

FOR THE LOVE OF HUSAYN

Edited by

Muhammad-Reza Fakhr-Rohani

This book is a compilation of different poems composed in memory of the Master of Martyrs, Husayn ibn'Ali (AS) and his loyal companions who were martyred almost 14 centuries ago in Karbala, Iraq.

A chorus of poets, from different parts of the world, have sung the praises of the heroes of the greatest act of sacrifice in human history, the Battle of Karbala, and this book reflects only a glimpse of such songs of praise, sorrow and mourning.

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Publisher's Note

The current volume is a compilation of different poems composed in memory of the Master of Martyrs, Husayn ibn'Ali (AS) and his loyal companions who were martyred almost 14 centuries ago in Karbala, Iraq.

A chorus of poets, from different parts of the world, have sung the praises of the heroes of the greatest act of sacrifice in human history, the Battle of Karbala, and this book reflects only a glimpse of such songs of praise, sorrow and mourning.

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Part I

Introduction



There is something quite strange yet intriguing with the name 'Imam al-Ḥusayn'. One of the most charming and pleasing names, the name 'Imam al-Ḥusayn' implies noble characteristics and most admirable qualities. Yet, it mysteriously inspires his adherents and admirers to carry out their most sincere duties and modes of servitude, simply for the sake of meeting his satisfaction. The compiler of the present volume simply aspires to be regarded as one such person.

Throughout history, the purest and noblest forms of art, literature, architecture, and so forth have been associated with either religion itself, or figures closely associated with God and/or religion. Hence, the most sincere feelings of devotion are crystallised in the form of poetry, regardless of the language used. The impact of Imam al-Ḥusayn on poets is highly evident in such languages as Arabic, Persian, Urdu, or Turkish, being the dominant languages of Muslim populations. Such poems

reveal the extent and depth of the impression the Imam has since exerted on the culture of the language in question. By the same token, it is interesting to examine such devotional poems in English. Indeed, such poems only express the poet's most sincere feelings or reflections about the admirable figures in question.

The bulk of *ziyārāt*[1] texts, poems, prose pieces, laments, sermons, and *ta'zia* (Shī'ī version of passion play)[2] scripts devoted to the 'Āshūrā tragedy collectively make up what can generally be called 'Āshūrā literature.[3] Granted that such forms of 'Āshūrā literature necessitate redefinition of literature proper simply to cover literary and linguistic manifestations of the whole event, 'Āshūrā literature is by no means limited to the Islamic era, beginning specifically from the very day of 'Āshūrā 61 AH/ 680 AD.

'Āshūrā literature dates back to the pre-Islamic period. According to an account related in *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān,*[4] following the Ṣafwān prayer, Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq remarks, through the chain of authorities indicated therein, that the text of the 'Āshūrā Ziyārat text was initially composed and issued by the Almighty. (Supposing that there had not been any praise for Imam al-Ḥusayn except the very account indicated here, this single account itself proves well indicative of the magnificence and significance of the 'Āshūrā incident and the unique personality of Imam al-Ḥusayn). If such an authoritative text as the 'Āshūrā Ziyārat-text could provisionally be put aside on the basis of the fact that its source of production was God the Almighty, the first human-produced work in the rest of the common heritage of 'Āshūrā literature dates back at least to the very first elegy which the Christian apostle Zachariah composed on the 'Āshūrā incident [5-6] several centuries ahead of its taking place. (There are some outstanding and high-ranking Shī'ī *ulema* [clerics] who have written various accounts[7] of the similarities observable between the attributes and fates of the Christian apostle John [Arabic Yaḥyā] and Imam al-Ḥusayn). Such literary forms are entirely devoted to reveal the purest and noblest

kinds of sincere feelings of their composers as well as serving as accounts of the hardships and afflictions Imam al-Ḥusayn's front suffered and endured in the 'Āshūrā tragedy.[8]

In the Islamic period, since the 'Āshūrā tragedy onward, almost every devout belletrist, author, or researcher, amateur or proficient, has produced (at least) a work, literary or scholarly, chiefly to mark his or her reverence and tremendous respect for Imam al-Ḥusayn. Such works are by no means limited to Shī'ī literary figures; rather, quite a lot of Sunnī, even Christian, Jewish, and Hindu figures have shown and continue to show their respect and reverence by composing such pieces.[9]

Truly amazing is the fact that 'Āshūrā literature transgresses bounds of religions, political leanings, and/or languages in that almost nothing can stand on a par with it as so penetrating and moving and, at the same time, smoothing. The more a person reads or writes about it, the more eager they feel to go on with it. It makes one ponder, feel a flame, produce a work,[10] feel satisfied for having accomplished his or her duty, and then find it far from expressing their true feelings and pathos they experience, let alone to reflect the smallest degree of the depth and wide horizons of the event! In a nutshell, fatigue does not make sense here, for this is a true instance of a labor of love.

'Āshūrā literature in its entirety is not, and should by no means, be restricted to the main languages of the Muslim communities. Such literature has been either translated into major European languages or produced directly in such languages as English, French, and so forth. As long as 'Āshūrā is remembered and devoutly commemorated, its literature will remain and survive, for 'Āshūrā has been an incident far beyond the bounds and confines of the precise day of 'Āshūrā, the plain of Karbalā', and the religion of Islam. It will remain imbued with invaluable and perennial lessons, moral, religious, and educational for all humanity.

'Āshūrā will always remain a never-inding lesson. It has since vociferated the voice of the perennial battle between right and wrong, darkness and light; it continues to mark

the oppression of pure religious thought and noble human characters. In this way, it reverberates the voice of religious nobility as exemplified and crystallised in the Battle of ʿĀshūrā. Throughout the ages, Imam al-Ḥusayn, the mourning ceremonies held for him, and even going on pilgrimage to humbly pay visitation to his sacred tomb and sanctuary, and even paying a visit to those who have been on pilgrimage to Karbalā', have not been altogether devoid of political implications for those who have realised the inherent political force behind the belief in the personality of Imam al-Ḥusayn as well as the spiritual and religious rewards and virtues recorded in the authoritative and canonical *ḥadīth* texts.[11]

To these, one must add the innumerable biographies,[12] *nawḥas* (viz. dirges), *marthiyas* (viz. elegies), and dramas,[13] produced in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu, to mention just a few.[14]

The present book is by no means the first and last volume collected in this brand new field. Contrary to an initial anticipation, it seems that ʿĀshūrā literature in English will occupy at least five volumes of books. Hence, readers and critics are requested to contribute to this collection by providing the compiler with poems not included in the large corpus so far collected.

An attempt has been made to facilitate the readers' tasks. Where a person, a concept, a term, or an event is mentioned in a poem, the reader may refer to the endnote indicated, geared to its proper line number. This is for the reader's ease of reference to the lines in which they appear. Just after each poem, there are some explanations to save the readers' time, and to provide them with some basic information to comprehend the fragment(s) in question.

The present introductory essay can hardly be regarded as a suitable introduction to a poetic collection on ʿĀshūrā. It merely serves as a text by way of introduction. And, no doubt, any introduction to the life and afflictions of Imam al-Ḥusayn will prove far from adequate in respect of the greatest tragic incident in the world.[15] After all, who dares, or may even claim,

to adequately describe the life of Imam al-Ḥusayn whom God honoured with martyrdom?[16] Any attempt to describe such a great incident would be like an ant's description of the Prophet Solomon's kingdom.

This is just the first step to take a long journey. May God the Almighty consider and accept the present humble attempt. Amen!

NOTES

1 According to *The Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd ed., 20 vols. [1989], s.v. ziarat), the word *ziarat* is defined as "Muslim place of pilgrimage, a shrine; a pilgrimage to such a place." This is one sense of the word *ziyārat*, as used in Arabic and Persian. Although not recorded in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, there is still another sense of the word which concerns prescribed and often-recommended texts, of various lengths, to be read while paying such a visit. Ziyārat-texts deal with the second sense noted here; they signify a religious meeting, far beyond the bounds of time and place, with a mostly monologue type of talking.

2 *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (6th ed., 2 vols. [2007]) defines it in this way: "play commemorating the suffering and death of Husain, performed esp. on the anniversary of the event each year."

3 In Arabic, it is called *Adab al-Ṭaff* (lit. Karbalā' Literature). *Al-Taff* is another designation of Karbalā'. See, for example, J. Shubbar, *Adab al-Ṭaff*, 10 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Murtaḍā, 1409 AH/ 1988). In Persian, the following works must be mentioned as examples: H. Gul-Muḥammadī, ed., *'Āshūrā va Shi'r-i Fārsī* (Tehran: Atlas, 1366 Sh/ 1985) and M.-A. Mujāhidī, *Shukūh-i Shi'r-i Āshurā Dar Zabān-i Fārsī* (Qum: Shahid Mahallati Institute, 1379 Sh/ 1999).

4 *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān* is a collection of prayers for recitation, non-obligatory, recommended rituals, and so forth anthologized by the late Shaykh 'Abbās Qummī. Although the explanations were originally phrased in Persian, the whole text later on appeared in Arabic and Urdu and English translations. Its English translation is as follows: *Mafātīḥ al-Jinān/ The Key to the Gardens of Paradise*, tr. Badr Shāhīn, 2 vols (Qum: Ansariyan, 1430 AH/ 1388 Sh/ 2009). Various editions and selections of the original Persian volume are widely available.

5 See the annotated English translation of the Holy Qur'an produced by S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali (1st US ed., Elmhurst, NY: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, 1988), s.v. the Qur'anic mysterious letters Kāf, Ḥā, Yā, 'Ayn, Ṣād in the

first verse of the Sūra Maryam (viz. Mary), p. 242 f, n. 1309.

6 Viewed from this broad perspective, one may come up with a classificatory scheme of 'Āshūrā literature. That is, it may be classified as a) pre-Islamic, vs. b) post-Islamic accounts of lament on Imam al-Ḥusayn. While of the former there are just some reports in certain *ḥadīth*-based exegeses (*tafsīrs*) of the Holy Qur'an, the latter can (conveniently and irrespective of the language used) be subdivided into poetic prose pieces, lectures and sermons, and poems, all focusing on the captivating personality of Imam al-Ḥusayn, his speeches, addresses, the poems (ascribed to him), and particularly the hardships he and his matchless companions endured. As such, 'Āshūrā literature proves to be one of the most interesting literary genres not only far beyond the frontiers of Islam but signifying a linking thread amongst (at least) such Abrahamic religions as Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Unfortunately, such an archetypal and symbolic tragedy seems not to have received the due attention it deserves in most Western or Islamic literary circles. Needless to say, 'Āshūrā literature cannot logically be restricted to any predetermined languages and genres, nor to the faith and denomination of anyone who composes such a devotional piece of literature.

7 See, for example, J. Shūshtarī, *Dam 'al-'Ayn 'alā Khasā'is al-Ḥusayn,* Persian title [Ashk-i Ravān bar Amir-i Kāravān], tr. Sayyid Muḥammad-Ḥusayn Shahristānī (first lithographic ed., 1313 AH/ 1895; 9th ed., Qum: Dār al-Kitāb, 1381 Sh/ 2002), pp. 439-443, and pp. 423-450, for Imam al-Ḥusayn's similarities with other prophets and apostles; cf. the Arabic original under the title *al-Khaṣā'iṣ al-Ḥusayniyya: Khaṣā'iṣ al-Ḥusayn wa Mazāyā al-Mazlūm,* ed. Sayyid Ja'far Bāqir al-Ḥusaynī (Qum: Anwār al-Hudā, 1425 AH/ 2004), pp. 496-503, on the similarities between Imam al-Ḥusayn and the Apostle John; the entire Chapter 10, pp. 475-515, is concerned with the similarities between Imam al-Ḥusayn and other prophets and apostles.

8 Undoubtedly, the earliest piece of 'Āshūrā lament (viz. *nawḥa*) was produced by Zaynab, Imam al-Ḥusayn's sister, beside Imam al-Ḥusayn's decapitated body on the sweltering ground of Karbalā' after the Battle of 'Āshūrā.

9 See, for example, A. Bārā, *al-Ḥusayn fī 'l-Fikr al-Masīḥī* (5th ed., Beirut: Dār al-'Ulūm, 2009); A. al-Nābulusī, *'lāqa al-Masīḥīyyīn bi-Ahl Bayt al-Nabīy* (Beirut: Dār al-Hudā, 1422 AH/ 2001). Here mention must be made of Armenian Archbishop Sebouh Sarkissian's work "The Events of Karbalā': A Survey of Some Classical Sources: al-Ya'qūbī, al-Ṭabarī, and al-Mas'ūdī" (Unpublished thesis, University of Birmingham, 1981), and Kamāl al-Sayyid, *Boules Salāmah: Shā'ir al-Ghadīr wa Karbalā fī 'l-Zamān al-Akhīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Ghadīr, 1425 AH/ 2004). Part of the last work

(pp. 46-76) focuses on the 'Āshūrā incident as mirrored in the poems of Būlis Salāma, a famous Lebanese Christian poet.

10 This encompasses any type of work coloured and minted with a sincere sense of devotion, be it drawing an artistic work, e.g., the contemporary Iranian painter Maestro Farshchiyan's famous painting 'Aṣr-i 'Āshūrā [The 'Āshūrā Afternoon].

11 The bulk of ḥadīth literature in this regard is legion and amazingly abundant, thought-provoking, and awe-inspiring. See, for example, the ḥadīths recorded in such texts as Ja'far ibn Muḥammad ibn Qūlawayh al-Qummī, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt,* ed. 'Abd al-Ḥusayn al-Amīnī ([lithographic ed.] Najaf: al-Murtadawīyya, 1356 AH/ 1937), 'Abd al-Ḥusayn al-Amīnī, *Adab al-Zā'ir li-Man Yamamm al-Hā'ir,* ed. Najāh Jābir Salmān al-Ḥusaynī ([orig. lithographic ed.] Najaf, 1362 Ah/ 1943; repr. Beirut: al-Balāgh, 1424 AH/ 2003); Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn al-Ḥasan al-'Alawī al-Shajarī, *Faḍl Ziyāra al-Ḥusayn,* ed. Sayyed Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī (Qum: Āyatullāh Marashī Public Library, 1403 AH/ 1982) which contains ninety ḥadīths on this topic.

12 A huge number of volumes of bibliographies have been compiled on the biographies of Imam al-Ḥusayn. The bulk of biographical accounts is legion and practically incalculable. Certainly no other figure can match Imam al-Ḥusayn as the subject of so many books, treatises, theses, dissertations, and biographical accounts, short or long, published or unpublished, in history. Excluding manuscripts and essays on his biography, compiling a bibliography of the published books dealing with the life of Imam al-Ḥusayn would turn into a voluminous work. There is a short list of 103 important Arabic books on Imam al-Ḥusayn in M.-A. al-Amīnī al-Najafī's thirty-two page Introduction to *Maqtal al-Imam al-Ḥusayn* of M.-R. al-Ṭabasī al-Najafī (Qum: Muhibbin, 1382 Sh/ 2003), pp. 9-20. See also the bibliographies of such short accounts as M. T. al-Samāwī, *Ibṣār al-'Ayn fī Anṣār al-Ḥusayn,* rev. ed., ed. A. J. al-Ḥassānī (Beirut: al-Balāgh, 1424 AH/ 2003), and M.-B. Pūr-Amīnī, *Chihrihā dar Ḥamāsih-yi Karbalā* (Qum, Iran: Būstān-i Kitāb, 1382 Sh/ 2003). The Persian books and monographs on the subject are almost innumerable. The present author has not had access to a list of such biographies and research monographs written particularly in English; however, it is not illogical to guess that quite a great number of such accounts must have been produced in Muslim countries where English is the lingua franca.

13 For instance, A. al-Sharqāwī, *Ḥusayn the Martyr: A Play in Six Scenes,* tr. A. Abdul-Razzak (Chicago, Ill.: The Open School, 1997).

14 See, for instance, the articles "Anīs", "Marthiya", and "Muhtasham-i Kāshānī" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* new edition (Leiden: E. J. Brill,

1960-). I should here like to mention a research project on the Turkish heritage of 'Āshūrā literature, currently under development by Dr. Amīr al-Khālidī at the University of Kufa in Najaf, Iraq (personal communication).

15 This is a concept taken from a fragment in the 'Āshūrā Ziyārat-text.

16 This concept is taken from a fragment in the Arba'īn Ziyārat-text.

Hari Kumar

ASHURA



The chain whips awaken
A hundred eyes on their backs.
Red tears trail the streets
To the gold-domed tomb of Husain.
A golden spider with legs of blood

Wails shake the sky the minaret props.
But today, for every lash for Husain,
A lash will tear for a warded son. *

* http://www.harismind.com/poems.html#Ashura

T. D. Chattani

Vale of Sorrow



Through the Vale of sorrow does history trace
Two matchless martyrs our Prophet's pets
Who left their hearths with Islamic grace
In hunger and thirst their duty to face.
Severed from home, exhausted on the field

Opposed by enemies who had Satan's shield
They gave their lives that others be freed
From falsehood, tyranny and a Kafir's creed.
Most precious blood flowed from their veins
Battlefield of Karbala has still those stains

From our hearts should rush rivers of blood
Renewing our faith with this vital flood! *

NOTES

L. 8. Kafir = infidel, unbeliever, or pagan.

* Khurshed, ed., *Imam Husain*, 2nd ed., p. 157.

Ameen Khorasanee

Husain of Kerbala



Men weep for you today in many lands,
And on their breasts in bitter anguish beat,
And in sad, mournful tunes, the tales repeat of how you
Lost your family upon the sands.
You nobly spurned the tyrant's base demands and chose

Death to prevent your soul's defeat,—
Became a martyr with unflinching feet—
For these well may one weep who understands.
This sorrow at your death, despite the years is still as fresh
Which Time has failed to quell.

In every heart this day new pain appears
And of your sufferings men each other tell.
They see a vision through slow falling tears of that lone
Battle where a thirst you fell.*

* Lalljee, *The Martyrdom of Imam Husain*, p. 60.

Sarojini Naidu

The Night of Martyrdom



Black robed, barefooted, with dim eyes that rain
Wild tears in memory of thy woeful plight,
And hands that in blind, rhythmic anguish smite
Their bloodstained bosoms to sad refrain
From the old haunting legion of thy pain,
Thy votaries mourn thee through the tragic night
With mystic dirge and melancholy rite,
Crying to thee: Husain! Husain!

Why do thy myriad lovers so lament?
Sweet saint, is not thy matchless martyrhood
The living banner and brave covenant
Of the high creed thy Prophet did proclaim,
Bequeathing for the world's beautitude
Th' enduring loveliness of Allah's name? *

* Naidu, *The Feather of the Dawn*, p. 6.

Sarojini Naidu

THE IMAM BARA



I

Out of the somber shadow,
Over the sunlit grass,
Slow in a sad procession
The shadowy pageants pass
Mournful, majestic, and solemn,

Stricken and pale and dumb,
Crowned in their peerless anguish
The sacred martyrs come.
Hark, from the brooding silence
Breaks the wild cry of pain

Wrung from the heart of the ages
Ali! Hassan! Ḥusayn!

II

Come from this tomb of shadows,
Come from this tragic shrine
That throbs with the deathless sorrow

Of a long-dead martyr line.
Love! Let the living sunlight
Kindle your splendid eyes
Ablaze with the steadfast triumph
Of the spirit that never dies.

So may the hope of new ages

Comfort the mystic pain
That cries from the ancient silence
Ali! Hassan! Ḥusayn! *

NOTES

Imam Bara. "Imambara, Imaumbara, Eemaumberra = A building maintained by the Shia Muslims for the express purpose of celebrating the Muhurrum ceremonies, to which they bring their Tazias and Taboots." Lewis, *Sahibs, Nabobs, and Boxwallahs: A Dictionary of the Words of Anglo-India,* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991.

* Naidu, *The Sceptred Flute: Songs of India*, pp. 152-153.

W. C. Tailor

An Ode



Tell me friends what shall you say
On the awful Judgment Day
When Mohammad asks you where
Are those trusted to you care?
Dearer than a thousand lives?

Bound by many a fastening chain
Some in dungeons dark remain,
On Kerbala's barren strand
Others lie, a reaking band.
Torn with wounds and stain'd with mud

Weltering in their own heart's blood.
When before the Judgment seat
You the Holy Prophet meet,
He shall ask. If thus you show
The gratitude you justly owe,

For all the benefits bestow'd
By whom whose bounty freely flow'd.*

* Khurshed, ed., *Imam Husain*, 2nd ed., p. 158.

Anonymous

Vision of Kerbala



Here's the tale of my nightly trance
The Vision of Karbalā' in a deathly dance
When a Martyr great faced the lance,
Of shameful Shimr for Islam to enhance,
No war of weapons or battles' sound

Equals this tragedy all world round,
No hero hooked to holiness stood
With such head held high without shelter or food.
His trumpet spake not to an armed throng
But to seventy-two saints, the celestial strong

They all sang their heavenly song
Giving their all to avenge a wrong.
Satanic sceptres arranged with awful eye
This orgy of blood without a sigh
While our Sovereign Lord was passing by

In scorching sand to answer people's cry.
For Islam's unity he surrendered his head
With his darling children he nobly fed
The starving Ummat on its death-bed
Because through sacrifice are nations made! *

* Khurshed, ed., *Imam Husain*, 2nd ed., p. 156.

NOTES

L. 4. **Shimr** = Shimr ibn Dhī al-Jawshan was the most notorious figure in the Battle of 'Āshūrā His real name was Shurahbīl ibn 'Amr ibn Mu'āwiya. He symbolises cruelty and atrocity because he was reportedly the person who decapitated Imam al-Ḥusayn. He instigated and dispatched his men to attack and plunder the tents on Imam al-Ḥusayn's front.

L. 10. Although **seventy-two saints** = the widely-held number of martyrs of the Battle of 'Āshūrā; however, the number of martyrs listed inside Imam al-Ḥusayn's sacred shrine amounts to some one-hundred martyrs (personal observation).

L. 19. **ummat**, var. umma = the Muslim community.

H. Wells

Imam Husain



Pitched upon the scorching desert,
The tent of Husain lay,
Encompassed round with Satan's hounds
Upon that black sad day.
They numbered less than eighty strong,

Women and children too,
While Yazid's thousands stood a round,
Awaiting the fiend's might.
Driven away from the cooling stream,
His children waiting for water.

Awaiting with patience extremely sublime
Like sheep for the butcher's slaughter.
Oh! How valiantly fought that pitiful few,
Against Yazid's wild murderers,
Fought with a courage unequalled in Time

Fought with a fierceness that was surely Divine.
The earth quaked and trembled as noon drew near.
But still the survivors knew no fear
But fewer grew that pitiful band,
For Islam, God, and Husain they stand.

At last, all were dead, the devil had won,
Blood red sank down the merciless sun,
Trampled and torn lay the gallant Husain,
For Islam, God, and the faithful were slain. *

* Khurshed, ed., *Imam Husain*, 2nd ed., pp. 141-142.

Tabish Khair

Poem from Outside a Muharram Procession



The clash of arms, the clasp of armour
(Ya Hassan, Ya Hussain):
This is not sorrow, this is something else.
This is defeat

That's more than victory, this is
The past that's passed by father to son
As a trinket heirloom without price,
This is the inheritance of pain.

There they whirl, bleeding, bleeding
(Ya Hassan, Ya Hussain)
From wounds inflicted on other bodies
And in another century.

This is not war, this is women wailing
After the battle is over, after
The head is severed, mitred on a lance.
This is the knowledge of death

Passed on from mother to daughter
(Ya Hassan, Ya Hussain).
This is not religion, this
Is the exchange of unwrapped

Presents. This is a young boy feeling
With his father's heart, this is
A pony-tailed girl speaking
With the voice of her mother.
This is not anger, not even passion:
(Ya Hassan, Ya Hussain)
This is dancing with the wound of time.
This is my studied failure to feel. *

NOTES

L. 2. **Ya**, an Arabic vocative or attention-getter, almost equivalent to English O, Oh, or Lo. Imam al-Ḥasan, here mentioned as Ḥasan, was Imam al-Ḥusayn's elder brother.

* Khair, *Where Parallel Lines Meet*, pp. 9-10.

Anonymous

On the Morn of Muharram



Wake up my friends; for the morn of
Qiama has arrived
It is the month of Muharram
The crescent of grief has appeared
The month of mourning has arrived
Muharram is the month of tears
Muharram is the month of blood
Bodies are shredded
And the desert is a garden of blood
The crescent of grief has appeared
The month of mourning has arrived
The creation is sad and in mourning
It is the month:
When Husain was martyred
When the eyes of 'Ali shed blood
The crescent of grief has appeared
The month of mourning has arrived
Husain sacrificed for the path of Islam
His head is on the spear
His body is on the ground
The crescent of grief has appeared
The month of mourning has arrived
The arms of 'Abbas were cut in this month
The three-idged arrow settled in the
Parched throat of little Asghar

The crescent of grief has appeared
The month of mourning has arrived
Zainab will hug the dust of thee dungeon in this month
The innocent face of Sakina will be
Bruised in this month
The crescent of grief has appeared
The month of mourning has arrived. *

NOTES

L. 2. Qiama (correct Arabic form *qiyāma*) = the Resurrection Day.

L. 15. Ali = Imam 'Alī, the first Shī'ī Infallible Imam.

L. 23. Abbas = al-'Abbās ibn 'Alī, Imam al-Ḥusayn's step-brother, who was martyred at the Battle of Karbalā' on 'Āshūrā.

L. 25. Asghar = 'Alī al-Asghar, Imam al-Ḥusayn's six month baby.

L. 28. Zainab = Imam al-Ḥusayn's sister.

L. 29. Sakina = Imam al-Ḥusayn's beloved daughter.

* http://www.dartabligh.org/months/muharram/8_3.asp.

Farah Yeganeh

A Shaped Elegy for Karbala



Where do you reside now?
Where you reside?
Where you?
Where?

Where have the rainbows perished to?
Where rainbows perished?
Where rainbows?
Where?

Why does the city look so dark?
Why city dark?
Why dark?
Why?

I've lost the orange and the violet of the rainbow.
Orange and violet of rainbow.
Lost rainbow.
Lost.

What should be done with the silent confusion?
What with silent confusion?
With silent confusion?
What?

I used to stand under the big tall tree.
Stand under big tall tree.
Stand under tree.
Stand.

And wonder at the magic of the colors.
Wonder at magic of colors.
Magic of colors.
Magic.

What have they done to the echoes?
What done to echoes?
What to echoes?
What?

Have they eventually dissolved in nothingness?
Eventually dissolved in nothingness?
Dissolved in nothingness?
Nothingness?*

* Mrs. Farah Yeganeh herself contributed this poem to the present volume.

Ethel M. Pope

Tragedy of Moharram



Gold moonbeam shed their misty light
O'er a saddened world;
To sound of deepest funeral dirge.
Islam's banner is unfurled,
With slow and measured step, 'tis borne,
Aloft amid the throng,
The emblem of a mighty hand
E'er raised to right a wrong,
In by-gone days its silken folds,
Waved proudly in Iran;
From Continent to Continent,
The Arab symbol ran.
Its path was marked by victory,
The triumph of the right;
Till darkest Africa's heathen hands,
Were bathed in purest light.
That day of happiness is gone;
No more in ecstasy borne,
The banner heads a sobbing throng;
Whose duty is to mourn.
The loss of him beloved by all
A hero without stain,
Whose noble sacrifice has made
The world ring with his name

With open hand he gave his all;
His little children dear
Brothers, friends - helpless women too,
Cling to him in fear,
Unflinchingly, nor moved nor wept,
Secure in his just cause,
He nobly fought and nobly died,
To save Islam's great laws.
All the memory of martyrdom
Anew the passions rise;
A bitter, sobbing, wailing cry,
Goes up unto the skies;
With each new year the latent grief,
Pent up, breaks out again,
And Heaven returns the impassioned cry,
Husain, Husain, Husain!*

* Khurshed, ed., *Imam Husain*, 2nd ed., pp. 153-154.

Justice A. D. Russel

The Martyr of Karbala



From age to age, on Virtue's age,
Shall live the deathless story,
His loss remain the Martyr's gain,
His shame the Martyr's glory;
Till truth shall lie, and Honour die,
And Time itself be hoary.

I

"Arise Husain, arise,
Chief of the Prophet's seed;
Fling broad thy banner to the skies,
And come with utmost speed,
Or ere the throne of the All-Wise
Usurped be by foul Yazid."

He's donned his armour bright,
His Father's sword girt on;
The sword of Ali, as the might
Of the Destroyer's own:
And he is off ere morning light
Across the desert wide and lone.

"Now, Kufa, keep thy word!
To the good cause be true;
Yazid has sent a giant horde

To march thy province through;
The hirelings of his father's hoard,
Whose grace or mercy never knew."

II

The long plain stretches to the skies,
All in the burning noon;
The desert wind, death-laden, dies
Beneath the deadlier sun;
And all the camp exhausted lies,
By heat and thirst fordone.

The hot stands stretch a quiver, far
To south, to north, to west;
To eastward, where those palm-trees are,
Beyand the long dune's crest,
Stern Obaidallah lies, to bar
The Caliph from his quest.

"Father, I faint with thirst, I die;
A cup of water give!"
"My blood, my life fain give would I,
To help thee, child, to live.
Nay, yonder, look, a stream is nigh,
Thy suffering to relieve!"

III

"Euphrates, cool thy waters flow,
Thy eddies smoothy glide;

One draught-by generous foe
Such boons were ne'er denied!"
"The sword of Ali! On them ho,
With Husain for our guide!"
The sword of Ali wrought,
In swaths the fallen lay;
Might Fate by valour e'er be bought,
So had it been that day;
But ah, a single arm is nought
Against that vast array.

The noon-day prayer gave brief respite;
He sank before his tent,
"Come Abdullah, my heart's delight!"
"I come"... as he went,
An arrow pierced his infant heart,
His hour of life was spent.

IV

Woe! Life is but a waking dream,
That flies at dawning light;
A glimmer on a cloudy stream,
That, rushing into night,
Re-issues mid an endless gleam,
In gardens of delight.

But bring the atter box, likewise
The robe of Samarcand:
With me this morn in Paradise,

Glad, perfumed, ye shall stand,
Encircled by the radiant eyes
Of Houris in a band.

But more, but more than fairest fair,
My soul will long to see
His little form, out-stretched there,
Slain by their savagery ...
"Ho! Comrades, on to do and dare,
And die-sith so must be."

V

They bore his god-like head aloft,
His mouth struck with their whips.
"O mouth, that I have seen so oft,
A-teem with angel quips,
In baby-kisses, warm and soft,
Pressed to the Prophet's lips!"

O body, trampled, fouled, disdained,
Which charmed the gazer's eye,
The blood from out thy veins that drained
Was heaven's electuary;
No horses hooves were ever stained
In so divine a dye.

O barren plain of Karbala,
With herb, nor yet with sod
Be clad eternally; for ah!

There, overwhelmed, down-trod,
The holy son of Fatima
Gave up his soul to God! *

NOTES

L. 11. The All-Wise = God.

L. 16. The Destroyer = God.

L. 19. Kufa, or al-Kufa (Ar. al-Kūfa) = a town on the western bank of the Euphrates (Ar. al-Furāt). It is now quite close to al-Najaf. Al-Kufa served as a seat of Imam 'Alī's government, hence a refuge and Centre for the Shī'īs. Just prior to the Karbalā' incident, several of its inhabitants wrote letters of invitation to Imam al-Ḥusayn; however, most of them betrayed him and participated in the unbalanced war against him at Karbalā'.

L. 35. Obaidollah = 'Ubayd Allah ibn Zīyād, the Umayyad governor of Kufa.

L. 36. The Caliph = Yazīd ibn Mu'āwīya, the 2nd Umayyad ruler.

L. 43. The Euphrates (Ar. al-Furāt) = one of the two major rivers of Iraq near which the Battle of Karbalā' took place.

L. 57. Abdullah = 'Abd Allah al-Radī' (the Suckling) was Imam al-Ḥusayn's infant who was shot and martyred by Harmala on 'Āshūrā.

L. 68. Samarcand (Samarkand) = an ancient Persian city, now in Uzbekistan.

L. 95. The holy son of Fatima = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

* Khurshed, ed., *Imam Husain*, 2nd ed., pp. 136-140.

Mariam Rizvi

Untitled Poem



Peace, with sception and hope, I seek,
(congruity's scope I know is bleak)
To mend I crave (rather than kill)
To spill blood, abhor I will.

Intend I do, no force to use (If sense in you I can infuse)
But the rules, supreme, of the divine faith
Resolved I am, to defend till death.
Face your hostile moves I will.

Thought accord I covet, seek peace still.
A holy war it means indeed
If waged to crush the devil's creed.
No rancour, against you, I hold
But faith do cherish - as I told.

Islam I will resolutely shield
Burnt will stand and never yield.
Would welcome death (and make it tame)
Would rather die than live in shame.

Your Prophet's scion I'm - you know
At least some regard to his name show.
His singular dictum is my creed:
"Universal good" I adore, indeed.

Ali, the paragon, the seraphic Imam
Champ of the faith, the shield of Islam
Inimitable, impeccable: I am his son
His peerless attributes I have won.
My heart is virtues' abode and nest
Blessedness harbours in my breast.

Muhammad came in the kingdom of God,
as a messenger of peace as the master of creed.
He influenced the world with Ali's help,
and all the sons from his daughter's breed.

Fatima the lady of God's paradise,
Ali the warrior, the leader, the wise.
Hassan, the heir of eternal lore,
Husayn, the martyr, the heaven's door.

Call Ali in the trouble, Almighty says,
because in his presence the evil decays.
He's the Lion of God, he's the Sword of God,
and all his believers are one righteous squad.

Islam's prosperity is the gift of Hussain,
In the way of God, he sacrificed his clan.
He gave his head but not his grace,
His martyrdom is a slap on the devils face.

The grandson of prophet decided to fight,
to unveil the Satan, and bring him in light.

The food was banned, the water was stopped,
but on his mind the triumph had topped.

Zainab was with her brother all the time,
and participated as much to demolish the crime.
Her surety was Abbas, the holder of the flag,
Whose hand on the emblem is the victory's tag.
The thirst was a menace, the hunger a threat,
an example for all the mankind was set.

But the righteous fought, and died on the faith,
and the right won, against the evils wraith.*

NOTES

L. 34. **Imam al-Ḥasan** = the elder son of Imam 'Alī and the second Shī'ī Infallible Imam. He was the elder brother of Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 48. **Zainab**, var. Zaynab bint 'Alī = Imam al-Ḥusayn's younger sister who accompanied him from Medina to Karbalā'. She married her cousin 'Abd Allah ibn Ja'far and had four sons and a daughter. Two of her sons, 'Awn (var. Aun) and Muḥammad, were martyred on 'Āshūrā in Karbalā'. She bravely acted as the leader of the survivors of the Karbalā' tragedy and eloquently acted as the disclosing voice of the Karbalā' revolt to reveal and disclose the real face and unjust character of Yazīd.

L. 50. **Al-'Abbās** (var. Abbas) ibn 'Alī = Imam al-Ḥusayn's step-brother. He typifies and symbolises bravery, religious zeal, chivalrous politeness, and absolute obedience toward Imam al-Ḥusayn.

* Published on Thursday, 9 Muḥarram 1424 A.H./ 13 March 2003) at http://www.shianews.com/hi/articles/islam/0000071.php.

Syed Ahmed Ali Mohani

The Hero of Kerbala



Many, many years ago,
On bloody field of Kerbala,
A noble hero faced his foe,
As champion of God's Faith and Law.
Ov'erhead there was a scorching sun,
There were no shady trees,
Beneath a burning sandy plain,
With no refreshing breeze.
A scion of Hashim's noble line;
Of Heroism a model,
Son of Ali, the Lion of God,
Grandson of God's Apostle.
His comrades few but loyal and brave,
Some young and some advanced in age,
The record of whose actions gave,
To history its brightest page.
Of worldly comforts they had none,
No couch nor rosy bed,
To comfort their afflicted hearts,
The Holy Word of God they read.
Three days they every distress bore,
Deprived of drink and food,
The world does still wonder at,
Their unexampled fortitude.
They fell around him one by one,

Firm in their righteous ways,
And for their loyalty have won,
From friend and foe a world of praise.
His friends with loving grief he eyed,
Lying dead in sun's scorching rays,
To justify his aim he tried,
To deal with foes in peaceful ways.
He brought in arms his baby son,
Asked them to give him water,
Said he, "The babe no harm has done,
To die of thirst or slaughter."
Stones they threw and arrows shot,
Obedient to Yazid's behest,
And in their fury spared not,
Ev'n life of baby at the breast!
A little before his enemies were,
For water sorely passed,
Relief he gave them then and there,
And could not see even foes distressed.
He humbly prayed and praised the Lord,
The Giver of Spiritual beauty,
And though midst danger never failed,
To do his sacred duty.
Wickedness can no further go,
Cruelty needs no greater proofs,
His sacred body, after death,
Was trampled under horses' hoofs!
Victory, though mean, they gained, but still,
No bounds knew their ire.

Orphans and widows they captives made,
And set their tents on fire.
The captives saw with choking grief,
And eyes dimmed with tears,
The tragic sight of Martyrs' heads,
Uplifted on spears! *

NOTES

L. 2. Kerbala var. "Karbalā'" or "Karbela", correct Arabic pronunciation "Karbalā", English spelling "Karbalā'".

L. 9. Hashim, viz., Hāshim ibn 'Abd Manāf = the great-grandfather of the Prophet Muḥammad.

L. 11. The Lion of God = an honourific title for Imam 'Alī, signifying his bravery. Its Arabic original is Asad Allah, with a Persian equivalent as Shīr-i Khudā.

* Lalljee, *The Martyrdom of Imam Husain*, pp. 63-65.

Anonymous

A Journey



It was peak of the mischief and virtues in chains;
Just laws were sacked with rules insane;
As the tyrants on the rise, and mass confused,
offered lust with lies, and faith abused.

Thus the signs indicated, and time dictated.
Some souls elevated as al-Husain navigated;
a seed of the Prophet and the sight of his Parents
that time in deluge, he was ark so apparent.

In the Name of God, for the sake of Islam;
For the freedom of life and soul of Islam;
gave greatest sacrifice, but not his hands,
with the members of his kin and many of his friends.

Hur, Muslim and the friends those hearts so pure;
they offered their lives as shield and cure;
thus tyrants came forth from the curtain way old;
then peace was bought and lives were sold.

And daring in the manners were the two young brothers;
in the boldness of their moves were the teachings of a mother
Shone Aun and Muḥammad with the valor known as Haider;

Those children were slain not the feeling of the mother.

With a message from his father was Qasim bin Hassan;
a radiant jewel of Islam was this glowing young son;
but Qasim into pieces with a bride day old;
on the sand in heat it was savage and cold.
Then the pride of the Hashims rode back from the river;
And the tyrants made sure that he did not deliver;
they cut off his arms, but spirit was set;
till an arrow hit the bag, only eyes got wet.

Fell Abbas from the horse, with no hands for resort;
then al-Husain rushed to shore for a brother's end resort;
those children who waited with the patience were told;
and thirst in the camp was three days old.

Soon Akbar came down with spear in his chest;
which a father had to pull so severe was the test;
He was image of the Prophet, and the life of al-Husain;
He was vision of a mother and the eyes of al-Husain

Now the Leader was a lone as he called for the help,
then a baby fell down; a response from the crib!
This thirsty, pure, infant was a son of Imam,
Who, acknowledged his father and the call of Imam.

Thus al-Husain brought him for some water in the field,
and showed them baby's dried lips and appealed;
but the six months old got an arrow so thick,

that turned him over and tore his neck.

Ali Asghar went to sleep, with his father and no fear;
with the cradle on the fire, and their heads on spear;
and the mother's empty hand, with the tear-dried eyes,
who looked for the baby to sing lullabies.

And a sister by the camp saw the horror of this trip;
as a knife tore the neck, where the Prophet put his lips;
Earth in grief, roared heavens and mourned,
Sand turned red when al-Husain was torn.

And a child full of tears with her tiny bleeding ears,
bruises on her face and her thirst so severe;
She ran for her father who laid beheaded,
and cried for the uncle for help she needed;

Syeda Zainab looked for her in the sadness of that night;
did inquire every soul in the land of the plight;
but Sakina was sleeping on the chest of a body;
with the love of the father, from the fragrance of his boy.

Then the camp pushed down, while flames went up;
little children rushed out, as their dresses lit up;
it was night full of cries and the innocent quests;
shattered were the dreams and broken were the nests.

All defenses laid to rest, after trials and the tests;
left to face, one Imam, even history would detest,

who fainted with the illness faced torture and torment;
a Master of the pious and devotees' ornament.

Lashes on his back heavy chains on Imam;
but ladies were the prisoners, was the wound of Imam;
No chador for them but their rope tied arms;
and grief soared high from Kufa to Shaam.

But, the daughter of Ali challenged miseries with the messages;
with the families in bazaars, and deadly courts of savages;
With the depth of the patience and the Zenith of Bravery;
Islam was rescued for ever from the slavery. *

NOTES

L. 6. "A.S. can stand for a set of Arabic honourific -cum- Islamic and prayer-like formulas, viz., *"'Alayhi 'l-salām"* for a male dignitary and *"'Alayha 'l-salām"* for a female referent of high esteem. These formulas function to express one's reverence for the dignitaries concerned. Although widely-used in Islamic, particularly Shī'ī, devotional and religious texts produced in English, the abbreviation "A.S." has not been recorded with the above meanings in major English dictionaries."

L. 13. Hurr, Ar. al-Ḥurr, was a commander who blocked Imam al-Ḥusayn's route; however, he got aware of his grave fault and joined Imam al-Ḥusayn's army on the morning of 'Āshūrā and sacrificed his life in the cause of Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 19. Aun and Muḥammad were two sons of Lady Zaynab who were martyred at Karbalā'.

* http://al-islam. org/history/history/marsiyya.html.

L. 19. **Haider** = a title of Imam 'Alī.

L. 21. **Qāsim** was son of Imam al-Ḥasan, Imam al-Ḥusayn's elder brother. Qāsim fought the enemy and was martyred in defence of his uncle, viz., Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 25. **The Hashims** = the Hāshimids who were present at Karbalā', viz., Imam al-Ḥusayn and those of the Hāshimid dynasty.

L. 29. **Al-'Abbās** (var. Abbas) ibn 'Alī = Imam al-Ḥusayn's step-brother. He typifies and symbolises bravery, religious zeal, politeness, and entire obedience toward Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 33. **Akbar**, lit. 'elder' = a title of 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, the elder step-brother of the fourth Shī'ī Infallible Imam. Akbar is used here as a shortened form. On 'Āshūrā, he was the first of the Hāshimids who went to the battlefield, fought the enemy, and was martyred.

L. 45. **Ali Asghar**, Arabic title 'Alī al-Asghar, is 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn. ["Asghar" in Arabic means "the youngest"]. When Imam al-Ḥusayn lost all his companions, he got back to the tents at his encampment and found it suffering from intense thirst. To prevent his baby from dying of thirst, Imam al-Ḥusayn brought it near the enemy forces so as to get him some water. As Imam al-Ḥusayn took Alī al-Asghar in his arm, Harmala ibn Kāhil al-Asadī shot a three-pranged arrow and martyred him. Alī al-Asghar is a symbol of oppression of Imam al-Ḥusayn's front.

L. 57. **Syeda Zainab**. 'syeda' (lit. Lady, Miss, or Mrs.) is the feminine form of 'syed', itself the Subcontinent Indian English variant form of 'sayyid' which means 'Mr.' or 'sir'. Regarding Zainab, or Zaynab bint 'Alī, she was Imam al-Ḥusayn's younger sister who accompanied Imam al-Ḥusayn from Medina to Karbalā'. She married her cousin 'Abd Allah ibn Ja'far and had four sons and a daughter. Two of her sons, 'Awn (var. Aun) and Muḥammad, were martyred at Karbalā' on 'Āshūrā. She bravely acted as the leader of the survivors of the Karbalā' massacre, eloquently acted as the voice of the Battle of Karbalā', and disclosed the real face and unfitting character of Yazīd."

L. 59. **Sakina** = (Sakīna bint al-Ḥusayn) Imam al-Ḥusayn's daughter.

L. 71. The word "Chador" symbolises formal and religious covering for Muslim females when they get out doors. Already a loan word in English, it signifies females' high social status in chiefly Middle Eastern Muslim communities.

L. 72. **Kufa to Shaam**. Kufa, or al-Kufa (Ar. al-Kūfa) is a town on the western bank of the Euphrates (Ar. al-Furāt). It is now quite close to the shrine city of Najaf. Al-Kufa served as a seat of Imam 'Alī's government, hence a refuge and Centre for the Shī'īs. Just prior to the Battle of Karbalā', several

of its inhabitants wrote letters, inviting Imam al-Ḥusayn to move there; however, most of them betrayed him and participated in the unbalanced war against him in Karbalā'.

L. 72. **Shaam**, or **Al-Shām** = the Levant that is a region presently comprising Syria, and the neighbouring parts of Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan. It specifically refers to Damascus, the capital and, in the early Islamic history, the seat of the Umayyad dynasty. In Shī'ī culture, it implies the hardest and most unbearable phase of captivity for the survivors of the Battle of Karbalā'.

A. K. Esmail

THE CONQUEROR OF KERBALA



The tremendous surge from mid-deserts
Had just reached the brink
On its victorious onwards march
And, there for a while it stopped.
For a while it was touch and go
For a while it seemed
Desert born desert contained.
That was not to be
It was not so decreed
Muhammad's own blood
Was there to answer the call.
At Kerbala the faith was reborn
And Husain's martyred blood
Blossomed forth and
Lo, there was universal Islam.
To the last day-last minute
Shall shine the immortal deeds
Of Husain and his cohorts
The Faithful Few
Yes the Great one himself was on trial
The Last Prophet's own blood
His darling and his heir
Husain himself had to fall
Before the grand message spread.
The mouths that had fed

Bit the hands that held
The ungrateful serpent's bite
That was a Prophet's reward.
Bereft of gold, bereft of home
Bereft of food and water itself
But full of Muhammad's blood
Full of pluck, full of faith
The Courageous led on.
Led on the last seventy-two
Seventy and two of the grand host
Spiritual ancestors of the like
Who from ages keep the faith alive
Those that do not quit.
Thrones are usurped, gold stolen
But not the thorny Crown
That always rests on the brows of a rare Jesus.
That was Husain's heritage
That went back of Christ
A heritage to stand like rock
To suffer to strive and to die
To die and cease to be
So that Truth for ever be.
They don't die
The heroes of Kerbala
They who go through fiery furnaces and walk in the valley of shades
For the end they emerge
In shining armours radiating
Light of truth for ever.

In vain, in vain did Yazid foam
In vain, did his armies storm
For the field was theirs
Who had their precious lives lain
The conqueror of Kerbala was Husain.
Here the unmatchable became invincible
Here the price for the perfect was paid
What father had conceived
The brave son had fulfilled.
Ye, fields of Kerbala
Stand us in need
Muslims are again on trial
There is no Husain to lead.
Ya, Muhammad Mustapha
Grant us thy son's spirit
Let Kerbala be our beacon
For we have only to repeat
The original deed is done
Can we not just repeat?
Yazids are yet all about
Within us and also without
His tribe does not die
Ye, waters of old lady Furat
Tell us how Husain fought
Tell us how he won
For again have we to win
And leave an example behind
That the message of Muhammad
The sacrifice of Husain

Shall not be in vain
Islam, Allah's noblest gift
Has to be earned again and again. *

NOTES

L. 19. **The Faithful Few** = Imam al-Ḥusayn's companions who were relatively much less than the number of the enemy's army, which reportedly exceeded 30,000.

L. 21. **The Last Prophet** = Prophet Muḥammad.

L. 54. **Yazīd ibn Mu'āwīya** = a very notorious and detestable figure. He was the cruel monarch of the Umayyad dynasty. Soon after his gaining power, he ordered al-Walīd ibn 'Utba, his agent in Medina to gain by force Imam al-Ḥusayn's oath of allegiance. As this was all in contradiction to the contents of the peace treaty earlier signed by Mu'āwīya and Imam al-Ḥasan, Imam al-Ḥusayn rightly refused to recognise Yazīd as a ruler. Hence, the Imam al-Ḥusayn left Medina for Mecca in defiance to the political pressure exerted. As the people of al-Kufa had invited Imam al-Ḥusayn, he intended to go there. En route to and near al-Kufa, it was at Karbalā' where Yazīd's agents and henchmen forced Imam al-Ḥusayn to stop. In fact, Yazīd ordered his forces to fight and slay Imam al-Ḥusayn and his companions thereat.

L. 67. **Ya, Muhammad Mustapha.** Ya is an Arabic vocative or attention-getter, corresponding roughly to English *O*, *Oh*, or *Lo*. Mustapha, var. Mustafā, lit. chosen, selected, preferred, favourite, is another *laqab* (designation or appellation) of the Prophet Muḥammad.

L. 73. **Yazids** = those who are like Yazīd in character. Although proper names are regarded as inherently definite, and non-count, in such secondary uses they qualify as a set-, or category-denoting nouns, hence they may take a plural marker.

L. 75. **Furat, Ar. al-Furāt,** [the Euphrates] = one of the two major rivers of Iraq

* Lalljee, *The Martyrdom of Imam Husain*, pp. 60-63.

whereby the city of Karbalā' is located. It symbolises the thirst Imam al-Ḥusayn and his companions endured as well as the battle occurred thereby at Karbalā'. According to numerous Islamic ḥadīths, it is regarded as a paradise river imbued with virtues for whoever gets consecrated with it. Also recommended is to perform *ghusl* [i.e., washing the whole body in a prescribed way for religious or ritual purposes] with its water prior to performing ziarat, viz. pilgrimage, to Imam al-Ḥusayn's sacred sanctuary. See Muḥaddithī, *Farhang-i 'Āshūrā*, s.v. Furāt.

Sayyed Ali Musavi Garmarudi

The Track of Blood



Trees I like them-
In your reverence they stand firm;
Likewise the water,
It's the dowry of your mother.
It's your blood brightened the honour,
It's your nobility the horizon does mirror.
The dusk is that niche,
In the morn by martyrdom you did pray.

In my mind thoughts about that valley flood
The soil of which sucked your blood.
No, indeed not, a vale so high I saw never.
It is you, only you, in a downfall dear,
Better from the vale itself hear!

A sword which at your throat did ply
Cut everything into two under the sky.
Turned Husaini whatever at your side
While Yazīdi the other side.
Now rocks and we!
Waters and we!
Hills, canals, meadows, trees-

Some are Yazidis
Else, they are Husainis.

Blood your neck irrigated
Everything under the sky into two divided-
Even the color
Resided in every particle
In a dazzling garish carbuncle.
Else, not Husaini nor does concur.

Your death, lo, what a gage!
Laughed at life and vilified its stage
That to the death desired life to page.
Your blood stood there
and stood the Truth in its care:
One it is but a fare.
Determination stood a security;
Riveted the world into its guarantee.
Although false espouses the world
Truth in canopy of your name brides the world.

Peep into truth if to see you
And the grass when it is to grow,
The water in a drink when it's to flow,
The stone as challenges a throw,
Into a sword when it cuts into two
Or the lion when its roar the winds blow,
Into the horizon which is bloody,

In the smile of dusk which is ruddy.
In a stand,
In a demand.

You to be found in crevices,
To be smelled in roses
And the burning sun to be demanded,
The early morn to be commanded.
Should be opened heart of the night,
Seeds scattered the delight
And the winds carry your sight
To be plucked from the bunches' height.
In God alone you to be seen,
Whosoever upon Truth if to lean,
Gory is he and his fingers beam
The glow of your blood and its sheen.
Eternity is the mirror
Hung before you for every viewer.
Alas, the sun, it is no better;
Hence, we wouldn't utter:
'It is your looks' glitter.'

In a cozy corner of history's conscience
Guarding the Truth stands he is vigilance.
In his smile tacts flow in mellifluence.
Strong, straight. Star striking-
Such the determinations are demonstrating

The elevations if to be viewed by a human being.
Lo, infancy of reason astonishes in a daze confusing.
It is the lake of your own blood-
A gateway of history where you have stood
Holding a jug of civilization for human good

To quench the caravan of mankind
In a martyrdom pacing onward pressing the hind.

Your name disturbs the sleep under moon
And deluges in water a Typhon,
Lo, rests the law in your tone.

To battle your determination only fools prone,
Your distinction is blood, only blood, blood alone.
O, you, not a divine but in divinity drown.
Death is vile in your hold
As a fly a plaything among children's fold
And Yazīd, a pretext. An excuser if to be told,
As though a handkerchief before you unrolled
and you spited the filth of tyranny in its shroud
and threw into the history's dustbin for other to scold.

A huge blood sucker,
Not an entity but a liar;
Such was Yazid an idler.
Sins personified in him
And he to mankind a megrim.
Robbery of name it is it to name him

'A man' however the sense he claim.
O, you! O, Glorious victim!
Be upon you blessing!
Not because thirsty you met martyrdom
But your enemy is of such a sum.

Your death red
Broke Yazid's name into a shred,
And made the sense in the word tyranny dead.
Troops of words with barracks of description fled.
Indeed, defeated is every human toil;
Battle with you is foul and toil.
Freed are the lions in your coil.
Your blood overflows the expression's soil.
Beyond the words is the flow for history's turmoil.
Out of the track of time proceeds as a procession Royal
O, "Zabeehullah!" Divinity in your blood flows;
You the "Ismayeel" of God, in you Oneness glows.
"Abraham's vision" from a dream reality barrows,
Karbala where your appointment wallows,
Moharram the hour of love when the love loves.
And, lo, you are that sole person
Carried forty days the pilgrim's season.
"And We have complete it in ten"
Ah, burns me the desire of comprehension;
The incomplete pilgrimage pawned in suspension,
Gained in your kiss at the dagger its perfection;
For the "BLACK STONE" virtual the best compensation.
Begins the love's history,
The red gains its entity,
From your death-to life a treaty.

Letter commences from your blood
Religion found way the time you stood
As you fell the truth stood

And took the Right a mould good.
Weakened the tyranny's base in your blood's flood.
Autumn of your death delivered eternal spring,
Grass and trees in a pleasant ring,
And a blossom of red at every branch to swing,
Else, a dry fuel wood it is to the trees cling.

Secret of death you have opened.
No knot remained under your will's nail unopened.

Wailing and weeping is the honour;
You ahead and it entails you for ever.
Beyond the manliness you are far and further.
Prayers: you; intention: you;
Oneness: you; and the one you;
Oh, the verdure, the ever green'
Oh, the red that frills the green
Nobler than every pure and clean
No human a parallel to you ever has been.

O, sweet but staunch and staunch but sweet,
Gapes wide history its mouth for you to spit.
You an iron arm, you the scale of balance-
You sense of the Book and you the Qur'an's essence.
In your looks interpretation glow,
And the paces to the earth dignity bestow.
And become a gravity for galaxies on onward grow
Divine verses lip and your lips utter-
Wherever you be in you heavens glimmer.

Wonder! Oh, wonder! you a wonder'
My astonishment ends not if I to ponder
Foolhardy it is to fathom oceans by a finger.

Weep we-
Gains your blood in our tears constancy
Our tears a polish and sword in tendency
Its seat is in the arena of tyranny.
You are a Qur'an in red
Verses of your bravery wrote the blood
In the desert as far as the sands scud
Those sands turned into a field-

Rich in red bunches as a shield.
Blood is the crop, blood is the yield
Its every branch is a sword, a dagger
Uproots the tyranny in the noon of its summer.
Hence, red is the field and shall be for ever.
O, *Tharallah*!
The Garden of Eden; lo, what a mania!
You planted in the burning desert of Karbala.
With fruits red,
Rivers bloody from bed to bed
Buds to bloom martyrdom's red
And trees in a row forming a green shade.
Only loveful eyes see with looks in love fed.
Akbar - you and in a quality bred;
And the palm trees of consummate red.

Hurr - not a person but an attribute.
At that side of the river to contribute:
He parted the caravan and its plenitude.
Bridges to a man your word, your look;
Towards you he is in a hook
As a food in a caravan for a cook.
The brains in search of refuge
Obtain from you light in a deluge.
Desire for envy is a befitting subterfuge.
Hurr's bleeding head and your skirt - a fate profuse!

Good is red after your martyrdom;
Tears are daggers in your kingdom. Your pain is the pabulum
For a journey - destination not datum
The track of your blood is the way
Terminates at the God's gateway.
You are from the blood's strain
And we in your love mad remain.
Your blood sands were to sustain
To gush from stones in a fountain.
Oh, the fertile view-
Tyranny has no enemy better than you,
To a victim no acquaintance nearer than you.
History gets brief in your class
Hands do not meet at Karbala's pause,
Galaxy of Existence there heats the brass;
The worship moves round it, solarium draws.

Here the word ends,
End too to end tends,
At you no end bends. *

NOTES

L. 16. Ḥussaini, Husaini, Ḥusayni, and Ḥusaynid = forms of an adjective, denoting association, or leaning, toward Imam al-Ḥusayn. The suffix -i is an adjective marker in both Arabic and Persian.

L. 17. Yazidi = association or inclination toward Yazīd (var. Yazid), or having some of his disgusting characteristics.

L. 21 and 22. The final -s in the words "Yazidis" and "Ḥusaynis" is English plural marker.

L. 111. Regarding "Zabeehullah", or "Dhabīh Allah", "Dhabīh" (the slain) denotes "(blood) sacrifice or oblation"; consequently, "Dhabīh Allah" means "an entity presented as an oblatory sacrifice to the pleasure of Allah". Basically, the title was applied to Isma'īl (Biblical and English Ishmael; also Samuel), son of Ibrāhīm (Biblical and English) Abraham. In the Shī'ī culture, the term is used with a connotation to refer to Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 112. Ismayeel = Persianised form of "Ismā'īl" (explained above).

L. 115. Moharram, var. "Muharram".

L. 171. Tharallah, var. Thār Allah is a title of Imam al-Ḥusayn. Granted that 'Thār' literally means 'blood revenge', 'vengeance', or simply 'retaliation', it frequently occurs as one of the titles of Imam al-Ḥusayn in the prescribed ziarat texts to be read for paying homage to him. In the ziarat contexts, it signifies 'the person whose blood revenge will be taken by God'.

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L. 172. **The Garden of Eden** = the Paradise Garden. There are ḥadīths, confirming that the precise site of Imam al-Ḥusayn's burial chamber and sanctuary are indeed one of Paradise Gardens in this world.

L. 179. Akbar lit. "Elder" = a title of 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, the elder brother of the fourth Shia Infallible Imam 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, Zayn al-'Ābidīn. Akbar is used here as a shortened form. On 'Āshūrā, he was the first of the Hāshimids who went to the battlefield and achieved martyrdom.

L. 181. **Al-Hurr ibn Yazīd al-Rīyāhī** = a renowned man in Kufa. He met Imam al-Ḥusayn at a spot called Dhū Husm, and prevented him from reaching Kufa. He did this on a mission from and at the command of Ibn Zīyād. However, on the day of 'Āshūrā, he realised the grave sin he had committed and decided to repent. To accomplish this, he left the army wherein he was a commander, and approached Imam al-Ḥusayn's front. Having joined the Imam's army and expressing his repentance, he enquired of Imam al-Ḥusayn if his repentance might be accepted by God. Upon receiving the Imam's positive answer, he sought permission from him to fight the enemy forces and was martyred. In the 'Āshūrā culture, he symbolises last-minute repentance, eternal felicity, and salvation.

A. J. Chapman

Ali-Asghar



(An extract from "the Epic of Islam")

Now the Imam, hearing a woman wailing,
Turned himself round from those implacable foes
He fought against, forgetting their brutal force,
To know what ill had befallen one of his;

If that made woman cry aloud and wail.
He was sore wounded, and if ever hope
Of victory had been, hope now was none.
Another hour he might endure; but then
The end is sure; as that the sun will set
When day is done. However many more
Of these hired foes he stretch upon the sand,
In wormy death, ere night should fall, his own
Heroic blood must mingle with the sand;
The sand be turned bright scarlet, ere the sky
Is dyed that sunset. His calm eyes would close
In death before eve's curtains veil the day,
And dewy night begin. Would it have been
Anything wonderful, if on his ear
That woman's wail and fall'th unheeded; if
The lion taken in the toils, so stricken,
With the whole battle resting now alone
On his sword flashing in the sun, his spear,

Had thought: "What matter if a woman cry!?"

He heeded. All his life he had been used
To feel for others. If one wept, 'twas his
To comfort her. If one was sick, 'twas his
To bring the remedy. He could not hear
A loved one cry, and not give heed. What if
Deaths many as there are blades of grass, or grains
Of sand on beaches, menace, will his nature
Not to itself be true, as angel kind
Is like to angel, and will still be like,
Though hell's flames lick around? So back Husain
Rode to the camp, to know what ailed, that one
Cries out so loud. It was because the child,
His Ali Asghar, little babe, had fainted
Of heat and thirst, and 'twas its mother's cry:
Her cry had summoned the father from the fight.
Does she not always cry for him, if child
Of theirs ails anything? And now the littlest
Lies in a faint because of bitter thirst.
So, she has cried. He took the babe, and rode
Straight to that lynx-iyed, stony, pitiless ring
Of enemies, and, in a voice whose tones
Of passionate pity for the baby touched
Even those hearts, asked for some water for it.
"Give it some water. Give it water enough
"To save its life. Have pity. You call me
"A rebel. Let it be that I am one;
"The grandson of your Prophet, one. That makes

"No rebel of this child. Rebels conspire
"Gainst kings. Against what king has Ali Asghar
"Conspired, or could conspire? He hardly knows
"Bitter from sweet. He only knows to smile
"What thirst is? He cannot speak a word;
"Can only cry. He only knows to smile
"Out of his dear, sweet eyes, and with lips,
When he is happy; and to cry with pain,
"As now with pain and thirst. See, lest you think
"Tis water for myself I seek, I lay
"The child here on the mound, and go apart,
"while you bring water for it; give it drink,
"I will stand off, and watch. When it has drunk,
"Depart ye, and I will come, and take the babe
"Back to the mother." The baby lay
Unconscious still. Where Husain's arm was bent,
It made a pillow for the little head.
The army moved, all a few paces nearer,
Drawn, as a tide, by that compelling voice.
There is in men what even avarice
Cannot blot out - the instinct to discern
The kingly in a man, and when its voice
Is heard, to offer homage, and obey.
The voice that came from where the man and babe
Stood solitary, was a kingly voice
Thy see a mound: a wounded man stands on it;
His raiment, battle-stained, all torn; but let
Only that voice be lifted up in theme
Of passion - will the sight change straight to one

Of royal splendour. "Tis my king!" each heart
Will say - "my crowned and sceptred king; and I
"Shall only know my peace, if I obey
"That voice!" The army moved those paces nearer,
Drawn, as a tide, by that compelling voice;
And then there rang out hoarsely: "Oh, for mercy,"
"Give it some water: spare its life." Then roared
The Commander, 'Umar Sa'ad: There is to be
"No womanish feeling here! Are we to win
"The whole reward, or, having a corpse too few
"To show, to have it mulet? A brat's a corpse,
"If dead, as one much bigger! Counts as one!
"When heads are fixed on spears, a little one
"Has in the bleeding line as good a place
"As any bigger!" Then Hurmala shot
Arrow that pierced through Ali Asghar's neck
And buried in the father's pillowing arm.
There it now quivers.

Of all the woe on earth
Meted a man, there is not one to tear
So cruelly the fibres of his heart,
As that his little child, his innocent,
Who smiled from such a depth of happy eyes,
Should die, and die in pain: from being soft,
To lie in mother's or father's arms, so pliant
It takes the very shape of the arms that make
A cradle for it, to grow cold and stiff;
Too rigid now to bend. That desolation

Tore than that father's heart, he looking down
For flicker of eyelid; for a sign of life
Remaining; for belief at first is hard;
Too hard at first. How can a life God meant
Should count as many as threescore years and ten
On earth before it end, end suddenly
Before a year is past? Is't possible?
This world that God created is divine?
Divine man's life in God-sustained? How then
Believe a life has ended when not only
The natural course has not yet run, but when
It hardly has begun? So father, mother,
Will linger by their dead child, the hearts torn,
In them, half thinking that it is not dead.
They feel the body they've just felt as cold,
Grow warm again; not it reality, but through
So strong imagination. Now their ears
Half-hear a breathing; so the heart is quick,
Filled with that love, to hear what it would hear,
There see those eyes open again; not really,
But in imagination. So the heart
Is quick, as fain, to think that is, which is
What it so longs for.

When Imam Husain
Brought Ali Asghar forth, it was with face
And body covered over with his aba;
So to protect him from the heat and glare.
His enemies raised a shout. They thought he brought

The Holy Book, covered, and brought it out
To seal a truce on. Now with another aba,
One of the drifting desert sand, the Imam
Must cover Ali Asghar's body; aba
Made with a sword for needle; not of wool,
But gritty sand; a sepulchre made swiftly,
Full in the sight of all those pitiless eyes,
Unfeeling as a lizard's; a grave dug
With zulfiqar (though two-tongued, silent sword).
First, the Imam the cruel arrow drew
From forth his arm, forth from the baby's neck
The blood that flowed, poured in the father's hand.
And lay there in his palm; his own child's blood.
What should he do? - Whether to cast it down
On earth, to be a curse where curses lay
Already thick? Or throw it, oath-like, up
To heaven, to mingle with the down-coming rain
Of benediction? In either case blood spilt,
Which none should spill. Thus thinking, the Imam,
As one who dyes his beard with henna, smeared
The little baby's blood over his beard,
Saying: "With this dyed beard will I appear
"Fore God! And they all saw in heaven one stride,
A bloody-bearded man, when each wet hair
Told the host who came there; from where; and whose
The will was that he come so much before
His time, and in such guise. First, he would dig
The grave. Then happy earth shall have her part
In Ali Asgar. There is heaven's part too,

And never father buries son, but thinks
In paradise his bliss to be again
United to that part. While the Imam
Dug with bright zulfiqar a grave that took
So little time to dig; for small the body
To lie therein, what thoughts he must have had
The paradise of waking next, with those
Two souls beside him - Ali Akbar and
The tiny Ali Asghar. Think of him
Bent over the hot sand, digging with sword,
A bloody-bearded man, ringing with hearts round,
Turned all to wolfish; his own acts done there,
That men might know, or some (if any would),
That only truth is truth, and maketh free;
Man's truth being to worship God, and count
Nothing as gained, except the love of God,
Increaseth in his heart. Therefore the throne
Usurped, his favour that upon it sits;
All the appurtenance of royalty,
If wrongfully displayed, counteth as dirt,
Let there be pebble lying on the beach,
Or flower in cranny of a crumbling wall,
Or smaller thing, even a spider's web
If it move man so much as to his first
Dawning perception of the love of God.
And life as not begun till it begins
In some act of God loving, it is worth
(pebble; or flower or web, or smaller thing)
More than a thousand thousand gilded thrones

Unsanctioned, or his favour who could give
The owner of the unbending knees, let him
But bend the knee, kingdoms and gorgeous thrones
With flung Alhambra. A bare desert grave
To bury a child in, is a kingdom better;
Better there, too, to rule one's heart in peace,
Full of the love of god, than in Damascus
To lord it over subjects not thine own
By will of heaven. Better to see around
Your throne (not recognised by common eyes
As throne) those martyred bodies in the camp;
Only a little count of warriors slain
For truth, and lest the Prophet's word should be
Obliterated quite, and the begun
Purification of the earth be stopped
Almost at the beginning. Better that
Than to usurp a fairer, richer realm
Than ever earth has known.

There is no man
Left now on earth, whom one should wish to seat
Upon a throne, unless there is able, one
To turn his gaze aside from what befall
His dearest or himself of all that men
Misfortune call, and unconfused, behold
God's once, or oftener than once, declared
Intention with regard to human life;
Steadfast to hold the truth, as did Husain
His lifelong, all his days. The Prophet said

"Two things I leave you - God's Own book revealed
"My family. Cling ye to them as to
"A rope. They will remain, inseparable,
"Until their purity and I are joined
"Again, in heaven." What could prevail,
Then, at Kerbala but one thing alone?
That none of them should suffer by a jot
That purity to minish or to fall
On which depended the divine intent
Regarding, not those few ranged there alone,
But all the race? Or what can now prevail,
In any quarter of the echoing earth,
Of all the acts of any Sayyid but those
Conceived in like regardlessness of self;
Such absolute devotion to the truth
Of purity declared, as the Imam
Guided his steps by, all that dreadful day
Of Karbalā', and all the days before? *

NOTES

L. 1. **The Imam** = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 36. **Ali Asghar** (Ar. **'Alī al-Asghar**) = a baby son of Imam al-Ḥusayn who was shot and martyred by Harmala on 'Āshūrā.

L. 87. **Umar Sa'ad** (Ar. **'Umar ibn Sa'd**) = the commander of the Umayyad horde on 'Āshūrā.

L. 94. **Hurmala** (**Harmala ibn Kāhil al-Asadī**) = an archer on the Umayyad front who martyred 'Alī al-Asghar on 'Āshūrā.

* Khurshed, ed., *Imam Husain*, pp. 143-152.

L. 136. The Holy Book = The Holy Qur'an.

L. 172. Ali Akbar (Ar. 'Alī al-Akbar) = the eldest son of Imam al-Ḥusayn; he was the first Hashimid martyr on 'Āshūrā.

L. 197. Alhambra = the famous castle in southern Spain; it is regarded as a sign of Muslims' heritage and architecture in Europe.

L. 222 - 226. This is the percept of the very famous and over-quoted ḥadīth of the Prophet Muḥammad.

See Muslim ibn al-Hajjāj, Ṣaḥīḥ *Muslim*, tr. Abdul Hamīd Siddīqī(4 vols, Beirut: Dār al-Arabia, 1971), vol. 4, p. 1286, report No. 5920. Further information can be sought in H. Tehrani, *Su'ālāt-i Mā/ Our Questions* (2nd ed., Qum: Nashr-i Hazeq, 1427 AH/ 2005), pp. 136-181; M. Firydanī, "Hadīth-i Thaqalayn", *Dāyirat al-Ma'ārif-i Tashayyu'/ Encyclopaedia of Shi'a*, vol. 6, pp. 158-161; *Mawsū'āt Kitāb Allah wa Ahl al-Bayt fī* Ḥadīth *al-Thaqalayn* (2 vols., Qum: Madrasah Baqir al-'Ulūm, 1387 Sh/ 2008); and S.H. al-Rajā'ī and H. Shakūrī, *Hadīth al-Thaqalayn fī Kutub al-Khāṣṣa* (Qum: Madrasah Imam Baqir al-'Ulūm, 1387 Sh/ 2008).

L. 227. Kerbala = Karbalā'.

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Part II

INTRODUCTION



MIR ANIS

Throughout history there have been so many poets who composed poems on Imam al-Ḥusayn and the ʿĀshūrā tragedy; they are by no means limited to such Islamicate languages as Persian or Arabic. Wherever there is a Muslim, and particularly a Shiite community, some pieces of literature on ʿĀshūrā and Imam al-Ḥusayn are rightly expected to be found. Moreover, the scope goes far beyond those of the Muslim populations: even non-Muslims have contributed to this religio-literary enterprise.[1] Mir Anis of India is credited to be one such poet whose literary fame and talent made other universally-acclaimed figures as Homer in Greek literature and Shakespeare in English literature comparable with him.

Mir Babr Ali,[2] known as "Anis" (as it was his second, lifelong poetical pseudonym [*takhallus*])[3] was born in Faizabad,

Uttar Pradesh, India, to a Shiite religious family, credited with inheriting unique literary talent. Born around 1801, he spent his childhood in Faizabad and migrated to Lucknow and lived there until he breathed his last in 1874.[4]

Mir Anis exerted a profound impact on Urdu literature and raised *marthiya/ marsiya* to its apex. He accomplished it to the extent that such a literary historian as T. Grahame Bailey regarded it as "the highest form of Urdu verse"[5] and considers nothing else "so admirable in Urdu poetry as the *marsiya*".[6] Many Urdu literary historiographers relate this phenomenon to the literary competition between Mir Anis and Mirza Salamat Ali "Dabir", better known as "Mirza Dabir", (1803-1875) in Lucknow.[7] The competition was so serious and fierce that the inhabitants of Lucknow were divided into two groups, one favoring Mir Anis and the other Mirza Dabir. Grown up in an erudite family, Mir Anis was especially favored by Shamsul Ulema Maulana Syed Hamid Husain, the author of the Shiite voluminous compendium end encyclopedic work *'Abaqāt al-Anwār*.[8] The impact of this attention from Syed Hamid Husayn is evident in Anis's *marthiyas* to the extent that he tries to keep to the factual aspects of the Karbala tragedy, abstaining from mixing realities with fancies (as most unschooled or lay poets have a leaning to doing so). When it comes to checking his *marthiyas* with the main incidents of the Karbala tragedy, one finds Mir Anis not only a loyal and devout poet but also almost an objectivist historiographer in his own right. He is far from making a narrator to entertain, or to arouse merely the passion of, his audience. Envisaged through the English translations available, Mir Anis proves not only a *marthiya*-versifier, but a true preacher of admirable moral traits.

Mir Anis was a prolific poet. It is almost impossible to come up with a true estimate of the exact number of the *marthiyas* he composed. Any time the present writer was searching in India to purchase a complete book or series of books of his *marthiyas*, the man in charge of the bookshop remarked that the volumes

he had should not be considered as a complete collection of Mir Anis's *marthiya*s. Zaidi maintains that Mir Anis "must have composed at least five hundred thousand lines."[9] In addition to this in quantity, qualitatively he gave his *marthiya*s "a much greater Indian element."[10] He was truly one of those who made a significant contribution to internationalization of the Battle of Karbala in the precinct of world literature in that he put it in the vicinity of non-Arabo-Persian poetry.[11] Hence, Azad's assessment comes true that the *marthiya*s of Mir Anis are "Urdu's contribution to world literature."[12]

MARTHIYA [ELEGY]

The word *marthiya* (sometimes spelt as *marsiya* or *marsia*) is a genre of mournful poetry developed basically in ancient Arabia to lament the passing of a beloved person. It is also meant to celebrate the dead person's positive traits, merits, and good deeds.

In the Islamic tradition, particularly in the realm of ʿĀshūrā literature, *marthiya* is accorded particular significance. Soon after the ʿĀshūrā tragedy, the first ʿĀshūrā-oriented *marthiya*s, with a focus on the tragic martyrdom of Imam al-Ḥusayn and/ or his companions, began to develop some of which are anthologized in Arabic *marthiya* anthologies. In line with commemorating Imam al-Ḥusayn, Shiite Infallible Imams kept on encouraging poets to develop *marthiya*s, and the *marthiya*-tellers used to receive lofty rewards in return.[13] In the Muslim communities, the literary activity of developing *marthiya*s is an ongoing trend which resulted in developing its own genre.[14] Sweetman describes *marthiya* as a "frequently great literature".[15] More specifically, Mir Anis's contribution has made "a piece of literature which... stirs the deepest emotions and rouses the strongest feelings."[16] Throughout its history, *marthiya* has made several functions some of which are defaming the opponents of the *Ahl al-Bayt*,

giving a sense of historiocity and religions identity to the ardent devotees of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, particularly those who take pride in venerating Imam al-Ḥusayn.

NOTES

1 Even followers of the non-Semitic/ Abrahamic religions in the Indian Subcontinent commemorate Ashura. For a good book in this regard, see Syed Sadiq Naqvi, and V. Kishan Rao, eds., *The Muharram Ceremonies among the Non-Muslims of Andhra Pradesh* (Hyderabad, A.P.: Bab-ul-Ilm Society, 2004).

2 Some English sources record his name as Mir Babar Ali, while some others record it as Mir Babr Ali. It seems that the latter one must be correct. I owe this point to an insightful remark I received from Dr. Syed Sadiq Naqvi of Hyderabad, A.P., India.

3 His earlier, youth *takhallus* was "Hazeen". So young as his father Khaliq was taking him from Faizabad to Lucknow, he changed his earlier *takhallus* from "Hazeen" to "Anis" at the suggestion of Nasikh, who was then "the doyen of Lucknow poets". See Zaidi, *Mir Anis* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1986), p. 37.

4 The dates given above are recorded in Zaidi, *A History of Urdu Literature* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1993), p. 160; and *idem*, *Mir Anis*, p. 33. He remarks that out of the dates ranging from 1211 AH/ 1796-7 AD – 1220 AH/1805 AD, that of 1216 AH/ 1801 AD "sounds more plausible" (Zaidi, *Mir Anis*, p. 33). Historical records show variant dates, a few of which are as follows: (1803-1874) s.v. "Anis, Mir Baber Ali" in *The Encyclopedia of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2006) as well as in David Matthews's Introduction to his work *The Battle of Karbala: A Marsiya of Anis* ([New Delhi: Rupa, 1994], p. 1).

5 T. Grahame Bailey, *A History of Urdu Literature* (1932; ed. M. R. Kazimi; Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 65.

6 Ibid., p. 59.

7 S. A. Hyder, *Reliving Karbala* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 36.

8 Zaidi, *Mir Anis*, p. 45.

9 Ibid., p. 62.

10 Ibid., p. 90.

11 Ibid.

12 Mohammad Husain Azad, *Ab-e Hayat* (basically in Urdu but also available in English translation as *Ab-e Hayat: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry*, tr. and ed. Frances W. Pritchett and Shamsur Rahman Faruqi [New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001]), qtd. in Zaidi, *Mir Anis*, p. 90.

13 See M.-J. al-Ṭabasī, *al-Maqtal al-Husaynī al-Ma'thūr*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Dar al-Samī', 1428 AH/ 1386 Sh/ 2008), pp. 14-30.

14 Research literature on *marthiya* in English can be found on the Internet as well as in Zaidi, *Mir Anis*, pp. 15-23; *idem*, *A History of Urdu Literature*, pp. 159-160; David Matthews, *The Battle of Karbala*, pp. 18-27; and the entry "Marthiya" (together with its language-wise subdivisions, in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 6 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), pp. 602-613.

15 J. W. Sweetman, "Some additional notes on Muharram," *News and Notes*, June 1935, p. 46 (quoted. in J. N. Hollister, *The Shi'a of India* [London: Luzac, 1953; repr. New Delhi: Oriental Books, 1979], p. 170).

16 Ibid.

Marthiya No. 1

A Short Marthiya



When the sun cut down the march of the night
And dawn unveiled its face,
The noble Imam looked heavenwards
Turned round and called his faithful men:
"The night is done; let's praise the Lord.
Arise and pray, O soldiers of Faith.
The day of reckoning has come when blood
Shall flow of Mohammad's sacred kin.
Said Zahra's Son, rosy-faced with joy,
"The night of separation is gone at last.
Union with God is at hand.
We'll be mourned by angel and jinn alike
Restless nights were spent by us
Awaiting this glorious mourn.'
As they heard the call the Godly band
Woke up, got dressed and prayed.
The celestial King was on the prayer mat
When arrows fell around
And followers saw the wicked foe.
A protective moth to Imamhood's lamp
Abbas arouse
And picked up his matchless sword.

(Husain proceeds to the ladies tent)
Armed from head to foe, lion-like, Abbas guarded the door

Lightning-like did flash his face
The women looked forlorn and pale.
Zainab prayed, O Lord above
Let Fatima's field be verdant and green
For evermore.
May the parting of the hair always remain filled
With sandal paste:
May the lap be full of kids,
(The enemy attacks the Imam)
As he advanced, the King of Faith's steed turned around.
The thirsty tiger pounced
The cruel foe's sword struck the shield.
Hussain's scimitar rent assunder
The revolving dome of heavens.
The enemy's head and body were patched on to the saddle.
Up to his neck his horse
Was struck in the sand.
Fairies left Mount Caucasus,
The genii their abode.
Lions forsake their dens, wolves their forests
Jaguars rolled out of their caves.
Falcon and partridge got together and hid themselves.
The swish of slings,
Syrian clouds raining arrows,
Horses neighing,
Hot winds,
Scorching sun,
The heat of the battle,
The abominable desert,

Burning.
Restless hearts.
Ask Hussain the splendour of the day:
Enemy watermen crying:
The battle is on
The shadows are lengthening,
Cool your parched souls.
The tyrants flocked to the waterskins,
And slaked their thirst,
Only Hussain had no water.
The thirst and the hot sun,
The glare which stabbed the eye.
He attacked hither and thither
Drops of perspiration
On the holy face
Fell like pearls on the dust.
None so thirsty had ever fought so in the throng
Now breathe in the air for a while
Thy steed trembles in the hot sun.
Now proceed for the sake of thy people.
"I come to Thee, O Lord" said he; sheathed his sword,
Suddenly arrows came flying towards him.
He spurred his horse to clinch the argument
His thirsty comrades surged forward
Wave after wave,
And the Syrian army became headless in a stroke.
Ali's sword flashed, its million hues
Shone at the forehead;
Leapt up from the saddle-belt;

Undaunted by shield and club,
Its wonderous edge, a gift from God.
Helmets turned into bubbles.
The cavalry raised a storm of yellow dust.
The skies were filled,
Like the hour glass
With sand.
The azure dome became a mound of earth
The valley of conflict turned dark for miles
The sun hid itself from the human eye.
The afternoon seemed neither night nor day.
God; the splendour of the Imam in the battle fray
Had eclipsed the sun's resplendent rays.
Hussain's rose-petal lips were parched and dry
Split image of the Father of Dust.
Mounted on his heavenly bay,
His war cry made the enemy yell.
Run, the tiger is roaring in the terrain
Help, help, O Hussain,
Hussain-at-arms is God's wrath sent down to earth
Denizens of the sea flew out and fell
On islands.
The mountains shrank
Covering their faces with their sides.
The seemurgh shivered and shed its feathers.
A Voice came from above:
Hail, Shabbir!
This scimitar was meant for thee;
For thee was destined the glory of this war;

Hail, hail;
Fight not any more, O Hussain,
Terray a while;
Enough O Hussain
Stop.
Thy steed trembles in the blazing sun
Enough, O Hussain.
In the afternoon, the autumn wind
Ravaged the bower,
Withered each leaf and plant,
Separated father from son,
Scattered brothers,
Zahra's Son was bent with grief
Losing son and brother was like losing both his arms.
His loyal men had fallen,
All, all were gone.
At noon tide Hussain,
The Son of Ali
Was left alone. *

* Translated by Quarratulain Hyder, in A. J. Zaidi, *A History of Urdu Literature* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1993), pp. 163-167.

NOTES

L. 3. The noble Imam = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 6. Soldiers of Faith = Imam al-Ḥusayn's comrades.

L. 8. Mohammad's sacred kin = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 9. Zahra's Son = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L.11. Union with God = Reaching the paradise as a divine reward; martyrdom.

L.17. The celestial King = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L.21. Abbas = al-'Abbās, Imam al-Ḥusayn's half-brother who symbolizes chivalry, politeness, and profound religious conviction.

L.26. Zainab = Imam al-Ḥusayn's sister who left her husband back in Medina and accompanied Imam al-Ḥusayn. Often regarded as the female mastermind of the Hashimites, she is regarded as the messenger of the Karbala tragedy whose disclosing harangues in Damascus awoke the people of Damascus, then the base of the Umayyads, and made them oppose Yazīd's rule.

L.54. "Ask Hussain the splendour of the day." It seems that the noun phrase following the name Ḥusayn must be in apposition with it, hence the revised form "Ask Hussain, the splendour of the day" must be the correct form.

L.77. The Syrian army = The foes of Imam al-Ḥusayn. They are regarded as the Syrian army, for they stood in support of the Umayyads whose base was part of the Levant, at present called Syria.

L.78. Ali's sword = Zulfiqar, or Dhu'l-fiqār. It is not well-documented in Islamic accounts whether Imam al-Ḥusayn fought with that sword.

L. 95. The Father of Dust = This is a literal translation of the Arabic title Abū Turāb, a designation of Imam 'Alī.

L.105. The seemurgh = The griffin, it is a "fabulous bird, often mentioned in Eastern romance." It symbolizes felicity and good luck.

L.107. Shabbir = Originally name of a son of Aaron (brother of the Prophet Moses), the Prophet Muhammad is said to have received a message from God via the Archangel Gabriel to name Imam al-Ḥusayn after Shabbir (in Arabic Shabir [pronounced as either *shabeer* or *shubayr*]) whose Arabic equivalent or translation is al-Ḥusayn. Most biographies of Imam al-Ḥusayn document this event. See, for example, A. Qummi, *Muntahā al-Āmāl*, p. 205.

L.122. Zahra's Son = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L.128. The Son of Ali = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

Marthiya No. 2

Mir Anis's Marthiya



The following text is taken from Syed Ghulam Abbas, *The Immortal Poetry and Mir Anis* (Karachi: Majlis-e-Milli, 1983), pp. 229-343. The editor's prefatory remark: *The poetic English translation in the above volume contained several misprints, inappropriate punctuation marks, and a number of grammatical errors. They have been all silently edited.*

1

O God! Make my bouquet of poetry bloom into a Heavenly bower,
Thou art all rain, and I am a parched crop, soak me with water,
Thou art all Grace, shower me with Thy grace for a while,
O God! I am all mute, give me a tongue fluent and agile,
So long as the sun retrains its luminous luster,
My pen be blessed with a serene and sublime grandeur.

2

In the world all around, Thy grace is in plentitude,
For which the nightingale sings hymns of gratitude,
Each sapling bows and worships Thee, O Lord!
For my labour, I wish Thy favour as reward,
Bedeck me therefore, with all lovely laurels,
And my work be reckoned as one of the marvels.

3

Bless my searching soul, with deep insight,
Like precious gems, studded, in a monarch's crown to light,
Higher than the Pleiades [*sic*], my thoughts may soar,
And the Pole Star, be a guide no more,
All brightest gems, that dawn upon my ken,
I cull them all, but for the Prophet's kinsmen.

4

I have the power to paint a rivulet, bigger than a sea profound,
And roll a drop of water, into a pearl renowned,
And lend such grace to a particle of dust, so as to vie with sun,
And the thorns look as comely as a rose, their ruggedness shun,
I give new shape and colour, to the realm of thought,
And that, too, with manifold notions fraught.

5

And if I paint, a graphic picture, of a gallery,
All celestial beauty be presented, in its entirety,
Stripped of stars, shall the firmament be made,
The legend of Solomon's synod shall fade,
An image of wonderland, I can create,
To people it with fairies, and wonders to permeate.

6

After the pageantry of peace, if battle I survey,
Khyber alone, my set disposition convey,
The enemies are slain, in quick succession,
And in the battle-field, they are on a run,
In the heat of battle, all foes are burnt,

With the slash of swords, a new experience they have learnt.

7

Your help is most genuinely sought, O Haider the Valiant!
Relief to men, you have always wrought, O Haider the Valiant!
You are highly gracious, and compassionate, O Haider the Valiant!
Your benediction is pure and chaste, O Haider the Valiant!
With faith in you, I charge the world with a sword,
I am all alone, and against me a horde.

8

Of callousness of hearts, I complain not, my liege!
The vile accusation are ill-got, my liege!
Betwixt nightingale and damask rose, no love exists, my liege!
It's not only me agonized, but each soul writhes, my liege!
There is dismal darkness all around, all human hearts bleed,
Injustice is the order of day, and men are marred by greed.

9

The good are being dwarfed by the wicked,
The ignorant keep, defying the learned,
Merit has lost, its virtue and worth,
To the dull-witted, beauty has no mirth,
With aching heart, I am perforce mute,
But tears roll down, when the pain is acute.

10

A lowly stone is hailed, but a diamond is defamed,

The pearl has lost its luster, but the shell is well acclaimed,
Woe to them, who compare the starchy substance to silvery moon,
And value a common glass, more than a pure white stone under swoon,
The rubies of Badakhshan and Aden, are worthless to them,
And all the gems of wisdom are meaningless to them.

11

Gone are the patrons, the lovers of art,
Who loved and cared for men of craft,
None exists now, with a taste so rich and varied,
Who is to value, this work of great merit indeed?
I dawned upon the scene, when the lovers of art were gone,
The commodity came to be available, when the customers were gone.

12

It lovers of letters don't exist, no matter,
To me you matter most, you Holy Prophet, you're all and ever,
The Almighty God, created the universe but for you,
And none can fill my coffers, better except you,
You, and the people of your house, are the source of exultation,
In your adoration lies, the path of my salvation.

13

O King of Kings! I am nothing, my mind is like a fen,
Bewildered are, not only Hassan and Farzdaq, but all such men,
Even Wa'el and Sahban went all ashamed,
You're incomprehensible, the leaned feel but mentally maimed,

You're the Celestial Light, and I mere dust, I can't adore,
The best tongues are laden with crust, I can't adore.

14

What's the eloquence of an ignorant being like me,
O Holy Being! You know that from ignorance, I am not free,
I possess neither agility of mind, nor a facile disposition,
Whatever I am, is rather owing to your grace and compassion,
I'm but a human being, even the angles can't you appraise,
To His own chosen creatures, God does of late and early praise.

15

The surging passions, made me say,
That I'm the composer, of the best of lay,
That I could stretch, a drop of water, into a river,
But I beseech you to forgive my faults, which are fewer,
It's true that the claim of an inflated ego, had no justification,
But it was to cure my heart-wounds, and to act as medication.

16

I admit my fault, but never before, have I committed a failing,
And never have I indulged, in self-praise unassailing,
Nor have I ever eulogized wittingly power and pelf,
I have never emulated, a talent inferior to myself,
I pride in the love of my Leader, the Saviour,
My strength of self springs from Ali, the Helper.

17

Of no worth is my speech and oration,

Engrossed day and night, I am in Shabbir's adoration,
A two-fold description, is my heart's desire,
Crest-fallen I am, my liege! I beseech you to inspire,
It's in this way that I make a description novel and thorough,
The one of jubilation, the other of sorrow.

18

The third Sha'ban is the propitious birthday,
And tenth Muharram is the martyrdom day,
Both the events are great, and both celebrity,
One is worship, the other an act of piety,
I'm the adorer, because this house has made me richer and richer,
For one the reward is Kausar, and Paradise for the other

19

O Antiquated Canopy! Wear a new garment,
O Full and Mature Moon! Shed a lustre resplendent,
O Gloom of Corrosive Suffering! Be banished for good,
O Lovely Light of Morn! Lift merrily thy hood,
The joyous birth occurs, in the abode of Ali,
The sun itself descends to the palace kingly.

20

O Sun! O Moon! A new moon is born,
The rewarding fruit of faith is born,
The son of the Lady of Universe is born,
The most lustrous light of empyrean is born,

Each soul thus feels, invigorating delight,
Nine luminaries, shall indeed, follow this light.

21

O Ka'ba of Faith! Thou art holier now,
O Rukn-e-Yamani! Thou art grander now,
O Jerusalem! Thou art more sanctified,
O Fountain of Zamzam! Thou art loved all wide,
O Sacred Stone! Thou art greater glory's manifestation,
O Mount of Safa! Thou art soul's sanitation.

22

O Yathrib and Batha! Thy liege and lord is coming,
Be complacent, thy protector and guard is coming,
With his advent, the world is sure to change for better,
Of a new tone and tenor, he is said to be the setter,
Verily are these days of Ka'ba's rejoicings,
And with unhappy Jacob, lovely Joseph's meetings.

23

O Land of Madina! Thou art nobler, and higher than heaven,
The earth shall now share, the splendour of Heaven,
More than the sun, thy star is refulgent,
More than a rose of Heaven, thy flower is fragrant,
The pavement is that, where angles, their wings spread,
And that's the empyrean, wherefrom the Divine Light is shed.

24

O Last of the Prophets! Felicitations for the coveted gem,

O Light of God! Felicitations for the divine emblem,
O King of Najaf! For the happy birth, congratulation,
O Blessed Lady! This son of yours, is a propitious omen,
May this house be blessed, with an internal light,
May this eternal light be blessed with perennial delight.

25

O August month! Thy lot is great,
Thy grandeur grand, stately state,
All the blessings are but, by the grace of Fatima's darling,
Propitious is the year of his birth, the year of rejoicing,
Much poorer is the gaiety of Eid's morning,
And the nocturnal beauty of Nauroz is nothing.

26

How soul-stirring was that Friday night,
When Mohammad's grandson was born, to all men's delight,
Religion thrived, the glory of Islam became more splendent,
That evening rivalled with, the Night of Ascent
How radiant was the sun, speak O Full Moon-light!
How graceful was the night, speak O Great Night!

27

The milkiness of moon, the refulgence of stars,
Which lent light to vision of men, and removed their scars,
The fairies smiled gaily, the guard of Heaven guffawed,
The angles conversed mirthfully, and each of them felt awed,
Bursting with joy was Michael the Angel,
Brimmed with elation was Gabriel the Angel.

28

Flooded with light was Madina's each corner and nook,
Fragrant was each way, and every borough gave a new look,
Odorous was that night, like a Tatarian deer, full of musk,
Or that, it looked like a heap of fragrant damask,
Never was the earth so majestic, nor was the sky so envy-laden,
Blessed was each hearth and home, with an azure from Heaven.

29

The agony made Fatima restless with pain,
Her face paled, and gushed out tears in train,
As the Lady was the house-comforter,
Her suffering made Ali all the sadder,
Distressed he fell, each moment his heart smirched,
He sauntered to and fro, with Hasan into his lap perched.

30

The King of Yathrib thus prayed God Almighty,
Most Merciful, Most Sanctified art Thou, O Deity!
Zahra is thy maid, and my son a slave,
Soothe her sufferings, in her difficult way ease pave,
She is in fact poor, sorrow-stricken and starving,
To comfort her sad heart, her mother isn't surviving.

31

Then suddenly, the chamber was flooded with light,
Brightened was each object, very like a sprite,
Rushed Asma to Ali, with tiding of joy,
I greet you Sir, O Haider, for a lovely boy,
For the well-being of Fatima's child, make the best of offering,

Verify the moon has descended, not a child so darling.

32

Never have I seen, a fairer face,
He is in the image of the Prophet, and all his grace,
His forehead is lit, with a majestic light,
God has sent moon, in the form of a child all bright,
Is this the personage of the Prophet that we are beholding,
Is it an illusion or the visage of the Prophet that we are beholding?

33

To Ahmad, as soon as the happy news, was communicated,
In gratitude to God, he at once prostrated,
He hastened to the abode of Zahra, jubilantly happy,
And spake [*sic*] to her, "Heartiest greetings for the son, O Mary!
I want to see my darling, the golden beam of my own light,
He is my son, my being's part, and my heart's delight.

34

Thus, entreated Asma, "O God's Messenger!
May I wash the babe, before taking him out of chamber,"
The Prophet laughed, and uttered in haste,
"Fetch the child, for he is pure and chaste,
This moon of mine shall illumine the highest of heaven,
God Himself has sanctified him, so as to enliven."

35

I am unto him, he is unto me, it's an established fact,
He is verily the Light of God; he is sacred and sacrosanct,

The hidden secrets of Nature shall now find a trace,
He is the sign of Faith; he is the Divine grace,
This child shall help me in my task,
And undo for good, the infidels' mask.

36

The Prophet broke the tidings at that moment,
Asma brought the child, on a piece of soft parchment,
The sweet odour of the newly-blossomed flower,
Made the Messenger of God more joyful and happier,
Then the Prophet glanced at the babe's lovely face,
And to his bosom lay his grandson for an embrace.

37

As after retrieving Joseph, Jacob's heart had surged with glee,
The Prophet, like the Qur'an on a stand, put the child on his knee,
Then sucking the infant's lips, the Messenger caressed his palms,
He fondled the babe long, indeed imprinting kisses on his arms,
When the babe's chest was sighted, the Prophet felt his body minced,
A kiss in the throat of the child made Mohammad's heart winced.

38

He did overcome his grief, although a little he wept,
Then made a prayer-call in the right ear, and then in the left,
Thus, speaking to Haider, the Holy Prophet did a question set,
O Saint of Saints! Haven't you sighted my son as yet?
With this fount of light, your house is indeed lustre-packed,
Verify, in the whole world, your son is peerless and unmatched.

39

You being the father, and Fatima the mother, of this merited boon,
Therefore, he is all resplendent, a blend of the sun and the moon,
"O Fountain of Faith! O Lustrous Light!", thus Ali replied,
"May the babe bloom under your grace, may your life abide,
Exalted is your office, and your rank most important,
Like me, your abject slave, this child is your servant.

40

The worldly blessing so do exist, but verily for your lustre,
It's but for your good self that the land retains its verdure,
The lowly dust beneath your feet can ascend to the highest heaven.
My whole worth and value is, because of you, the Sovereign,
For nobleness of lineage, matters neither Zahra, nor Ali rather,
His greatness lies in the fact that you are his grandfather,

41

The Prophet then laughed and a question he posed,
What name for the child have you proposed?
"My Liege!" said Ali, "How could have I thought,
That I should precede you, it fits me not?"
"Postpone it, till a commandment comes", the holy being did say,
"For I, too, can't surpass Him, nor can deviate His way."

42

Then came suddenly Gabriel, the winged archangel,
And to the Holy Prophet he brought the Divine will,
"Dear he is unto Us; Zahra's lovely flower is Our beloved most,

We have named him Husain, O Prophet the Provost!
Most elegant is he, the prince of men of handsomeness,
Hasan is its abbreviation, and its origin is from goodness".

43

The letter H indicates, that he is the saviour of all men,
S is a symbol that for him, propitiousness will never deaden,
Y signifies his greatness, like the verse Yaseen, and its grandeur,
And N reflects the Prophet's light, and all his splendour,
Saved is he who utters his name, with all reverence and humility,
Ten times greater than Hasan he is in comeliness and beauty.

44

We made the two streams of light, first merged,
From them the most splendent gem, such as he surged,
Utmost daring and dashing, unmatched in deference and reverence,
No other babe shall see the light of day, with so much of excellence,
Others certainly know not, what verily do We know,
Unique is the task assigned to him, for none can ever do so.

45

God the Bountiful has endowed him with a wealth unbounded,
Gallant like Ali he is, his bravery shall make all astounded,
In valour and fortitude, he is like the best tempered iron-rod,
From his heart springs, of course, the abiding love for God,
He is highly exalted and honoured, deeply devout and dutiful,

Besides being a guide and mentor, he is being and bountiful.

46

When the Vision had conveyed the gospel of the Providence,
Closer drew Gabriel, for a look of the babe's countenance,
The angel uttered commendatory words, to the Prophet he said,
"Your Majesty! This babe is your replica, from foot to head,
We had bowed down, whenever he gleamed upon our sight,
Even at Empyrean, too, we often saw this light."

47

Lord's favourite he has been, since the dawn of Creation,
Earlier than the mould of Adam, his light existed in Heaven,
God is indeed the Perennial Source, and a Fount of All-Perfection,
For him the two worlds were made, and the Creator had the Creation,
Harrowing are his tales of sufferings, and human hearts they rend,
All weep and will continue to weep over his tragic end.

48

Jubilating and condoling is his birth,
Intertwined with sorrow is all mirth,
The child who is lying into the lap of Your Grace,
The tyrants shall him for no fault, and shall disgrace,
Most certain is the calamity, even if the Doomsday occurs,
He will surely be slaughtered, while prostrating in prayers.

49

Your Majesty! During Muharram shall be done this brutal act,
When your moon is eclipsed, the world shall get darkened in fact,
In the afternoon of tenth, on Friday, no more shall live your dear,
And the assassins shall raise his head on a pointed spear,
His body shall be trampled soon after his head is severed,
Under horses' hooves'll be his chest, and his body revered.

50

With anguish of pain, the Prophet groaned, "Ah! My life may part,
What a sad news you broke unto me; it has rent my heart!
My heart is shaken now, and injured is my feeling,
How sad shall my daughter be, she shall cease her living,
To a bleeding heart, no medication, can, however, assuage,
How to give this news to Zahra, and make her grief salvage."

51

When conveyed was to Fatima, Gabriel's woeful communication,
Joy paled into sorrow, and loomed large lamentation,
Sorrow-stricken and wailing, Mary the Second, cried,
"O Father! O Sire! My heart is fully fried,
Alas! My lovely babe shall be daggered to death,
Ah! My Shabbir shall be staggered to death!"

52

Alas! He will be denied of water for days and days,
How sad! The thirst will make my son ablaze,

For a famished being, the enemies in teeming multitude,
How ill-fated is my darling, Joseph the Second, in verisimilitude,
Unshrouded he shall be buried, in clothes extremely tattered,
His head shall on spear be raised, and body on the ground battered.

53

He has seen the light of day, only to show his fortitude,
He has entered the stage of life, only to exit from the world so rude,
He is born for a tragic death, to inhabitate wild forest,
His life has buddle only to burst, making mother's heart molest,
O Providence! His lovely face shouldn't have I seen,
How good indeed it were, if born he hadn't been.

54

Is there total darkness all around, or have I lost eyesight?
That pain each moment hurts my heart, and there is no respite,
Smeared are with tears of pain, the lapels of my garment,
And from my home has parted for good, blissful joy and merriment,
Aggrieved and wailing since henceward, shall I pass my life all,
Husain the Oppressed, shall be his name, by which this day I call.

55

O King of Kings! Your daughter has had possibly no feeling,
That the maternity-room does give a look of a condolence meeting,

The sixth day of the birth has changed into the mourning day,
My babe's fortune is nipped in the bud, this I am forced to say,
I shall not change my clothes, nor shall I wash father,
In my confinement, like fortieth-day mourning, shall I weep father,

56

Where has Haider gone, why he consoles me naught?
The aching heart of Zahra, with shooting pain is fraught,
No balm for my wound, no cure for pain he has to suggest,
Why has he been mute, condoling words he hasn't for my rest,
Why has he torn away from me, why is he in seclusion?
Ah! I hear lamenting him, over the plight of his son.

57

Then, looking at the babe, she said, in a voice faint,
My heart's joy! My peace of mind! O Martyr! O Saint!
Thou shalt be butchered by the wicked, when I am no more,
In the memoriam, I weep henceward as never have I wept before,
No other task, save lamentation, shall be my life's way,
Never shall I cease weeping, whether it be night or day.

58

Thirsty shalt thou be killed, what a torment! O Husain!
This fair frame into pieces shall be rent, O Husain!
Upon thee, sorrow and suffering shall crowd, O Husain!
Thy corpse shalt know no shroud, O Husain!
Ungraved shalt remain thy body for long,
And it shall also be trampled, what a wrong!

59

To Zahra comforted, thus Mohammad the Apostle,
Subservient is man, to the Divine Will,
The creator has made him so high and eminent,
And none knows it but Gabriel the Transcendent,
The noblest sacrifice for God he is, an altar too for my immolation,
Verily is your darling the path to people's salvation.

60

Should you be but aggrieved, O Soul of the Prophet!
That your son will remain unshrouded, ungraved and unwept,
When Abid the Captive from prison is freed,
Your son will then, indeed, be buried,
The souls of all the Prophets will in fact mourn his death,
And Zainab-like sister, will indeed, mourn his death.

61

When Muharram moon is sighted each year,
In every house will people gather,
From Heaven the angels will descend for mourning,
The chest-beat and lamentation will be never-ending,
Each mourning-house will be all resplendent,
Like a hovering moth the sun will be pendent.

62

How glorious! How august! Is the assembly if the mourners,
Where charged is the atmosphere with adoration of adorers,
The Paradise feels envious of its exhilarating atmosphere,

Doubtlessly, its water taste the ambrosial water,
It's verily the high court of a Saint who is all saintly,
Unto Heaven is pouring the grace of Husain bin Ali.

63

O Prophet Khizr! Give my poetry a new power of eloquence,
O Splendent sun! Brighten my intellect with thy radiance,
O Chagrin and pain! Give my heart-wound a palatable taste,
O Fear of God! Castigate my ills and chasten me chaste,
As a bondsman of my great leader, I should be reckoned eternally,
And be treated, as a free man, by the grace of Husain bin Ali.

64

How exalted is this place, unperceiving are even the pious,
For its sanctifying beauty, the Paradise, too, feels envious,
What a market-place it is, where all the goods ensure salvation,
That Joseph is for sale which buyer buys for what an estimation?
Where else are available such goods, and that, too, free of cost?
Never did the stars witness such a galaxy in the past.

65

How soul-stirring is congregation! How vivifying the assemblage!
The lovers of Haider do exist, if it be a palace or cottage,
To the master of the two worlds, the admirers adore day and night,
The lovers are devotees of the Five, of the Twelve, and are Shiite,
The starry sky feels all eclipsed, so luminous is the congregation,

Clustered with stars is the assembly of mourners, such is fulmination.

66

The Holy Prophet has pronounced: the adorers are his helpers,
And Haider has similarly said that they are his supporters,
So has asserted the blessed soul, that they are his chief mourners,
"I shower my love on them, and they, too, are my lovers,
It they be but aggrieved this day, and their tears are shed,
We shall rescue them in their graves, when they're lying dead."

67

Bewail they [*sic*] for my kith and kin, for tales of harrowing sufferings,
May God bless them longer lives, may prosper their offsprings,
May these lovers, too, flourish forever, and they be always well,
And, on the Day of Judgement, they stay out of Hell,
I weep him, too, when dead is my lovers, and my faithful,
And for his blissful salvation, I beseech the Almighty, the Merciful.

68

Weeping is but natural, an act which is a compulsion,
Weeping is a means for our Doomsday intercession,
The duties one owes to God are very many and several,
Like prayer, it's of infinite good, a good which is all eternal,
So weep, O mourner! Weep, for time and tide are fleeting,

Nothing shall do you good, when the pulse has lost its beating.

69

Should death grant you intermission in fact,
Weep on, weep on, it's a noble act,
And tears are nothing short of prayer,
Treat pains of assembly as a source of pleasure,
As Husain has suffered the worst of thirst and starvation,
It's but for you that the liege has faced the worst of privation.

70

This abode, called world, is all strange, where comfort is all denied,
It is indeed like flower whose fragrance is all belied
Or, it is like that selfish friend, devoid of all friendliness,
Or, like that honey which looks honey, but lacks its real sweetness,
No poor man has passed his evening but with the pain of suffering,
Things never remain as they are, and life is ever-changing.

71

Now is one into mother's lap, now in the bed of grave,
Shrouded into sheet are often sighted, the healthy and the brave,
One gets all mute at a time; he is then a chatter-box,
On pyre is a throne-sitter; and he is but a corpse,
A child is the father of man, and change is the law of Nature,
The strutter and drum-beater is often taken on a stretcher.

72

Whether it be joy or sorrow, comfort or discomfort,
Life taste like a cup of hemlock, or a dish of dessert,
At time, life tends to be tragic; at time, it's but comical,
As a blend of the two streams, it's however a sum total,
Isn't there an orchard, unvisited by an autumn,
Which flower remains unfaded, that has had its blossom?

73

Queer is the ebb and flow, of this mortal world,
Heard melodies are often sweet, sweeter are unheard,
He was surely Fatima's darling who had chaste upbringing,
How tragic was his end of life which had a grand beginning,
Till tenth of Muharram, comfortless he was, facing all tribulation,
From seventh to tenth, the oppressed suffered the agony of starvation.

74

To the vile dust, his dear ones were all reduced,
And the Sovereign appeared lifeless and defused,
Gone with the sons of Muslim, and also the sons of his sisters,
Neither Qasim was alive, nor were Abbas, Akbar and Asghar,
All were lost in the way of God, reaching the Prophet's embrace,
For farewell to his house-folks, the Sovereign all alone did pace.

75

He wished to see once more his sister,

Drove him to the love of Sakina, his darling daughter,
To Sajjad, his son, he had to transmit the Imamate's knowledge,
And to his wife, Bano, he had to pay last homage,
The tattered clothes he wore because he has the forebodings,
Lest he be stripped of raiments, his body subjected to goadings.

76

Hard indeed, very hard, was his arrival in the tent,
Painful it was to embrace each one, and he felt his heart rent,
Not easy was the entry to the tent, but more difficult was the exist,
His stay was for a short span, but he was indeed sorrow-knit,
The sister wept bitterly, the brother talked of fortitude,
Heart-rending was the exchange of words, but common was rectitude.

77

The Blessed Soul thus said, "Endure, Sister! Endure,
Our mother suffered for the good of men, it's the only cure,
She replied "I can't help shedding tears on this cruel suffering,
Since you are to be slaughtered, brother! How can I keep living?
No strength have I so to watch, my mother's house to be looted,
Alas! I can't see you butchered, and this house uprooted."

78

My whole life has been sorrow-assailed,

When mother died, I wailed and wailed,
Hardly had my pain subsided, when my father's blood was shed,
But when brother Hasan was poisoned, my heart became all red,
Except you, 'My Liege! My brother! None else is my protector,
I am after all a human being, joy and sorrow do matter.

79

Each living soul has but to depart,
On the stage of life, no actor can play longer than his part,
These very eyes have seen the dear ones dying,
But your death, O brother, is most mortifying,
Never did I behold a battle, so thick and so grim,
Never was a house devastated to such a complete brim.

80

Alas! Where and how should I hide you brother?
Of the four revered souls, despoiled is the treasure,
To what a wilderness, has my fate taken me,
O Death! Draw near, come close to the daughter of Ali,
The son of Zahra weeps for me over our separation,
I have lamented for others, but he bewails my desperation.

81

The wailings of Zainab, the agonies of Sakina, were heart-rending,
In her tiny bosom, the heart throbbed with pain and suffering,
Very like the moon her face glittered, her ear-rings sparkled gentle,

The Sire gazed with a forlorn look at his daughter's mantle,
His grief betokened, the monarch was helpless,
His sad looks reflected that the father was helpless.

82

With tears she painfully grounded, "Embrace me, O father!"
Replied the King piteously, "Come, O Soul of your father!
Weep not, O darling, for your tears make worse our despair,
We wish to smell the rich and sweet odour of your hair,
Your uncle is at Kausar, but for you, he is restive,
We are to see him shortly, have you any message to give?"

83

Tell me, O darling, at the moment, how is your mother?
Whither is she sitting, wailing in which corner?
To Heaven, ever since Akbar has been,
Many times have we come, but she isn't seen,
Did she love us all, so long Akbar has been living?
Doesn't she like to turn up, even for the last meeting?

84

When Bano, the forlorn lady, heard him say,
She felt assured that the King was on his way,
Leaving the infant's cradle, bare-headed she ran,
"O King!" she cried, "Faintness made my sense san,
My Liege! Death hovers round me, and soon I am to fade,
My Lord! For the farewell has come now your maid.

85

There words having heard, a few steps advanced the august King,
Striding her paces, the lady knelt, with her hair but dangling,
Broken-hearted and grief-stricken, was the Saintly Saint,
Tears streamed from his eyes, making handkerchief all taint,
In a choked voice, he said, "The shock of separation is greater,
Rise! O Great Lady! Rise! We asseverate you of Akber."

86

My Lord! My Crown! She said, how to get away and rise,
In there very feet, my Master! My real authority lies,
God forbid, were not the son of the Prophet living,
I should be but a non-entity, I should be reduced to nothing,
If gone away from the sacrosanct feet, much lower shall I be,
Woe fall unto me, if you are lost, how sadder shall I be.

87

To this house I came, when ransacked was my castle,
Afresh is my memory of the first captivity, which made me throttle,
Then Ali the Saviour helped me, the Persian,
And by your grace, from a slave, I rose to a free woman,
As the daughter-in-law of Ali and Fatima, I was thus elevated,
To the progeny of the Holy Prophet, my good luck then me related.

88

For a span of twenty-six year, I have been your consort,
But now, O Sovereign, separation appears to be my lot,
Like pillows were my arms so as comfort to you provide,

With shackles, alas, the same arms are to be tied,
With uncovered head, shall I be abashed to death, my Liege,
Where to hide in the wild, I feel out of breath, my Liege.

89

The Blessed Soul said, "None in this mortal world has long lingered,
Strange indeed, but the lover and beloved have always felt smothered,
God Himself has defined this world, as a test-centre, full of woes,
Each human eye has wept in grief; each mortal man has tasted throes,
Separation caused a cleavage, the Lieutenant of God was put asunder,
It was only for eight years that Zahra and Ali could live together."

90

Those who lived for scores of years, loving utmost each other,
Death tore away in a flick of moment, drawing them all asunder,
O Faithful Lady! Death is a must, and except God, eternal is who?
To heaven probably suits not, the union of the two,
None feels secure, not even unhurt, by the sting of Time,
The good ones are never treated better than slime.

91

Incumbent it is upon a being, to pray God for His grace,
He is the Provider of the widows, with needed solace,

You'll follow the same path, which we are going to tread,
Overcome the shock of cruel parting, cast aside dread,
The Protector'll release your arms of the universe who is the Lord,
You have Sajjad-like son, he is sure to be your guard.

92

How aggrieved is Zainab! Look at her pitiable plight,
None in this house is so miserable, she is without ray of light,
Massacred are both of her sons, her life-long treasure,
A jolting blow to her has been the death of youthful Akbar,
Gone is the lad she looked after, her own sons, no more exist,
Who is going to care for her, if days of her life persist!

93

Then, into the ear of his son, the Leader whispered something,
No sooner did the son give his ear, than he started weeping,
And to Bano, the whole world appeared dismal and dreary,
In utter grief, fainted Zainab; life to her tended all wearey,
As difficult was the stay, the King came out,
Alone he entered weepingly, alone he came out.

94

He turned towards the Ka'ba, a few paces he had retreated,
To the right shoulder he tilted his neck, and felt a bit excited,
Then placing his turban on shivering hands, he said with a quiver,
"O God! O Creator! O Sustainer! O Nourisher!
O Almighty! After Thee, Thy Prophet is but great,

Pity his progeny, O Protector! They are in abject state.

95

"O God! Of the Prophet's house Thou art the only Care-taker,
O Power of Powers! Of these widows, Thou art the only Protector,
O Life-Giver! Of my ailing son, Thou art the only Curer,
O Custodian! Of all my gems, Thou art the only Preserver,
Thou knowest that in an alien land, I am beset by misery,
Thy grace I have always sought for, I leave them unto thee.

96

"Not mine but Thine are these slaves, O Most Merciful Creator!
Whether it is heath or home, Thou art the Saviour and Sustainer,
The faithless are bent upon, pouring tyranny and curse,
The world is shorn of love, and time has changed for worse,
O Lord! The esteem which I command, owes but to Thee,
This house has two daughters and two daughters-in-law of Ali.

97

"I say not that they remain unmolested,
And the tyrants leave my tents unignited,
My females be looted, caged, and taken to Syria as prisoners,
And they be not allowed to cry, even as mourners,
My Abid be shackled, fettered and necked with an iron-collar,
Provided it helps Thy Prophet's people to prosper."

98

Having said so, he undid the opening of his garment,
And afterwards, he dusted his sacred raiment,
Shabbir transformed into a corpse, his covering into shroud,
With aching heart, he read exordium aloud,
When he turned his face, no lover was there indeed,
Having come nigh, he saw weeping his own steed.

99

In loneliness, the Blessed Being, called all his men one after one,
But none of them responded, as to Heaven they had run,
All alone mounted up the horse, the darling of Ali,
Higher ascended the crest of Imamate, shining more brilliantly,
With pride sped the galloping charger, but pacing off the ground,
'The Pole Star to Heaven shot up', was the clamour all round.

100

Graceful was the gallop of the charger, gaining full speed,
At each step, as a spirited peacock, had indeed danced the steed,
The ornaments embellished him, the accessories and the bridle,
He flew into air at the slightest spur, with stirrups of the saddle,
To the sky the charger had flown, like the speed of a rocket,
There was an outcry, 'reappeared had the steed of the Prophet.'

101

Stricken with awe, the words of praise, the enemy soldiers poured,
War-poem recited the gallant warrior, holding a naked sword,

He said to them, "O Misguided Miscreants! Shed not blood of mine,
I am verily the image of Joseph, the Prophet of Palestine,
Egotism it is verily not, by God, a fact no mean,
In the delightful panorama of Nature, Husain is a charming scene.

102

"By God, in the entire universe, no man is of my nobleness,
Though poor I am at present, unrivalled in large-heartedness,
Yes, none except me, on the Dooms Day, is to be the Intercessor,
Many men exist, but who else is the Holy Prophet's successor,
If there be such a claimant, he is indeed insane,
This world is nothing but sordid, and pride brings no gain.

103

"I am the person whom God has blessed with the gift of Kausar,
I am the celestial being of Paradise, I am the leader,
God graced me with Ali's fortune, the Holy Prophet's civility,
Power and pelf are my possession, and every other authority,
I am all light, Mount Toor is my dwelling place,
My prayer-sheet is the throne of Solomon, the prophet of good race.

104

"My grand-father is he whose feet are Heaven's coronet,
Most approximate to the Master, most ascendant, the last Prophet,

On my mother's approbation, the intercession is sure to last,
Breaker of idols my father was, indeed a great iconoclast,
Hadn't Haider fought well in the way of God,
The idols would have never been out of the House of God.

105

"With the best of his bravery, he did fight each battle,
Each uphill task he accomplished with utmost of his skill,
He dealt a crushing blow to the foe, each rival he smashed,
In dreadful, drab and dismal night, the torch of light he flashed,
Was there any such who professed faith, but for the fear of his sword,
The hapless one who lagged behind, he cut his head like a ground.

106

"Fewer were not the idols, reprobates were all around,
Who had the power to kick Azza out, who shattered it to ground,
The infidels folded their hands, and knelt down the ignominious,
But spared them not unbroken, Haider the Magnanimous,
By the grace of God Almighty, he cleared the House of God,
And after making a prayer-call, came out the Lion of God.

107

"I am the owner of that sword, I am presently its real possessor,
I am the son of Haider, the world's greatest warrior,

I am the descendant of the Prophet, the leader of mankind,
I am the heir to the Holy Being, for whom the world was designed,
Dead are all great and mighty, gone are they with shrouds alone,
I am the regent of all of them, and their relics I own.

108

"This tiara on my head, belongs to the Messenger the Grand,
This is the sword of Ali, this is Hasan's waistband,
This is the garment of David, a rare protective weapon,
This is the garment of Joseph, the unhappy Jacob's son,
The testimony of the Holy Prophet, should you wish, I reveal,
This is the ring of the last Prophet, this is Solomon's seal.

109

"Look at this sword, it belongs to which great and gallant warrior,
Fearless is its possessor, it is the sword of which valiant attacker,
Poorer is the flow of a river than the sharpness of the sword,
It's indeed a flash of lightning and also a sword,
It's not merely a sword-bite but the Divine rage,
It is not a river bank, but it's called death-cage.

110

"That is may halt for a while, so swift isn't its action,
Much lighter it's in movement, not heavy in its motion,

It's the sign of sure success, the victory of the victor,
You'll get all burnt as fire it is, and hasn't a drop of water,
No accursed creature shall be left, each one lacking uprightness,
Here is Death defying with rage and has no shred of blindness.

111

"Others are just little drops, we are but the ocean of grace,
We are the knowers of the Book, none is so in any case,
We are the echo of Goodness and Truth, of Justice and Fair-play,
Better than other beings verily we are, and prudence is our way,
The angles kept repeating out names, it is a fact so simple,
And Gabriel-like teacher has been, surely our disciple.

112

"Hadn't God wished, the Prophet's gracious manifestation,
No canopy over earth had been in the scheme of Creation,
And the earthy earth should have been but sheer dust,
Hadn't we chastened, this world would have been all but lust,
Of prayer-call each morn and evening, when was heard such a sound,
During our stay in Heaven did the world with Islam ever resound?

113

"Ill-treating a well-wisher, strange is your gesture for obligation,

Friend of the foe you are, but for your friend have no affection,
Obstruct not hence my way, and don't believe the misguided rake,
Let the poor wayfarer leave this land for the Heaven sake,
Affliction-free shall I be, distress will also disengage,
I shall be saved of torture of death, and you of Divine rage.

114

"I promise you, I sojourn not, in any habitation,
Nor do I intend to make Yathrib, as my destination,
Fortitudinous as I am, never shall I complain,
And utter not a word, for this suffering and pain,
Weeping shall I cease not, as relatives I have lost,
I shall tell my questioner that to the worst loot I was cast."

115

The enemies mirthfully replied: "Divine wrath deters us not,
We are indeed infernal creatures, fear of Hell dithers us not,
Even the grief of the Holy Prophet comes not too our way,
Worthless are to us the sighs of the Lady of the Day,
We are only the lovers of wealth, we are the men of passion,
We have nothing to do with God, we are the slaves of Mammon."

116

"No matter," said the Leader, "Beware of your rank and row,
The fury of God is sure to befall; beware of your rank and row,
Like lightning shall I pass each time, through your rank and row,

When are the lovers of Five intercepted by the fewer rank and row?
My sufferings you have seen enough, now encounter me fight,
If you are but the slaves of money, then face me smite."

117

No sooner was the celestial sword from the scabbard unleashed,
Arrows, stricken with terror, from their bows were released,
How defiantly did Death dance, how gruesome was its temper,
The infidels left the bank at once, away ran from the river,
With a promise of triumph, the Phoenix of Victory, dashed outside,
And for a hunt, the Falcon of Death, loomed large each side.

118

It was like a new moon, appearing form the cloud's frame,
Or a candle, in the gush of wind, burning into twined flame,
And, like a flash of lightning, the steed galloped all round,
The sword-glitter vied the radiance of sun on the battle-ground,
The enemy soldiers shielded their heads, helter-skelter they sped,
Gabriel raised his wings much higher, feeling more agitated.

119

Upward the sword dashed suddenly, then downward distress it set,

Upon the legion of oppressors, destruction was instantly beset,
In the course of its movement, as the two-edged sword made its run,
Obliterated was the horde, of the faithless and the pagan,
Smashed, nay effaced were they, by each and every blow of God,
Like the shattered idols they were, broken by the Lion of God.

120

Like a lightning-flash upon the infidels, the sword had grounded,
"It shall be a total massacre," the tingle of the sword it sounded,
It seated into a shield sometimes, in a sword it penetrated,
It pierced into arrow's head, and a needle's eye it perforated,
The wrong-doers quaked, upon them gates of mercy were barred,
With shame in fact bowed bow-strings, feeling as if marred.

121

Up above the sword glistened, sometimes on the head and bracelet,
Striking its target with great fume, it came upon the armlet,
A heart it cut into two halves, and then smote the chest,
A jolting blow it gave to the waist, and side it did arrest,
It continued actioning, till it had its feed,
And the limbs which were left uncut were crushed by the steed.

122

Footless it was, but here and there, speedily had it moved,
Gory was the sight all round, and blood from each wound oozed,
In a queer way it changed its colours, each and every moment,
Precious rubies it did spit out, such was its blood's ferment
Its body was pure diamond, its colour was greenish emerald,
Not with a single gem but gems, its whole belly was stuffed

123

During the course of battle, fairy-like looked its face,
The red robe the sword had worn, lent it but the bridal grace,
Even at its height of glory, its head was humbly bent,
It grace, it was bride-like, attired in floral ornament,
Its blade tasted like Heavenly apple, so did its pointed barb,
By the side of Shabbir-like warrior, it lay hung un its grab.

124

The swift-paced wave of a river is poorer than its flow,
And the powerful current of the deep sea is indeed more slow,
Of no worth is the throb of lightning in scattering flame,
And blunter is the tongue of dagger, if it has a claim,
Worse was in fact its burning flame, infernal fire far better,
It was certainly a lance, a piquet, a razor, and a dagger.

125

Its presence was in every gang, and yet from all asunder,
In purpose and prowess unique was it, heroic in task and temper,

The curve of blade combined fire, air, and also water,
It was poison, deadly death, and vivifying like nectar,
How merited was indeed the sword, good-natured it was verily,
And whatever the occasion was, it proved its worth surely.

126

The flowers of each and every twin, its blade ever cropped,
And ever since eternity, the heads of rebels it chopped,
Its grim face was all appalling, even Death was but in terror,
Its resting-place was rather the innermost of the armour,
It entered through a passage sometime and peeped from another,
It was at times seated in heart, and then it went farther.

127

From the side of the arrows, it fell upon the lancers,
And passing through the spears, it pounced upon the archers,
Then hitting hard the cavalry, it struck upon the riders,
To the swords it had turned, from the front of the shielders,
The glory of the infidels had thus faded instantly,
Hundred thousand they were in count, but it scanned them fully.

128

As the sword touched the shield, no wrist was there to linger,
And was left not uncut, the unbroken junction of the finger,
Nor did it unabate its fight, playfulness and wantonness,

The limbs of all of them were but quickly amputated,
Albeit the infidels jabbered, and apt sentences they ejaculated.

129

The armoured heathens had no strength to fight,
Torn were their chests into four, and livers into left and right,
So out of fear, they shouted and said, "Courage we are shorn,
And if we get out lives spared, second time we are born,
About the armlet we had heard that it was life-saver,
We never thought that a trap it was, and for us a death-paver."

130

Erased was the mode of battle from the infidels' memory,
And the archers had forgotten their art of archery,
The faithless were oblivious of all the artifice,
The loss of sense deprived them of the power of device,
A nagging feeling surged them all, their bones had no marrow,
Desperately they screamed, the bow was without arrow.

131

Droopingly, and overcome with fear, knelt down the spear heads,
Crouchingly, and with shame, the bows hung down their heads,
Falteringly, in the field, the bearers did their standards bend,

Kneelingly, on the ground, the banners tried them to defend,
"Peace! Peace! O Lord of Universe!" was but the outcry,
Grant us amnesty now, we have no longer strength to defy."

132

The Sovereign replied, "Never will ebb the flooded river,
Respite is hard indeed, and never will cease the wave of terror,
Nor will stop the son of Fatima without being victorious,
Until Pharaoh is vanquished, it won't satisfy Moses,
That is the fury of God, that's Nature's rage,
Its tide will but continue, till closed is evening's page."

133

From this row, in between that brigade, he swiftly passed,
He crushed that unit of the troops, which had then advanced,
Slashing the double-edged sword, through crowds he sauntered,
As if Ali came out of Khyber, after the fort he had captured,
For the Blessed Soul of the Prophet, the world survived destruction,
Hadn't Shabbir relented his rage, inevitable were world's perdition.

134

He fought and fought, but more than rage, was his grace.
No less was his love for men, but bravery was in its own place,
Very like his own grandfather, the good of mankind he did crave,

He never loved his son better than had loved his own slave,
Never did he wield the sword when one was found undefying,
And shed tears in utter grief when a soul he noticed dying.

135

Having driven the enemy out from the riverside, he did say,
"Why have you fled from the river, come, and block our way?
Is an invited guest treated in such a cruel manner?
Should it please us, we can drink even the river's water,
But alas! Fortitude has quenched our thirst for ever,
This water is now venom for us, since Abbas lives no longer.

136

"Yet fresh in our mind is, the oppressive thirst of Akbar,
His bright face, his bursting youth, his stately stature,
How parched were his lips, how marvellous was his eloquence,
'Water,' water, said he dying, with dried lips he made utterance,
Whom to tell what we have suffered, for there isn't anyone,
Has ever a father lived, after the death of such a son?"

137

Having uttered these words, he called Sakina's water-carrier,
"O brother! Your love once more has brought us nearer,
River-bank we have captured in the raging fight,
But brutal thirst, O Abbas, has effected sense and sight,

Put your parched lips upon these lips dried,
If left is a little water, let your brother be supplied.

138

"Why lying on the sand with hidden face, O Brother! *Now* cheer!
Rise! To Sakina, we haven't brought here,
Fast asleep you are, it's hard for the brother to awaken,
O Son of God's Lion! It's afternoon, by Heaven,
It shall please us if you advance with the raised banner,
Aren't you going to pray with brother in the usual manner?"

139

Having thus said, the brother wept for his brother,
And when the tyrants felt sword-wounds no longer,
The multitude swarmed to battlefield, retreating their ways.
The Syrian army fell upon him, who had been thirsting for days,
Shower of arrows pierced the Saint, whose father was Saintly,
Assaulted was Husain bin Ali by the tyrants' most cruelty.

140

Mopping the tears, the Sovereign cast, a glance at his chest,
Three-pointed arrows had pierced him from waist to chest,
With spears from each side, the devils assaulted the Imam,
Wounded was each limb of his body; wrist, shoulder, and arm,
Pitted against his was the world, worst were the circumstances,
Stained with his very blood were the blades of all the lances.

141

Clung to the saddle, earth blow made him weaker and weaker,
Turning his own face to his master, dolefully looked the charger,
To him said brokenhearted Shabbir, to him again he caressed,
"O Faithful horse! Now the battle has almost ended,
It's now the parting time, shortly we are going to alight,
Our hand has ceased functioning, thou too hast lost thy might.

142

"Mortally wounded thou art now, thy pain we can bear no longer,
Powerless to support we are, at any moment we can falter,
Praiseworthy art thou indeed, as thou hast served us well,
Destination we have reached, here Ali's darling shall ever dwell,
The house where thou hast lived shall instantly be looted,
Ever since the childhood days, we are going to be dissociated.

143

"The enemies have besieged us; we cannot go to the camp,
Strained out of vigour we are, and thus we feel all damp,
It's hard now to maintain ourselves, and we can't make thee run,
Thy sides are badly wounded so we can't spur thee anon,
The animal in fact feels the hurt and certainly its rigours,
Aggrieved and afflicted we are too; we feel the pains of others,

144

"How to show to thee, how wounded art thou from hoof to mane,
Never, never have we touched thee even with a single soft cane,
As the steed listened these words, his heart indeed mellowed,
And from the eyes of the charger two big steams of tears flowed,
The animal wept, and deeply touched was the charger,
He turned his face and placed it upon the foot of his master.

145

Shaking his head, he said to his nourisher, "My Liege! Don't alight,
An ounce of strength, I yet have my master, My Liege! Don't alight,
All around, the assassins are with swords, My Liege! Don't alight,
The enemies are advancing in large hordes, My Liege! Don't alight,
Woe to tyranny! The seater of canopy be reduced to dust and mire,
I wish not to be unsaddled by the time I expire."

146

The Sovereign spoke, "How long can one love a passenger?
Thou art a true replica of a faithful charger,
Tell us, what is the way of maintaining hold?
When the heart, hands, and feet are uncontrolled,
It's better to alight, than reelingly fall,

The wounds shall ope, if we unconsciously fall.

147

"It's almost afternoon, and dismounting is a must,
We have to bow to God the Almighty on this very dust,
Though the course of death, certainly most torturous,
Yet martyrdom, and that too in prayer, is most auspicious,
Severance of head from body, for God's glory greater,
Righteous are we, and martyrdom is a legacy, from our pater."

148

Having said so, the master of the worlds alighted for ever,
Unfixed was the precious stone from a ring, the saddle lost its cover,
To share sorrow, no friend was there, no supporter of the lord,
Abetting his sword, came down the Sovereign, it was really hard,
Smeared with blood were the raiments of the Being of Light,
He lay a hand on the neck of horse with the remaining might.

149

He placed his lips, on the horse's mane, giving such a vent,
"O Charger of the Holy Prophet! Ye go to the door of the tent,
The tyrants shall slay us, within no time for nothing,
Tell Zainab to be careful of Sakina who is our most darling,
And stay there, so long as we aren't beheaded,
Take Bano wither the Almighty wishes, her way to be threaded."

150

The son of the Lion of God moved, after having there words said,
Bin Ash'as shot a cruel arrow on his sacred forehead,
The shrieks of Zahra shook the entire universe,
The three-pointed arrow, breaking his head, did pierce,
Of the leader of two worlds, fortitude was the only weapon,
The arrow kissed indeed the impression of submission.

151

The Blessed Soul had not yet drawn the arrow from his forehead,
The misguided Bin Malik hit hard with a sword upon his head,
Breaking the head unto the eyebrow, the cruel sword made its way,
Shabbir was razed to the ground, losing alas his sway,
Gushing was the blood of the Sire, the angels cried in agitation,
Each said that in the mosque of Kufa, Ali had the same condition.

152

Sitting towards the Ka'ba was the helpless Sovereign,
He raised his head upside down, into a coma he had fallen,
But he was worshipping God that an arrow his mouth pierced,
And like a ruby appeared his lips after being blood-smeared,
Like a fount, the blood flowed and down the chin it came,
Uprooted were two gem-like teeth, and jolted was his frame.

153

With a lance attacked his thigh, Bin-e-Wahab the Lancer,
And with a sword Zararah too had assaulted his shoulder,
The arrow of Bin-e-Kahil had his heart perforated,
And the axe of murderous Khooli had his arm amputated,
The blow of the sword, he could have expanded,
That the spear of Ibne Inus, his breath was suspended.

154

With a shudder, the Sovereign knelt, prostrating to God's glory,
The heathen army beat the drums for the joy of the victory,
Bursting with joy, the son of Sa'd made a clarion call,
"O Khooli! O Shees! O Shimr! Great warriors your are all,
Overcome him, for death-stricken is the Leader Impeccable,
Behead Husain bin Ali now, all of you who are capable."

155

So has a narrator said, it was like the Day of Resurrection,
Twelve tyrants advanced, with drawn daggers in extreme jubilation,
A lady then appeared from the door of a tent,
Unveiled and uncloaked, she did lament,
The accursed creatures shouted, with lands their eyes covering,
For safeguarding her son, Lady Fatima was coming.

156

Shrill were her shrieks, piteous was her chest-beating,
And glistened so her earrings, as if a flash of lightning,
With cries she said to Fizza who covered her with a wrapper,

"I am a complainant, and the complainant needs no cover,
Unveiled shall I visit the Prophet's grave in this very manner,
With Husain has gone my veil for ever, for ever.

157

Thus before the mass of men, the revered lady did call,
"O Grandson of the Holy Prophet! O Lover of God of all!
Riderless is the horse now, whither has been your exit?
O Brother! Your sister has come for a visit,
Most certainly shall I die if I see you not,
Never to homeward shall I ply if I see you not.

158

That time the Sovereign heard the moaning of his sister,
When placed upon his sacred throat was the assassin's dagger,
With a gesture he said, "O Shimr! O Murderer! O Butcher!
Stay for a moment, as Zainab has come out, O Slayer!
After all, we are passing from this mortal world,
Let the brother speak and the sister be heard."

159

The assassin, Shimr, turned his face, and dagger he withdrew,
The Sovereign called out Zainab, shedding tears of rue,
"By appearing in this sea of tumult, you have pained your brother,
We are in the jaws of death, whom do you wish to see, my sister?

We cannot rise now, as swords have our body slain,
Fidget not by our side; mother is standing in pain."

160

Having heard these words, the sister did race,
She cried, "O Brother! May I once cast a look at your face,"
But, alas! The hapless sister couldn't reach her bother,
And severed was the head of Syed by a tyrant's dagger,
Neither the assassin, nor the sword, nor the neck was beheld,
When she reached, seen was Shabbir's head on a spear held.

161

Beholding her brother's severed head, the sister cried in agitation,
"Were I dead but for you brother! O Victim of the worst aggression!
You are done to death, O Brother! You are silenced for ever,
Who will look after us now, O Badly-butchered Brother!
The progeny of the Messenger of God are surrounded by ill fate,
The daughters of Ali and Fatima are shelterless now at any rate.

162

"How sorrowful! O Grandson of the Prophet of Ascent! O Husain!
How doleful! O Supporter of widows! Most decent, O Husain!
How sad! As if Ali was killed this day, O Husain!

How bad! Your corpse is unshrouded in a miserable way,
O Husain!
Your death is uncondoled, no mourning man is seen,
And lying is the body on the ground, ah! How the brutes demean.

163

"Where I but for you butchered, my Sovereign! My Syed!
O Dagger-cut! O Sword-slaughtered! My Sovereign! My Syed!
O Starved! O Helpless and hapless! My Sovereign! My Syed!
Your head is with murderer, all merciless, My Sovereign! My Syed!
You summon not your sister, and make even no utterance,
But keep on staring with what a gloomy despondence.

164

How spineless I am! You know very well, my brother,
Neither Ahmad, nor Ali, nor Zahra, nor Hasan lives any longer,
You were the source of my strength, but, alas, you are slain,
Gone for good you're O Brother! leaving me in the darkling plain,
Nothing, nothing, you could speak, O Brother! at the time of parting,
To Najaf at least you could take sister when you were departing.

165

O Mother's son! O Martyr! O Brother! My Dear!
How to get for you a grave, no pall-bearer is here,

O Brother! How to comfort my heart, and how to condole my feeling,
Extremely thirsty you are slain when in prayer kneeling,
Never has a mortal man been so badly maltreated,
Slaughtered is not even an animal unless its thirst is satiated.

166

Speak not a word Anis, for the heart feels unsated,
The heart-rending cries of Zainab can no more be stated,
Now pray God the Almighty, the Giver of all grace,
To ward me off the jealous, and bring my heart solace,
Enemical they are to this ignoramus creature for nothing,
By the sword of tongue they are cut into fissure for nothing.

NOTES

L. 18. The Prophet's kinsmen = the *Ahl al-Bayt*. According to Jafri, the term *Ahl al-Bayt* refers to "the immediate family of [the Prophet] Muhammad. In verse XXXIII: 33 [of the Holy Qur'an], we hear: 'And God only wishes to remove from you [all kinds of] uncleanliness, O members of the family [of Muhammad] and thoroughly purify you.' All the commentators of the Qur'an are unanimous in the opinion that the term *Ahl al-Bayt* in this verse refers to Muhammad's daughter Fātima, his cousin and son-in-law 'Alī, and his two beloved grandsons, Hasan and Husayn" (*The Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam* [London: Longman; Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1979; repr. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000], p. 16). However, the term *Ahl al-Bayt* in the context of the 'Āshūrā tragedy refers, by extension, to (and includes) the Hashimids and 'Alids who accompanied Imam al-Ḥusayn from Medina to Mecca and thence to Karbala.

L. 32. Khyber = It was a castle of the Jews of Medina which was captured by Muslims.

L. 59. Badakhshan and Aden = Badakhshan is a city in Afghanistan, famous for its jewels; Aden, or Eden, is a city in Yemen, famous for its jewels, too.

L. 73. The King of kings = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 74. Hassan and Farzdaq = 1) Hassān ibn Thābit was a poet who eulogized the Prophet Muhammad to the extent that he is known as the Prophet's poet. 2) Contemporary with Imam al-Ḥusayn, and Imam 'Alī al-Sajjād to the eighth Infallible Imam 'Alī al-Ridā, Hammām ibn Ghālib (better known as al-Farazdaq) was a poet who used to compose poems in praise of the Infallible Imams and in particular on the Karbala tragedy.

L. 80. O Holy Being = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 98. Shabbir = Shabbir = A Hebrew equal of Imam al-Ḥusayn's name. The transliterated rendering shows an incorrect pronunciation; the correct pronunciation is Shubayr, not Shabbir.

L. 103. The third Sha'ban = The third of Sha'ban is the birthday of Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 104. Tenth Muharram = 'Āshūrā, the day on which the Battle of Karbala took place.

L. 108. Kausar = Arabic al-Kawthar (with the "th" pronounced as a voiceless interdental fricative as in the English word "thin"). It is the name of a Paradise river, also the title of the 108th *Sūra* in the Qur'an. The title al-Kawthar means "abundant grace;" it is used as an appellative of the Prophet Muhammad's daughter Fāṭima al-Zahrā, too. A paradise river from which the believers shall drink.

L. 117. The Lady of Universe = Ḥadrat Fāṭima al-Zahrā, daughter of the Prophet Muhammad.

L. 120. Nine luminaries = The nine infallible Imams who were descendant of Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 121. Ka'ba of Faith = The House of God in Mecca.

L. 122. Rukn-e-Yamani = A corner of the Kaaba, facing toward Yemen.

L. 123. Jerusalem = The first qibla for Muslims toward where they used to perform their ritual prayers.

L. 124. Fountain of Zamzam = Near the Kaaba, Zamzam is a fountain which sprang at Ishmaels's hitting the ground.

L. 125. Sacred Stone = The sacred Black Stone of the Kaaba.

L. 126. Mount of Safa = A mount in Mecca, near the Great Mosque.

L. 127. Yathrib = Medina; Batha = Bat'ḥā' = Mecca.

L. 133. Madina = Medina.

L. 139. Last of the Prophets = The Prophet Muhammad.

L. 140. Light of God = The Prophet Muhammad.

L. 141. King of Najaf = Imam 'Alī.

L. 142. Blessed Lady = Ḥaḍrat Fāṭima al-Zahrā, the Prophet Muhammad's daughter and the wife of Imam 'Alī, and mother of Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 149. Eid = Also spelled as *id*, it refers to a Muslim feast-day.

L. 150. Nauroz = Now-Rouz, the first day of spring, usually celebrated by Iranians and Persian-speaking peoples as the beginning of the new year.

L. 151. Friday night = Imam al-Ḥusayn's birthday. It must be Thursday night, not Friday night.

L. 152. Mohammad = As for its variant spelling, viz. Muhammad, this is the academically-acclaimed spelling of the name, "principally used by scholars." (See T. McArthur, ed., *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992], s.v. "Arabic," p. 79.) For a short discussion on the variant spellings of the name Muhammad in English texts, see M. G. Carter, "Arabic Literature," in D. C. Greetham, ed., *Scholarly Editing: A Guide to Research* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1995), p. 564.

L. 154. The Night of Ascent = The night when the Prophet Muhmmad ascended to God's empyrean.

L. 175. The King of Yathrib = The Prophet Muhammad.

L. 183. Asma = Full name Asmā' bint 'Umays, a housemaid of Imam 'Alī and Fāṭima.

L. 193. Ahmad = Ahmad is another designation or name of the Prophet Muhammad, mentioned only once in the Holy Qur'an (61: 6).

L. 224. Azan, Arabic *adhān*, is a call for prayer, vociferated by a muezzin from the minaret of a mosque, or nowadays, broadcast by radio or TV. It is an Islamic practice to utter azan in the ears of a newborn infant.

L. 226. Saint of Saints = Imam 'Alī.

L. 231. Fountain of Faith; Lustrous Light = The Prophet Muhammad.

L. 238. The Sovereign = The Prophet Muhammad.

L. 243. My Liege = The Prophet Muhammad.

L. 249. Us = God; Zahra's lovely flower = Imam al- Husayn.

Ll. 253-256. The letters HSYN stand for the consonant sounds of the name al-Ḥusayn.

L. 274. Your Majesty = The Prophet Muhammad.

L. 285. Your Grace = The Prophet Muhammad.

L. 289. Your Majesty = The Prophet Muhammad.

L. 303. Mary the Second = Ḥaḍrat Fāṭima al-Zahrā.

L. 306. Shabbir = Imam al-Ḥusayn. See note to L. 98 (above).

L. 309. My son = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 310. Joseph the Second = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 325. King of Kings = The Prophet Muhammad.

L. 338. The whole line refers to Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 397. The phrase "Bewail they" is wrong; it must be "Bewail them."

L. 404. There are numerous hadiths related from the infallible imams that weeping in lamentation of Imam al-Ḥusayn will nullify the mourner's sins, hence making her or him worth of intercession.

L. 411. There are numerous hadiths related from the Infallible Imams that shedding tears for Imam al-Ḥusayn is a religious act and brings the mourner abundant rewards.

L. 440. The Sovereign = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 441. The sons of Muslim = The sons of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl, namely, 'Abd Allāh and Muhammad. The former was martyred at the age of twenty six, and the latter at the age of twenty seven.

L. 442. Qasim = Qāsim ibn al-Ḥasan was son of Imam al-Ḥasan, who was Imam al-Ḥusayn's elder brother. Hence, Qāsim was the latter's nephew: he was martyred when he had not reached the age of puberty. Abbas = al-'Abbās ibn 'Alī was Imam al-Ḥusayn's half-brother, and the standard-bearer in the Battle of Karbala. He was a reliable support for Imam al-Ḥusayn, too. Akbar and Aṣghar were Imam al-Ḥusayn's sons who were martyred, the former was a young man, very much resembling the Prophet Muhammad in appearance, manner, and speech; and the latter was a child, not older than six months.

L. 446. Sakina = Sakīna bint al-Ḥusayn was Imam al-Ḥusayn's beloved daughter.

L. 447. Sajjād = The fourth Infallible Imam, 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, known as al-Sajjād (that is, one who practices ritual prostration a lot). He was one of the survivors of the Battle of Karbala. He was exempted from fighting on 'Āshūrā due to the high fever he had. According to the Islamic rules, the sick people are exempted from taking part in jihad, that is, the defensive war.

L. 448. Bano = Full name Shahr B□n□, she was Imam al-Ḥusayn's Persian wife, and mother of the 4th Infallible Imam, 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn. She was not present at Karbala.

L. 457. The Blessed Soul = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 465. "When my father's blood was shed" refers to the assassination of the Infallible Imam 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib at the Kufa mosque in the dawn of 19th Ramadan 40 AH/ 23 January 661 which led to his martyrdom on 21 Ramadan 40 AH/ 25 January 661.

L. 479. The son of Zahrā = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 481. Zainab = Zaynab bint (Imam) 'Alī ibn Abū Tālib was Imam al-Ḥusayn's sister who spread the account of the Karbala tragedy and led to defamation of the Umayyad rulers.

L. 481. Sakina. See note to L. 446 (above).

L. 485. The monarch = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 487. The King = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 491. Kausar = See note to L. 108 (above).

Ll. 495-497. Akbar = Imam al-Ḥusayn's elder son who was the first of the Hashimids who was martyred in the Battle of Karbala. Imam al-Ḥusayn described him as a person who very much resembled the Prophet Muhammad in appearance, behavior, and conduct.

L. 499. Bano. See note to L. 448 (above).

L. 502. King = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 503. My Liege = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 504. My Lord = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 505. King = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 507. Saintly Saint = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 510. Akber = Akbar, viz. 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, Imam al-Ḥusayn's elder son. See note to Ll. 495-497 (above).

L. 511. My Lord! My Crown! = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 524. O Sovereign = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

Ll. 527-528. My Liege = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 529. The Blessed Soul = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 533. The Lieutenant of God = Imam 'Alī.

L. 537. Faithful Lady = Ḥaḍrat Zaynab, Imam al-Ḥusayn's sister.

L. 549. Her (Zaynab's) sons = This seems to be a mistake, for only 'Awn ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Ja'far was Zaynab's son, although his half-brothers Muhammad and 'Ubayd Allāh were also present at Karbala.

L. 550. Akbar. See note to L. 510 (above).

L. 553. The Leader = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 555. Bano. See note to L. 448 (above).

L. 557. The King = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 559. The Ka'ba = The Kaaba.

L. 579. Syria = The Levant.

L. 581. My Abid = The 4th Infallible Imam ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn, known as al-Sajjād.

L. 582. Thy Prophet's people = The *Ahl al-Bayt* and their close relatives who were present at Karbala.

L. 585. Shabbir = Imam al-Ḥusayn. See note to 98 (above).

L. 589. The Blessed Being = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 591. The darling of Ali = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 609. It seems that the sentence "None except me...is to be the Intercessor" could be better put as "None except me...will be the Intercessor."

L. 613. Kausar = Kawthar. See note to L. 108 (above).

L. 623. Haidar = Haydar (var. Haidar, or Hyder [Indo-Pakistani spelling]) is an appellative designation of Imam ʿAlī. The Arabic word *haydar* means "lion".

L. 632. Azza (Arabic ʿUzzā) was the name of a famous idol which the pre-Islamic Arab polytheists worshiped.

L. 633. Haider the Magnanimous = Imam ʿAlī.

L. 635. The House of God = The Kaaba.

L. 636. The Lion of God = Imam ʿAlī.

L. 638. Haider = Imam ʿAlī.

L. 640. The Holy Being = The Prophet Muhammad.

L. 662. The Book = The Holy Qur'an.

L. 680. Yathrib = Medina.

L. 694. Five = The five holy persons who gathered under the cloak, that is, the Prophet Muhammad, Imam ʿAlī, Ḥadrat Fāṭima al-Zahrā, Imam al-Ḥasan, and Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 714. The whole line refers to Imam ʿAlī's smashing the idols at capturing Mecca.

L. 786. The Sovereign = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 788. The son of Fātima = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 795. Khyber. See note to L. 32 (above).

L. 796. The whole line refers to a divine hadith, that is, a *ḥadīth qudsī ("divine tradition")*, indicative of the fact that God created the whole universe for the sake of paying tribute to the Prophet Muhammad.

L. 809. Abbas = al-'Abbās, Imam al-Ḥusayn's half-brother who fought with bravery at Karbala.

L. 810. Akbar. See note to L. 510 (above).

L. 811. The whole line implies Imam al-Ḥusayn's description of his son 'Alī al-Akbar as the one who resembled the Prophet Muhammad more than any other person could.

L. 815. The line refers to Imam al-Ḥusayn's remark that life was meaningless after the martyrdom of his son 'Alī al-Akbar.

L. 816. Sakina's water-carrier = al-'Abbās ibn 'Alī.

L. 825. Son of God's Lion = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 831. The Syrian army = The army under the Umayyad who came to Karbala to fight Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 832. The Saint = Imam al-Ḥusayn; whose father = Imam 'Alī.

L. 834. The Sovereign = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 843. Faithful horse = Imam al-Ḥusayn's horse, Dhu al-Jinah, the winged.

L. 849. Ali's darling = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 870. The Sovereign = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 877. To bow to God = To say *salat* or *namaz*, Islamic ritual prayer.

L. 882. The master of the Worlds = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 884. The lord = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 885. The Sovereign = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 886. The Being of Light = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 893. According to a legend, Imam al-Ḥusayn miraculously took his Iranian wife Shahr Bānū shortly before outbreak of the battle to a desert in Iran, near Tehran. There is a mount, near Tehran to the east, which is called the ShahrBānū Mount; people commonly believe that the temple thereat belongs to her; hence it is regarded as a sacred place.

L. 894. The son of the Lion of God = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 895. Bin Ash'as = The correct form is Ibn Ash'ath. There were two persons with this designation among the foes of Imam al-Ḥusayn. They were Muhammad ibn Ash'ath and Qays ibn Ash'ath. It seems that the latter was who shot an arrow toward Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 899. The impression of submission = the forehead. The line refers to shooting an arrow toward Imam al-Ḥusayn's forehead, just a few moments before his martyrdom.

L. 900. The Blessed Soul = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 901. Bin Ma'lik. The correct form is Usayd ibn Mālik. He was one of

those who shamelessly and cruelly trampled Imam al-Ḥusayn's body after decapitation.

L. 903. Shabbir = Imam al-Ḥusayn. See note to L. 98 (above).

L. 904. The Sire = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 908. It is better for "that" to be replaced with "when".

L. 912. Bin-e-Wahab = Sālih ibn Wahab al-Ju'fī was one of those who trampled Imam al-Ḥusayn's sacred body on the 'Āshūrā afternoon.

L. 913. Zararah. The correct form is Zur'a ibn Abān ibn Dārim. He was one of who shot an arrow toward Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 914. Bin-e-Ka'hil = Ḥarmala ibn Kāhil al-Asadī was the person who shot an arrow to 'Alī al-Aṣghar, Imam al-Ḥusayn's six month baby, on 'Āshūrā. Some sources record that the name of Imam al-Ḥusayn's baby was 'Abd Allāh, hence known as 'Abd Allāh the Suckling Infant.

L. 915. Kooli = Khūlī ibn Yazīd al-Asbahī was the person who carried Imam al-Ḥusayn's sacred head to Kufa.

L. 917. Ibn Inus = Sanan ibn Anas al-Nakha'ī was who hit Imam al-Ḥusayn with his spear and, reportedly, decapitated him.

L. 920. The son of Sa'd = 'Umar ibn Sa'd was the commander of the Umayyad horde at Karbala.

L. 921. Shees = The correct form is Shabath ibn Rib'ī; he was one of those who wrote a letter of invitation to Imam al-Ḥusayn to come to Kufa but betrayed and fought him on 'Āshūrā.

L. 921. Shimr = Shimr/ Shamir ibn Dhū al-Jawshan, full name Shurahbīl ibn 'Amr ibn Mu'āwīya. He was one of the cruellest soldiers of the Umayyad army who reportedly severed Imam al-Ḥusayn's head. He symbolizes utmost cruelty. For a separate study on this cruel figure, see E. Kohlberg, "Shamir", *Supplement to the New Edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 722-723.

L. 922. The Leader Impeccable = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 932. Fizza = Her Arabic name was Fiḍḍa; she was also the housemaid of Ḥaḍrat Fāṭima al-Zahrā.

L. 937. The line refers to Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 944. On Shimr, see note to L. 921 (above).

L. 953. Mother = Ḥaḍrat Fāṭima al-Zahrā.

L. 957. Syed = The Arabic term is *sayyid*; this is currently its English canonical form. *Syed* is the spelling widely used in the Indian Subcontinent.

L. 961. Victim of the worst aggression = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 963. Badly-butchered Brother = Imam al-Husayn.

L. 979. Hassan = Imam al-Hasan (d. 49 AH/ 669 CE) was Imam al-Husayn's elder brother.

L. 983. Najaf is the city where the sacred tomb and sanctuary of Imam 'Alī are situated.

Marthiya No. 3

THE BATTLE OF KARBALA: A MARTHIYA OF ANIS



Translated into English verse by David Matthews, and published by Rupa in New Delhi in 1994, pp. 35-90 (including the notes).

1

The sun had run his journey o'er the night;
Unveiled, the Dawn revealed her glorious face.
The King who rides the heavens saw her light
And called his brave companions to their place.
'The time has come at last; to God give praise;
Arise! In fitting prayer your voices raise.

2

Brave hearts! For strife and slaughter dawns this day;
Here the blood of Muhammad's race will flow.'
Zahra's darling, honoured, seeks the fray;
The night of parting fades 'neath union's glow.
'We are those for whom the angels weep;
To live this day we sacrificed our sleep.

3

This morning brings an evening ever blessed;
We who depart for Paradise will slake
Our thirst by Kausar's spring, and there find rest.*
May God exalt our names for honour's sake.'

Unequalled, each of them to joy gave birth.
'Let martyrs rise in glory from this earth.'

4

At this the faithful friends rose from their beds,
And donning glorious raiment combed their hair;
Then tying turbans on their noble heads,
They faced the peerless Lord and gathered there.
Wrapped in coloured cloaks, their fear grew less;
Rose perfume, musk and civet filled their dress.

5

Brave warriors dwarfing heaven with their height;
In battle Solomons, in Sheba lions;
The bravest fighters bowed before their might;
No pangs of hunger pained these stalwart scions.
For their great hearts the world was less than nought;
To the vastness of the sea they gave scant thought.

6

Their dry lips sang the praise of God, and light
Shone on their faces; fear was put aside.
No grief or panic clouded o'er their sight;
They joked and laughed and shared their skills with pride.
Their charming accents gladdened every ear;
Each word they uttered was a joy to hear.

7

Beyond compare the figures of their speeches;

Each point they made with rare magnificence.
Their rhetoric the art that knowledge teaches;
Their dry tongues shed the honey of eloquence.
Arabian poets marvelled at their art.
Lips like pistachios gently prized apart.

8

Laughing voices, faces like the rose,
Their bodies smelt as sweet as Joseph's cloak;
Devout, abstemious; their saintly pose
In Heaven's slaves would servitude provoke.
Such rubies are not found, such pearls are rare.
'They are angels', cried the Houris, 'born of air.'*

9

There was no water for the heavenly crowd;
Before the prayers they washed in shining sand
Their faces gleamed like sunrays through a cloud.
Sons of the Father of the Dust, this band
Became as radiant as the silver moon;*
Their faces mirrors in a hazy noon.

10

The kinsmen of the King stepped from their tent,
Fatima's darlings all of beauteous face;
Qasim the fair and Akbar heaven-sent,
Aqil and Muslim, Ja'far's valiant race.
Their countenances lit the sky around.
The flower of eighteen suns stood on the ground.

11

That morning 'neath the shadow of the stars!
If Moses, who called God on Sinai,*
Had seen their light that with the vision jars,
He would have swooned. Celestial majesty
Was echoed by the birds' song in the bowers
Of the desert valley filled with fragrant flowers.

12

That dancing brilliance wafted by the breeze!
The russet satin sky was put to shame.
Rosy dew-drops hung on swaying trees;
Diamonds were abashed and pearls found blame.
Each bush was crowned by glittering diadems;
The leaves of every tree wore precious gems.

13

How fine the art of the Creator's pen!
On every leaf embellishment was shown;
A skill beyond accomplished poets' ken,
Which to the simpler mind remained unknown.
All stood in awe of the Lord of Servants' craft;
Enamelled richness o'er the valley laughed.

14

The light, the fresh, cold desert and the sky!
The pheasant, quail and peacock made their call;
The sweet-voiced birds intoned their plaintive cry;
The morning breeze brought coolness to the soul.
Red petals clothed the trees and sought their arms

Then gathered in the ditches round the palms.

15

The desert and the morning breeze that blew
Amid the branches swaying in the bowers,
Scattering on the blooms rare drops of dew;
One nightingale addressed a thousand flowers.
The primroses of Zahra's garden drank
The dew, collected on the rosy bank.

16

The ring-doves gathered round the cypress tall;
The pigeons cooed: 'The Lord alone holds sway!'
Then came the cry: 'Our God is blessed by all.'
The birds pursued their worship in their way.
Not only flowers sang their adulation;
The tongues of thorns gave praise in exultation.

17

Lifting up its hand, the ant cried out:
'Oh Cherisher of the weak, who rule our fate!'
'Eternal One! Almighty!', came the shout,
'There is one God, and He alone is great.'
The deer called in the woods, the birds in the air;
The jungle lions roared within their lair.

18

And here amid the thorns the Prophet's flowers
Imparted fragrance to the desert lands;

The house of Fatima faced its last hours
In the garden planted by Muhammad's hands_
This garden cut down in those ten sad days,
By traitors wasted, cruelly set ablaze.

19

Ah God! The autumn and the flowers of spring!
Muhammad's sons could scarcely hold their breath.
Like bridegrooms they had dreamed of joy to sing;
But their red garlands were the blooms of death.
Awake all night, their eyes were drunk with sleep.
Their perfumed smiles caused closed buds' hearts to leap.

20

The glory of that russet-coloured tent!
A fresh sky o'er the earth had been unfurled.
To the canopy no pole's support was lent;
This ancient house! Faith's pivot in the world.
For Allāh's loved-ones dwelt beneath this sky
Like stars in the empyrean on high.

21

The desert land smiled mocking at the skies;
The seventh heaven thought it dwelt above.*
Its curtains were the veils of beauties' eyes,
And heaven plucked its stars from it with love.
The morning thought the sun a wretched sight
When it compared it to that desert's light.

22

Then suddenly the dawn's white light came in;
To lead the prayer the King came from his throne.
All stood behind the Lord of Men and Jinn;
Ali Akbar called the prayer in Hasan's tone.
The eyes of everyone were filled with tears.
As if the Prophet's voice fell on their ears.

23

The birds fell silent; trees in ecstasy
Rocked to an' fro; their buds and fruit sang praise.
The towns and deserts joined in harmony,
And ocean-beasts emerged to hear their lays.
The darling of Shabbir to all lent weight;
O'er land and sea they cried: 'Our God is great!'

24

The women of the King wept hitter tears;
While Bano of renown stood silently,
Zainab repeated blessings with her prayers:
'My muezzin, I give thy life to thee!*
They call in praise of God; oh, hear their joy!
As beautiful as Joseph is my boy.

25

He reads from the Qur'an; what majesty!
His grandsire once for speaking held the prize.
Ah, may his voice remain eternally!
The strains of David, who was called The Wise!
Those melodies like petals of a flower!

A nightingale chirps in the Prophet's bower.

26

Let someone take these blessings on my part;
May God protect him from the evil eye!
His eloquence would capture any heart,
Although for two long days his throat is dry.
In foreign lands misfortune strikes Husain.
Three days of hunger torment him with pain.'

27

'Make ready for your worship!', came the cry.
'The King of all Creation leaves his seat.
In ranks of light the Leader passes by;
Salvation's path bows down to touch his feet.
His radiance in the highest heaven will reign.'
The Qur'an became a prayer-mat for Husain.

28

The company's prayers were verses from that age;
Like bismillah the King stood at their head;*
The ranks were lines of writing on the page,
And proudly stood behind the one who led.
The dawn blinked at the whiteness shown between
The rows of words that Ali once had seen.

29

They magnified the Lord in glorious tune;
All heaven's angels blessed them for their sake.

In faith their faces shone bright as the moon;
In fear of God their limbs began to quake.
Their necks were bowed in humble adulation.
Like the crescent moon they folded in prostration.

30

Haidar's scions, Muhammad's noble kin,
Eighteen brave young men stood in one place;
All peerless, righteous, humble, free of sin,
The friends of the Imam in wisdom's grace.
Theirs the praise of God in all directions.
Theirs the beads that told their benedictions.

31

They stood, then bowed; their prayers flew to the sky;
To the One Existing Lord they showed devotion.
Prostrate upon the ground, their time passed by;
Their hands, their arms, their feet betrayed no motion.
But of their own dire plight they made no word.
They prayed beneath the shadow of the sword.

32

They raised their heads and pointed to the air;
The gates of heaven received their adulation.
Their hands, the pinions of the bird of prayer,
To the trembling sky sped on their supplication.
In humble pose they fell upon the ground;
In Gabriel's domain their words passed round.

33

The prayer of the King of Men was now complete;
His thirsty friends came forth to shake his hand.
One kissed his cheek, another touched his feet;
What stalwart spirits had this hungry band!
His soldiers pledged their faith with every breath;
Embracing on the feast-day of their death.

34

Here one fell upon the ground in thanks;
Here the Qur'an was read in doleful strains.
Praise of the Prophet echoed in their ranks;
Here power to the Almighty 'mid their pains.
Husain cried out: 'Have pity on our plight;
On us who thirst and hunger in our flight!'

35

Here sad laments and pleading supplication;
But there oppression, cruelty, wicked deeds.
Umar, son of Sa'ad cried, 'Keep your station!
Watch the river, guard the banks and meads!
Husain is without water for two days.
Let him not drink a drop until he pays.'

36

The Celestial King gave orders from his place,
When arrows suddenly began to fall.
Towards the evil foe he turned his face.
Weighing his sword Abbas obeyed his call.
Like moths around the torch of the Imam,

They rallied to protect Husain from harm.

37

To Ali Akbar he made this behest:
'On treachery our evil foe is bent.
Life of my soul, go where the women rest,
And lead them from the forecourt to the tent.
Through negligence let no child come to grief;
For Asghar's neck is the target of the thief'

38

The Sky-Throned King had thus addressed his son,
When Fazza cried from the porch: 'Behold our plight!
Oh Lord, now where may Ali's daughters run?
The children have been crying through the night.
Suffocated by the heat they weep,
But now in the morning breeze they go to sleep.

39

Baqir rests, Sakina is in a swoon;
This feverish heat our babies has oppressed.
In tears they sleep, their faces like the moon,
Weak from hunger. Where to give them rest?
Theirs is no fault. Why do these arrows rain?
They seek the coolness of the breeze in vain.'

40

Hearing her voice, the Heavenly Lord arose;
'Neath shields his comrades took him to the porch.

He cried: 'We part for battle with our foes.
Prepare the horses. Light our righteous torch!
May our hearts rejoice in Paradise today;
Make haste to force this issue in the fray.

41

With these brave words, the King of Land and Sea
Went over to the women. In the ranks
His men prepared. Abbas, renowned and free,
Paced to and fro, a lion with armoured flanks.
The lightning of his face flashed on the sand;
His shield aloft, his sword gripped in his hand.

42

Solomon's crown was humbled by his helm;
The wings of Huma were envious of its plumes.*
His gauntlets would fair Victory overwhelm;
God save us from his anger when it looms!
When a brother wards off tyranny and wrong,
Will not his brother's heart feel safe and strong?

43

The King beheld the women's piteous state;
Their hair hung loose, their faces pale and white.
Zainab made a prayer: 'Oh God Most Great!
Save Fatima's darling in this awful fight.
May Bano's crop be green and fresh with sap;
And may she nurse new offspring in her lap.

44

At Karbala the traveller is undone!
An assault upon a Sayyid, loved by all!
In foreign lands can battle e'er be won?
Have mercy on these babes so frail and small.
They die of hunger; thirst has plunged its sword.
They are Your Holy Prophet's family, Lord!

45

Neither Ali nor the Prophet has been kept
To lead this house so cruelly laid to waste;
For Fatima we mourned, for Hasan wept;
Husain alone remains in kingship placed.
Have mercy! Spare the Refuge of our band!
Our company is lost without his hand.'

46

Drawing near, the Lord of Heaven spoke:
'Be not thou troubled. All thy prayers are heard.
Our cursed foe all faith and pledges broke,
And now they will learn justice at my word.
This is no time, my sister, for thy tears.
Bring forth the holy relics. Cease thy fears.'

47

Zainab brought the clothes the Prophet wore
When he went to Heaven on that night.
Husain put on his turban, and once more
He donned the cloak to which he had the right.
Those holy garments fitted perfectly;

The scarf of Fatima, his legacy.

48

The glorious turban-flaps hung down unfurled;
Like jasmine-perfumed locks they graced his race,
And on his shoulders rested black and curled.
Cathay and far Khotan renounced their place.
Musk and ambergris could not compare
With the scented spikenard twisting in his hair.*

49

The Prophet's fragrance wafted from his train.
No bridegroom knew such perfume from a bride.
Haidar, Fatima, Hasan, Husain.
The scent of the Holy Five on every side*
Was squandered on the vale; the swaying flowers!
In Paradise Rizwan rocked in its showers.*

50

The King of Time had donned this fine array;
His sister, blessing him, began to weep:
'Ah Haidar, Hasan! Where are you today?
We roam abroad; where does our mother sleep?
My sweetest Joseph now from us will part;
I die; ah, may the Prophet bless his heart!'

51

The box of arms was opened by the King;
Zainab, chaste and holy, beat her breast.

The armour wrought in heaven began to sing
The prayers inscribed upon the Leader's chest.
The beauty of its jewels shone out afar
And every link was like a gleaming star.

52

When Zulfiqar, the mighty sword, appeared,
The King of Heaven kissed its hilt with love.
He weighed it in his hand, and Glory cheered:
'I bow to thy magnificence above.
May victory be thy lot, may triumph flow,
And may thy strike fall squarely on thy foe!'

53

He fixed the sword that he alone could wield;
The crescent moon grew frantic in the sky;
Up to his shoulder mounted Hamza's shield,
Whose dignity increased when raised on high.
The mark of Prophethood was its proud gain
From being on the shoulder of Husain.*

54

The Lord of High and Low in arms was dressed;
The Sayyid's standard stood before the hand.
The women, hair dishevelled, were distressed;
His sister clutched the pole with trembling hand.
With swords bound to their waists, on battle bent,
The sons of Zainab came before the tent.*

55

Those rosy-cheeked young boys with valour trod.
Their cloaks tucked in and sleeves rolled up for war.
The might of Ja'far and the Lion of God;
In stature small, but valiant all the more.
They rubbed their eyes upon the flag and sighed.
In ecstasy to clasp the pole they tried.

56

They eyed the standard, looked with hopeful eyes
Towards their mother, praising loud the King;
Then taking counsel, sure to win the prize
Quietly said: 'From thee we ask one thing.
Who carries Ali's emblem to the fray?
Who bears our grandsire's standard there today?

57

For when the King takes counsel, let him know
We have the right, although we dare not ask.
Politeness tells us that we should be slow
In coming forward for this glorious task.
We love and serve the Master of Creation,
But also hope to gain our reputation.

58

Great heroes in the Prophet's army fought,
But Ja'far gained the greatest honour then.
On Khaibar's field all great distinction sought,
But Ali took the standard of his men.
We may be thirsty, but we fight like lions.

Of Ali and of Ja'far we are scions.'

59

Zainab answered: 'What is this to you?
Can I advise or sway the Lord of Men?
Please know your place. Accept that which is due.
I shall be angry if you speak again.
Now stand aside, clasp hands and show respect.
Ali Akbar stands alone through your neglect.

60

Move aside. Go by the standard. There!
Make sure our Heavenly Master does not see.
You come and drive me mad. Now is that fair?
Your behaviour is not good. Please let me be!
You cry, but I can do no more nor less.
As far as I'm concerned that's childishness!

61

You're babies. Still you crave the highest place.
Well, find a way of putting on some years.
But I admit there's courage in your face.
No one can match you from amongst your peers.
This issue must be weighed up carefully.
No one receives what is not meant to be.

62

The standard was not made for hands so small.
You are the youngest, though you think you're wise.

Before the Prophet's Grandson you must fall.
This is your duty; here your glory lies.
You wish to fight, but what can be attained?
Today in death alone is honour gained.

63

What if your forebears won that rich reward?
Do you think it good to steal their reputation?
Real qualities are those shown by the sword.
Let Haidar guide you; aim at Ja'far's station.
You do have Ali's blood, but do not boast.
Be worthy of that title midst the host.

64

How did the Winged Ja'far gain renown?*
The standard was the Prophet's gift he took;
And when he drew his sword and brought it down,
The lands of Syria and Turkey shook.
And when he lost his life that Son of Kings,
Instead of arms God gave him jewelled wings.

65

For three whole days their army faced defeat;
Then Ali bore the standard to the field.
The Lion of God put Marhab to retreat;
The foe within the fortress would not yield.
But he broke down that door of infamy
As if it were a leaf plucked from a tree.

66

Now, Ali's noble son, in ambush caught,
Beholds our mother's garden laid to waste.
And you forget to ask why I'm distraught.
Incensed by rank and honour you make haste
To win for your own name a reputation.
For me you spare such scant consideration.'

67

The rose-faced boys in deference clasped their hands:
'Oh, Sister of Husain! Control thy wrath.
No further talk of standard on these sands,
But thou wilt see our worth when we go forth
To rout the foe, then sleep where martyrs fall.
You will say we were the bravest of them all.'

68

Her loving sons thus spoke; she drew her breath,
And then as the tears welled up within her breast,
She cried: 'You give me tidings of your death;
But wait and by your mother's hand be blessed.
You scorn your mother's words before you part.
Why do you plunge this dagger in my heart?'

69

The King drew near to Zainab and thus spoke:
'My sister, didst thou hear what thy boys said?
They are the lions which fearsome spirits broke.
By such unequaled hearts are armies led.
Compared to the bravest ones who passed before,

Their frown is different and their courage more.

70

Just ten years old! What purpose they display!
Such stubbornness in ones so young is rare.
May dearest fortune smile on them today.
At whose breast were they suckled? By whose care
Were they brought up to grace the Prophet's name?
But they are young. How can I meet their claim?

71

The bearer of the standard is thy choice.'
'The King of Heaven must choose.' Zainab replied.
'Thou wert declared our mother with one voice',
Answered Husain, 'the day that Fatima died.
So now must thou decide; for thee to say
Which one will hear the standard to the fray.'

72

Zainab answered: 'I can do no more.
For thou art Leader of the Strong and Weak,
And after the Qur'an thy word is law.
But if it is thy will that I should speak,
Then I would choose the brave Abbas. For me
In valour no one stands as high as he.

73

He loves thee; he is thine obedient slave;
A younger brother who will give his life

For thee, and fight with strength among the brave;
A worthy son in time of war and strife;
A lion-hearted general, good and fair.
With his great courage no one can compare.'

74

The King who has no equal found his voice,
As tears came to his eyes: 'To thee my thanks.
My sister, thou hast uttered Ali's choice.
Go call Abbas, the terror of the ranks.'
Akbar called his uncle reverently:
'The King awaits. My aunt has chosen thee.'

75

Abbas came in the presence of the King.
'Go to thy sister', said Husain. 'She chose.'
Zainab placed the standard in the ring.
Taking the flag the Lord of Heaven arose:
'Here is the standard thou alone mayst lift.
For thee the Holy Ones reserved this gift.'*

76

He clasped the pole and to his Master bowed,
Then filled with glory touched his sister's feet.
She blessed him, saying: 'Brother I have vowed
My life to thee. Protect me from the heat
Of battle. Go and bring us peace today,
And guard thy brother in this awesome fray.'

77

Abbas addressed his sister: 'While my head
Remains upon my neck, be not distressed.
Though a hundred-thousand swords on us be sped,
They will not pierce this shield, my stalwart breast.
The sons of the Lion of God to action rise;
They fight with lions and tear out their eyes.'

78

To Ali's tomb he turned his noble face:
'Behold each atom has become a sun!
Ah, Lord of Dust! Have mercy on thy race.
Before Husain to martyrdom I run.
My head will fall to save thine only peer;
My blood and sweat are shed upon Shabbir.'

79

Hearing this, Abbas's wife drew nigh.
At first, she looked with coyness at her spouse.
She blessed Husain and Zainab with a sigh,
And said: 'These sufferings my grief arouse.
But such reward that you have now bestowed
Makes great the honour which we are not owed.'

80

Zainab laid her head upon her breast,
And said: 'I pray thy womb may e'er give life.'
She answered: 'May my Lady's name be blessed.
Let children be thy fortune as a wife.
May Ali Akbar pass his wedding night

Here 'neath the stars that make this heaven bright.

81

May destiny ensure their safe return.
Let the cry go up in Yathrib for the Lord.*
May dear Umm al Banin with honour burn.
My joy on Ali Akbar's bride be poured.
May henna red his hands and feet adorn.
May his wedding greet the shadow of the morn.'

82

The little girl, Sakina came and said:
'Where is my uncle? Tell me, why this throng?
Let me place my blessings on his head.
May he be saved by God from harm and wrong.
He takes the standard; may his fame be mine;
For he is Ali's glory, Ali's sign.'

83

'Come, my dear', Abbas smiled through his tears.
'You're thirsty, and I did not stop to think.'
Sakina answered: 'No, allay thy fears.
Thou hast the standard now, but we must drink.
Go, fill my water-skin. No other boon
I crave from thee. Bring water. Bring it soon!'

84

Hearing her words, the Sayyid women cried.
Qasim came near and called to the Imam:

'The Syrian army masses with its pride
And fast approaches, bent on doing harm.'
Husain replied: 'No cause for fear this day!
Abbas will bear our standard to the fray.'

85

Standard in hand, Abbas to action fell.
The barefoot women ran with hair disheveled.
The Lord cried: 'Brood of Mustafa, farewell!
We part. 'Tis time the scores were duly levelled.
This is the morning of the night of sorrow.
Our fading stars unite to greet the morrow.'

86

Grief-stricken, Zainab fell before Husain;
And Bano, stumbling, fell before her son;
Trembling, Kulsum fell, her heart in pain;
Sakina, Baqir fell down one by one.
The garden was despoiled, no gay flowers danced;
The standard like a funeral-bier advanced.

87

The celestial Lord Abbas with firm intent
Strode out; the soldiers said their last farewell.
The King of Both Worlds left the women's tent,
But Zainab's piercing shrieks he could not quell.
His heart was pained; tears washed his eyes anew,
As when a sun-flower's face is washed with dew.

88

Just like Muhammad, mounted on his steed,
Husain attached his quiver to the rein.
The tongues of men and Jinn cried out: 'Indeed,
The Prophet's horse descends to earth again!
His graceful movement shames the mountain-quail;
His face that of a bride beneath her veil.

89

Behold the way his eyes flash, stern and bold!
How proudly struts and sways the noble horse!
His limbs were fashioned in a perfect mould.
He stops and pricks his ears up in his course.
His neck the fairies' hands would fain caress.
Swift as Huma he sports his comeliness.'

90

The wind began to blow; the horse advanced
With joy towards the desert, gaining strength;
The cavalry took their reins; their horses pranced
The standard, like a cypress fair in length,
Came forth to Iram's garden midst its bowers_*
To Karbala, the land of desert flowers.

91

The five pronged emblem's radiance robbed the sight;*
Its gleaming was reflected on the sand;
It lit the high empyrean with its light_
A bridegroom's face veiled in a golden strand.
The emblem and the sun shone in both ways,

Entangling in the air their brilliant rays.

92

God's chosen army of magnificence!
The infamous enemy flags began to droop.
Brave Hashimites with rare munificence,
Adornment of the earth, an honoured troop.
Each one the seed of Ali, each in price
Was dearer than the groves of Paradise.

93

Those eight young boys, fair-faced, straight-backed and wise
With awesome strength and grit were Haidar's scions.
Black locks entwining their narcissus eyes,
With little knives they were a match for lions.
Their moon-like breasts for arrows were the snare
They came like bridegrooms to a place of prayer.

94

The houris from their windows in delight
Called out: 'Bless the Imam and bless his sword.
The earth this day presents a wond'rous sight,
For he resembles Mustafa, our Lord.
The banner of Abbas goes forth unfurled.
The company of the Prophet rules the world.

95

For when the Holy Prophet left his place,
We thought the world bereft of beauty's charm.
But let the old bent sky now hide his face!

Ali Akbar lives to be Husain's right arm.
Just see his comely looks and know his worth.
Muhammad in Heaven; his shadow on the earth.'*

96

Suddenly arrows rained upon the horde.
Husain advanced and pleaded with his foe.
His thirsty friends came to protect their Lord;
They struck the Syrian force and laid it low.
With swords held high, the fight was underway.
All strove like Malik Ushtar in the fray.*

97

The King's companions, bent on Holy War,
Raised cries; the earth began to shake with fear.
Fierce lions against foxes to the fore!
The cursed foe in panic to the rear!
To north and south fell lightning on the flanks
And pierced the black clouds of the Syrian ranks.

98

Now Ali's grandsons fought with might and main.*
Their daggers had the force of Zulfiqar.
On shield and shoulder savage blows would rain.
The wounded, dead and dying lay afar.
They proved themselves to be the Prophet's scions;
Nursed by the milk of Zainab, they were lions.

99

Those tiny little hands, those wrists so white;
Their speed created havoc in the field.
The enemy bowmen broke their ranks in fright,
And pleaded with the Prophet's men to yield.
In them Muhammad's strength was manifest.
'Twas Zainab's milk that fed their lion-like breasts.

100

Qasim, Hasan's son, so bravely fought;
Surrounded, he roared like an angry beast.
Three days of thirst and hunger were as nought.
With unveiled face no bridegroom to his feast
E'er ran so hard as he attacked his foes
And dealt the Syrian Arzaq hefty blows.*

101

The sword of brave Abbas flashed with such power
That Gabriel sought protection from his Lord.
The son of Sa'd there faced his final hour
'Midst shieldless corpses scattered by the sword.
As lions spring to gain the river banks,
Abbas swam through the waves of serried ranks.

102

The guards of the Euphrates lost their heads
And like the river's current flowed away.
Black-hearted foes were tossed into its beds;
Their life-breath burst like bubbles in its spray.
Abbas, dry-lipped, took water for his men,
As if the Prince of Arabs fought again.

103

Ali Akbar seized his victims with a frown,
Like a hungry lion pouncing on its prey.
The proud were vanquished, mighty men put down;
His adversaries o'er the desert lay.
Their heads were severed; no one dared to pass
Beyond the lines defended by Abbas.

104

On both sides swords rained down till past midday.
The earth and skies resounded with the crash.
With folded wings the angels looked away.
No more the shouts, no more of swords the flash.
The shields were spent; the spears now joined the fight;
By afternoon the army was in flight

105

Husain brought back the corpses of his nation;
No martyr's head was severed by the foe.
May no man suffer such dire tribulation!
He cried: 'Alas! Where do their spirits go?
The weight of mountains has been thrust on me.
Such fine array men's eyes will no more see.'

106

'Mid dead and dying stood the lone Imam.
The Prophet's cloak was soaked in crimson gore.
Dejected, anxious, thirsty, in alarm,
He heard their victory drums; the enemies' roar

Proclaiming slaughtered martyrs broke his heart;
It pierced his spirit like a poisoned dart.

107

Only he who grieves can understand.
The garden of life's toil now wasted lay.
No rest from lamentation's cruel hand
The lamps were out that once burnt bright as day.
Scattered limbs exposed to seering heat;
On Ali Akbar's corpse there was no sheet.

108

The King of the Age moved slowly to the tent;
He could not bring his thirsty lips to speak.
Lifting the flap, he cried: 'My heart is rent!
My sister, it is Asghar that I seek.
Now bring him from his cradle to the door.
I long to see his moon-like face once more.'

109

Muhammad's women ran to him unveiled,
And Zainab brought the baby in her arms.
He took the child, by pangs of love assailed,
And kissed him, overcome by infant charms.
The knife of grief cut through Husain's sad breast;
His holy knee afforded Asghar rest.

110

He cradled Asghar in his warm embrace.

Outside in ambush lurked black Kahil's son,*
Who fired a three-pronged arrow from his place;
Its target was the neck of the little one.
The baby writhed in pain; the Leader cried;
The tiny child was slaughtered by his side.

111

The baby died, and in the earth about
A little grave was fashioned by the sword.
The child was buried, and Husain cried out:
'Oh Holy Ground, be mindful of thy ward!
This love of Ali, keep him in thy care,
Ali's pledge and Fatima's treasure rare!'

112

He spoke and donned his shining arms once more;
His eyes were bloodshot, and his face was red.
Clothed in the Prophet's cloak, now went on war,
With Hamza's shield alone to fight he sped;
With Zulfiqar, that sword of might and fame;
Muhammad's armour graced his noble frame.

113

Was it Rustam clothed in armour or his steed?
The fiery, faithful horse was swift and fleet.
A bridle, gold and silver, was its lead;
Elixir was the dust raised by its feet.
The blood of Duldul far pulsed through its veins;*
Submissive when the Master took its reins.

114

The days of summer heat defy description.
My tongue burns like a candle if I try.
God save us from the blast of its inception!
The field was red, and yellow burnt the sky.
Cold water was the wish of this poor band,
As flaming winds poured fire upon the sand.

115

The vehemence of the sun, its cruel glare!
The face of day was burnt and black as night
The Alqama dried up; its banks were bare;*
Its bubbles burst and from the heat took flight.
The spring of life was dry; its work was done.
The Euphrates steamed and boiled beneath the sun.

116

Four-footed creatures sheltered in the lake;
With fish the salamander made its home;
The deer were languid, cheetas would not wake;
The molten rocks became a waxen foam.
The red flew from the rose, green from the glade;
In wells the water dropped in search of shade.

117

There was no tree that still bore flowers or fruits;
The date-palms were on fire like the chenar.*
No smiling rose drew moisture from its roots;
Thorns grew on branches burnt as black as tar.
No limb could stir, no beating heart would race;

All nature bore a pale, consumptive face.

118

The beasts cowered in the places that were wet;
Birds hid themselves within the forest trails.
The pupils of the eye were bathed in sweat,
And would not peep outside their eyelash-veils.
If one glance came to stand upon the street,
A thousand blisters formed upon its feet.

119

The lions would not emerge from their wild dens;
Dust hung, around the hazy sun's wide girth.
Gazelles all sought the refuge of the fens.
The firmament caught fever from the earth.
From pain of heat it uttered mournful sound.
Seeds roasted if they fell upon the ground.

120

The whirlpool on the water spun with flame;
From burning bubbles sparks of fire would leap;
The tongues of waves were dry; no solace came
To crocodiles which languished in the deep.
The rivers blazed as if on Judgement's Day,
And roasted fish upon their billows lay.

121

The mirror of the sky was scorched with heat,
And lightning dashed for shelter in the cloud.

Hot-tempered men could scarce stand on their feet.
For morning's camphor cried the sun aloud.
The dome of elemental fire burnt red,
And clouds to even colder regions sped.

122

In that great heat the King of Nations stood;
The standard's shade, the Prophet's arms no more.
His sighs were flames, his tongue was hard as wood,
His lips were grey, his back was bent and sore.
Three days deprived of water, now he stuttered;
His tongue tripped over every word he uttered.

123

The enemy riders let their horses drink;
They led their camels to the watering-places;
The birds refreshed themselves upon the brink,
And water-boys rushed moisture on their faces.
A pious act to care for bird and beast!
Husain, so thirsty, looked upon their feast.

124

A golden parasol for Ibn Sa'd!
His servants fanned him as he sat; and now
The ground was splashed with water by his guard.
But for Husain no shade to cool his brow.
The blazing sun beat down upon his back;
His blessed countenance was burnt and black.

125

The son of Sa'd called: 'Lord of Heaven, think!
Give me allegiance, for I mean no harm.
A cooling draught shall I give thee to drink.'
Husain replied: 'Ah wretch, respect Islam!
The son of Ali takes no gift from thee.
From thy hand [*sic*] water is but dust to me.

126

For if I asked, then Abraham would come
And fill my cup from the fount of Salsabil;*
Woulds't thou give me to drink, oh filthy scum?
With avaricious tyrants would I deal?
Thy very shadow causes flowers pain.
If thou art cut, no blood pours from thy vein.

127

And if I called, Jamshed would give his cup;*
The Prophet would tell Gabriel to bring
A draught from Kausar's spring for me to sup;
On earth the angels would my victory sing.
At my command the world would cease to be.
Iraq and Syria sink beneath the sea.'

128

He spoke and gazed on Zulfiqar's bright blade.
The son of Sa'd fell back, alarmed and shy.
From enemy ranks an arrow-charge was made;
The sound of war drums sped across the sky.
The horsemen massed; their spears were poised for war;

Black flags adorned the black-faced army's roar.

129

The clamour of the drums, the trumpets' cry!
The angels' ears were deafened by the din.
And from its senses all the earth did fly,
As armoured soldiers with their spears moved in.
With shields upon their heads came this vile band,
Like rain-clouds swooping on the desert sand.

130

Intoning martial verses, Ali's scion
Advanced with Gabriel's hand upon his shoulder.
Onward he advanced – a male lion – ,
With sleeves rolled up; each step he took grew holder
The bride of battle was in splendour wreathed;
Husain's intrepid sword was now unsheathed.

131

The flaming sword was wrenched out of its cover,
As moonbeams fly, as perfume leaves the rose,
As a comely maiden taken from her lover,
As breath departs the breast, as red blood flows.
When thunder roared and all the air did swell,
Laila swooned and from her litter fell.

132

Husain swooped like an eagle from on high,
As lions in the jungle pounce on deer.

The heavens flashed; the clouds began to cry;
His horse rushed down like water swift and sheer.
The sharp sword cut the foe with thunderous crash;
They fell like mountains 'neath the lightning's flash.

133

The sparks flew from the sword that cut and thrust,
Heads were severed in the wind that blew.
It beat upon the armour, raising dust.
The wings of Gabriel stretched out and flew.
Those wings were like a charm that all men saved,
For on them Ali's name stood out engraved.*

134

The foe on whom the sword fell split in two;
The blade came down again to make him four.
The path it took was the one Death pointed to;
However hard its task, it craved for more.
No rider in his saddle could be found;
The armour's chains lay scattered on the ground.

135

Its strike beheaded that tumultuous horde;
Assembled ranks were shattered by its flight;
Each body's castle fell beneath the sword,
And houses crumbled 'neath its torrent's might.
Whoever struck the scimitar fell dead;
Its lustrous sharpness made the streams run red.

136

Ah God, the river and the sheet of flame!
Fire on water, water set ablaze!
The sword sped onwards, whispering God's name;
Its current woke the still pools from their daze.
It quivered and the evil spate was snared.
With Zulfiqar's keen sharpness nought compared.

137

The centre, flanks and wings, both left and right
Of the murderous army by Husain were crushed.
The earth was spinning as the sword took flight.
From lifeless bodies all the spirit gushed.
Their souls left like those guests that part in haste;
The market closed; the city was laid waste.

138

The horsemen bore the sword's almighty speed;
It cut them through and split their horses' girth.
It thirsted after blood and did its deed.
And bloody corpses choked the heavens and earth.
No need it had for grindstone or for flint;
From land to sky all space shone with its glint.

139

This sword of autumn spoiled the garden's bloom.
Torn from its scabbard now it craved no home.
Faithful has for faithlessness no room.
Do those exalted with the lowest roam?
Straightness in its curve, and sharp its tongue;

The power to cut upon its breath was hung.

140

It struck the breast, the heart was bathed in blood;
The fingernails of Death plunged in the flesh.
The cry 'God save us!' poured out in a flood.
It cut down honour, then it struck afresh.
Ten steadfast men could not brook its attack;
Its flaming fire turned all their faces black.

141

Ranks collapsed on ranks where'er it struck,
Now this way, that way, dashing through the air.
'Where has it gone?' 'Which warrior did it pluck?'
The cries came: 'It is here!' 'No, it is there!'
The archers could not find the way to go.
If heads were severed, bodies did not know.

142

Those by the water washed their hands of life,
And hands of headless riders lost the reins.
A hand was struck; a heart was plunged in strife.
No hands were left to grab their horses' reins.
They fain would hide their faces in their hands;
But, shamed, their feet took off across the sands.

143

Ah, how they feared the Lion of Creation!
The stream of the Euphrates turned to bile.

Their cruel hearts were racked with consternation;
They could not run, nor could they stay awhile.
'Run!', came the cry, 'before it is too late.'
The river of God's wrath was in full spate.

144

Although the watery fish were armour-clad,
They hid themselves in fear, mouths open wide.
In whirlpools spun the shields; the waves were mad;
The crocodiles sought corners dark to hide.
The river would escape the sword's white heat.
But bubbles formed like blisters on its feet.

145

Divine destruction was the sword's swift blow.
'God help us!', came the cry. 'What can we do?'
Through helmets, then through breastplates it would go,
Then on through saddles, slicing steeds in two.
And when the sword into the ground was thrust,
The Earth cried: 'Save me, Ali, Lord of Dust!'

146

The bowmen, pressing hard, died in the fray.
Their arms hung loose; their bow strings still were taut.
The horn was cut, their arrows flew away;
One step onto the field and they were nought.
The bird of vain imagining took flight;
The notches on their arrows gaped in fright.

147

All those who were in archery renowned
Could find no place of refuge but the grave.
And those whose target-shot was always sound
Groped blindly for the life they could not save.
Those archers of perdition, sore misled,
Mistook the arrow's notches for its head.

148

The lines fell upon lines, and flanks on flanks;
Riders fell on riders, steed on steed.
For five that fled, ten fell among the ranks,
And heralds were despatched with awesome speed.
The army broke and tyranny was dashed.
So rare to see a foe so cruelly lashed.

149

The Lion of Karbala was now enraged.
To Karbala for refuge wolves had fled.
What war in Karbala the sword had waged!
At Karbala fell many a severed head.
The villages became abodes of ghosts.
Mounds of corpses towered above the hosts.

150

The Warrior King struck panic in his foe,
And turmoil broke beneath the ancient sky.
The bowstrings looked for refuge in the bow;
For help the bow to arrow-heads made cry.
The ruthless sword drove on, and everywhere

The enemy sought a respite from its glare.

151

From twanging bowstrings arrows sped like rain;
Hurtling from the Syrian cloud they poured.
The piebald horses, chestnut steeds in pain
Whinnied as the sweltering hot winds roared.
The hatred of the desert was on fire;
Husain alone withstood its clamorous ire.

152

Water-carriers came and called their wares:
'The market-place is brisk!' 'Come cool your hearts!'
The wicked, mindful only of their cares,
Rushed to the water-boys like poisoned darts.
A blazing fire consumed the world of pain.
All drank their fill except the Lord, Husain.

153

Such thirst assailed him 'neath those burning skies;
He masked his face and cried in desperation.
The sun's sharp glare assaulted his poor eyes,
But still he leapt and fought with exultation.
Rare beads of sweat poured down his holy face;
Pure pearls cascaded on the battle-place.

154

But those who slaked their thirst just slunk away.
The sword of Ali led the fight alone.

It flashed upon the scalp in full array.
Stopped by neither shields nor iron nor stone.
The blade of the Creator knew no thirst;
In front of it the helmets' blisters burst.

155

The enemies were confused, and could not tell
An arrow from a bow, such was their plight.
The archers seeking refuge fled to Hell;
Their quivers shuddered as they took to flight.
No sooner had they tried to grip their bow,
Their heads were off; their bodies were laid low.

156

The horses jostled riders when they saw
The sword flash by; in fear they jumped and leapt.
Not one in thousands stood this battle raw;
Among the ranks there was no order kept.
From every side the shout of 'Scatter!' 'Flee!'
Swords turned their faces from the misery.

157

From the stamping of the horses sand flew up;
The firmament filled like an hour-glass.
The dark-blue sky became a dusty cup,
And blackness spread o'er valley, hill and pass.
The glow that lights the world was lost from sight;
The afternoon at once had turned to night.

158

The prowess of the Lord against his foes!
With sunlight on his swarthy face he strode.
His dry cracked lips were petals of the rose;
Like Ali borne by Zuljanah he rode.*
Came clamour from the battle, fierce and harsh:
'Run off! An angry lion stalks the marsh.'

159

'Husain! Make haste to save us', came the cry.
'Husain contests the banks; the swamp he takes.
Husain fights with the wrath of God on High.
The world is his; in him God's spirit wakes!
Husain saved Noah from the dreadful flood.*
May we be saved by Ali Akbar's blood!'

160

The name of Ali Akbar reached his ears;
His heart was pierced; he pulled his horse's rein.
And as he stopped, his eyes were filled with tears;
He addressed the spot where his dead son had lain:
'Life of my soul! They call you from afar.
The battle ends; I lay down Zulfiqar.'

161

Ibn Sa'd cried out and slapped his knee:
'Ah shame! His victory becomes defeat!
Behold the hero! Such brave men as he
Should never lead themselves to base retreat.'
Then one of Ibn Sa'd's strong men cried out:

'This prize is mine! I'll put Husain to rout!'

162

He was gigantic, ugly, fat and dark,
And brazen-bodied with a waist of iron;
Of Death his quivered arrows bore the mark;
His shield had smashed the teeth of many a lion.
His heart was evil and his soul corrupt;
At his every step a mountain would erupt.

163

Another giant like him in form and height,
With brushy, beetling brows and dark-blue eyes.
Stood by his side, depraved and full of spite.
In battle he slew foes of wond'rous size.
One boasted of his club and one his sword.
They girded up their loins to slay the Lord.

164

To paint this awesome fight I need resolve;
To gain my enemies' praise the power of speech;
A sword-sharp tongue its hardness to dissolve;
A pen of steel its forcefulness to teach.
To draw the battle-ranks amassed for war
The inkpot needs the flash of Zulfiqar.

165

The anguished soldiers stood, their faces white;
The bravest of them trembled, for they feared

Husain might bring his sword into the fight.
Could Marhab stand his ground if Ali dared?*
Could Antar keep his head in such a fray?
Who has defeat or victory today?

166

A voice from Heaven cried out: 'In Allāh's name!
Oh Lord! Oh Darling of the Arab race!'
The King was mounted, mindful of his fame;
His sword rose up and showed its gleaming face.
The shameless giant pressed onwards like a flood,
But Zulfiqar was thirsty for his blood.

167

In battle stalwart soldiers staked their lives,
And evil frowned upon the earth beneath;
Their thunderous shields, their lightning-flashing knives
Were drawn against the horse that gnashed its teeth.
It beat its hooves; those cowards sought retreat.
The earth-supporting cow shook on its feet.*

168

The selfish giant came brandishing his spear
Against Husain, but little served his might.
At once the sword was raised into the air;
The tyrant's arrows from its strike took flight.
They might have hit a rock; their heads were dashed:
The string that fired them broke; the bow was smashed.

169

The tyrant raised his club in fresh attack;
The Scion of the Dusty One saw red.
He beat his hands in wrath; the giant fell back,
As lightning struck upon his angry head.
Defeat for evil! Victor for the just!
His head now severed fell upon the dust.

170

Confused and scared he tried to run away,
And groping took his sword in his left hand.
But Death's cold hand will always find its prey.
And Zulfiqar sliced through him on the sand.
A miracle the way the sharp sword flew!
The rider and his horse were cut in two.

171

The second giant approached; the King called out:
'Hast thou not seen the power of Zulfiqar?'
The wretch came on, regardless, with a shout.
But Death already called him from afar.
Summoned by the voice that knows no laws,
Another victim for the lion's jaws.

172

The King of Faith towards his rival turned,
As if a hungry lion had joined the fray.
With nonchalance the enemy's sword was spurned.
The sky was split; the heavens spun away.
The giant sank in the saddle without a sound;

His mighty horse was pressed into the ground.

173

The peaks of Qaf sped from the fairies' sight;*
The Jinn were lost; the lions strayed from home;
The denizens of the deep dashed to the light;
The hawk and partridge fled where pythons roam.
The mountains huddled, hiding, from the roar,
And eagles fell from eeries where they soar.

174

A voice came from the sky: 'All hail, Shabbir!'
This sword was made for him. Shabbir, all hail!
All hail! To him was battles honour dear.
Nursed at his mother's breast, how can he fail?
God gave him mastery o'er all creation.
For he alone could fight to save his nation.

175

But now enough! No more, Husain! No more!
'Tis time to rest. The horse pants from the heat.
The time for prayer draws nigh. The battle's roar
Is over now for thee. No more! Retreat!
No one can fight thus, thirsty in the throng.
Attend to thy dear kin, and soothe their wrong.'

176

Sheathing his sword, the King; cried: 'I obey!'
The Day of Judgement came upon the world.

The enemy stood like animals at bay.
Their arrows fixed, their standard's flag unfurled.
Husain stood helpless. See and you will know
Your helpless Lord alone before his foe!

177

Ten thousand arrows dashed upon his chest;
A hundred at one time sought out their prey.
The spears transfixed his side and pierced his breast;
Ten stuck for every four he pulled away.
The Shadow of the Lord was filled with spines,
Like needles in the backs of porcupines.

178

From all directions arrows poured like rain;
Assassins rushed with spears and daggers bared.
Such pain befell Husain. Such pain! Such pain!
The one who on the Prophet's lap was reared.
No one to pluck the arrows from his chest.
No one to lift him to his place of rest.

179

Midst thousands, one afflicted stood, alas!
The noble son of Fatima, alas!
Shabbir was struck by tyrants' spears, alas!
And arrows pierced his holy skin, alas.
That ragged, angry army, honour's bane,
Poured out its bristling quivers on Husain.

180

Those who had fled from battle now returned;
One took a stone and aimed it at his head.
The blow struck home; his fevered forehead burned;
Then to his throat a three-pronged arrow sped.
He touched his forehead, clasped his throat and sighed.
The arrow flew out from the other side.

181

This arrow had three heads, so it is told;
It pierced the Lord, not stopping in its track.
His breathing stopped; his eyes wide open rolled;
He tried to pull the shaft out from his back.
His final breath emerged – an angry flood – ;
The palm placed on his wound was filled with blood.

182

A'var Salami, an enemy of the King,*
A foe of true Islam, now played his part.
He split his forehead with a mighty swing;
Sinan, the son of Uns, speared through his heart.*
Another plunged his stomach with a hook.
The grave of the Prophet's Refuge sighed and shook.

183

Husain falls from his mount – calamity!
His holy foot falls from the horse's girth.
His side is gaping open – misery!
He swoons; his turban drops upon the earth.
The Qur'an has fallen headlong from its stand.

The Ka'aba's walls have crumbled into sand.*

184

Far from the wastes came Fatima's pure voice:
'Muhammad! See our family despoiled!
Now who will save our friendship and rejoice?
Against what tyranny our Leader toiled!
Full nineteen-hundred wounds were on him thrust;
Ah Zainab! Come! Husain writhes in the dust.'

185

Now Zainab moved the curtain of the tent
And came with unveiled face and heaving breast.
Her limbs were trembling and her back was bent.
She cried: 'Ah Karbala, where is thy guest?
From thirst I suffer; guide me with thine eyes,
And bring me to his corpse, to where it lies.

186

The whole world is in darkness at my feet.
For Allāh's sake, stay with meat my side.
Where lies our Sayyid writhing in the heat?
Ah mother, lead me to the place he died!'
Her sighs consumed her blazing heart with flame.
A voice was heard: 'Who moans and calls my name?'

187

Who called: 'Oh sister! Do not come this way!
The time for thy departure is at hand.

For Allāh's sake, go home! Lost is our day.
May Ali save the ship of this poor band.
Let not Husain be left in this cruel waste.
To drape his corpse let Fatima make haste.'

188

Her head uncovered, Ali's daughter walked
To the place where Ali's darling son was slain.
She ran, though by the evil enemy balked,
And reached the spot, clutching her breast in pain.
Ignoring every danger, she drew near,
And saw her brother's head stuck on a spear.

189

Then Zainab, overcome with sorrow, cried:
'Ah Sayyid! Let me bless thy blood-soaked face.
My brother's throat was slit. See how he died!
Dids't thou forget thy sister's healing grace?
Our house is robbed; the promise was not kept.'*
His moving lips took God's name as she wept.

190

'Thy sister greets thee, brother. Answer me!
Hear the cry of Haidar's daughter's strife.
With thy dry tongue give answer! Hear my plea!
Should Zainab cling to this accursed life?
For Death alone can end this separation.
No one is left to give me consolation.

191

My brother! Can I bring thee back once more?
What can I do? Where can I tell my woes?
To whom can I recount the pain I bore?
Our city is now ruled by evil foes.
The world has been destroyed beyond belief.
How can I live within this house of grief?

192

Why did this wretched waif not die before?
Come tell me how the dagger ripped thy breast?'
A voice cried: 'Do not ask the pains I bore!
For all that came to pass was for the best.
Now from all tribulations I am free,
But ah! the [*sic*] wound to be apart from thee!

193

For even now the foe is bent on plunder.
Give nought but thanks to God for thy dear life.
When tyrants come to set our home asunder,
Take care of poor Sakina in her strife.
Protect my daughter in thy warm embrace;
Let no one look in anger on her face.'

194

Enough, Anis! Your very limbs are quaking.
This monument you built with glory rings.
Such verses written while your hands were shaking
Will fire the world and please the hearts of kings.

Their harvest is this gathering of mourning
The spring-like pleasure of the autumn's dawning.

NOTES

Throughout the following notes, those of David Matthews are preceded by his surname, that is, Matthews, followed by his explanations, enclosed within double quotation marks, and reproduced verbatim. The quotation is then followed by a shortened title of his book *The Battle of Karbala: A Marsiya of Anis* (New Delhi: Rupa, 1994) as *Battle*, followed by a page number.

L. 9. Zahrah's darling = Imam al-Ḥusayn; Zahra is his mother.

L. 15. Kausar (Quranic al-Kawthar/ kawthar) designates several things, among them, a) the name of a Paradise stream, b) name of the 108th sura in the Holy Qur'an, meaning "food in abundance", and c) Ḥaḍrat al-Zahrā, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad. Matthews's note to verse 3: The name of a spring in Paradise (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 87).

L. 26. Sheba = Arabic *Saba'*. According to *Webster's New Geographical Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (2001), it was an [a]ncient country located in south of the Arabian Peninsula, and probably included Yemen.

L. 41. In ancient, pre-Islamic Arabia, poetry was regarded as a high art.

L. 44. "Joseph's cloak" alludes to the Qur'anic verses in the Sura 12 (Yusuf [Joseph]: 93-96). Joseph's cloak was taken to his father Jacob (Arabic *Ya'qūb*) and his eyesight was restored.

L. 48. "Houri" (English *houri*). Matthews' note to verse 8: "[A]ngels are traditionally said to have been born of air, men of dust and Jinn of fire." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 87)

L. 52. "The Father of the Dust" (Arabic *Abū Turāb*) = One of the designations of the Infallible Imam 'Alī Matthews's note to verse 9: "Muhammad gave this name to 'Ali when he made his ritual ablutions with sand permissible when there is no water at hand." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 87).

L. 57. "Qasim and Akbar." Qāsim was a son of Imam al-Ḥasan. Qāsim ibn al-Ḥasan was Imam al-Ḥusayn's nephew. Akbar refers to 'Alī al-Akbar

who was Imam al-Ḥusayn's elder son. He was the first Hashimid who was martyred on 'Āshūrā.

L. 58. "'Aqil, Muslim, and Ja'far". 'Aqīl was Imam 'Alī's brother and father of Muslim. Muslim ibn 'Aqīl was Imam al-Ḥusayn's emissary who was martyred at Kufa at the command of Ibn Zīyād, the then ruler of Kufa. There were two young men by the name of Ja'far who attended the Battle of Karbala, namely, Ja'far ibn 'Alī, a brother of 'Abbās ibn 'Alī; he was martyred at the age of nineteen or twenty one. (Pour-Amini, *Chehrehā*, p. 124). The other one was Ja'far ibn 'Aqīl who was martyred at the age of twenty three. (Ibid., p. 23).

L. 60. The phrase "eighteen suns" = This may refer to the 48 Hashimids who were martyred in the Battle of Karbala.

L. 62. Matthews's note to verse 11: "Moses on Sinai: Moses ascended in order to see the face of God. He fainted before the divine effulgence." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 87).

L. 89. The phrase "The primroses of Zahra's garden" = It refers chiefly to Imam al-Ḥusayn and, by extension, to his half-brothers.

Ll. 91-96. These lines imply what the Holy Qur'an refers to as every entity's being a manifestation of the glory of God.

L. 107. The phrase "those ten sad days" = The first ten days of Muharram whose apex is 'Āshūrā.

L. 109. "The autumn" = the season of grief.

L. 113. "Awake all night" = the volitional, virtuous midnight salats.

L. 118. "Ancient house! Faith's pivot in the world" = The Kaaba.The *Ancient House* is a translation of the Arabic *al-Bayt al-'Atīq*.

L. 122. Matthews's note: "the seventh heaven: the seventh heaven is regarded as the highest. Here the desert land of Karbala is exalted by being imagined to be above it." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 87). References to the exalted status of Karbala can be found, *inter alia*, in Ibn Qūlawayh, ed., *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, pp. 259-271.

L. 128. "The King" = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 129. "The Lord of Men and Jinn" = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 130. Ali Akbar, and Ḥasan. For 'Alī Akbar, see note to L. 57 (above). Imam al-Ḥasan, who was Imam al-Ḥusayn's elder brother, had a son by the name of Ḥasan who was wounded on 'Āshūrā. (Pour-Amini, *Chehrehā*, pp. 174-75).

L. 137. Shabbir = A Hebrew equal of Imam al-Ḥusayn's name. The transliterated rendering shows an incorrect pronunciation; the correct pronunciation is Shubayr, not Shabbir.

L. 140. Bano = Shahrbano, or Shahr Bānū. Daughter of Yazdigird III, the last Sassanian king of Persia, she was an Iranian princess who was a Zoroastrian before conversion into Islam. However, she attained the honor of getting married to Imam al-Ḥusayn. She was mother of the fourth Infallible Imam 'Alī al-Sajjād, hence Iranian Zoroastrians still regard Imam al-Ḥusayn as their brother-in-law.

L. 141. Zainab = Imam al-Ḥusayn's sister who accompanied him from Medina to Mecca and thence to Karbala. She undertook the directorship of the survivors of the Karbala massacre from Karbala to Damascus and back to Medina. Her harangues disclosed the real face of the Umayyad ruler c.

L. 142. Matthews's note to verse 24: "muezzin: the person who calls the prayer (azan) usually from the minaret of the mosque. 'Ali Akbar is always credited with having a sweet voice." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 87).

L. 158. The King of all Creation = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 164. Matthews' note to verse 28: "*bismillah*: the first words of the Qur'an: 'In the name of Allāh'. Here Husain is imagined to stand before his people like the first words on a page of the Qur'an. Those standing behind him are arranged like the lines of writing on the page. The whiteness of their clothes is like the whiteness of the paper." (Matthews, *Battle*, pp. 87-88).

L. 175. Haidar = Imam 'Alī.

L. 182. The One Existing Lord = God.

L. 185. It seems that in this line there must be a comma just after "plight". It might read as "But of their own dire plight, they made no word."

L. 193. The King of Men = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 207. Umar, son of Sa'ad = He was the chief commander of the Kufan army. Imam al-Ḥusayn advised him to abandon Yazīd's party, but he decided to fight Imam al-Ḥusayn in the vain hope of becoming the ruler of Ray, central Iran. He received the anathema of Imam al-Ḥusayn for his cruelty and oppression.

L. 211. The Celestial King = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 214. Abbas = al-'Abbās ibn 'Alī, was Imam al-Ḥusayn's half-brother, renowned for his chivalrous character, braveness, and religious zeal.

L. 222. Asghar = Imam al-Ḥusayn's six-month baby who was martyred at the Battle of Karbala. His name is 'Alī, and designed with the adjective "Aṣghar" (lit. the younger).

L. 223. The Sky-Throned King = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 224. Fazza = Fiḍḍa was the housemaid of Imam 'Alī and Ḥaḍrat Fāṭima al-Zahrā.

Ll. 224-28. Reference is made to the martyrdom of Ḥaḍrat Fāṭima al-Zahrā.

L. 241. The King of Land and Sea = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 244. A lion = al-'Abbās ibn 'Alī; see note to L. 214 (above).

L. 245. The lightning of his face = al-'Abbās was so handsome and eye-catching that he was referred to as Qamar Banī Hāshim (lit. the Moon of the Hashimids).

L. 248. Huma = an Iranian legendary bird. Matthews's note to verse 42: "Huma: a bird of Persian mythology" (p. 88). Steingass defines it as "A bird of Eastern fable, supposed to fly constantly in the air without touching the ground, and looked upon as a bird of happy omen, prognosticating a crown to every head it overshades; a bird of paradise, phoenix, large royal eagle, or pelican." (s.v. Huma, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, London, 1892)

L. 251. A brother = al-'Abbās.

L. 253. The King = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 255. Zainab, see note to L. 141 (above).

L. 256. Fātima's darling = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 257. Bano, see note to L. 140 (above).

L. 260. Sayyid = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 264. Your Holy Prophet's family = According to Jafri (in *The Origins*), the term *Ahl al-Bayt* refers to "the immediate family of [the Prophet] Muhammad. In verse XXXIII: 33 [of the Holy Qur'an], we hear: 'And God only wishes to remove from you [all kinds of] uncleanliness, O members of the family [of Muhammad] and thoroughly purify you.' All Qur'anic exegetes are unanimous in the opinion that the term Ahl al-Bayt in this verse refers to Muhammad's daughter Fāṭima, his cousin and son-in-law 'Alī, and his two beloved grandsons, Ḥasan and Husayn" (p. 16). However, the term *Ahl al-Bayt* in the context of the 'Āshūrā tragedy refers, by extension, to (and includes) the Hashimids and 'Alids who accompanied Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 271. The Lord of Heaven = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 278. The line refers to the Prophet Muhammad's Ascension.

L. 286. Matthews's note to verse 48: "Cathay and Khotan: far-off lands in China, renowned for their perfumes." Also, spikenard: "an aromatic plant found in India. Its twisting shoots are often compared to curly black hair." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 88).

L. 286. Cathay = According to *Webster's New Geographical Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (2001), Cathay is "[a]n old name for China, esp. during the Middle Ages; introduced by Marco Polo." However, according to Steingass's *Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* (1892), it is the "[n]ame of a city

in China." As for Khaton (or Khotan), *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary* provides the following explanation: "Tartary; also a certain district of that country celebrated for its musk; the capital of Tartary."

L. 291. Haidar = Imam 'Alī.

L. 291. Haidar, Fatima, Ḥasan, Husain = a ritual motto uttered in the *azadari*, mourning, rites in the Indian Subcontinent. The above names, preceded by the name of the Prophet Muhammad, constitute what is generally regarded as *Pajtan-e Pak* 'the Blessed Five Persons', or simply 'the Holy Five'.

L. 292. The Holy Five, see note to L. 291 (above). Matthews's note to verse 49 "The Holy Five: the 'Five Holy Ones': Muhammad, Fatima, 'Ali, Ḥasan and Husain, known as the *panjtan*." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 88).

L. 294. Matthews' note to verse 49: "Rizwan: the gatekeeper of Paradise." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 88).

L. 295. The King of Time = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 299. Joseph = The Quranic Joseph (Arabic *Yūsuf*) is the symbol of being the beloved son of his father. "My sweetest Joseph" refers to Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 307. Zulfiqar = Imam 'Alī's sword. Historical records cast doubt as to whether Imam al-Ḥusayn used, and fought with, Zulfiqar on 'Āshūrā.

L. 308. The King of Heaven = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 315. Hamza = Hamza ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib was the Prophet's uncle who was martyred in the Battle of Uḥud. Prior to Imam al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom, the title *Sayyid al-shuhadā'* "The Prince of Martyrs" was used for him; however, the title has been exclusively used for Imam al-Ḥusayn after his tragic and heartrending martyrdom in Karbala.

L. 317. Matthews's note to verse 53: "The mark of Prophethood: The Prophet had a birthmark on his shoulder, which was considered to be the mark of his prophethood. The shield gains dignity by ascending to Husain's shoulder." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 88).

L. 318. The asterisk * is just a code in Matthews's version to the note just cited above.

L. 319. The Lord of High and Low = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 320. The Sayyid = al-'Abbās ibn 'Alī.

L. 324. Matthews' note to verse 54: "the sons of Zainab: the young boys, 'Aun and Muhammad, who in spite of their tender year desired the honour of taking the standard into battle, as their grandfathers, Ali and Ja'far had done in previous campaigns." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 88)

L. 327. Ja'far = Imam 'Alī's brother who led the first Muslim immigrants

to Abyssinia (that is, Ethiopia) in the seventh year after the Prophet Muhammad's attaining prophethood.

L. 327. The Lion of God = (Arabic original, *Asad Allāh*), this appellative title refers to Imam 'Alī and his braveness.

L. 332. The King = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 337. The King = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 341. The Master of Creation = Although this metaphor must refer to God the Almighty, it is not unlikely in this context to allude to Imam al-Ḥusayn, as this is a usual practice of *marthiya* composers.

L. 345. Khaibar = The Battle of Khaybar took place near the Khaybar Castle, the treacherous Jews' den and refuge, was conquered by Imam 'Alī.

L. 350. The Lord of Men = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 353. The line reveals an Oriental mode of politeness.

L. 354. Ali Akbar = See note to L. 57 (above)

L. 356. Our Heavenly Master = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 369. The Prophet's Grandson = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 372. death = martyrdom.

L. 379. Matthews's note to verse 64: "Ja'far was killed in the Battle of Khaibar, a fortified territory to the north-east of Mecca, where the Muslims defeated the Jews (629 A.D.). In the battle his arms were cut off. In their place he was given jewelled wings. The next verses refer to the Battle of Khaibar." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 88). The Winged Ja'far = (Arabic *Ja'far al-Tayyār*, lit. Ja'far the Flying) was Imam 'Alī's brother.

L. 387. Marhab = The chief of the Jews who was defeated and killed by Imam 'Alī in the Battle of Khaybar.

L. 391. Ali's noble son = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 392. Our mother's garden = Fadak, a garden which the Prophet Muhammad dedicated to his daughter Ḥaḍrat Fāṭima al-Zahrā.

L. 398. Sister of Husain = Zaynab.

L. 404. The King = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 422. The King of Heaven = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 429. And after the Qur'an thy word is law = Imamate is continuation of Prophethood.

L. 439,444,445. The King = Imam al-Ḥusayn. 444, and Matthews's note to verse 75: "The Holy Ones: the *panjtan* (verse 49 above)." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 88).

L. 451. Master = Imam al-Ḥusayn. Bowing to the Imam reveals al-'Abbās's politeness. Also, the word 'master' is another indication of his politeness

toward the Imam, for al-'Abbās never regarded himself not on a par with Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 461. The Lion of God = Imam 'Alī.

L. 463. Imam 'Alī's tomb is situated in Najaf, a great shrine city situated to the south of Karbala.

L. 465. Lord of Dust. See note to L. 52 (above) where "The Father of the Dust" is explained. "Lord of Dust" (Arabic *Abū Turāb*) refers to the Infallible Imam 'Alī.

L. 468. Shabbir = Imam al-Ḥusayn. See note to L. 137 (above).

L. 479. The "wedding night" indicated in this line reflects the legend of 'Alī al-Akbar or Qāsim's marriage in Karbala, as common amongst unschooled Indian Shiites. This is not a well-documented account, nor is it mentioned in any authoritative *maqtal*s, accounts of the martyrdom of Imam al-Ḥusayn. However, Matthews's remark reads as follows: "There is a tradition in India that 'Ali Akbar was married at Karbala." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 89).

L. 482. Yathrib = [Here 'th' has the phonetic value of 'th' in the word 'earth'.] Yathrib was the name of the city of Medina, Arabia, before the Prophet's migration there. Matthews's note to verse 81 reads thus: "Yathrib: the old name of the city of Medina." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 88)

L. 483. Umm al Banin = Correct spelling as Umm al-Banīn, lit. 'mother of sons', it is the designation of Fāṭima bint Hizām, Imam 'Alī's second wife who got married with him after the demise of Ḥaḍrat Fāṭima al-Zahrā. She was mother of al-'Abbās, Ja'far, 'Abd Allāh, and 'Uthmān, all of whom were martyred in Karbala on 'Āshūrā. However, Matthews's remark reads as follows: "Umm al Banin: the mother of Abbas."(Matthews, *Battle*, p. 89).

L. 485. A wedding custom practiced in Middle Eastern countries. However, Matthews' remark reads as follows: "henna: a red paste applied to the hands and feet of a bride and bridegroom." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 89).

L. 487. Sakina = Imam al-Ḥusayn's daughter and a symbol of enduring atrocity and hardship in childhood.

L. 499. The Sayyid women = The women who were Imam al-Ḥusayn's relatives.

L. 500. Qasim = Qāsim ibn al-Ḥasan. See note to L. 57.

L. 501. The Syrian army = The Kufan army who fought Imam al-Ḥusayn in obedience to Yazīd. Here Syria does not refer the country of Syria with its present-day political borders; rather, it refers to what is known as the Levant.

L. 507. Brood of Mustafa = the *Ahl al-Bayt*; al-Mustafā, lit. 'the well-chosen' is an appellation of the Prophet Muhammad.

L. 512. Kulsum, Arabic *Kulthūm* [with the *th* pronounced as in thin] = Imam al-Ḥusayn's daughter.

L. 513. Sakina = Imam al-Ḥusayn's daughter; Bāqir = Imam Muhammad al-Bāqir was Imam 'Alī al-Sajjād's son. At the time of the Battle of Karbala Imam Muhammad al-Bāqir was a child.

L. 517. The celestial Lord Abbas = al-'Abbās's beauty and handsomeness.

L. 519. The King of Both Worlds = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 526. The Prophet's horse = Burāq, a horse which reportedly took the Prophet to the Heaven on his Ascension.

L. 534. Huma, see note to L. 248.

L. 539. Matthews's note to verse 90: "Iram: a fabulous garden in Arabia, renowned for its beauty and freshness. Here it is compared to Karbala." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 89).

L. 541. Matthews's note to verse 91: "the five-pronged emblem: an emblem, usually made in the shape of an outstretched hand (*panja*), fixed on top of the standard. It represents the Five Holy Ones." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 89). However, contrary to Matthews's view, the editor of the present volume thinks that the *panja* must resemble al-'Abbās's arms, cut off in the battle; hence it symbolizes supporting the religion and the Imam to one's sacrifice.

L. 549. Hashimids = the blood relatives of Imam al-Ḥusayn, who accompanied him to Karbala.

L. 555. "Narcissus" is a flower to which beautiful and charming eyes are analogized in Oriental languages and cultures.

L. 562. Mustafa, our Lord = the Prophet Muhammad.

L. 564. The company of the Prophet = Imam al-Ḥusayn's front.

L. 570. The line refers to 'Alī al-Akbar's full resemblance to the Prophet. Matthews's note to verse 95: "Muhammad in Heaven: referring to 'Ali Akbar, who is said to have resembled the Prophet in looks." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 89). Abu Mikhnaf relates that "When Husayn sent 'Alī ibn Husayn to the battlefield, his eyes brimmed with tears. He said, 'God. You are witness against them that I am sending one of your servants who most resembles your Messenger in appearance and temperament, blessings upon him and his family.'(Extracted and quoted from Abu Mikhnaf, *Kitab Maqtal al-Ḥusayn: Narrative of the Matyrdom of al-Ḥusayn*, tr. H. Mavani [Montreal, Canada: Privately printed, 2002], p. 75.)

L. 574. The Syrian force. See note to L. 501 (above).

L. 576. Malik Ushtar. The correct Arabic name is Mālik ibn al-Hārith al-Ashtar al-Nakhaī, shortened as Mālik al-Ashtar (in Arabic), and as Mālik-e Ashtar (in Persian and Urdu). Mālik was a close companion of Imam 'Alī. He lost

one of his eyes at a battle, hence called al-Ashtar, or Ashtar, lit. one who lost one of his eyes. Matthews's note to verse 96 reads thus: "Malik Ushtar: 'The Master of the Camel', a renowned companion of the Prophet." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 89).

L. 577. The King = Imam al-Ḥusayn; Holy War = Jihad. Jihad is primarily a defensive war.

L. 579. Fierce lions = Imam al-Ḥusayn's associates. Foxes = Yazīd's army; fox symbolizes cowardliness.

L. 583. Ali's grandsons = the 'Alids = the descendants of Imam 'Alī Matthews's note to verse 98: "Ali's grandsons: 'Aun and Muhammad (verse 54 above)." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 89).

L. 584. Zulfiqar. See note to L. 307 (above).

L. 600. Matthews's note to verse 100: "Arzaq: a warrior of Yazīd's army, killed by Qasim." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 89).

L. 603. The son of Sa'd, known as Ibn Sa'd = He was the chief commander of Yazīd's forces at Karbala.

L. 607. The Euphrates, Arabic *al-Furāt*. One of the two main rivers of Iraq on which the city of Karbala is situated. Great virtues and blessings are attached to this river in Shiite hadith sources.

L. 612. The Prince of Arabs = Imam 'Alī.

L. 626. No martyr's head was severed by the foe = This shameful act was committed by the Umayyad for the first time in the Arab history.

L. 643. The King of the Age = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 646. Aṣghar. See note to L. 222 (above).

L. 656. Black Kahil's son = The reference is to Ḥarmala ibn Kāhil al-Asadī al-Kūfī who reportedly shot and martyred Imam al-Ḥusayn's baby, 'Alī al-Aṣghar. Matthews's note to verse 110 is as follows: "Kahil: Hurmila ibn Kahil, an expert bowman of Yazīd's army." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 89).

L. 658. The phrase "It's target was" is grammatically incorrect. Its correct form must be "Its target was."

L. 659. The Leader = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 664. Holy Ground = Karbala. There are numerous hadiths that Karbala is a highly sacred city, and even higher by far in station than Mecca. For some information, see Ibn Qūlawayh, ed., *Kāmil al-Zīyārāt*, pp. 259-271.

L. 670. Hamza. See note to L. 315 (above).

L. 673. Matthews's note to verse 113: "Rustam: a hero of Persian legend, renowned for his great club." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 89).

L. 677. Matthews's note to verse 113: "Duldul: The mule of Muhammad, which

he gave to 'Ali" (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 89).

L. 677. Duldul = Another name of Dhū 'l-Janāḥ, Imam al-Ḥusayn's horse.

L. 678. Master = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 679. It does not seem likely that the Battle of Karbala took place in summer, for the 'Āshūrā tragedy occurred on 10 October 680, and October is the tenth month which comes in autumn. However, the desert region of southern Iraq has scorching sun, hence it can be compared with summer time for its burning heat.

L. 687. Alqama = A tributary, branching from the Euphrates (*al-Furāt*) near which the Battle of Karbala took place. It is where al-'Abbās ibn 'Alī was martyred. Matthews's note to verse 115: "The Alqama: a tributary of the Euphrates." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 89).

L. 690. The Euphrates. See note to L. 607 (above).

L. 698. Matthews's note to verse 117: "chenar: an Indian tree, whose leaves turn bright red in autumn." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 89).

L. 727. The King of Nations = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

Ll. 739 and 745. Ibn Sa'd = The chief commander on Yazīd's front at the Battle of Karbala.

L. 745. It is very much unlikely for such a cruel person like Ibn Sa'd to address Imam al-Ḥusayn as "Lord of Heaven". This expression reflects Mir Anis's devotion, not the respect probably discharged by Ibn Sa'd.

L. 750. It seems that the line must read: "thy hand's water", not "thy hand water", as it appears in the Matthews's original text (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 68).

L. 752. Salsabil = A paradise spring of fountain, also mentioned in the Holy Quran (76:18). Matthews's note to verse 126: "Salsabil: A fountain in Paradise. During the month of Muharram, water or sherbet is set out at places along the road for thirsty travelers, in memory of Husain's suffering. The stalls set up are known as sabil." (Matthews, *Battle*, pp. 89-9).

L. 757. Matthews's note to verse 127: "Jamshed: a legendary Persian king, who possessed a cup in the bottom of which he could see the future." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 90).

L. 759. Kausar. See note to L. 15 (above).

L. 763. Zulfiqar. See note to L. 307 (above).

L. 764. Son of Sa'd = Ibn Sa'd. See note to Ll. 739 and 745.

L. 786. Laila = Imam al-Ḥusayn's wife and mother of 'Alī al-Akbar. Contrary to the common view, there is no mention of her name in authentic *maqtal* book. Apparently, she had passed away long before the Battle of Karbala.

L. 796. Matthews's note to verse 133: "The wings of Gabriel: Gabriel is said by the Shi'as to have the names of 'Ali and Husain engraved upon his wings." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 90).

L. 816. Zulfiqar. See note to L. 307 (above).

L. 853. The Lion of Creation = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 854. The Euphrates. See note to L. 607 (above).

L. 889. The Lion of Karbala = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 895. The Warrior King = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 946. Zuljinah. See note to L. 677 (above). Matthews's note to verse 158: "Zuljanah: the name of Ali's horse." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 90).

L. 953. Matthews's note to verse 159: "Noah: There is a popular legend that Noah called upon Husain to save him from the flood." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 90).

L. 954. Ali Akbar. See note to L. 130 (above).

L. 960. Zulfiqar. See note to L. 307 (above).

L. 961. Ibn Sa'd. See note to L. 207 (above).

L. 984. Zulfiqar. See note to L. 307 (above).

L. 988. Matthews's note to verse 165: "Marhab, Antar: two of Yazīd's best fighters." (*Battle*, p. 90).

L. 992. Darling of the Arab race = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 993. The King = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 996. Zulfiqar. See note to L. 307 (above).

L. 1002. Matthews's note to verse 167: "The earth-supporting cow: the earth is imagined to be supported on the horns of a cow, which in turn is supported on the back of a fish swimming in the primordial ocean." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 90).

L. 1010. The Scion of the Dusty One = Imam 'Alī's son, viz. Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 1018. Zulfiqar. See note to L. 307 (above).

L. 1021. The King = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 1022. Zulfiqar. See note to L. 307 (above).

L. 1027. The King of Faith = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 1033. Matthews's note to verse 173: "the peaks of Qaf: fairies are supposed to inhabit the Caucasus Mountains, known in Arabic and Persian as Qaf." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 90).

L. 1039. Shabbir = Imam al-Ḥusayn. See note to L. 137 (above).

L. 1044. His nation = his *umma*, viz. religious community.

L. 1051. The King = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 1055. Your helpless Lord = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 1058. Assassins = the foes, enemies, who fought Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 1060. The line refers to Imam al-Ḥusayn and the type of cherish he used to receive in childhood from the Prophet.

L. 1064. The noble son of Fatima = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 1065. Sabbir = Imam al-Ḥusayn. See note to L. 137 (above).

L. 1081. The King = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 1082. True Islam = Imam al-Ḥusayn who has represented true Islam.

L. 1090. Sinan, the son of Uns = Sinān ibn Anas. *Uns* is not correct; the correct form is *Anas*.

L. 1097. The Qur'an = the articulate Qur'an, viz. Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 1098. Matthews's note to verse 183: "Ka'aba: the sacred enclosure at Mecca, containing the black stone — the Holy of Holies of Islam." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 90)

L. 1107. Our Sayyid = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 1117. Ali's daughter = Zaynab.

L. 1118. Ali's darling son = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 1124. Sayyid = Imam al-Ḥusayn.

L. 1127. Matthews's note to verse 189: "the promise: it is said that, in his childhood, Husain promised Muhammad that he would save his people." (Matthews, *Battle*, p. 90)

L. 1130. Haidar's daughter = Zaynab; Haidar = Imam 'Alī.

L. 1150. Sakina = Imam al-Ḥusayn's daughter. See note to L. 487 (above).

L. 1159. Anis = Mir Babr Ali "Mir Anis" addresses himself in the closing sestet of his *marthiya*.

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