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Because of the size of this volume it has been decided not to publish the Autumn issues 1985 and 1986 of this journal.

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PREFACE

This special number of *Al-Serāt* contains papers which were either presented at, or, in some cases, subsequently submitted in longer written form to, the International Conference on the Imam Ḥusayn held in London from the 6th to the 9th of July, 1984. The event was jointly organized by the Muhammadi Trust of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Muhammadi Islamic Centre, Toronto, Canada, to commemorate the 1400th *hijrī* anniversary of the birth of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the third Shʿī Imam and grandson of Muḥammad, the prophet of Islam, in 4 AH. Further details of the conference and speakers can be found in: Maryam Wdlings, 'Report on the International Seminar on Imam Ḥusayn. peace be upon him', *Al-Serāt* X/2 (Autumn, 1984), 3-12.

The papers have been arranged thematically under three headings, and within these headings the order is alphabetical, according to author. Given both the variety of ways in which the subjects were treated in the papers themselves, and the different backgrounds of the contributors, only an absolute minimum of uniformity has been imposed by the editors, and, while it is hoped that consistency has been maintained within each paper, such consistency should not be looked for between them. Dates, for example, usually appear in their *hijrī* form, but in some places they are given according to the Christian calendar, or in both forms; it should be clear from the context which system is being used. Qur'ānic quotations have been given throughout in the form of, e.g., 2:156. without further indication. The transliteration of Arabic names and terms follows the usual style of *Al-Serāt*, but in the case of other languages the editors have generally retained the transliterations given by each author.

The Muhanimadi Trust would like to thank the contributors and organizers for their cooperation and assistance, and for their kind patience in awaiting the delayed publication of these papers. In particular, they would like to thank Mahmoud Ayoub and Azim Nanji for their help and advice in the preparation of this volume, and Lynda Clarke for her translation of Professor al-Janhānī's contribution.

INTRODUCTION

This publication of the proceedings of the conference to commemorate the 1400th *hijra* anniversary of the birth the the Sayyid al-Shuhadā', the Imam Ḥusayn, peace be upon him, gives me the opportunity to say a few words of introduction about the Muhammadi Trust and the Muhammadi Islamic Centre for those whose do not already know about their operations and activities. The Muhammadi Trust was established in the United Kingdom in 1973, with its registered office in London, for the purpose, *inter alia*, of encouraging Islamic studies and disseminating knowledge of Islamic teachings: and its sister organization, the Muhammadi Islamic Centre of Canada, was set up in 1979, with the additional aim of awarding fellowships to students and scholars of Islam, and it has recently been registered under the name of the Muhammadi Islamic Foundation so as to allow it greater freedom and independence in its activities. Both organizations are anxious to strengthen unity among all Muslims, and, in particular, the youth. In pursuit of these objectives, the Trust has published a number of books and booklets in the English language. Some of these are translations of Arabic books on religious themes and topics, written by renowned scholars, and some are original works by scholars of international repute who have contributed to the study of Islam. The Trust also publish a journal, *Al-Serāt*, which prints articles on religious topics by eminent writers. Those who are familiar with this journal know that the utmost importance is given to the quality and standard of the articles, and, at the same time, full freedom to express views is allowed the writers so as to permit the publication of articles propounding diverse views with which the publishers may not necessarily agree. This effort of the Trust is directed towards the dissemination in English of knowledge concerning Islam in all its aspects.

Although a large body of literature on Islam exists in oriental languages such as Arabic, Persian, and Urdu, there is, in contrast, a dearth of such literature in English. Yet English is the only language with which our younger generation living in the Western world is familiar.

The diffusion and dissemination of knowledge is. according to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, the religious duty of every Muslim, man or woman. The Prophet of Islam has enjoined us to acquire knowledge from the cradle to the grave. As Sa'dī said,

پئے علم چوں شمع باید گداخت کہ بے علم نتواں خدا را شناخت

'*to kindle the light of knowledge, one must necessarily melt like a candle; for how can one understand the divine Being without the glow of learning.*'

I will now say just a few words as my humble tribute to the great Imam whose memory we have honoured in this conference. As a gem of the purest rays, serenest sparkles and reflected light, the life of the Imam Ḥusayn mirrors the light of guidance through its every facet. It is no wonder that the Imam Ḥusayn is looked upon as an ideal by all who believe in righteous causes, who believe that no sacrifice is too great for the achievement of a noble aim, who believe that death for a righteous cause is the very acme of noble living and far preferable to a life of ignominy and degredation based on compromising principles. How rightly Kawar Mchandra Singh Bedi has said:

جی کے مرنا تو سب کو آتا ہے مر کے جینا سکھا دیا تو نے

'*Everybody knows that after life there is death;*
but it is you [O Ḥusayn] who has taught how to live by dying.'

As Thomas Carlyle, in his *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, has put it: 'The best lesson which we get from the tragedy of Karbala is that Husayn and his followers were rigid believers in God: they illustrated that numerical superiority does not count when it comes to truth and falsehood. The victory of Husayn, despite his minority, marvels me.'

On the plains of Karbalā', Ḥusayn showed what *jihād* stands for in Islamic terminology. He taught us, as no one else could have done,

that it does not mean aggrandisement or the flamboyant display of valour which cries out: 'One crowded hour of glorious life is worth an age without a name.' He showed, as none else could have done, that to remain firm and steadfast in the hour of trial and tribulation, to surrender to the will of Allah with complete resignation is the zenith of martyrdom and *jihād*. He showed us that even the death and destruction of his dearest ones cannot deter a person from the performance of the appointed task, from the fulfillment of the ordained purpose, without the least hesitation, without the least demur, without a word or murmur of complaint. Who else but Ḥusayn could have prayed to Allah for the salvation of Muslims without any rancour or bitterness under the dagger of the assassin. And all this with the utmost serenity and calm which comes from supreme resignation to the will of Allah and complete submission to His divine purpose. As Yagana says,

ڈوب کر پار اتر گیا اسلام آپ کیا جانیں کربلا کیا ہے

Only after drowning did Islam survive. How is it possible for anyone to comprehend the meaning, message, and significance of Karbalā'?

Secretary to the Muhammadi Trust.

THE IMAM ḤUSAYN: HIS ROLE AS PARADIGM

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INTRODUCTION

THIS article seeks to summarize the role of the the Imam Ḥusayn as 'model' or alternatively as 'paradigm', a choice of terminology that I shall clarify below.

As is well known, the Shī'a integrate the *aḥādīth* or Sayings of the the Imams into the concept of *sunna*, together with the *aḥādīth* of the Prophet. Thus *al-ḥadīth al-nabawī* and *al-ḥadīth al-walawī* go hand in hand, both representing the indivisibility as well as continuity inherent in their concept of *sunna*.[1] This concept reflects two aspects: one that the conduct of the Prophet and the Imams exemplify an ideal, and secondly that such an ideal represents a paradigm according to which Muslims guide their own lives. If *tanzīl* or revelation can be said to represent the vertical dimension by which the Divine Will is revealed, then the Prophet and the the Imams represent through their model lives the unfolding at the horizontal level, that is to say in the world, of that Will. This particular dimension of the *sunna* embodies the enactment of a paradigmatic role rather than its juridicial complement where the concern is expressed in terms of conformity to a normative pattern as developed in the *sharī'a*.

Among certain Western scholars the analysis of the 'prophetic paradigm' has been focused essentially on the stages through which a 'prophet's' life may pass, and such phases, regarded as prototypical, have come to be applied to the lives of individuals as far apart in time and purpose as Zoroaster, the prophets of the Bible, the Prophet

1 See for example Shaykh al-Mufīd's *Kitāb al-Irshād*, trans. I. K Howard (London, 1981), pp 1-5, and al-Qāḍī al-Nu'mān's *Dā'a'im al-Islām*, ed. A. A A. Fyzee (Cairo, 1951). I, ch. I.

Muḥammad, Martin Luther, Joseph Smith, and many pretenders to the title in our time.[2] Such generalization and consequent superficializaiion can best be avoided by rooting the idea of *paradigm* in an Islamic context and defining it in terms of the concept of *sunna* that is found in the established sources on the lives of the Prophet and the Imams. The the Imams, as heirs, *awsiyā*, to the prophets, and as thosc who communicate thc esoteric meaning and guard the exoteric aspects of the Divine Message, incorporate in their exemplary lives the *sunna* of all the prophets. This has come to have special significance in the case of the Imam Ḥusayn. As Professor Mahmud Ayoub has shown in his extensive study, each of the great prophetic figures, from Adam to Noah to Abraham and Jesus, participates at the level of Shīʿī sacred history in the suffering of the Imam Ḥusayn.[3] Within the perspective of the Shīʿī tradition, the relationship between the Imam Ḥusayn and the ancient prophets is linked to the key events in their lives, which in turn depict a common pattern of participation and sharing in the tragedy at Karbalā'. In this way the paradigm reflected in the *sunna* of the prophets is projected into the life of the Imam Ḥusayn. At the esoteric level, this is a sacred conception of history in which each of the prophetic cycles has provided a *sunna*, a pattern of life as an example for those to whom the revelation ts directed, and which has as its ultimate goal the creation or an ideal set of values for human kind. This process reaches its consummation in the Qur'ānic verse: *Today, I have perfected your din far you and called it Islam.* (5:4)

The the Imams, as an integral part of this sacred history, have a key role in the attainment of the ideal, and the specific participation of the ancient prophets, as well as the relationship between the Prophet Muḥammad, the other members of the Holy Family, and the Imam Ḥusayn, affirm the continuity of this paradigmatic role in their lives.

2 See for example the reference in M. R. Waldman. 'The Popular Appeal of the Prophetic Paradigm in West Africa'. *Contributions to Asian Studies*, 17 (1982), 110. See also I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion* (London, 1971), for the background to such general notions of prophets.

3 Mahmoud Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam* (The Hague, 1978), pp. 27 ff. in particular. This paper has benefited greatly from Professor Ayoub's work. Where possible I have also drawn on the historical background front the work of Prof. S. H. M. Jafari, *Origins and Early Development of Shiʿa Islam* (London. 1979).

In reviewing the use of the term *paradigm* and rooting it within the conception of the *sunna*, I hope the original sense of T. S. Kuhn's use of the term 'paradigm'[4] has been clarified as representing the universally accepted set of presuppositions concerning the nature of the world with the implication that the world is to be perceived according to certain metaphysical assumptions.

As the Sayyid al-Shuhadā', the Imam Ḥusayn's life in Shī'ī tradition embodies in a vivid and dramatic manner the unfolding of the true sense of history and its significance for believers, and, as a mirror of the ideal present in the lives of the great prophets, he is seen as 'the living perfection or concretization of this ideal'.[5]

With this background in mind, we can focus on three different but inter-related contexts to illustrate the significance of this paradigmatic role: (i) the Paradigm of Leadership (*imāma*), (ii) the Paradigm of Polity (*umma*), (iii) the Paradigm of Moral Order (*dīn*). It can be argued in each case that the Qur'ānic basis and prophetic example applicable to the respective context had undergone an erosion, and that the life of the Imam Ḥusayn seen through the traditional sources and symbolized by its repeated commemoration reflected a challenge to such erosion.

THE PARADIGM OF LEADERSHIP

Historians, and in particular modern Western historians of early Islamic history, who address the issue of leadership as it is reflected in biographical details on the life of the prophets and the the Imams, have tended to be sceptical about the value of such details.[6] Though the general controversy between those who see leadership primarily as an individual attribute and those who prefer to view it as being determined by the situation still continues, it assumes a critical significance in the case of early Islam. The scepticism has often lead to an over-emphasis on the historical situation to explain events and a subsequent minimization of the historic influence exerted by the individual

4 T. S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (Chicago. 1962)

5 Ayoub, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

6 As a recent example see the remarks in M. A. Cook, *Muhammad* (London, 1983), pp. 61 ff.

examples of the prophets and the the Imams. In the case of the Imam Ḥusayn, this tendency has led to a virtual exclusion of most details and a discounting of the majority of traditions that depict the events in the life of the the Imam.[7]

As a result, much of the complexity and significance of the role of leadership exemplified by his life has been missed. The primary factor in this significance is the pattern of communication that came to exist between the individual life and the response of the group of followers who saw an intense, cosmic dimension unfolding in those events. As a paradigm in the context of Islam, the role of leadership of the Imam Ḥusayn represents a continuing pattern of communication as well as a learning process between the followers and the model. The testimony of Shīʿī tradition is the testimony of participants for whom ‘history' and ‘biography’ are repeated and renewed, transcending the specific conditions that may have created it. The life of the Imam Ḥusayn thus understood as a paradigm of leadership becomes a model by embodying those qualities that, in all times and stages of human history, can be regarded as the true themes of the human quest for meaning.

The historical circumstances that precipitated the events of Karbalā’ are too well known to be recounted here, but the specific actions of the Imam Ḥusayn in challenging the authority of Yazīd is explained by the traditional sources in its particular context. They point out the circumstances under which the *bayʿa* or allegiance was demanded by Yazīd and rejected by the Imam Ḥusayn, where Islamic norms, which previously had at least been adhered to nominally, were now being discarded.[8]

In a sermon, preserved in Ṭabarī and delivered before reaching Karbalā’, the Imam Ḥusayn sets out the basis for assuming the position of leadership and putting his life in jeopardy.

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7 See for example the reference made by L. Veccia Vaglieri regarding the scepticism of other historians in her article ‘Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī’, *E.I.*[II], III. 614.

8 See in this connection the remarks of Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Ḥusayn Tabatabaʿi in *Shiʿite Islam,* trans. S. H Nasr (New York. 1975), p. 200.

O people, the Messenger of God said during his life, 'He who sees an oppressive ruler violating the sanctions (*halāl*) of God, revoking the covenant of God, opposing the *sunna* of the Apostle of God … and does not show zeal against him in word or deed. God would surely cause him to enter his abode in the fire.'[9]

It is important to note that such a definition of *sunna* and the assumption of the responsibility of standing fast to it implies that the leadership of the prophets and the Imams draws its inspiration and strength from its awareness of a role envisaged for them by its very transcendent and cosmic origin. This role cannot be a merely passive one; it is dynamic, because linked to the transcendent, it imparts its example not just by word but also by deed.

THE PARADIGM OF POLITY: THE MODEL *UMMA*

The organization of the *umma* at the time of the Prophet Muḥammad, as in other realms, was based on Islam's rejection of a dichotomous view of order. True sovereignty in the *umma*, which was the expression of the Divine Will through the revelation of the Qur'ān, rested ultimately with Allah, and was effected through His messenger the Holy Prophet. Islam, in addressing the totality of life, thus included within its vision the realm of political life. According to the Shī'a, the continuity of this principle and paradigm lay in the acceptance of the divinely instituted leadership of the Imam 'Alī after the Prophet. For them, the issue of leadership was inseparably bound to the concept of *walāya* and the esoteric role of the the Imams in interpreting the Qur'ān and the *sunna*. As is well known, the position of the Imam 'Alī and his followers, in response to events leading to the establishment of the first three *khulafā' rashīdūn*, was to safeguard the well-being of the *umma*, while retaining the Shī'ī perspective on the role of the the Imam.

The onset of the Umayyad dynasty, and particularly the nomination by Mu'āwiya of his son Yazīd to the position of ruler, altered the overall context quite dramatically. It is within this particular context that the role of the Imam Ḥusayn represents the affirmation of the paradigm of

9 Ayoub, *op cit.*, p. 107, where this passage is quoted.

polity and of the model based on the perceived danger that the unity of members of the *umma*, as well as the very basis of its ethos, was being threatened by a complete bifurcation. In relationship to the question of sovereignty, the historical events raised the question of whether the political life of Muslims was to draw its source of values from the paradigm of the *umma* established by the Prophet, or whether the operation of military power was to be permitted full sway. Whatever political and other causes are adduced for the eventual problems that beset Muslims during this period, our sources spend considerable time highlighting the Imam Ḥusayn's resistance to the idea of the pursuit of power for its own sake. The aflirmalion that, in the organization of the *umma*, the principle of the sovereignty of Allah should not be disestablished by the mere operation of power, constitutes a second paradigm established through the Imam Ḥusayn's life.

THE PARADIGM OF MORAL ORDER

Related to the issue of sovereignty in the *umma* was the question of the moral order and of the values by which life in the *umma* would be governed. One significant aspect of the conflict that came to a head at Karbalā' as depicted in Shī'ī literature was between those who wished to maintain a totalizing Islamic vision, and those who based their behaviour on a frame of reference outside the Qur'ān and *sunna*, the Imam Ḥusayn's message to those who wished to support his struggle as reflected in the letters he wrote, according to tradition, illuminate the nature of conflict:

For behold the *sunna* has been rendered dead and innovations are made alive. Thus if you listen to my words and obey my commands I shall guide you to the right path.[10]

In order to help define the elements in this conflict. I wish to borrow a contemporary term to identify how erosion of the *sunna* can be perceived. The term is 'secularity'. The process of secularization implies that there is no sacred centre, no defined and accepted authority originating from a Divine Mandate, and that mere historical actuality

10 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

can determine what values predominate in life. This absence of faith and its primacy reflects the secularization of values. Our sources, when they refer to the events, make it evident that this was indeed the threat that the Imam Ḥusayn perceived, as the *umma* was forced to come to terms and adapt to the given conditions of the time. The model that emerges from the nature of his response is that the source of values and identity, regardless of how grim the historical conditions may have been, cannot be made subject to the weight of circumstances; it must always remain constant.

The other clement of 'sccularity' that has some relevance for the situation at the time has to do with how the Imam Ḥusayn's very presence represented a threat. In as much as he symbolized the *sunna* and was the focus of those whose hopes and aspirations were based on the restoration of the primacy of Islam, his presence and role acted as a deterrent. For secularly to triumph, tradition, since it is regarded as static, must be broken through. On the other hand, as heir to the Prophetic Tradition, the Imam Ḥusayn's role was to safeguard and affirm the integrity of Tradition and to lend his prestige and authority to its defence. Secularization necessitates the disengagement of religious values and institutions from the sphere of public and political life. The events of Karbalā', in their own time and by their historic commemoration, were a resounding rejection of such a disjunction.

As I indicated earlier, the study of great figures also involves an analysis of the aspirations of those who respond to them and the continuing interaction between the 'model' and the followers. Thus, in examining the life of the Imam Ḥusayn, we are conscious of his own personal and moral example but also of its immediate and long-term social and historical impact. In this way we can hope to do justice to the life-long themes mirrored by his life, that have been absorbed into the consciousness of Muslims. These themes, which survive the historical moment and the limitations of time, represent a continuing source of inspiration in the universal search for transcendence.