The Journey of Tears

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Written by Mullah Bashir Hassanali Rahim

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1st Canadian Edition
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DEDICATION

This book has been dedicated to the memories of Haji Rajabali Gulamhussein Datoo, Late Mullah Bashir Hassanali Rahim, Late Sugrabai Bashir Rashim, Late Aziz Anwarali Datoo & Late Qais Mahmood Nurmohamad.

All readers are requested to recite **Al-Fatiha** for the Isale Sawaab of the above Marhumeen.

In Memory of:

Haji Darweshali R. Bhamani
Shahrbanu D. R. Bhamani
Haji Shabbirhussain D. Bhamani
Rashid Abdallah Bhamani
Hoorbai Rashid Bhamani
Virbai Dhalla Bhamani
Abdul Rasul Rashid Bhamani
Shirinbai Abdulrasul Rashid Bhamani
Yusufali Rashid Bhamani
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Mahmood Mohamedtaki Champsi
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Laila Damani
Haji Abdulla Datoo
Haji Gulamhussein Abdulla Datoo
Haji Rajabali Gulamhussein Datoo
Maryambai Rajabali Datoo
Marziabai Roshanali Datoo
Hassanali Gulamhussein Datoo
Amirali Gulamhussein Datoo
Hayderali Gulamhussein Datoo
Roshanali Gulamhussein Datoo

Gulamali Gulamhussein Datoo
Haji Rajabali Gulamhussein Datoo
Fatmabai Abdulraza Datoo/Mawji
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Dawood Hassan
Feroz M. C. Jaffer
Hussain M. C. Jaffer
Haji Jaffer M. Jaffer
Maryambai J. M. Jaffer
Abdulhussain M. Jaffer
Laylabai A. M. Jaffer
Akberali M. Jaffer
Laylabai Akberali Jaffer
Yusuf M. Jaffer
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Ramzanali R. Jaffer
Naazim R. R. Jaffer
Mullah Asgharali M. M. Jaffer
Hassanali Dhalla Kanji
Anvarali Sachedina Kalyan
Gulamali Ladak
Haji Mohsin Gulamali Ladak
Abdulhusein Mohamed Manek

Akberali Mohamed Manek
Haji Pyarali Mohamedali Merali
Gulamabbas Gulamali Merali
Nargis Anverali Nathoo
Fatmabai Ali Nensi
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Aminabai Yusufali Nurmohamed
Qais Mahmood Nurmohamed
Haji Rajabali Hasham Paroo
Count Kassamali Rajabali Paroo
Mullah Pyarali Hassanali Rahim
Mullah Sadiq Hussein Rahim
Mullah Muhammad Hassanali Rahim
Mullah Bashir Hassanali Rahim
Sugrabai Bashir Rahim
Haji Abdullah Sajan
Roshanbanu Abdullah Sajan
Kulsumbai Abdullah Sajan
Fatmabai Pyarali Sajan
Fatmabai Mohamed-taki Sajan
Raziyabai Muhammad Suleiman
Haji Mohamed A. G. Versi
Muhammad Hussain R. Walji

Please remember these deceased individuals with the recitation of a Suratul **Fatiha** for their reward.

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In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

Foreword by Project Initiator

In 1989 my grand-father, the Late Mullah Bashir Hassanali Rahim decided to create awareness amongst the youngsters of the tragedy of Karbala, its pathos, impact and message. The intention for this was since due to the fact that the majaalis were in the language of Urdu, the youth and younger generation were not fully aware of the purpose of the month of Muharram.

Once the book was distributed among the communiy to this era, they began to have children's majaalis during the twelve days. They were encouraged to host the majlis turn by turn, recite, and take charge of nawha and tabarrukaat, etc. My grand-father would prepare the material for them. Alhamdulillah the tradition continues to this day.

The past has now come to repeat itself, and not only has it affected Europe, but the Muslim Shi'a community all over the world, especially where I live in London, Ontario, Canada. At the mosque, I observe the surrounding of the youth and younger generation and what I see is unexplainable. The youth and younger generation not only do not know who our Imam is, but how he and his family sacrificed their life for us, which is why I have tackled on the responsibility to take great care of this matter.

Foreword by Project Initiator

Through my dearest friends and uncles (Shaikh Shafiq Hudda & Shaikh Saleem Bhimji) they had taken on the responsibility to not only assist, but also publish this book.

Please remember me and for all of those that took part in the project in your prayers.

With salaams and dua's,

Kabir Arifali Datoo

Introduction

The History and Philosophy of Aza-e-Hussain

a) The Message

Over one thousand three hundred and fifty years ago, on the 10th of Muharram, just before 'asr, a man stood on a sand-dune at Kerbala. He was bleeding from several wounds on his body. He had lost everything. Since early morning he had carried several dead bodies into his camp. He had even buried his infant child.

He looked at the bodies of his loved ones. Tears flowed out of his eyes. He looked at the sky and seemed to draw some strength from an unseen source. Then, like a muezzin from a minaret, he raised a call: "Is there anyone who will come to assist us? Is there anyone who will respond to our call for aid?"

He turned direction and repeated the call. He did this four times.

Whom was he calling out to? Surely he was not expecting anyone to come to his aid. Those who wanted to help him had already crossed the lines and laid down their lives for the cause. He knew there was no one left. He knew that there was no other Hur. And yet, meticulously and laboriously, he made sure that his call reverberated in all directions.

Of course that call was a call to Muslims of every generation in every land. It was a call to us where ever we may be. It was a call for help. Help against Yezeedism which in every age rears its ugly head to oppress justice, truth and morality. Our Imam was calling out to every Muslim of every age and time to combat Yezeedism, both within himself and as an external force. This was his battle cry for jihad-ul-akbar. He had already demonstrated that his objective had always been to create a spiritual awakening through

amr bil ma'ruf and nahyi anil munkar. Now he was calling out for the continuation of this jihad at the individual, social and political levels.

b) Evolution of Aza

Muslims, and more particularly the Shiahs, have answered this call with the unique institution of aza-e-Hussain. With every tear that we shed for him we pledge to resist the oppression of injustice, immorality, inequity and falsehood. Every time we raise our hand and bring it down on our chest in matam, we are saying: "Labbaik, Labbaik Ya Mawla!" to our Imam, Hussain Ibne Ali, the grandson of the Holy Prophet (SAWA).

For long the word aza-e-Hussain has been exclusively used in connection with the remembrance ceremonies for the martyrdom of Imam Hussain. Aza-e-Hussain includes mourning congregations, lamentations, matam and all such actions which express the emotions of grief, anger and, above all, repulsion against what Yezid stood for. These emotions, however, remain futile and hypocritical unless accompanied by a will to reform both at the individual level and the community level.

The term majlis has both a grammatical meaning and a meaning which relates to aza-e-Hussain. In its technical sense, a majlis is a meeting, a session or a gathering. In reference to aza-e-Hussain, it means a gathering to mourn Imam Hussain. In this sense it was first used by our sixth Imam, Ja'far Sadiq (A.S.) It is reported that his companion al-Fudhayl Ibne Yasaar came to pay his respects to the Holy Imam.

After the exchange of usual courtesies, Imam asked al-Fudhayl: "Do you people ever organise majaalis to recall the martyrdom of

Imam Hussain?" Al-Fudhayl, with tears pouring down his eyes, replied: "Yabna Rasulillah, indeed we do." The Imam said: "May Allah bless you. I highly approve of such majaalis."

On another occasion, the poet Ja'far ibne Iffaan recited to our Imam al-Sadiq a poem on the tragedy of Kerbala. The Imam began to weep uncontrollably. He then addressed the poet in the following terms: "O Iffaan, do not think that it is only those whom you can see here are listening to your poetry. In fact Allah's closest angels are present here at this majlis and they are all listening to your recitation and they too lament and weep. May Allah bless you for what you have recited. He will, inshallah, reward you with paradise for your efforts on our behalf."

Aza-e-Hussain was a phenomenon which gripped Muslim conscience immediately after the tragedy of Kerbala.

The first majlis-e-Hussain was recited in the market-place of Kufa by a lady from whose head her veil had been ripped off, whose hopes and aspirations had been destroyed on the blood-drenched sands of Kerbala but whose indomitable spirit stepped forward to free the Islamic values from the yoke of tyranny and oppression. She was the first one to answer the call of Imam Hussain. Standing on her unsaddled camel, she looked at the multitude rejoicing the victory of Yezid. As soon as people saw her, they were quiet. They knew that a historic moment for Kufa had arrived. Looking straight at them, the daughter of Ali said: "Woe upon you O people of Kufa. Do you realise which piece of Muhammad's heart you have severed! Which pledge you have broken! Whose blood you have shed! Whose honour you have desecrated! It is not just Hussain whose headless body lies unburied on the sands of Kerbala. It is the heart of the Holy Prophet. It is the very soul of Islam!"

The first majlis touched and moved the people of Kufa so deeply as to give rise to both the Tawwabun movement and al-Mukhtar's quest for vengeance.

Ten days after Ashura, a messenger from Yezid arrived in Madina. His name was Abd al-Malik ibne Abi al Harith al-Sulamee. He came to tell the Governor, Amr bin Said al-Aas that Hussain ibne Ali had been killed in Kerbala.

The Governor, more conscious of the mood of the people, said that he himself could not make the news public but Abd al-Malik, if he so wished, could make the public announcement. Abd al-Malik announced the news after the morning prayers.

There was such intense weeping and wailing from the homes of Banu Hashim that the very walls of masjidun-nabawi began to tremble. Zainab, Umme Luqman, the daughter of Aqeel ibne Abi Talib came out screaming: "What will you say when the Prophet asks you: "What have you, the last ummah, done with my offspring and my family after I left them? Some of them are prisoners and some of them lie killed, stained with blood. What sort of ajr-e-risaalah is this that you disobey me by oppressing my children?"

Fatimah Binte Huzaam, also known as Ummul Baneen, carried her young grandson Ubaidullah ibne Abbas and prepared to go out. When asked where she was going, she said that she was taking the orphan of Abbas to offer condolences to the mother of Hussain.

Marwan ibne Hakam reports that every afternoon men and women would gather at Jannat-ul-Baqee and there would be remembrance of the tragedy of Kerbala and the weeping and wailing could be heard miles away.

When the prisoners were finally freed by Yezid, they asked for an opportunity to have rites of remembrance in Damascus. A house was made available to them and aza-e-Hussain went on for over a week. Just as Hadhrat Musa Kalimullah had been raised in the palace of the enemy of Allah, Firaun, Bibi Zainab laid the foundation of aza-e-Hussain in the very capital of his murderer!

On their return to Madina, Bibi Zainab took over the leadership of aza-e-Hussain in the city of the Holy Prophet. This aroused such strong emotions in the people and such revulsion against the oppressor that Amr ibne Said ibne al-Aas wrote to Yezid to have Bibi Zainab exiled from Madina. This was done in the beginning of 62 A.H. Bibi Zainab died shortly afterwards.

Both the 4th and 5th Imams greatly encouraged aza-e-Hussain. In their times aza-e-Hussain had to be performed in utmost secrecy as the regime was opposed to any remembrance of Kerbala. The poets who composed elegies and the devout Shiahs who attended the gatherings at which these elegies were recited did so at the risk of their lives. Nonetheless, the poets continued to pour out their emotions in their poetry.

Some of these poetry are extant today and one can see the intensity of faith and sadness enshrined in the words of the poets.

Gradually, the institution of ziyarah came into being. People would visit the graves of the martyrs and there perform aza-e-Hussain. Our Imams wrote for them ziyarahs to be recited. One of these ziyarahs is recited today by us and is known as Ziyarat-e-Waritha.

When we examine Ziyarat-e-Waritha, we can see not only a testimony of the greatness of Imam Hussain and the moving sentiments describing his sacrifice for the cause of Allah, but also

a solemn pledge and a commitment by the reciter: "And I make Allah, His angels, His prophets, and His messengers, witnesses to the fact that I believe in Imam Hussain and in my return to Allah. I also believe in the laws of Allah and in the consequences of human actions. I have subordinated the desires of my heart to his (Imam Hussain's) heart and I sincerely submit to him and (promise to follow his commands)"

Clearly, this undertaking was never meant by our Imams to be an empty ritual. Recitation of Ziyarat-e-Waritha is a commitment to Imam Hussain's cause made in the presence of Allah and the angels and the prophets and the messengers and in full awareness of the final accountability of human action. One must always reflect upon the seriousness and solemnity of this pledge.

Until the time of ghaibat-e-kubra, we find that our Imams always encouraged aza-e-Hussain. They saw in aza-e-Hussain not only a demonstration of grief for Imam Hussain and the martyrs of Kerbala but also a renewal of one's commitment to Allah and His laws as expounded in the Holy Qur'an and the ahadeeth.

We have records of the sayings of the representatives (Naibs) during ghaibat-e-Sughra explaining and encouraging aza-e-Hussain. From 329 AH onwards the fuqaha and the 'ulemas took it upon themselves to perpetuate the message of Kerbala.

Shaykh Ibne Babawayh-al-Qummi better known as Shaykh as-Suduq who died in 381 AH was the first scholar to have introduced prose as medium of conveying the message of Imam Hussain. He would sit on a pulpit and speak extempore while many of his students sat by the side of the pulpit and recorded the speech. His speeches have been preserved and to this day are known as the Amali (dictations) of Shaykh Suduq.

Public demonstration of grief first occurred in 351 A.H. On the 10th of Muharram, there was a spontaneous procession in the street of Baghdad and thousands of men, women and children came out chanting "Ya Hussain! Ya Hussain!" beating their breast and reciting elegies. In the same year, a similar procession took place in Egypt. The regime tried its best to stem the tide of aza-e-Hussain but failed. Very soon aza-e-Hussain became an institution with deep roots in the hearts of Muslims. Majlis evolved into an institution for amr bil ma'ruf and nahya anal munkar as well as reminder of the tragic events.

As Islam spread, different cultures adopted different modes of aza-e-Hussain. Taimur Lang introduced the institution of tabut and alam in India. As Islam spread southwards on the sub-Continent, the form underwent changes to take into account local cultural influences so as to portray the message of Kerbala in the medium best understood by the local people, both Muslims and non-Muslims.

By the beginning of the 19th Century, there was not a corner of the world, from Spain to Indo-China, which did not have some form of demonstration on the 10th of Muharram.

The form varied from country to country. In Iran, the most popular form has been passion plays as a medium transmit the message of Kerbala in addition to the majaalis from the minabir.

In India, the Ashura processions became part of the Indian Muslim culture. Even the Hindus participated in these processions. The Maharajah of Gwalior was always seen walking behind the 'alam of Hadhrat Abbas barefooted and without any insignia of his exalted office. Marthiyas and majaalis were such strong influences on the Muslim population that they helped

strengthen not only their Islamic beliefs but also their political resolve.

History reports that even Gandhi on his famous salt march to protest against the oppression of the British Raj took 72 people with him in emulation of Imam Hussain protest against Yezid's oppression.

c) Importance of Aza

The following excerpt from the last will and testament of the Late Ayatullah Ruhullah Khumayni (A.R.) is most touching and relevant: "The memory of this great epic event (Ashura) must be kept alive. Remember, the cries of damnation and all the curses that are rightfully raised against the cruelty of the Bani Umayyayah caliphs towards the Holy Imams, are reflected in the heroic protests against cruel despots by the nations through the centuries. It is the perpetuation of such protests that shatter oppression and cruelty. It is necessary that the crimes of the tyrants in each age and era be indicated in the cries of lamentation and in the recitals of elegies held for the Holy Imams"

Where ever the Shiahs have gone they have taken with them the cultural forms of aza-e-Hussain as practised in their country of origin. Today, aza-e-Hussain in one form or another, can be seen throughout the world.

Aza-e-Hussain is an important institution and we have to ensure that it is kept alive so as to cultivate and nurture Islamic conscience in each one of us and that our children and their descendants remain committed to the cause of Imam Hussain.

d) Aza At Personal Level

We must never lose sight of the fact that while the form of aza-e-Hussain may reflect the local indigenous culture, the essence of aza-e-Hussain must always be remembrance of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain and our re-dedication to his cause.

There is always the danger that if the form appears to be incongruent to the local norms and consequently incomprehensible to the young generation or to the indigenous population upon whom we wish to impress the message of Kerbala, the substance might gradually lose its significance. The fabric of the substance invariably depends upon the acceptability of the form.

Throughout history the form of aza-e-Hussain has always undergone changes to accommodate local norms. It is for us, therefore, to seriously re-evaluate the form in order to ensure that we can pass on to our children the substance of aza-e-Hussain in its pristine state and also make aza-e-Hussain an irresistible instrument of tableegh! We are duty bound to Allah and His Prophet to ensure that our children grow up to accept aza-e-Hussain NOT as a ritualistic activity NOR as means for atonement, but as a serious commitment to the basic values of Islam."

Dr. Liyakat Takim in his speech in Toronto on the occasion of the last Hussain Day made this very profound statement: "The message of Imam Hussain can only be properly comprehended when we bear in mind the Qur'anic principle of tawheed which demands our undivided commitment to Allah only."

I accept that not all of us can suddenly make or honour such a commitment. But supposing on the day of 'Ashura, after

performing our a'amaals or when the Ziyarah is recited after the aza, each one of us promises, in the name of Hussain ibne Ali, to give up one such activity as is contrary to the doctrines of Islam what a strong community we would be and what an excellent legacy we would leave for our children!! This in my opinion would be aza-e-Hussain par excellence!

e) Aza As Instrument of Tableegh

It is our duty to deliver Imam Hussain's message to the indigenous population of the country we live in. We can succeed in this only if we ourselves appear to be true followers of Imam in all our interaction with the community at large. We must reflect the maximum integrity, Islamic values and our sincere commitment to Imam's cause. We can not possibly be making the commitment enshrined in Ziyarat-e-Waritha without the least intention of honouring that commitment.

Processions are of course the institution effectively used in the countries of the East and in Africa. We have to convince ourselves that this institution can be equally effective in the West. If not, we must explore other means of taking Imam's message to the people. We have to examine such activities as:

1. Blood donation through Hussaini Blood Banks;
2. Distribution of food to the needy;
3. Maximum usage of media to explain the event and the fact the Holy Imam died to save the basic values cherished by all the communities;
4. Publication and distribution of leaflets;
5. Distribution of cold drinks in schools and colleges;

6. Visiting the patients in hospitals with floral gifts. You may find that when you take a small gift to a patient in hospital you will have carried the message of Hussain to the entire family of that patient.

All these suggestions are based on the institution of the public "sabeels" which we still have in the East and in Africa. While mourning is important, perhaps we should limit that within the confines of our Imambargahs, and demonstrate the true spirit of Imam Hussain's generosity when he ordered Hadhrat Abbas to provide water to Hur and his army. Perhaps we too may see a large number moving towards Islam and Imam Hussain.

f) Zakiri And Presentation of History

I seek, with utmost respect, to offer word of caution to all my zakir colleagues.

Exaggeration can only discredit us and the cause of Imam Hussain. The historical accounts must be adhered to although at times, in our anxiety to arouse emotion, we resort to exaggeration. We should have the recorded history as our guide and reason and logic as our limitations as do most of our 'ulema and fuqaha.

Abu Mikhnaf was the earliest historian who took testimonies from eye witnesses and compiled his maqtal. There is in existence today an book in Arabic called Maqtal Abi Mikhnaf. It is doubtful whether this is the original text. However we do have the excerpts quoted by Tabari and other historians. We zakireen have relied on various sources principally Allamah Majlisi's Biharul Anwar and others. Several very good books in English exist on this subject. Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi is the compiler of a book containing several very interesting articles relating to the

history of the tragedy of Kerbala. Then there is Shaykh Mufid (A.R.)'s al Irshad.

Extrapolations of certain inferences from known facts are not, in my opinion or in the opinion of the 'ulema, objectionable. For example description of natural human emotions, though not chronicled in vivid detail may be extrapolated if the description is within the bounds of reason and does not detract from the character of the personalities involved.

Some of the maqaatil can be faulted in respect of certain statements For example Tabari records that the age of Imam Zain-ul-'abideen (A.S.) was questioned at Kufa and he was examined to determine whether he had attained buloogh. (See the History of al Tabari, Vol. XIX page 166). Shaykh Mufid gives the fourth Imam's age at the time as 23 years. It is well known the Imam was married and had a son.

Many such contradictions exist in the maqaatil but this does not mean that we have to reject any account in total. Detailed events, and often the names of those involved, are very difficult to record accurately even by an honest and meticulous chronicler recording contemporaneously as the events are taking place. Abu Mikhnaf began to compile his history, mostly through eye witness account at least twenty five years after the tragedy. It is necessary for us to be eclectic for so long as we remain within the confines of reason. To be eclectic we must know what historical material is available and where to find it.

It is not within the scope of this article to deal with all the historical sources I would refer the reader to S. H. M, Jafri's the Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam, Chapter 7. I would

also refer any reader interested in the subject to the following additional works:

1. The volume of Tabari referred to above.
2. Al-Irshad by Shaykh Mufid.
3. The article by Imam Hussain by Veccia Vaghliers in the Encyclopaedia of Islam which is based mostly Balaadhuri's account.

g) Objectives

We have to remember that the 'ashra-e-Muharram is a very emotional period and this emotion has to be exploited by the ahle minabir to convey the message of Kerbala, to awaken a hatred against all that Yezid stood for and to rekindle a commitment to Islam as preached by the Ahlul Bayt and for which Imam Hussain laid down his life.

We can not perpetuate the illusion that aza-e-Hussain means no more than a few tears, matam and processions. These are the means and not the end. They are important only if they lead each of us becoming a better Shiah than we were in the preceding year.

If we lose sight of the objectives we may find ourselves answerable for forgetting and holding to ridicule the cause for which our Imam sacrificed so much!

Imam Hussain himself advised a muslim who was claiming to be a shiah to fear Allah and not to make a false claim lest on the Day of Judgement he is raised with the liars. "Our shiah," the Imam added, "is the one whose heart is pure of malice, deception and corruption. His words and deeds are only for the pleasure of Allah."

We must during this forthcoming 'ashra-e Muharram pose this question to ourselves in all seriousness. Do we intend to make a commitment to Imam Hussain's objectives or do we wish to continue complacently in our current state, paying what can best be described a lip service to his martyrdom with demonstrative mourning only??

While I pray that we begin, as we must, to understand the philosophy of aza-e-Hussain and make a serious commitment to the objectives of the King of Martyrs, I sincerely hope that there never comes a day when majaalis are replaced by clinical lectures devoid of all emotion! Reason when supported by emotion has a more enduring effect, and it is for this very end that as a recompense of the rationality of the message of the Holy Prophet he is told by Allah to ask for no recompense save the love of Ahlul Bayt. Love, while being an emotional force, becomes hypocrisy if one fails to identify and follow the wishes of the loved one.

May all our Muharrams be true demonstration of our love for, and a confluence of emotion, reason and commitment to, Imam Hussain.

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1

Departure of Madina

On 20th Rajab in 60 Hijra, Muawiya died. For more than twenty years the tyrant had ruled over Muslims. He was the son of Abu Sufyan and Hinda who had left no stone unturned in persecuting the Holy Prophet. Abu Sufyan became a Muslim only after he was convinced that Mecca would surrender to the Prophet. His son Muawiya, however, refused to accept Islam and went into exile in Yemen. It was only when he saw the whole of Arabia become Muslim that Muawiya was left with no alternative but to accept Islam.

After the death of the Holy Prophet Muawiya and his elder brother sided with the enemies of Hazrat Ali. He played an important part in usurping leadership from Hazrat Ali. For this, first the elder brother and after his death Muwaiya, were rewarded by the ruler of the time with the governorship of Syria.

When Hazrat Ali became Khalifa, he dismissed Muawiyaa for his corruption and anti Islamic behaviour. Muawiya refused to give up his position. This led to the battle of Siffeen. When Muawiya was about to lose the battle he managed to trick and bribe the majority of Hazrat Ali's army to insist upon referring the dispute to arbitration. Using the same methods he got the arbitrators to give a decision in his favour.

Muaiya then set himself up as an independent Emeer-e-Shaam, (the Ruler of Damascus) while Hazrat Ali was the khalifa. Soon

after the martyrdom of Hazrat Ali, Muawiya, making full use of his methods of bribery, treachery, tyranny and oppression succeeded in becoming the Khalifa.

Muawiya was not interested in Islam. He only used Islam for his power and glory. He never hesitated to trample over the laws of Islam. When any saying of the Holy Prophet did not suit him he ordered it to be struck off all records. He set up a special department under Abu Huraira to manufacture ahaadees which would favour him and his policies.

Muawiyah hated Hazrat Ali and all the members of Ahlal Bait. The Shiahs were mercilessly persecuted. Any one who dared to say anything on favour of any member of Ahlal Bait was put to death or thrown into a dungeon.

Now Muawiya was dead and his son Yezid made himself the Khalifa. Yezid was worse than his father. In addition to all the evil qualities of his father, he openly mocked Islam. He was often found drunk, singing songs which made jokes of namaaz, the holy Prophet and his progeny.

The difference between the father and the son was this. Muawiya used Islam. Yezid was determined to destroy Islam.

As soon as he became Khalifa, Yezid sent a letter to his Governor of Madina, Waleed bin Utba, asking him to get Bai'at from Imaam Hussain. Bai'at means an oath of allegiance. Yezid felt that if Imaam Hussain declared bai'at to him, no one could then accuse him of having taken over khilafat illegally.

Waleed received the letter on 27th Rajab. He sent a message to Imaam Hussain to go to the palace that evening. Accompanied by

his brothers, sons and nephews Imaam Hussain went to the palace.

Imaam asked all who had come with him to wait outside while he went in alone. Waleed showed Imaam no respect and rather arrogantly asked him to declare bai'at to Yezid. Imaam replied that the question of Bai'at was a serious matter and should be discussed openly in day light.

Imaam came out looking sad. He asked all his companions to go home and prepare for a journey at dawn the following morning. He requested Hazrat Abbas to take charge of the preparations adding, "Abbas, Faatimah Sughra is ill. She will not be able to stand a long journey. She will have to stay in Madina."

Imaam began to walk slowly towards the mosque, deep in thought. Imaam Hussain could not even consider bai'at to Yezid. It was not a matter of his pride or his right to khilafat. Bai'at to Yezid would mean Imaam's approval of Yezid's way of life and this would decidedly lead to a total destruction of Islam. It was Imaam's duty to uphold and defend Islam. If he stayed on in Madina while he refused to give bai'at, then Yezid would surely attack him in Madina. Imaam would have the advantage of having all his own relatives as well as the people of Madina fighting on his side. But this would have two serious disadvantages. Firstly, it would put all his friends in Madina in danger. Secondly, although Yezid might be defeated, history would look upon the battle as a battle of khilafat.

Even if Yezid were to be killed, the injustice, the oppression and the immoral way of life which Muawiya and Yezid had promoted would not die.

Imaam Hussain's mission was to destroy the evil that these two men had let lose. For this he needed to awaken the spirit of Islam amongst the Muslims.

Imaam arrived at the mosque. He lit a candle and walked towards the grave of the Holy Prophet. The thought that this might be the last time he would see the grave filled him with sorrow. He sat by the grave, put his cheek on it and began to sob. "I have come to say good-bye to you O grand-father. I have to leave Madina to save Islam. Pray that Allah grant me patience!!"

Imaam then went to the grave of his mother, Bibi Fatimaah Zahra. He was unable to speak. He kissed the grave and said a silent farewell. Some Zaakirs say that as the Imaam began to walk away, Bibi Fatimaah's voice was heard from the grave: "Khuda Haafiz, my son. Go! I too will be with you."

2

The First Journey - Madina to Mecca

After saying good-bye to the graves of his grand-father and his mother, Imaam Hussain went to Bibi Zainab's house. Bibi Zainab was Imaam's sister and was married to their cousin Hazrat Abdullah ibne Jaffer ibne Abu Taalib. After exchanging greetings with Hazrat Abdullah, Imaam Hussain advised his cousin of what had happened and what he had decided. Hazrat Abdullah tried to persuade Imaam not to leave Madina but Imaam insisted that it was the only way to save Islam. He then requested Hazrat Abdullah to permit Bibi Zainab to accompany him. Hazrat Abdullah looked at his wife and said, "Bismillah!" Bibi Zainab said farewell to her husband and her sons Aun and Muhammad. The brother and sister walked to Imaam's house.

When all the men who had accompanied Imaam Hussain to the Governor's palace got back, the ladies came to know about the journey. Hazrat Abbas, Ali Akber, Qasim and all the young men got busy with the preparations. Fatimah Sugra watched. She was lying in bed, too ill even to get up. No one was saying anything about her going. She decided to wait till her father's return.

Fatimah Sugra was Imaam Hussain's daughter. She was about eight years old. She lay on bed praying that her father would agree to take her. How could she possibly live alone? How could she survive without Asghar? Ever since he was born she spent all her time next to Asghar's little bed playing with him. Now he had

begun to recognize faces and smiled whenever he saw Sugra. Soon he would be talking and she was anxious to hear him call out her name. "Ya Allah!", Sugra murmured, "I hope I would not be left alone in Madina!"

Just then she heard her father's foot-steps. She quickly wiped away the tears from her eyes, propped herself into a sitting position and put on a brave smile to convince her father that she was well enough to travel.

Imaam Hussain sat on the bed, put his hand on Sugra'a head and said, "When you were born, my dear. I named you after my mother Fatimah Zahra. You look know that your grand mother was also known as Saabira, which means the patient one. I want you also to be a saabira and agree to stay in Madina with Ummul Baneen and Umme Salmah. Will you do that?"

What could Sugra say? She nodded her head fighting back her tears. Imaam kissed her and left the room.

Whenever the children of the Ahlul Bait were troubled by any thing, they took their problem to Hazrat Abbas. Sugra thought of her dear uncle, smiled hopefully, and sent for Abbas. Surely, he would find a way to solve her problem?

Abbas came in. He was accompanied by Ali Akber.

Sugra looked at them and said, "I know how much you two love me. How can you then leave me and go away? If I die who will bury me?" They explained her that she was too ill to travel and promised her that they would come and fetch her as soon as they had settled some where.

Fatimah Sugra said, "I will accept that as I do not wish to disobey my father. I will be brave and stay here." She looked lovingly at her

brother and added, "Ali Akber, promise me one thing though. When after you get married and return to Madina, and find Sugra gone, promise that you and your bride will visit my grave and recite Fatiha."

Akber and Abbas could not control their tears as they said good bye.

At dawn the caravan departed. Supported by Umme Salmah on one side and Ummul Baneen on the other, Sugra waved good-bye. It was difficult to part with Asghar and both Imaam Hussain and Bibi Rubaab had to hold and console Sugra as she kissed her little brother good-bye.

The story of Kerbala is a tale of five journeys of tears. This was the first journey. From Madina to Mecca. Each journey had its hero and heroine. The hero of this first journey was Imaam Hussain and the heroine was the memory of Fatimah Sugra, his beloved daughter whom he had left behind. Until they turned the corner, Imaam kept looking back. He would bravely smile and wave to his daughter. Ali Akber of course could not even do that because he was unable to control his tears.

As soon as they were out of sight, Imaam Hussain stopped his horse and began to sob! It is always so very difficult and so very sad for a parent and child to part!

Days passed into months. Sugra would spend her days in the mosque or visiting Ummul Baneen, Hazrat Abbas's mother.

Ramadhan passed. Eid was a difficult day for Sugra. She kept on thinking of Asghar, and Akber and her darling sister Sakina. Then came Muharram. For some reason Sugra's restlessness increased. One night she got up. She felt a little thirsty. She filled a cup with

water. As she brought the cup to her lips, Sugra stared at the water, and screamed. The cup fell out of her hands. Umme Salmah came running."What is it, Sugra?" Sugra was shaking with fear. She ran into the arms of Umme Salmah."O grand-mother!" she cried, pointing at the cup, "As I lifted the cup to my mouth, I saw Ali Asghar's reflection in the water. I saw him spread out his little arms towards me. And then I heard him speak. He was saying, 'Al atash, Ya Ukhti Fatimah." (I am thirsty, O my sister Fatimaah!!) This was the night of 9th Muharram, Shab-e-Ashura!!

Hazrat Muslim

Imaam Hussain's caravan left Madina on 28th Rajab, 60 A.H. and reached Mecca on the fourth of Shabaan. Imaam had not yet made up his mind on where to go. For the time being he decided to stay in Mecca at least until the month of Dhul-Hajj and perform the pilgrimage.

The people of Kufa in Iraq heard of what had happened in Madina. Kufa was an important Shiah centre. The Shiahs there had long suffered under Muawiya. They feared even greater sufferings under Yezid. They felt that slowly Islam would be totally destroyed by the greed for power and glory of these two men. They were anxious to preserve the teachings of the Holy Prophet. They needed an Imaam who would teach the tafseer of the Holy quraan and relate to them the true sayings, ahaadees, of the Holy Prophet. They a held a meeting in the house of Sulayman bin Surad and decided to write a letter to Imaam Hussain inviting him. In this letter they wrote: "We invite you to come to Kufa as we have no Imaam to guide us. Through you Allah will unite us on the path of truth."

A messenger took the letter to Mecca and gave it to Imaam Hussain. A few days later the people of Kufa sent an emissary, a special messenger, to Imaam to persuade him to go to Kufa. His name was Qais ibne Musheer as-Saydawi.

There followed hundreds of other letters and many special emissaries from the people of Kufa to Imaam Hussain. The Governor in Kufa was a man called Nu'amaan bin Basheer. Although he was a follower of Muawiya and Yezid, he was not by nature a cruel man. The people of Kufa believed that Imaam would be safe in Kufa.

When Imaam Hussain received so many petitions and messages from Kufa he decided to send Hazrat Muslim as his emissary to Kufa to study the situation there and report to Imaam. Imaam would go only if there would be no danger to the people of Kufa or to Imaam or any of his companions or family.

He wrote a letter to the people of Kufa and gave it to Hazrat Muslim. In this letter Imaam said, "I am sending my cousin and one of the most trusted ones from my family, Muslim ibne Aqeel, to report to me about your affairs. If his report agrees with what you have writ_ten I will soon be with you. You must be clear of the fact that the Imaam is only one who follows the book of Allah, and serves Allah in all matters and affairs with justice, honesty and truth."

Who was Muslim ibne Aqeel? He was the son of Aqeel ibne Abu Taalib. He was a famous warrior. He married Ruqayya binti Ali, Imaam's sister through another mother. We know of his four children. Abdullah aged about 15 years, Muhammad who was about ten years old, Ibraheem who was eight and young Ruqayya

who was just five or six. All these children had travelled with their parents and were in Mecca.

As Hazrat Muslim was preparing for the journey, Imaam Hussain went to him and said: "Muslim, the whole world knows that you are one of the bravest warriors. It is just possible that seeing you in Kufa some people may think that our intention is to fight Yezid. Take your two sons Muhammad and Ibraheem with you. When they see you with such young children, they will know that our intentions are peaceful."

Hazrat Muslim and his two sons said good-bye to all and left Mecca. Their journey through the desert in the heat of summer was very difficult.

They arrived in Kufa towards the end of Dhul Qaad. They were received extremely well by the people of Kufa. Very soon more than eighteen thousand people appeared before Hazrat Muslim and pledged their allegiance to Imaam Hussain as their Imaam.

Hazrat Muslim reported to Imaam Hussain that most of the people in Kufa were ready to receive him as their Imaam and advised that Imaam should proceed to Kufa. Amongst the people of Kufa there were many spies employed by Yezid to report to him direct. When Yezid heard from them of the invitations to Imaam Hussain and the arrival in Kufa of Hazrat Muslim he was filled with fury. He sent a message to his Governor in Basrah, Ubaydullah ibne Ziyad, to go to Kufa and take over the position of Nu'amaan ibne Basheer. Ibne Ziyad was also told to arrest Muslim and kill him and do all that was necessary to suppress the Shiahs in Kufa.

Ibne Ziyad was a cruel and unjust man. He arrived in Kufa on the evening of 2nd Dhul Hajj. On the following day he went to the

mosque and addressed the people of Kufa. He first announced his appointment as Yezid's governor. He then threatened any one who was engaged in any activity against the government with immediate death, and ordered them to surrender Hazrat Muslim to him.

Ibne Ziyad sealed Kufa in such a way that no one could go in or out of the city without the governor's permission.

At this time Hazrat Muslim was staying with Al Mukhtar. At the invitation of Hani bin Urwah, another leading member of the Shiah community, he moved to Hani's house. This was done secretly and except for a few people no one knew where Hazrat Muslim was. Through a spy who pretended to be a Shiah, Ibne Ziyad found out where Hazrat Muslim was. Hani was arrested and thrown into prison. Not wishing to endanger the lives of his friends, Hazrat Muslim and his two sons left Hani's house. He left the children with Qadhi Shurayb, a judge, and went into the desert to try and get back to Imaam Hussain to warn him not to go to Kufa. This was the seventh of Dhul Hajj. That whole day and the following day Hazrat Muslim tried to get out of the city. He found all the exits sealed and guarded by Ibne Ziyad Soldiers.

On the eighth, late in the evening, tired, hungry and exhausted, Hazrat Muslim knocked at the door of a house on the outskirts of the city. A lady opened the door. Hazrat Muslim requested for a little water to quench his thirst. The lady gave him water. When she learnt who he was, she invited him in and offered him shelter for the night. This lady was called Tau'aa. She gave Hazrat Muslim some food and water and took him to a room where he might spend the night.

Late that night Tau'aa's son came home. When he learnt that the man Ibne Ziyad was looking for was in his mother's house, he felt that he would be rewarded by the governor if he got Hazrat Muslim arrested. Unknown to his mother he slipped out in the darkness of the night and gave the information to a captain in ibne Ziyad army. Early the next morning, five hundred soldiers surrounded the house of Tau'aa and demanded Hazrat Muslim's surrender. Hazrat Muslim came out holding his sword. Three times he drove the enemy away. Twice Ibne Ziyad had to send in reinforcements.

While Hazrat Muslim was fighting, some soldiers went up the rooftops and began throwing stones and lighted torches at him. Others dug a trench in the path of Hazrat Muslim and covered it with grass. Although badly wounded and totally exhausted, Hazrat Muslim kept on fighting. Then he fell into the trench. More than fifty soldiers pounced upon him and chained him. He was dragged to the court of Ibne Ziyad.

Ibne Ziyad told Hazrat Muslim that he would be killed and asked him if he had any last wishes. Hazrat Muslim said: "I owe a debt which should be discharged by selling off my sword and armour. Secondly I want my body to be given a proper burial. Thirdly I want a message sent to Imaam Hussain advising him not to come to Kufa." Ibne Ziyad agreed to the first request but refused to do anything about the second and third requests. He then ordered Hazrat Muslim to be taken to the roof of the palace to be executed and his body thrown to the ground.

Hazrat Muslim was calm and composed as he was dragged up the steps. He was reciting "Allahu Akber" until the last moment. Then there was an absolute silence followed by a thud as Hazrat Muslim's body fell to the ground.

This was on 9th Dhul Hajj. Immediately after Hazrat Muslim was killed Hani bin Urwah was dragged to the roof top and executed.

3

The Second Journey - Mecca to Kerbala

At the same time as Yezid sent Ubaydullah ibne Ziyad as his governor to Kufa to kill Hazrat Muslim and establish a reign of terror there, he sent his agents to Mecca to murder Imaam Hussain during the Hajj season in such a way that no one would suspect him of having got the Imaam killed.

As the pilgrimage season grew nearer Hazrat Abdullah ibne Jaffer Tayyar came to Mecca with his two sons, Aun and Muhammad. Imaam had by this time received the message sent by Hazrat Muslim with Qais ibne Musheer, and made up his mind to go to Kufa after performing pilgrimage. Hazrat Abdullah tried to persuade Imaam not to go to Kufa as he felt that Yezid would never let Imaam settle there. Imaam responded that as the people of Kufa had invited him to go to them as their Imaam it was his duty to go. When Hazrat Abdullah saw that the Imaam was adamant, he gave the hands of his two sons into the hand of Imaam saying, "Accept my sons in your service. One will serve you as Zainab's representative and the other as mine."

Thousands of people from everywhere poured into Mecca for Hajj. Amongst them were the assassins sent by Yezid. Imaam Hussain came to learn about Yezid's plot. He did not wish the House of Allah to be turned into a battlefield. Imaam decided to leave Mecca without performing pilgrimage.

On the eighth of Dhul-Hajj, the very day on which Hazrat Muslim was murdered in Kufa, Imaam Hussain's caravan left Mecca. Our Imaam's heart was filled with mixed feelings. He was sad at being forced to leave Kaaba without performing Hajj. At the same time Hazrat Muslim had favourably reported on the situation in Kufa. So at least there would be a sanctuary for Imaam there.

So began the second journey of tears. The hero of this journey was Hazrat Abbas and the heroine was Bibi Sakina.

Let us look at this caravan as it travels towards Iraq. At the head of the caravan is Hazrat Abbas carrying the 'alam. Next is Imaam Hussain surrounded by all his companions. In this group we find Qais ibne Musheer. He is accompanying Imaam to his home town. How proud he would feel entering Kufa with the grand-son of the Holy Prophet! He smiles at the thought. Then come the camels carrying the mehmils (palanquins or litters) in which all the ladies are. Behind the mehmils, forming, the a rear guard, are Ali Akber, Qasim, Aun, Muhammad and the other young men of Baku Hashim.

Hazrat Abbas can be seen riding up and down the caravan to make sure that every one is comfortable. He often stops by the Mehmil carrying Sakina to make sure that she had enough water and food. He inquires of her how Asghar is. If there is anything anyone wants, Hazrat Abbas rushes to fetch it. Sakina is so very proud of her uncle Abbas. Every one knew that Sakina was the apple of the eye of Hazrat Abbas. When any child in the caravan needed anything he or she would tell Sakina. Sakina would speak to Abbas and the wish of that child would be fulfilled immediately. There were about fifty children in the caravan and the four year old Sakina was an important link between them and Hazrat Abbas.

The caravan came to a small oasis called al-Thalabiya. It was decided to stop there for the night. This was the sixth stop of the journey. Qais ibne Musheer was no longer with Imaam Hussain as he had already left for Kufa carrying Imaam's letter announcing his imminent arrival.

Tents were pitched. Imaam led maghrib prayers. As the evening meal was being prepared, he heard that two travellers from Kufa were in the settlement. He invited them over. He questioned them about the conditions in Kufa. The travellers described how the city had been placed under a total blockade. Imaam asked his two guests about Hazrat Muslim. The travellers remained quiet, their faces reflecting their sadness. Imaam asked them again. With tears flowing down their beards the travellers reported of the death of Hazrat Muslim and the brutal way he had been killed. Imaam summoned Hazrat Abbas and asked him to look after the guests. Slowly he made his way to Bibi Zainab's camp. Putting his hand on her shoulder, he said, "Dear sister, your mission has begun. Go and console our sister Ruqayya. She is now a widow! But first send Muslim's daughter to me."

Young Ruqayya binti Muslim entered the tent. She was accompanied by Sakina. Imaam took the orphan girl into his arms. Kissed her on her cheeks, Then he put his hand on her head and kissed her again. The young girl looked at Imaam Hussain fearfully and said, "Uncle you are treating me as an orphan should be treated in Islam. Tell me, what has happened. Is my father well?" Imaam could not speak. Tears rolled down his eyes. Sakina stepped forward. Yes, Sakina! The heroine of this journey! She stepped forward and embraced her cousin and lovingly offered her condolences!!!

Qais Ibne Musheer

Qais ibne Musheer was a leading member of the Shiah community in Kufa. He had been sent by the people of Kufa to persuade Imaam Hussain to accept the invitation to go to Kufa as their Imaam.

It was upon his arrival in Mecca that Imaam began to seriously consider going to Kufa and sent Hazrat Muslim as his envoy to study the situation there and report to Imaam. He rode to Kufa with Hazrat Muslim and brought back to the Imaam Hazrat Muslim's message of the sincerety of the people of Kufa.

Qais ibne Musheer decided to stay on with Imaam so that he could proudly ride into Kufa with the grand son of the Holy Prophet. Imaam Hussain was, however, forced to leave Mecca before he could perform Hajj. The caravan left Mecca on the eighth Dhul Hajj. When they reached the fourth stop of the journey, a settlement called al-Haajir, Imaam Hussain decided to send a letter to the people of Kufa telling them of his departure from Mecca and that he would shortly arrive in Kufa. He gave this letter to Qais and asked him to take it to Kufa. This was before Imaam had heard of the death of Hazrat Muslim.

Qais was proud to be Imaam's messenger. Indeed he is known in history as SAFEERATUL HUSSAIN IBNE ALI, the ambassador of Imaam Hussain. He galloped towards Kufa. When he reached al-Qadassiya, on the outskirts of Kufa he was astonished to see a large garrison of soldiers guarding the borders of the city. He suspected some thing was wrong. He hid behind the bushes. At night he visited some bedouins who were camping around. From them he learnt of the arrival of Ubaydullah ibne Ziyad as the new

Governor, and of the efforts being made by him to capture Hazrat Muslim.

Qais was in a dilemma. Should he rush back to Imaam Hussain to advise him of the danger or should he try to get into Kufa and help Hazrat Muslim? He spent the night trying to gather more information from the bedouins. Qais learnt of how ibne Ziyad had spread terror in the city and how he had isolated Hazrat Muslim. He also learnt that the blockade was being strictly enforced and it was virtually impossible to get into Kufa without being caught. Qais was anxious to learn of how Hazrat Muslim was but the bedouins did not know much about him. In fact it was on that very morning that Hazrat Muslim had been killed.

Thinking that he might be some help to Hazrat Muslim, Qais decided to get into Kufa. He waited until sunset. Carefully, hiding himself from the soldiers posted to guard the borders, Qais tried to make his way into Kufa. He was spotted by some soldiers. Qais fought them bravely. Soon, however, ibne al-Numayr, the commander of al-Qadassiya came to the scene with a large number of soldiers. Qais was captured and chained. In the morning he was taken before ibne Ziyad.

Ibne Ziyad promised Qais to spare his life if he would mount the minbar and curse Imaam Hussain. Qais mounted the minbar and in a loud voice said: "O people of Kufa I am the messenger of Imaam Hussain ibne Ali. I declare before you that Hussain, the grand-son of our Holy Prophet is the best man alive today."

Saying this Qais looked at ibne Ziyad defiantly. He then called for the curse of Allah upon ibne Ziyad and Yezid, and called for Allah's blessings upon Hazrat Ali and Imaam Hussain. Ibne Ziyad was beside himself with anger. He ordered Qais to be taken to the

roof of the palace and thrown to the ground. As he mounted the steps, there was a smile on the lips of Qais. As he was being pushed off the roof Qais cried out: "MY salaams to you O my master Hussain ibne Ali!"

Tiflaan-e-Muslim

Hazrat Muslim had taken with him his two sons Muhammad and Ibraheem. After Hazrat Muslim was killed, Muhammad and Ibraheem were also arrested and put into a dungeon. It is said that Muhammad was just eight years old and Ibraheem was ten years old.

On the 20th of Dhul-Hajj in 60 Hijrah, when the jailer came to give the children their evening meal, he saw them saying their prayers. The jailer waited. When the boys had finished their prayers, he asked them who they were. When the jailer learnt that they were the sons of Muslim Ibne Aqeel and the grandsons of Hazrat Ali, he let them escape. The children came out of the prison.

It was a dark night. Their first thought was to go to Imaam Hussain and warn him not to go to Kufa. Everywhere they went, they found the roads blocked by Ibne Ziyad soldiers. It was impossible to get out of Kufa. Now it was almost day-break. Where could these two young boys go?

They found themselves by the side of the river Euphrates. They drank some water from the river and then went up a tree to hide for the day. Just then a woman came to the river to get water. She saw the two young boys and asked them who they were. Ibraheem said, "We are two orphans, could you please leave us alone and not tell any one that you have seen us?" The woman asked them to accompany her to her mistress who would help them.

The woman's mistress was a kind lady. After talking to the boys for a while she realized who they were. She gave them food and said to them, "You can spend the day here and I will try to help you. Unfortunately my husband Harith is working for Ibne Ziyad. He is out at the moment. You can rest in the spare room but make no noise otherwise when he comes back, he will find out you are here."

The children said their prayers and went to sleep. In the evening Muhammad woke up and started crying. Ibraheem asked him why he was crying. Muhammad said "I saw our father in a dream. He was calling out for us." Ibraheem said, "Brother, be patient. I also saw our father in a dream beckoning us to him." They both started weeping. Harith, who had come back heard the children crying. He opened the door and asked the children who they were. On learning they were the sons of Muslim Ibne Aqeel, he tied both the boys to a pillar. Harith's wife tried to stop him, but he beat her up. Harith wanted to collect the reward which Ibne Ziyad had offered to anyone capturing the children.

The children spent the whole night tied to the pillar. In the morning Harith dragged them to the river-bank. He took out his sword. Ibraheem asked him, "Harith, are you going to kill us?" Harith said "Yes!" Ibraheem said, "In that case give us time to finish our morning prayers." The two boys said their prayers. They raised their hands and cried out "Inna Lillaah wa Inna IIay-hi Rajeeoon! O Allah we are coming to you. Give our mother courage when she hears of our death and judge between us and our killers!!" The sword came down! There were splashes in the water. Two young bodies were seen floating away in the waters of the river Furaat.

Hazrat Hur

Hazrat Hur bin Yezid at-Tamimi al-Yarbu'i was a career officer in the Kufa army. When Hussain bin Numayr, the commander at al-Qadisiya, learnt that Imaam Hussain and his entourage were getting very close to Kufa he dispatched Hur with a detachment of 1,000 men to intercept Imaam.

Hur believed that Imaam was being prevented from entering Kufa because his presence might jeopardize the stability of the city. As a professional soldier he did not very much concern himself with what he considered to be political issues. His duty, he felt, was to execute the order of his superiors. However, lurking somewhere in that stout military heart was an Islamic conscience.

Hazrat Hur and his soldiers met Imaam Hussain and his companions at a place a few miles outside Kufa.

It was midday when the two parties met.

Hur and his people had been travelling since morning and were very thirsty. He requested Imaam Hussain for water for his army. Imaam Hussain asked Hazrat Abbas, Hazrat Ali Akber, Hazrat Qasim and the others to give Hur and his men water and also to give water to their horses. This must have been a poignant scene. Water bottles being brought out of the saddle bags and the youths pouring water for Yezid's army to quench their thirst.

Zuhr prayers were led by Imaam and Hur and his soldiers joined in. After the prayers Hur told Imaam Hussain that his orders were to stop Imaam Hussain from going to Kufa unless he agreed to give "Bai'at"-swear allegiance- to Yezid. Imaam Hussain said that he would never give Bai'at to Yazeed. Yazeed was an unjust ruler

who wanted to destroy Islam. In any case he was going to Kufa because he had been invited by the people there.

Imaam produced two sacks of letters and petitions from the people of Kufa begging him to go there. Hur said that as his orders were not to let Imaam go to Kufa there was nothing that he could do save carry out his orders.

Imaam Hussain could have fought Hur and his soldiers and forced his way into Kufa, but he did not wish to start any battle.

He told Hur that he would take another route and go away from Kufa. Hur said that his orders were to follow Imaam Hussain. And so, followed by Hur and his 1000 soldiers, Imaam Hussain and his companion rode in the direction away from Kufa.

On the 2nd Muharram, they reached Kerbala. Imaam Hussain bought land there and put up his tents. Hur and his men pitched their camps some distance away.

The following day, Umar bin Sa'ad came to Kerbala with 4000 soldiers. Umar Sa'ad was the commander of the Yazeed's Army. He had several meetings with Imaam Hussain and was so impressed by Imaam that he began to join Imaam for prayers.

When Ibne Ziyad heard this, he was furious. He sent Shimr with 10,000 men and wrote a letter to Umar bin Sa'ad, ordering him to get "Bai'at" from Imaam Hussain or kill him. Umar bin Sa'ad immediately changed his attitude towards Imaam Hussain. Following his instructions he imposed restrictions on Imaam Hussain and his followers from getting water from "Furaat", and from 7th Muharram, no one from Imaam Hussain's camp was allowed near the river.

On the night of Ashura, Hur was very restless. He could hear the children in Imaam Hussain's camp cry because of thirst. He began to think "What have I done? Why did I put the son of Fatimah in this position? Will Allah ever forgive me?" He could not sleep the whole night. Within him there was a struggle between his duty as a soldier and his Islamic conscience. Just before dawn he made up his mind.

Hur, his son and his slave rode over to Imaam Hussain's camp. Hur threw himself at Imaam Hussain's feet, pleading for his forgiveness. Imaam Hussain took Hur in his arms and said, "Hur, I forgive you. I assure you that my grandfather, the Holy Prophet also forgives you."

Hur then asked Imaam Hussain for permission to go and fight the enemies of Islam. Imaam Hussain said "Hur, you are my guest. How can I let you die for me?" Hur insisted. Hur went to the battlefield, and after a valiant fight, he fell and was killed. His son and the slave were also killed.

Hur's example moved nearly thirty other soldiers to defect to Imaam Hussain, where the only reward to be had was certain death, but where Allah's pleasure lay.

The story of Hur is the story of a struggle between right and wrong within the human mind and victory of the Islamic conscience.

When he got to the body of Hur Imaam prayed to Allah: "Oh Allah! I Commend to you this brave man who has given his life for Islam."

Hazrat Muslim Bin Awsaja

Hazrat Muslim Bin Awsajaa was a 'Sahaabi', a companion, of Hazrat Ali. He was greatly respected by Hazrat Ali, Imaam Hassan and Imaam Hussain. He was a leading citizen of Kufa and was among those who had written letters to Imaam Hussain inviting him to go to Kufa. He was an old man, nearly eighty years old.

When Ibne Ziyad wanted to find out where Hazrat Muslim Ibne Aqeel was hiding in Kufa, he sent his spy to Muslim Bin Awsaja. The spy pretended to be a devout shiah and Hazrat Muslim Bin Awsajaa believed him and took him to Hazrat Muslim. Hazrat Muslim Bin Awsajaa never forgave himself for having accepted the story of the spy so easily.

After the murder of Hazrat Muslim Ibne Aqeel, Hazrat Muslim Bin Awsajaa slipped out of Kufa. He left Kufa by foot and travelled towards Mecca in the hope of meeting Imaam Hussain on the way. Some historians record that he met and joined Imaam at the place called 'Zuballah' on the same day as Imaam Hussain got there. From him Imaam learnt details about how Hazrat Muslim bin Aqeel and Hazrat Hani bin Urwah had been murdered. Imaam Hussain was grief stricken.

Muslim Bin Awsajaa said to Imaam Hussain, "Mawla, I beg you to accept me in your party." Imaam Hussain replied "O Muslim Bin Awsajaa, whenever I see you, I am reminded of my father. You know that these people will not let me live. You are an old man. Go back to your family and give your children and grandchildren the honour of burying you when you die. Your age excuses you from jihad." When Muslim bin Awsaja insisted, Imaam let him join his entourage.

On the day of Ashura, early in the morning, Muslim Bin Awsajaa went to Hazrat Habeeb Ibne Mazahir, removed his turban and asked Habeeb Ibne Mazahir to tie the cloth of the turban tightly around his waist and abdomen saying, "Habeeb, I do not want those dogs of Yazeed to see me stooping with old age." Habeeb Ibne Mazahir said, "But Muslim, you will not then have a turban on your head." Muslim replied, "When they kill me, and when I meet our Holy Prophet I want these my white hair to be my witness when I complain to our Prophet against Yazeed and his people."

When Muslim Bin Awsajaa rode out to fight, a soldier from Yazeed's army teased him, "O old man! Go back to your bed and lie there!" Hazrat Muslim replied, "O dog! My bed is now the sword of Yazeed. Let me show you the spirit of Islam." Saying so he attacked the soldier and killed him with one stroke.

Umar bin Sa'ad sent twenty strong warriors to fight Muslim Bin Awsajaa. Six were killed and 14 ran away. At last, thirsty and exhausted, Muslim Bin Awsajaa stopped his horse, looked at the sky and appeared to be saying a prayer. Just then they fell upon him like hounds. Muslim Bin Awsajaa fell to the ground with countless wounds on his frail body.

Habeeb Ibne Mazahir and Imaam Hussain rushed to him. When they reached Muslim bin Awsajaa, he looked at Imaam Hussain and asked, "Mawla, How did I fight?" Imaam Hussain replied "You fought like a true follower of Ali Murtaza." Hazrat Muslim took Imaam Hussain's hand in his hand, brought it near his lips, and as he kissed Imaam's hand he breathed his last. There was a smile on his lips and pride on his face.

Habeeb Ibne Mazahir

Habeeb Ibne Mazahir was about the same age as Imaam Hussain. They were childhood friends. When Hazrat Ali moved the capital to Kufa, Habeeb also moved to Kufa. He stayed on in Kufa and became a prominent citizen. He was a devout Shiah. The first letter which Imaam Hussain received inviting him to Kufa was signed by Habeeb Ibne Mazahir. After Hazrat Muslim and Hazrat Hani Bin Urwah were killed by Ibne Ziyaad, Kufa was sealed off. No one could get in or out of the city without the Governor's permission.

Ibne Ziyaad also started spreading the rumour that Imaam Hussain had gone to Madina and that he was living there happily under the protection of Yezid. Even Imaam Hussain's messenger Qais Bin Musheer who tried to take a letter to the citizens of Kufa was arrested outside Kufa. He was tied and gagged, and thrown from the roof of the palace to the ground three times. Ibne Ziyaad succeeded in spreading terror in Kufa and silencing the people.

Habeeb Ibne Mazahir was heart-broken because he could not join Imaam Hussain. He did not even know where Imaam Hussain was. There were all sorts of rumours but no one knew anything for certain.

Imaam Hussain had reached Kerbala. Everyday Bibi Zainab saw soldiers coming to join the camp of Umar-e-Sa'ad, the Commander of Yazeed's Army. On 4th Muharram she came to Imaam Hussain and said "Ya Akhee, why are all these soldiers coming?" Imaam replied "My dear sister, they are gathering to kill me." Bibi Zainab said, "Brother, you have hardly seventy-two men with you, while they are in thousands." Bibi Zainab had tears in her eyes as she added, "Do you not have anyone ready to come to

your help?" Imaam Hussain said "Falsehood can buy you many supporters, truth has few friends."

That very day Imaam Hussain wrote a letter to Habeeb Ibne Mazahir, his childhood friend, telling him how Yezid's vultures were gathering to kill him. The letter was carried by a messenger who entered Kufa in the dark by climbing over the city walls. The messenger reached Habeeb's house as Habeeb, his wife and his young son were sitting down for breakfast. Habeeb read the letter, kissed it and tears began to flow down his cheeks. His wife asked him what was wrong. Habeeb said "Who would ever have thought that people would be so thirsty for the blood of the grandson of the Holy Prophet, whose name they utter in every Adhaan and in every Salaah?"

Habeeb instructed his servant to take his horse to a farm outside the city and wait for him there. If anyone should ask, the servant should say that he was taking the horse for grazing.

At Asr, when most people were in the mosque Habeeb slipped out of Kufa. He mounted his horse and galloped towards Kerbala. Habeeb Ibne Mazahir reached Kerbala late in the evening. Imaam Hussain greeted Habeeb with great affection. When Bibi Zainab heard that Habeeb had come she asked Janaab-e-Fizza to convey her greetings to Habeeb. When Habeeb received the message he began to sob saying, "How fortunate are the companions of Imaam Hussain that the daughter of Fatimah Zahra should honour them with greetings."

On the fateful day of Ashura, between zuhr and asr, Habeeb Ibne Mazahir rode into the battlefield. He fought bravely. Finally he was over-powered, He fell to the ground. Imaam Hussain rushed to him. Habeeb looked at Imaam and said "O the grand-son of the

Holy Prophet, please forgive this humble servant for not being able to give more than his unworthy life for you and Islam." Imaam took Habeeb in his arms and cried, "O my friend! O my friend!" Habeeb died resting his head on Imaam's shoulder.

Wahab Bin Abdullah Qalbi

This is the story of a young bride and a young bridegroom who were at Kerbala. They had been married only two months. The bridegroom was his mother's only child.

After his marriage the mother decided to go for Hajj and take the son and his bride. They left Kufa for Mecca in the month of Shawwaal.

On their way back, they found Kufa sealed off. At the border the mother asked why Kufa had been placed under such a strict blockade. She was told that a rebel group was camped at Kerbala and that Kufa was sealed off to protect the city and its inhabitants from an attack by the rebels. She asked who the rebels were. She was told the leader was Hussain Ibne Ali Ibne Abu Taalib.

On hearing the name, the lady almost fainted. This lady was the widow Abdullah Qalbi and her son, the newly wed bridegroom, was Wahab Bin Abdullah Qalbi. His father was a companion of Hazrat Ali. In 40 Hijrah when Abdullah Qalbi's wife was pregnant she became very ill. Abdullah Qalbi went to Hazrat Ali and said "My wife and I have been childless for so long. Now that she is expecting a baby she is so ill that I may lose her. Please Mawla, pray for her." Hazrat Ali prayed, and Abdullah Qalbi's wife recovered. Same year Hazrat Ali was martyred. A few months later Wahab was born. Two years later his father died. The widow had brought up her son with great love.

Now she heard the son of Ali being accused of wanting to attack Kufa and kill the people there. She refused to believe it. She said to her son, "Wahab, I must go and find out what is happening." Wahab said, "Mother, I too would like to come." The three arrived in Kerbala on the 7th Muharram.

On learning the true situation Wahab decided to stay on with Imaam Hussain and fight for him. When he told his mother of his decision, she said "I am the proudest mother in Iraq."

On the day of Ashura, Wahab fought for Imaam Hussain. When he was killed the mother and the bride were standing at the gate of the camp. Their faces were radiant with pride. Umar Sa'ad ordered Wahab's head to be cut off from the body. He threw the head at Wahab's mother. She picked it up, kissed it and threw it back at Umar Sa'ad saying, "What we have sacrificed for our Imaam and for Islam we do not take back. I am sorry I have one son only. If I had twenty, they all would have fought Yezid today." Then she went into the camp, and took the young bride in her arms. Just then, the tent's curtain lifted and Bibi Zainab came in. She embraced them both and offered her condolences saying: "May Allah grant you patience to bear Wahab's loss!!

John bin Huwai

Among those who were martyred at Kerbala were sixteen slaves or freed slaves. Most of them were from Abyssinia, the present day Ethiopia. Some of them belonged to Imaam Hussain's family and others to the companions of Imaam who remained with him.

On the night before Ashura Imaam and the companions freed all their slaves and urged them to go away and seek their safety, but

these sixteen would not leave. Amongst them was an Abyssinian called John bin Huwai.

Hazrat Ali had given John to Abu Dharr Ghiffari, Abu Dharr freed him, but John stayed on with Abu Dharr as a companion. When Abu Dharr was exiled from Madina John went back to Hazrat Ali who invited him to stay on as his companion. In the company of Hazrat Ali he learnt the tafseer of Quraan and the traditions of the Holy Prophet. He also knew the Holy Quraan by heart. When Hazrat Ali was martyred John stayed with Imaam Hassan and after Imaam Hassan he moved in with Imaam Hussain. When Imaam Hussain left Madina John insisted on accompanying him.

At Kerbala John could always be seen at the side of Imaam Hussain. He was an old man, dark with grey curly hair. Because of his profound knowledge and pleasant manners he was greatly respected by all.

John spent the whole night of Ashura sharpening his sword. On the following day he helped in repelling the first two attacks from Yezid's army. At mid-day, after the Zuhr prayers, John came to the Imaam, and stood silently with his arms folded. It was his habit never to speak in the presence of Imaam until spoken to.

Imaam Hussain looked at John and said, "John, I know you have come for my permission to go to the battle-field. You have been a good and trusted friend. I will not deny you martyrdom for Islam. Go, Allah be with you!" John smiled happily. He faced the enemy and recited a poem which said "I am a soul willing to die for Allah and have a sword thirsty of the blood of the enemies of Allah. Before I die I shall fight the enemies of Allah with my sword and my tongue, and thus shall I serve the grand-son of the Holy Prophet."

John fought courageously, all the time reciting the poem. He received several mortal blows but his recitation of the poem continued. John fell from his horse, he still continued to fight with his tongue by reciting the poem. And then a few horse men moved to where he lay. John, the Abyssinian, was silenced.

Zuhair Ibne Qain & Saeed Ibne Abdullah

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah Ta'ala has time and again emphasized the requirement of every muslim to say his prayers. In Sura-e-Ma'oon Allah says "Woe unto those who do not say their prayers regularly, and pray only to be seen by others!"

Let us see how Zuhr prayers were said in Kerbala. When the time for Zuhr prayers came most of the companions of Imaam Hussain lay dead. They had been killed in the three battles which had taken place since sunrise. Now there were only about fifteen companions left in addition to the members of the family who numbered about eighteen. These 33 stood up to say Zuhr prayers and Imaam Hussain stood in front of them to lead the prayers.

Just then the enemy began to shoot arrows. This made it very difficult for Imaam Hussain to lead prayers. Imaam told his companions that he would lead "Namaaz-e-Khauf", which meant that some would join in the prayers and half way they would read salaam and terminate their prayers, and then others would come in. This would give everyone a chance to say prayers in jama'at. behind the Imaam. The problem, however, was how to protect the Imaam from the arrows. Two companions stepped forward and begged Imaam to let them stand in front of him and act as a shield. They insisted upon this and the Imaam finally agreed.

These two brave men were Zuhair Ibne Qain and Saeed Ibne Abdullah. They performed their prayers first and then when Imaam began Jama'at prayers they stood up in front of him. Every time an arrow was shot at Imaam they put forward their own bodies and this way stopped the arrows from hitting Imaam.

Let us imagine the scene. Imaam Hussain is leading the prayers, Zuhair and Saeed are standing in front of him. The natural human instinct is that when a man sees anything flying towards him, he ducks to avoid it. Here are two men who not only do not duck but actually put forward their bodies to intercept the arrows. By the time the prayers had finished, 38 arrows had hit Zuhair Ibne Qain and 52 arrows had hit Saeed Ibne Abdullah. It was by sheer will to serve their Imaam and Islam they kept themselves alive. When the Imaam recited the last salaam "Assalaamu 'Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahu wa Barakaatuh", these two great heroes of Kerbala fell.

When Imaam Hussain went up to them and said "My friends, you have given your lives for something most beloved to Allah, the salaah!" Imaam then raised his hands and prayed, "O Allah! I am proud to commend to You the souls of my two companions who gave their lives for salaah. Please, Allah, grant them Your Rahmah." Every one present called out "Aameen!", and it is said that "Aameen" could be heard from the angels in the sky.

Aun and Muhammad

Aun and Muhammad were the sons of Bibi Zainab. They had not accompanied Bibi Zainab when she left Madina with Imaam Hussain (A.S.) Just before Imaam Hussain started his journey from Mecca, Hazrat Abdullah ibne Jaffer brought his two sons to

Mecca and handing them over to Imaam Hussain said, "Ya Imaam, since you have decided to go and will not allow me to come with you, please take my two sons with you. Aun will represent his maternal grandfather Hazrat Ali (A.S.) and the other will represent his paternal grandfather Hazrat Jaffer-e-Tayyaar."

Aun and Muhammad were quite young. It is reported that Aun was about thirteen and Muhammad was a year or two younger. They had learnt the art of fencing from their uncle, Hazrat Abbas.

On the night before Ashura Bibi Zainab said to them, "My sons, tomorrow there will be a battle. I can not ask you to fight because you are young. But if anything happens to Imaam Hussain, while you are still alive, I will be filled with shame." Both the boys stood up and said "Mother, we have the blood of Ali and Jaffer in our veins. Our grand fathers were warriors whose fame will always be remembered. Do you think we can possibly shame them? More over we are the pupils of Uncle Abbas. Mother, unless you forbid us and stop us from fighting, we shall go to the battlefield and show the enemies of Islam how bravely the children of Islam can fight. All we want from you is a promise that you will never weep for us. Or souls will never rest in peace if you grieve for us after we are gone."

Tears of joy and pride flowed down Bibi Zainab's eyes as she embraced her two boys. In the morning during the general attacks from the enemy, Aun and Muhammad fought side by side with Ali Akber, Qasim and Hazrat Abbas. Every time either of them succeeded in felling an enemy, he would look proudly at Hazrat Abbas who would smile and nod his approval. Imaam Hussain would not, however, give the two boys permission to go for single combat. They were very disappointed. They came to their mother for help. Bibi Zainab sent someone to request Imaam Hussain to

come to her tent. When the Imaam came Bibi Zainab said, "Hussain, at the battle of Siffeen Abbas was only eight years old. When he saw someone trying to attack you, he rushed into the battle field and killed the man. Do you remember how proud our father Ali was? Today I too want to be proud of my sons. I want to see them go out there and defend Islam. Will you not allow me that privilege?" Imaam Hussain stood there in silence. He looked at his sister. He saw the disappointment on her face. He saw tears forming around her eyes. He put his arms around the two boys and led them to their horses. He kissed them and then helped them mount."Go," said Imaam, "Go, and show the world how those as young as you can fight the injustice and oppression of Yezid!" Then he turned round and lifted the curtain of the tent. The boys raised their hands and said "Fi Amaani-llah, mother!" Bibi Zainab replied, "Bismillah my sons. Allah be with you!"

The two boys rode out into the battlefield. They fought bravely. At one point Umar Sa'ad asked, "Who are these two youngsters? They fight like I have seen Ali ibne Abu Taalib fight." When he was told who they were he ordered his soldiers to give up single combats and surround and kill the boys. Aun and Muhammad were attacked from all sides. Soon they were over-powered and brutally killed. Imaam Hussain and Hazrat Abbas carried the two young bodies to a tent and laid them on the floor. Imaam walked to Bibi Zainab's tent. He found her in sijdah praying, "Ya Allah, I thank you for accepting my sacrifice. My heart is filled with pride because my two sons have given their lives for your religion."

Burair Hamdani

After the death of Uthmaan, people prevailed upon Hazrat Ali to accept Khulafah. Uthmaan died on 24th Muharram in 35 Hijrah

and Hazrat Ali became Khalifah in the same month. The first thing he did after becoming the Khalifah was to dismiss all the corrupt governors and other officials. Muawiya, who was the Governor of Syria, did not accept the dismissal and responded by gathering together a Syrian army of fifty thousand soldiers to fight Hazrat Ali. Hazrat Ali marched from Kufa with an army of twenty thousand. The battle took place North of Kufa at a place called Siffeen on the banks of the river Furaat. At one time during the battle, Hazrat Ali's army captured Furaat.

Muawiya and his army were cut off from water. When Hazrat Ali heard that Muawiya soldiers were suffering from thirst, he ordered his army to let Muawiya army come to the river saying, "Every living being is entitled to water." Immediately Hazrat Ali's army made a way for Muawiya and his soldiers to come to the river and take as much water as they needed, and also to water their horses and camels.

From Asr until sunset Muawiya soldiers were at the river bank drinking water, watering their animals and filling their mashks. When Hazrat Ali's officers complained to him, Hazrat Ali replied, "To deprive any human or animal of water is a sin Allah will never forgive."

Yazeed was at Siffeen, so was Imaam Hussain. When the Muharram of 60 Hijrah came, Yazeed sent a secret order to ibne Ziyad to force Imaam Hussain away from Furaat and then cut off Imaam Hussain, his family and his companions from water. Ibne Ziyad gave orders to Umar Sa'ad to do so. On the third of Muharram, Umar Ibne Sa'ad asked Imaam Hussain to move his camp away from Furaat. Imaam Hussain and his camp were cut off from water, while 25 years earlier, his father had allowed

Yazeed's father and the army of 50,000 freedom to go to the river and take as much water as they had wanted.

The children in Imaam Hussain's camp were soon crying out "Al-atash! al atash!" Burair Hamdani was a companion of Imaam Hussain. He was present at Kerbala. On the night before Ashura, he could no longer stand the cries of "Al-atash, Al-atash." In the dark of the night he made his way to the river. He filled his mashk and secured the cap. He too was very thirsty but did not even think of drinking water when he was at the river bank. How could he when the grand-son of the Holy Prophet and his children were thirsty!

On his way back, he was seen by two of the guards posted to make sure that no water reached Imaam Hussain's camp. They tried to stop him. He attacked and killed them both. He brought the mashk to Imaam Hussain's camp. He called Bibi Fizza and asked her to take the mashk to the children. They were more than fifty children in Imaam Hussain's camp. They were all very thirsty. When they heard that water had come, they rushed. They put their cheeks on the mashk to cool themselves. In this rush the cap flew open and the water spilled. The children looked with pain and disappointment as the water disappeared into the desert sand. Burair was desolate. He raised his hands to the sky and cried, "Oh Allah! I had hoped that this Your humble servant would tonight earn the du'aas of the children of Imaam. Oh how very unfortunate Burair the son of Hamdani is!" Imaam consoled Burair, "My friend, you have earned the du'aas of Fatimah's son for your brave effort!"

Hazrat Qasim

Hazrat Qasim was the youngest son of Imaam Hassan (A.S.). Qasim was born in 47 A.H. three years before his father was martyred. When Imaam Hussain prepared to leave Madina in the month of Rajab 60 A.H. Qasim mother Umme-e-Farwa asked Imaam Hussain to take her and Qasim with him. Imaam Hussain agreed.

Hazrat Qasim, although only 13 years old, had, like his cousins Aun and Muhammad, learnt fencing from Hazrat Abbas and Hazrat Ali Akber. Hazrat Abbas was very fond of Hazrat Qasim.

On the night before Ashura when Imaam Hussain was passing by Umm-e-Farwa's tent he heard Qasim say to his mother, "Mother, tomorrow Uncle Abbas, Ali Akber and I will defend Imaam Hussain. Mother, if I get killed please do not weep for me." Umm-e-Farwa replied, "My son although I dearly love you, I shall not weep for you. Nothing will make me prouder than to see my son give his life for Islam." When Imaam Hussain heard this conversation he prayed to Allah to bless Hazrat Qasim and Umm-e-Farwa.

On Ashura day after Aun and Muhammad had fallen in the battlefield, Hazrat Qasim came to Imaam Hussain and begged for permission to go and fight. Twice Imaam Hussain refused saying "Qasim you are young and your mother's only son." Hazrat Qasim was very disappointed. He went to his mother. When she saw her son so disappointed she remembered that just before he died, Imaam Hassan had written a letter, given it to Umm-e-Farwa saying, "If ever you find Qasim in difficulty, give him this letter." She gave Hazrat Qasim the letter. In the letter it was written, "My son Qasim, a day will come when my brother Hussain will be

facing an enemy army of tens of thousands. That will be the day when Islam will need to be saved by sacrifice. You must represent me on that day."

Hazrat Qasim read the letter. He smiled. He rushed to Imaam and gave him the letter. After reading the letter Imaam Hussain said, "O my brother's son, how can I stop you from doing what your father wanted you to do. Bismillah, go. Allah be with you."

Imaam Hussain tied Imaam Hassan's turban on the head of Hazrat Qasim and helped him mount his horse. As Qasim was riding out, Imaam Hussain said "Inna Lilla-hi Wa Inna Ilai-hi Raji'oon." Hazrat Qasim said "O my uncle - Do not be upset. I do not fear death. Death for Islam will be sweeter for me than honey." Hazrat Qasim came to the battle field. He was a very handsome boy. When the enemy saw him, they began to murmur, "How can we kill someone whose face is shining like moon?"

In a loud and a clear voice Hazrat Qasim introduced himself and cried out a challenge for single combat. He killed several famous warriors who came forward.

Every time he felled an enemy Hazrat Qasim would stand on his stirrups, look behind and wave to Hazrat Abbas, just as a pupil would seek approval of his teacher on any assignment, Hazrat Abbas would proudly wave back. When the enemy saw his bravery and realized that they could not possibly over power him in single combats, they came from behind and one of them hit Hazrat Qasim on the head with a sword.

Hazrat Qasim tried to go on fighting but alas he was so young and he was so very thirsty! He fell from his horse crying out, "YA AMMAHO, ACCEPT MY LAST SALAAMS." Imaam Hussain and Hazrat Abbas rode out. The soldiers tried to stop them, when

finally they came to where Hazrat Qasim had fallen they saw a dreadful sight!! Hazrat Qasim's body had been trampled by the horses of the soldiers who had tried to stop Imaam Hussain and Hazrat Abbas. Hazrat Abbas was so angry when he saw this that he began to shake with fury. He took out his sword and wanted to attack the enemy. Imaam Hussain restrained him saying "Abbas, have patience, dear brother. Do not give them an excuse for saying that we attacked them first."

Was Qasim body carried to the camp to his mother? This is not very clear. It is reported, however, that Imaam Hussain took off his abaa, spread it on to the ground, and gathered the pieces from the ground as one gathers flowers from a garden!

Hazrat Abbas

Hazrat Ali married Fatimah Binti Huzaam Ibne Khalid in 24 Hijrah. Fatimah gave birth to Hazrat Abbas on the 4th Shabaan, 26th Hijrah. In 27th Hijrah Ja'far was born and in 29th Hijrah Uthmaan was born. Abdullah was born in 32nd Hijrah. Because she had four sons Fatima Binti Huzaam was known as Ummul Baneen.

Ummul Baneen, from the very first day she entered Hazrat Ali's house, treated the children of Bibi Fatimah with utmost respect. She brought up her own sons to look upon Imaam Hassan, Imaam Hussain, Bibi Zainab and Bibi Kulthoom, not as brothers and sisters but as masters and mistresses.

Imaam Hussain was very attached to Hazrat Abbas. When Hazrat Abbas was born, Hazrat Ali asked Imaam Hussain to recite the adhaan and the iqamah in the ears of the child. When he was on the arms of Imaam Hussain, the infant smiled and raised his arms.

There were tears in Imaam Hussain's eyes. Was it because he knew that the child was trying to say: "O Mawla I have come and will happily give these my arms and my life for you and Islam?"

In early childhood Hazrat Abbas would follow Imaam Hussain like a shadow. If Imaam Hussain looked thirsty, Abbas would rush to bring him water. If Imaam Hussain seemed hot, Abbas would fan him with the hem of his cloak. At the battle of Siffeen in the 34th Hijrah, Abbas was only eight years old. Imaam Hussain was fighting in the battle field. When Hazrat Abbas saw an enemy soldier approaching Imaam Hussain from behind, he took a sword and rushed into the battle field and killed the enemy, at the same time crying out in a loud voice, "How can any one dare attack my Mawla while I am alive." He continued to fight maintaining his position behind Imaam Hussain. Muawiya saw this and asked, "Who is that boy?" When he was told he was Abbas ibne Ali, he said, "By God! No one can fight like that at that age except a son of Ali!"

Hazrat Abbas grew up to be a tall and handsome man. He was so tall, that when he sat on a horse his feet touched the ground. He was so handsome that he was known as Qamar-e-Bani Hashim, the Moon of the family of Hashim.

Hazrat Abbas was also a valiant warrior. It was said that Muawiya did not dare invade Madina because of five men who were with Imaam Hussain and could, together with their Imaam, conquer a whole army. These were Muhammad Hanafia, a brother of Imaam Hussain, Hazrat Muslim ibne Aqeel, Abdullah Ibne Jaffer, Hazrat Abbas and Hazrat Ali ibnal Hussain, our fourth Imaam, Zainul 'Abideen.

The Second Journey - Mecca to Kerbala

When Imaam Hussain decided to leave Madina in the month of Rajab 60 Hijrah, he did not encourage Muhammad Hanafia and Abdullah Ibne Jaffer to accompany him. He wanted to make sure that no one at the time or in the future would suggest that Hussain wanted to fight for the khilafah.

Just before Imaam Hussain left Madina, Ummul Baneen summoned all her four sons and said to them, "My sons you must remember that while I love you, Imaam Hussain is your Master. If Imaam or his sisters or his children get injured or hurt while you are still alive, I will never forgive you." There were tears in Hazrat Abbas's eyes as he promised his mother that he and his brothers would lay down their lives for Imaam Hussain and his children.

The caravan reached Kerbala on 2nd Muharram. From the day the sad news of Hazrat Muslim's murder had reached the caravan of Imaam Hussain, Hazrat Abbas and his brothers increased their vigilance to protect Imaam and the others.

Hazrat Abbas was very popular with the children of Imaam Hussain especially Sakina who was only four years old. Whenever the children wanted anything they would cry out "Ya Abbas!" or "Ya Ammahu!", and Abbas would go running. But from the seventh of Muharram Abbas was unable to respond to their cries for water.

Then came the day of Ashura, after Zuhr prayers one by one the brave companions of Imaam Hussain fell in the battle field. At last only Imaam Hussain, Ali Akber and Hazrat Abbas were left. Imaam Zainul 'Abideen lay sick in his tent.

Several times Hazrat Abbas asked Imaam Hussain for permission to go and fight. Each time Imaam Hussain would reply "Abbas, you are the captain of my army, you are my 'alamdaar - the

standard bearer." Hazrat Abbas would never argue with Imaam Hussain. His three brothers were killed in the battle fought after Zuhr. Imaam Hussain could see the anger in Hazrat Abbas's eyes, especially when Hazrat Qasim's body was trampled upon by the enemy. Imaam Hussain knew that if he let Abbas go and fight, there would be a massacre in the enemy rank. Imaam Hussain's object was to re-awaken Islam and not to score a victory on the battle field.

Just then Bibi Sakina came out holding a dried up mask. She walked up to Hazrat Abbas and said "AL ATASH, YA AMMAHU! I am thirsty O my uncle Abbas!" Abbas went to Imaam Hussain and requested for permission to go and get water for Sakina. Imaam Hussain gave his permission. Abbas put Sakina's mashk on the 'alam, mounted his horse and rode up to Imaam Hussain. He said "I have come to say goodbye." Imaam Hussain said "My brother, come and embrace me." Hazrat Abbas dismounted his horse. There were tears in Imaam's eyes. As Hazrat Abbas prepared to mount his horse, Imaam Hussain said, "My brother, I want a gift from you. I want your sword." Hazrat Abbas, without uttering a word, gave Imaam Hussain his sword and rode into the battlefield, armed only with a spear and holding the 'alam.

There were 30,000 enemy soldiers in the battlefield. They had all heard of the valour of Hazrat Abbas. A cry arose, "Abbas is coming!" Yazeed's soldiers started hiding behind one another. A few brave ones dared go near Hazrat Abbas but were soon put to death by the spear or by a kick.

Hazrat Abbas reached the river Furaat. He filled the mashk with water. He himself was very thirsty. He took the water in his palms, looked at it and threw it away saying, "O water of Furaat, my lips can welcome you only after Sakina has quenched her

thirst!?" He placed the mashk on his 'alam and started to ride back.

Umar Sa'ad cried out, "Do not let that water reach Hussain's camp, otherwise we shall all be doomed!"

A soldier climbed a tree and as Abbas was riding past the tree he struck his sword on the right shoulder The spear and the arm fell on to the ground. Just then someone crept behind Hazrat Abbas and struck him on the left shoulder. The 'alam fell. Hazrat Abbas gripped the mashk with his teeth. His one object was to get the water to Sakina. Fighting with his feet he urged the horse to get him to Imaam's camp as quickly as possible.

Alas! an arrow was shot. It went flying across the desert and hit the mashk. The water began to pour out and with the water all the hopes of Hazrat Abbas poured on to the sands of Kerbala to be buried forever in the thirsty desert. Abbas now did not want to go back and face Sakina. With his feet, he signalled the horse to turn back. The enemy surrounded him from all sides. Abbas fell from the horse!! As he fell, he cried out "My salaams to you Ya Mawla!"

Imaam Hussain seemed to lose all his strength when he heard the voice of his dear brother Abbas.

When Hazrat Abbas left to go to fetch water, Imaam stood at the gate of the camp watching the 'alam. Sakina was standing next to Imaam Hussain, also with her eyes fixed on the 'alam. When Abbas reached the river bank and bent down to fill the mashk, the 'alam disappeared from sight. Sakina was frightened and looked at her father. Imaam said, 'Sakina, your uncle Abbas is at the river bank.' Sakina smiled and said, 'Alhamdulillah!' and called out all the children to welcome Abbas. When Hazrat Abbas lost both arms, the 'alam fell onto the ground. Sakina could see it no longer!

She looked at Imaam Hussain, but he turned his face away. Sakina began to tremble with fear and her eyes filled with tears. She raised her hands and prayed, 'Ya Allah! Do not let them kill my uncle Abbas! I will never ask for water again!' and ran inside to her mother.

Imaam Hussain reached where Hazrat Abbas was lying. It was a tragic sight. Hazrat Abbas was lying on the ground. Both arms had been severed! There was an arrow in the right eye and blood blocked the left eye. As soon as Hazrat Abbas sensed the presence of Imaam Hussain he said "Mawla, why did you take the trouble to come over? Please go back and look after Sakina." Imaam Hussain said, "My dear brother, all your life you have served me and my children. Is there anything I can do for you at this last moment of you life?" Hazrat Abbas replied, "Aqaa, please, clean the blood from my eye so that I can see your beloved face before I die!" Imaam cleaned the blood. Abbas fixed his gaze on Imaam. Then he said, "Mawla please do not carry my body to the camp. I do not wish Sakina to see me in this state!" Imaam Hussain took Hazrat Abbas in his arms, and kissed his forehead. Just then our Mawla, our Mushkil Kushaa, Abbas ibne Ali breathed his last. Imaam Hussain placed Sakina's mashk on the 'alam and carried the 'alam to the camp. He went to Bibi Zainab's tent. Imaam Hussain could not say a word. He gave the 'alam to Bibi Zainab and sat down on the floor! The brother sister performed aza-e-Abbas.

Hazrat Ali Akber

Hazrat Ali Akber was the son of Imaam Hussain. He was a handsome young man of eighteen. His mothers' name was Umm-e-Laila. He was also a brave soldier. He had been taught fencing

and archery by Hazrat Abbas. He so much resembled the Holy Prophet that Imaam Hussain was often heard to say that whenever I remember the Holy Prophet I look at Akber.

Ali Akber had a loud beautiful voice. It was he who always recited adhaan. On the morning of Ashura day Ali Akber recited adhaan. Every one knew that it was the last time they would hear Ali Akber's adhaan. Imaam Hussain began to weep when Ali Akber began his Adhaan. The ladies could also be heard crying in their tents.

After Zuhr prayers Ali Akber stood in front of Imaam Hussain. He said, "Father I request for permission to go and fight the enemies of Islam." Imaam looked at his son lovingly. He said, "Akber, you have my permission. May Allah be with you! But Akber, you know how much your mother, sisters and aunts love you. Go and say farewell to them."Ali Akber went into the tent of his mother. Every time he wanted to come out of the tent the mother, aunts and sisters would pull his cloak and say, "O Akber, How can we live without you!" Finally Imaam Hussain had to go in and plead with all to let Ali Akber go.

Imaam helped his youthful son to mount the horse. As Akber began to the ride towards the battlefield, he heard foot steps behind. He looked back and saw his father. He said, "Father, we have said good-bye. Why are you walking behind him." Hussain replied, "My son, had you been a father you would surely have understood!!"

Ali Akber fought very bravely. No one dared come close to him in single combat after he had killed many well known warriors. Umar Sa'ad ordered his soldiers to finish off the young man saying, "When he dies, Hussain will not want to live! Ali Akber is the life

of Hussain." While a few soldiers attacked Ali Akber another slowly crept up to him and threw a spear at his chest with such ferocity that it penetrated Akber chest and he felt faint. As he was falling from his horse, he cried out."O Father, my last salaams to you!" As he hit the ground the spear broke but the blade remained lodged in Akber's chest.

When our Imaam heard Akber's salaam he looked at Furaat where Abbas lay and said, 'Abbas! Now that this brother of yours needs you most, where have you gone?' With all his strength sapped by the anguish in Akber's voice, Hussain began to walk towards the battle-field.

Let us pause briefly to remind ourselves of an incident in the seventh Hijrah. The Jews of Khaiber had revolted against the Holy Prophet. The Prophet and the Muslims of Madina laid a siege on Khaiber. They surrounded the fortress in which the Jews had taken shelter. The Muslims could not get victory unless they entered the fortress. There was a moat surrounding the fortress. Hazrat Ali had been unable to accompany the Muslims due to his illness. Three days passed and the Muslims could not find any solution. Even if they got across the moat they would face the famous gates of the fortress. These were made of steel, and it is said that at least twenty men were needed to push open or close each gate.

On the third day, after the morning prayers, the Prophet summoned Ali. Hazrat Ali immediately responded. He jumped his horse over the moat and with one hand swung open both the gates of the fortress with such force that they broke off their hinges. He carried them and put them across the moat to form a bridge. The Muslims rode into the fortress and conquered Khaiber.

Now let us go back to Kerbala. When Imaam Hussain got to where Akber lay he took him in his arms. Akber had his right hand on the chest. He placed his left arm over the shoulder of his father. Hussain said "Akber, why do you embrace me with one arm only?" Akber would not reply. Hussain tried to move Akber hand. Akber resisted. Imaam gently moved the hand. Then he saw it! He saw the blade of the spear. Imaam Hussain laid Ali Akber on the ground and sitting on his knees he put both his hands on the blade of the spear. He then looked at Najaf, and cried out, "Father, I too have come to my Khaiber!" He pulled out the blade. Jibraeel cried out "Marhaba! Marhaba!" Akber took a deep sigh and then lay still.

Hazrat Ali Asghar

Hazrat Ali Asghar was the youngest child of Imaam Hussain. He was born only a few weeks before Imaam left Madina. His mother's name was Rubaab daughter of Imra'u'l Qais who was the chief of the tribe of Kinda.

Rubaab had two children, Sakina and Ali Asghar. She and her two children accompanied Imaam to Kerbala. The fact that Imaam took with him a newly born baby further demonstrates the his intention was never to engage in any armed rebellion.

At Kerbala Asghar was only six months old. From the seventh Muharram there was no water in Imaam's camp. Asghar was in great pain because of thirst.

On Ashura day, after Ali Akber had been killed, Imaam Hussain was standing outside the camp. He was left all alone and he was preparing to go into the battlefield. Just then he heard a child cry. It was Ali Asghar, tormented by the pangs of hunger and thirst.

Imaam walked into Bibi Rubaab's tent. He lifted the child from the cradle."Rubaab," he said, "I will take him to Yazeed's army. Surely they can not possibly deny this little infant a few drops of water?" Rubaab changed Ali Asghar's clothes. She even tied a small turban on his head. Like any other mother she wanted her son to look at his best in front of strangers.

Imaam Hussain carried the child to the battle field. Walking up to Yazeed's soldiers Imaam Hussain said, "This child has done you no harm. He is dying of thirst. I am begging for a few drops of water for him."There was no response. Imaam said, "If you are afraid that when you bring Asghar any water I will drink it, look, I will put him on the ground and you can come yourself and give him water." He put the child on the sands of Kerbala and moved a couple of steps back. You can imagine how hot the desert sand was. Asghar lay there not even wincing. He turned towards the enemy and stared at them. A murmur arose among the soldiers but no one came forward to give water to the baby. Imaam took Asghar in his arms and in a clear voice said, "Asghar, my son, show them how thirsty you are!" Asghar turned his head towards the soldiers. He smiled sweetly, opened his mouth, brought out his dry tongue and moved it over his lips. The ultimate sword had been unsheathed!

The soldiers were so moved by this that they could be heard sobbing. Still, they were very afraid of Yazeed and none dared come forward to give water to Ali Asghar.

Umar Sa'ad was worried. It seemed that Asghar was emerging victorious in this confrontation against the might of Yezid. He looked at Hurmala, a famous archer, and said, "Silence Hussain!"

Then a terrible thing happened. Hurmala lifted his bow. He aimed an arrow at the child. The arrow flew across the hot desert. There

was a hissing sound. Asghar smiled. He lifted his head and arched his neck!! No civilized mind can even imagine what happened next. The hissing sound stopped and Asghar lay still on his father's arms.

Imaam Hussain looked down at Asghar's neck, he saw the arrow, he saw the neck, he saw the smile and then he could see no more!!!

Our Imaam began to feel faint. For a moment everything went dark. He could not see! There was a total silence over Kerbala, broken only by the sound of the gentle waves of Furaat. Even the enemy appeared stunned.

Slowly Hussain turned round and now looked at the baby in his arms.

The arrow had passed through the tender neck and lodged in Imaam Hussain's chest. There was no way Imaam Hussain could dislodge the arrow. His two arms were supporting the still child. He looked at the sky, and prayed "Ya Allah, give me courage in this most difficult moment of my life. No Prophet ever was subjected to a test as severe as this."

It is said that the Imaam was so shaken up by what had happened to the infant child that all of a sudden his beard went all grey and he looked an old man. With his teeth he pulled his abaa over Asghar to shield the body from the scorching sun. Then he took a few deep breaths, and began to walk towards his camp.

As he got near he saw Rubaab standing at the entrance to her tent. He saw the anxiety, the hope, the fear and the restlessness in her eyes. Our Imaam seemed to lose all strength. He could not walk forward towards Bibi Rubaab. He took seven steps back saying "INNA LILLA-HI WA INNA ILAY-HI RAJEEOON." He stopped

and thought that he must take the child to his mother. He again took seven steps forwards saying "INNA LILLA-HI WA INNA ILAY-HI RAJEEOON." Once again his eyes met with those of Bibi Rubaab's. Again our Imaam seemed to lose his courage and walked backwards repeating "INNA LILLA-HI WA INNA ILAY-HI RAJEEOON." Imaam Hussain did this seven times. Forward and backward. All the time Bibi Rubaab's eyes remained transfixed on the child. Each time Imaam reciting "INNA LILLA-HI WA INNA ILAY-HI RAJEEOON"

Finally, somehow, he got the arrow dislodged. He now took the dead infant to Bibi Rubaab. He said, "Rubaab! This is a test from Allah which no mother has ever been asked to go through. Come with me" Bibi Rubaab followed. With their own hands they dug a small grave! The father and the mother together buried Ali Asghar!!

Imam Hussain

Our Imam is all alone! He looks around him. There lie Habeeb ibne Mazahir, Muslim ibne Awsaja, Zuhair ibne Qain and all his friends and companions. There lie Awn and Muhammad. He looks at Qasim's trampled remains. He looks at Ali Akber, his beloved son, with that dreadful wound on his chest. He looks towards Furaat. Gently he whispers, 'Abbas, Abbas, I am alone! So very alone!'

Slowly Imaam Hussain moves towards the tent of Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen. Zain ul 'Abideen is lying unconscious on his bed. Lovingly Imaam shakes his son by the shoulder. The sick Imaam opens his eyes, 'Father, Father, why are you alone? Where is my uncle Abbas? Where is Ali Akber? Where is Qasim? Where are all

your companions?' Imaam Hussain says, 'Son, no man, save you and I, is left alive. All of them have died for Islam.'

Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen tries to get up. 'Where are you going, my son?' asks Imaam Hussain. 'To fight Yezid's army!' replies the young man. 'No, my son, you are too sick for Jihad. I have come to say good-bye. Look after the ladies and the children. And, my son, when you get to Madina, give my love to Sugra. Tell her that I always remembered her and that in these last moments of my life, I wish I could give her a hug before I get killed. . And also, my son, give salaams to our friends and tell them to think of me when they drink water!'

Imaam Hussain then stands in the centre of the camp and cries out, "O Zainab, O Kulthoom, O Sakina, O Ruqayya, O Rubaab, O Fizza my greetings to you! Farewell to you all!" The ladies and children weep and wail as they say farewell to Imaam.

Imaam walks towards his horse. There is no one to help him mount. Bibi Zainab steps forward. She holds the reins as Imaam mounts the horse. The horse moves a few steps and then it stops. Imaam Hussain urges the horse to move, but it stands still looking towards its hind legs. Imaam turns his head. He sees Sakina clinging to the horse's leg, pleading, 'O horse, do not take my father away from me. Do not let them make me yateemah!'

Imaam dismounts. He says, 'Sakina, you are the great grand daughter of the Holy Prophet! I love you so much that if you tell me not to go, I will not. But then Islam will be destroyed. How will you or I be able to face the Holy Prophet on the Day of Judgement?' Fighting back her tears the four year old Sakina can only manage to say, 'Bismillah, father!' The four year old holds the reins as her father mounts for a certain death!!

Hussain rides on. He stands on a hill and cries out, "Who is there who will come to my help?"

Of course our Imaam is not expecting any of the enemy soldiers to come to his help! To whom is he addressing this plea for help? Our Imaam is addressing the plea to all the Muslims, in every age and everywhere, young and old, men and women, grown ups and children urging us all to always fight Yezidism and refuse to disobey the commands of Allah. Every little effort we make to preserve and act according to our Islamic conscience is a response to our Imaam's call with LABBAIK! LABBAIK!

Imaam rides towards the enemy. There is a shower of arrows! Imaam ignores the arrows and rides on. He wants to make one last effort to preach true Islam to the enemies of Islam. He stops and turns towards the enemy and begins to speak: "O those of you who do not know me, know that I am the grandson of the Holy Prophet. I am on the path of truth. Yezid personifies falsehood and corruption. He wants to lead you away from Islam. Do not follow him. Do not kill the grandson of Allah's messenger. Allah will never forgive you! Remember that when you see a ruler who does what has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, who indulges in sins, who oppresses the people he rules, and you do nothing to stop such a ruler, before Allah you are as guilty as he is. You know my ancestry. My parents did not raise me to submit myself to an evil tyrant. I am your Imaam. You have surrendered the freedom of your mind to the evil ways of Yazeed.

If you do not care for Islam, do, at least, care for the freedom of your spirit!!"

Umar Sa'ad cries out, "Do not fall victims to Hussain's oratory! Kill him!"

From all directions the soldiers advance towards Imaam Hussain with their naked swords! Imaam says: "You are determined to fight me Then fight you I shall! I do not fear death. Death to me is sweeter than dishonour. Now I shall let you witness the valour of the son of Ali ibne Abu Taalib!"

Imaam Hussain takes out his sword and begins to fight. Thirsty, tired, wounded, grieving, our Imaam fights as no one had ever seen any one fight! Where ever he turns to, the soldiers flee as rabbits do at the sight of a lion! Umar Sa'ad sends all his best warriors against Imaam. They all perish. No one dares come near our Imaam! Imaam stands on his stirrups. Casts his eyes to where Hazrat Abbas lies, and murmurs, "Abbas did you see the battle of your brother, the thirsty, the broken hearted brother?"

And then Jibra'eel appears and says, 'O Hussain, Allah is pleased with your bravery. The moment has now arrived for you to save Islam with your life!" Hussain looks at the sky! Yes, it is the time of Asr! Hussain returns the sword into the sheath. Lowers himself on the horse-back. Whispers to the horse "Take me to where my mother Fatimah is waiting for me! But, O my faithful horse, go past where my Akber is lying so that I may see my beloved son just one more time before I die."

Seeing that Imaam has sheathed his sword the enemy come from all sides. Some throw stones at him, some hit him with swords. Arrows are shot at him! Suddenly the horse stops! "My son, my son!" cries out the soul of Fatimah Zahra. Imaam Hussain falls from the horse! But his body does not touch the ground. It is resting on the blades of the arrows. He performs his Asr prayers lying on this musallah of arrows! Now he goes in to his last sijdah and says: "O Allah! All praise is to You and You alone!"

Someone is moving towards where our Imaam is in sijdah on the arrows. He is holding a dagger in his hand. The earth trembles! The sun goes into eclipse! Jibraeel cries out "OH HUSSAIN HAS BEEN KILLED, HUSSAIN HAS BEEN KILLED!!!!" Sakina falls on to the ground unconscious! Bibi Zainab runs to the tent of our fourth Imaam. 'Oh Son! What has happened?" Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen staggers towards the curtain of his tent. Lifts it up, and pointing his finger at a head mounted on a lance. He cries out in a trembling voice: "Assalaamu 'alaika, Ya 'aba 'Abdillah!!!"

Shaam-e-Gareeba

It was after 'asr on the day of Ashura. Imaam Hussain lay dead. The earth had trembled! Furaat had broken its banks! From the camp of the family of the Holy Prophet such lamentation arose as had never been heard before!

Yazeed's army had brutally murdered our Imaam, his sons, his brothers, his nephews, his companions. No one was spared. Amongst the male adults there remained only our fourth Imaam, Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen, who lay unconscious in his tent with his young son Muhammad hovering around him, weeping.

One would think that even the devil would halt himself in exhaustion after so much evil. But that was not to be!

Umar Sa'ad received a letter from ibne Ziyad. The governor of Kufa instructed that they should not be satisfied with the death of Hussain. His body must be subjected to the ultimate insult of being trampled by the hooves of horses. And this was done to the grandson of the Holy Prophet!!

As the sun was setting in the horizon, the soldiers rushed to Imaam Hussain's camp in search of booty. They looted every tent.

Every lady, and every girl was stripped of her veil. Fatimah's daughters were left bare-headed. Sakina's ear-rings were pulled off her ears, splitting her ear lobes. When the little girl pleaded for her veil to be left untouched, she was slapped.

Surely they would stop now? But they did not. They set fire to all the tents. Humayd Ibne Muslim describes how he saw a little girl with her dress on fire, her ears bleeding, running from the scene of carnage. He says: "I ran after her. I took her by hand. Put out the fire in her dress. I wiped the blood off her ears. She looked at me and said, "You seem like a kind person, are you a Muslim?" I told her I was. She thought a while and then said, "Can you please show me the way to Najaf?" I asked, "Why do you want to go to Najaf at this hour and in this state?" She said, "I want to go and complain to my grandfather Ali ibne Abi Talib about how they killed my father." Realizing that she was Hussain's daughter, I took her back to her aunt Zainab."

As the night descended, Bibi Zainab gathered all the ladies and children, in to one small space in between the gutted tents. Imaam Zain-ul 'Abideen lay on the ground surrounded by these widows and orphans. There was no fire, no light. Only the moon cast its dull light.

Umar Sa'ad asked Hur's widow to take some food and water to the ladies and the children. As she neared to where they were resting, Bibi Zainab recognized her. She stood up, went towards Hur's widow and offered her condolences for the death of Hur. This gesture on the part of Bibi Zainab, who had suffered so much, lost so many, and carrying so much grief in her heart, is a lesson in Islamic akhlaq which the world should never be allowed to forget.

Bibi Zainab took the jug of water. She went to Sakina who had fallen into a fretful sleep.

Gently she stroked the girl's dishevelled hair. Sakina opened her eyes. Bibi Zainab said, "Here is some water, Sakina. Please drink a little. You have been thirsty for so long!" On hearing the word 'water' Sakina cried out hopefully, "Has my uncle Abbas come back?" When she was told that Hur's widow had brought the water, she got up, went to Hur's widow, thanked her and then asked Bibi Zainab: "Have you all drunk water?" Bibi Zainab shook her head. Sakina asked, "Why then do you ask me to drink water?" Bibi Zainab said, "Because, my dear, you are the youngest." Sakina replied, "No! no! Asghar is the youngest!" Sakina took the jug of water, ran towards where Asghar lay buried, crying "Wa Asghara! Wa Asghara!"

This was how the homeless spent their night in Kerbala. This was Shaam-e-Gareeba, the night of the homeless. They had lost everything. Their men had died. Their children had been killed. In this desolate desert our fourth Imaam, the women and the remaining children are huddled where only a few hours before had stood their camp. Abbas, Qasim and Ali Akber had taken turns to guard the camp. Now Bibi Zainab and Bibi Kulthoom lay awake to make sure that Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen and the children were not attacked.

Suddenly, Bibi Zainab notices that Sakina has disappeared. She is alarmed. She looks around but Hussain's darling daughter is not to be seen. Bibi Zainab slowly walks to the battle field. She comes to where Abbas lay."Abbas! Abbas! My dear brother, have you seen Sakina?" There is silence! She makes her way to where Hussain's headless body lay. There, hugging her father, she finds Sakina, deep in sleep!!

4

The Third Journey - Kerbala to Kufa

Dawn breaks out on the desolate sands of Kerbala. What was the battle field yesterday, is a stretch of desert covered with the bodies of the slain. In the corner where there had stood Imaam Hussain's camp the mourning widows and orphans have completed their morning prayers.

Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen is in sijdah glorifying Allah. Umar Sa'ad walks over with a few soldiers and orders the women and the children to be tied with ropes as captives. There is a renewed wailing. Our fourth Imaam consoles them. He himself is put under heavy chains. Yezid's soldiers spend the day burying their dead. The bodies of the grandson of the Prophet of Islam and the other martyrs are left unattended. Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen pleads to be allowed to bury but all his pleas go unheeded.

Another night in Kerbala followed by another dawn! The prisoners remain tied. Our Imaam suffers the discomfort of the chain. His wrists and ankles are bruised. On the morning of the 12th Muharram the enemy brings unsaddled camels upon which the women and children are made to mount. A huge procession is being prepared.

At the head of the procession is Umar Sa'ad followed by the officers. Then a few foot soldiers carrying lances upon which are mounted the heads of the martyrs. In their midst is our fourth Imaam, chained and shackled. Then the camels carrying the

women and children as prisoners. Shimr and the rest of the infantry bring up the rear. The journey to Kufa begins.

Yes, the tale of Kerbala is a tale of five sad journeys! Now begins the third journey of tears. We look at the travellers. Some of those who had set out on that first journey, from Mecca to Madina, can be seen but the rest can not. No! They also can be seen if we look around! They are lying slaughtered on the sands of Kerbala.

Who is the hero and who is the heroine of this third journey? We see the hero, hand-cuffed, chained, exhausted with the long illness and the great suffering, our Fourth Imaam, Zain ul 'Abideen. And the heroine? Yes we see the lady. She is bare-headed. Her face full of pain and yet reflecting courage and the strength of her spirit! She knows that for the sake of Sakina and the other ladies she can not possibly give in to her grief and sorrow. Yes, it is Bibi Zainab!

Umar Sa'ad cruelty is not exhausted. He decides to lead the procession past where the bodies of the martyrs lie. As the camel carrying Bibi Zainab goes past the body of Imaam Hussain she can no longer contain her pain and anguish, and turning her face to Madina she cries out: "Ya Muhammad, The angels in heaven send their blessings upon you! Look, here lies your beloved Hussain, so humiliated and disgraced, covered with blood and cut into pieces. Here are we your daughters taken captives by Yezid!"

Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen walks over to Bibi Zainab." Dear Aunt, have patience. Your sacrifices for Islam have only just begun."

Ibne Ziyad, the Governor of Kufa, had declared a holiday. The city was decorated with flags and pennants. People had been told that the rebels who wanted to attack their city and murder them had been defeated at Kerbala and that their women were being brought into the city as prisoners. Those who believed this, and

many did, came out to line the city streets through which the procession was to pass so that they might mock and jeer at the prisoners. Big crowds had gathered everywhere. There was a holiday mood. The procession slowly entered the city and began to move towards the Governor's palace. People jeered and shouted at the prisoners. There were a few, however, who guessed the truth. When they saw Imaam Hussain's head, and saw the misery and grief of the widows and orphans, they began to shed tears. The majority were ignorant. They believed, or found it convenient to believe, the lies which Umar Sa'ad had told them. As the procession neared the palace, the crowds thickened. Most of the people who gathered around the Governor's palace were those who worked for Yezid or supported him. The jeering and insults grew louder. The face of Bibi Zainab was red with anger. She stood up on the camel, looked at the crowd and in a loud and clear voice said: "Praise be to Allah and blessings upon my grandfather Muhammad, His beloved Prophet!! Woe unto you, O people of Kufa! Do you know whom you have killed? Do you know what pledge you have broken? Do you know whose blood you have shed? Do you know whose honour you have defiled?"

There was a stunned silence. Then a gentle sound of people crying! There was a blind old man in the crowd. He had been a companion of Hazrat Ali. When he heard Bibi Zainab's voice, he cried out, "By Allah, if I had not known that he had died, I could have sworn that what I just heard was the voice of my master Ali ibne Abu Taalib." Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen went up to him and said, "Oh Shaikh! This is not Ali but his daughter Zainab binti Ali! She is the daughter of Fatimah, the beloved daughter of the Holy Prophet."The sound of weeping from the crowd grew louder. But as Bibi Zainab continued. Immediately there was a hushed silence:

"And well may you weep, O people of Kufa! The crime which you committed against your Prophet was so great that the skies shook, the earth trembled, and mountains crumbled down! You have killed your Imaam, and by doing so lost your shelter against hardship, evil and kufr! His blood stains your souls. Nothing can protect you from the anger of Allah for having killed the son of the last of His prophets!"

People could no longer control their wailing. Umar Sa'ad was frightened and quickly led the prisoners into the palace. The prisoners were brought before ibne Ziyad. Shaikh al-Mufid (A.R.) reports that ibne Ziyad sat on his throne and in front of him was the head of Imaam Hussain. He frequently poked the face with his cane. An old companion of the Holy Prophet, Zayd bin Arqam, was in the court and when he witnessed this indignity being inflicted on the head of Imaam he cried out, "Take your cane away from those lips! By Allah I have seen the lips of the Apostle of Allah on those lips!"

Ibne Ziyad was livid with rage. He retorted, "O old man! How dare you interrupt our celebrations of the victory of our Imaam, Yezid ibne Muawiya. Because of your age I spare your life. Leave my court immediately."

Ibne Ziyad then pointed at Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen and asked: "Who is this young man?" "He is Ali ibnal Hussain," replied Umar Sa'ad." "Why is he alive?" asked ibne Ziyad. and added, "Kill him straight away!"

Bibi Zainab rushed forward and planted herself in front of Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen."You will have to kill me first!" She said looking at ibne Ziyad with such defiance, determination and anger that

ibne Ziyad got up and walked away ordering that the prisoners be locked up.

5

The Fourth Journey - Kufa to Shaam

Bibi Zainab's speeches had stirred Kufa. The people of Kufa were filled with remorse. There was unrest in the city. In the market place they were whispering: 'What have we done? How could we invite the Prophet's grandson and then desert him to be mercilessly butchered at Kerbala? How can we permit the Holy Prophet's grand daughters be paraded in the streets like slaves? What have we done?'

Ibne Ziyad feared that the people of Kufa might rise against him. He ordered that the prison be strictly guarded. No one was allowed to visit them. Only the most trusted guards were allowed in or around the prison. In the mean time messengers ran between Kufa and Damascus. Although at first Yezid had ordered that the captives be detained at Kufa until he had completed all the arrangements for their entry into Shaam (Damascus), because of the mood in Kufa, Ibne Ziyad was anxious to have the prisoners out of Kufa as soon as possible. It was agreed that they be taken to Shaam.

Once again the prisoners were assembled and a procession left Kufa. But this time the departure was kept secret from the people of Kufa and took place at night.

So began the fourth journey of tears! It was a long and difficult journey.

Who was the hero and who was the heroine of this journey through the Iraqi and the Syrian deserts? Was it Bibi Rubaab, who from her unsaddled camel kept on staring at Ali Asghar's cradle loaded on another camel carrying the goods looted from Hussain's camp during the Shaam-e-Gareeba? Was it Sakina who now sat mournfully on her mother's lap staring at the 'alam of Hazrat Abbas and her mashk still tied to the 'alam, and who kept whispering: "I am not thirsty, Uncle, I am not thirsty!" Was the hero Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen who was made to walk all the way, the hot chains eating into his flesh?

Some times our Fourth Imaam would faint. His captors however knew no pity. They would flog him if he slowed down or fainted. On these occasions Bibi Zainab would intervene to stop the Imaam from being flogged to death.

This was the journey of which the hero was the valour of Hazrat Ali which ruled the heart of Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen and the heroine was the sabr of Fatimah Zahra which inspired Bibi Zainab.

The journey from Kufa to Shaam was a long one. It took over twenty days. The women and the children were exhausted. Their suffering was great! Quite often the children would faint under the scorching desert heat and fall off the camels. The mothers would scream. Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen and Bibi Zainab would go looking for the children. Sometimes they would find them by the road side barely alive and there were occasions when they were discovered too late. Our fourth Imaam would dig a grave to bury the dead child. An historian revisiting this route a few years later discovered a large number of small graves on the way side!

Some Zakirs narrate the following story: Once Bibi Zainab looked at the camel on which Sakina was riding. Sakina was not there! She looked at all the other camels, Sakina was nowhere to be seen. She panicked. Where could Imaam Hussain's darling daughter be? She asked Shimr to untie her to that she could go and look for Sakina. At first Shimr responded with his whip. Unmindful of her own pain she kept on begging. Shimr untied her with the warning that if she did not return soon he would flog Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen to death. Bibi Zainab ran in the direction from which they had travelled. Some distance away she saw an elderly lady holding Sakina affectionately, kissing her cheeks and wiping away her tears. She could hear Sakina telling the lady how her uncle Abbas had gone to fetch her water and how he had never returned. When Sakina saw her aunt she explained that she had fallen off the camel but the kind lady had looked after her. Bibi Zainab turned to the lady and said, "May Allah reward you for your kindness to this orphan!" The lady replied, "Zainab, my dear, how can you thank your own mother? Do you not recognize me?" As the lady lifted her face, Bibi Zainab saw that it was Fatimah Zahra!!

When the caravan reached the outskirts of Damascus Omar Sa'ad sent a message to Yezid that they had arrived. Yezid ordered that the caravan remain where it was until the morning. He wanted the people of Shaam to line the streets to look at the captives and witness his victory. In the meantime the streets through which the captives were to be marched were being decorated with flags and pennants.

Bibi Zainab had conquered Kufa. Now Shaam had come and was waiting for her!

The Court of Yazid

When at long last the caravan reached the outskirts of Damascus, a message was received by Umar Sa'ad that the prisoners were not to be brought into the capital until Yezid had completed all the preparations.

Yezid invited all the ambassadors, foreign dignitaries and leading citizens to his court. People were ordered to line up the streets. Musicians were asked to play music and dancers were told to dance in the streets. Such were the festivities organized by the Khalifah for the entry of the grandson and the grand daughters of the Holy Prophet of Islam into what had become the metropolis of the Islamic Empire!!

Surrounded by the dancers, the musicians and the jeering crowds of the citizens of Damascus the prisoners were led toward the palace of Yezid. The ladies who had never stepped outside their homes without their heads and faces being covered, had been forced to travel from Kerbala to Kufa, and Kufa to Shaam bare headed and with their arms tied with a single rope. If any one of them stumbled, she was whipped. Never in the history of Islam had prisoners been treated with disrespect, let alone the cruelty meted out to the members of the Holy Prophet's house-hold. And now, this ultimate insult of being led into the court of Yezid like a herd of cattle!

Bibi Zainab seemed to be drawing strength from some divine source. She wiped away her tears. Drew her hair over her face so as to hide as much of her face from the staring crowds as she could. Other ladies did the same. Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen straightened himself. Exuding dignity and confidence, he maintained his position behind the bearer of the lance upon which

was mounted his father's head. Such was the jostle of the multitude thronging the streets that it took them more than twelve hours to traverse the short distance between the city gates and the palace.

They entered the palace and were made to stand in front of Yezid. The tyrant was dressed in his best finery. Imaam Hussain's head was formally presented to him by Umar ibne Sa'ad. Yezid, with a cup of wine in one hand, ceremoniously accepted the ultimate symbol of his victory and commanded Umar Sa'ad to call out the names of the prisoners.

And then, in his drunken arrogance, Yezid recited a few couplets which enshrine a diabolical confession, a confession that explains the history of the division in Islam and the motives not only his but of his father and grand father in accepting Islam! He said:

"If my venerable ancestors who fell at Badr fighting Muhammad had witnessed how the supporters of Muhammad's faith were thrown into confusion with thrusts given with my spears, they would be blessing me today. The Banu Hashim played a trick to win power. There was never any wahi to them nor did they receive any revelation. Today the souls of my ancestors and friends killed by Muhammad at Badr will rest in peace!"

The raison d'etre of the Umayyad dynasty was vengeance against Islam, a sanguine continuation of Uhud where Yezid'd grand-mother had been only partially successful in her determination to have Ali and Hamza killed in retaliation for the deaths of her father and brother at Badr!! Yezid never believed in Islam, and yet the system forced upon the people after the death of the Holy Prophet had resulted in this worst of all the hypocrites becoming

the Khalifah of the Holy Prophet and the Ameer-ul-Mu'mineen of the ummah!!

Yezid looked at the prisoners lined up in front of him. He said: "It has pleased Allah to grant us victory! Look how He has caused the death of Hussain and humiliated his family!" He then recited an ayah of the Holy Quraan which means 'Allah grants honour to whom He pleases and brings disgrace upon whom He pleases.'

There were over seven hundred dignitaries sitting in the Court. They smiled and nodded approvingly. Bibi Zainab could stand it no more! She was filled with wrath. How dare this unclean man say such things? How dare he with his najis tongue recite from Holy Quraan? How dare he make mockery of the family of the Holy Prophet? In a loud and clear voice Bibi Zainab said: "O Yezid! Do you think that it is Allah who has caused you to commit all these foul deeds? Do you blame the Rahman and the Rahim for the oppression we have suffered? Do you blame Allah for the death of the beloved grand son of his most beloved Prophet? How dare you make these false accusations against the Almighty? No, Yezid, it was not Allah! It is you, with your insatiable ambition and greed for wealth and power, who are the only cause of the suffering inflicted not only upon the household of the Holy Prophet but on Islam itself!

Do not forget what Allah has said in the Holy Book: Let not the unbelievers take it that the respite We give them would do them any good. We allow them time in order that they might continue to indulge in sin to their hearts' content. Indeed a humiliating punishment has been kept ready for them.

Do you think that by killing the grandson of the Holy Prophet and bringing us to your palace as prisoners, you have scored a victory

against Islam? No, Yezid, no! Hussain with his blood has made sure that tyrants like you will not be able to use Islam as a toy to carry out their evil designs. The victory is not yours. The victory is of Hussain! The victory is of Islam!"

Yezid was stunned! The people present there could not but be moved by what this courageous lady had to say. This lady, who had seen and experienced great suffering, dared today defy the very man who had inflicted those sufferings. Who was she? They asked one another. When they learnt that she was the grand daughter of the Holy Prophet, their hearts began to fill with admiration!

In an effort to save the situation Yezid turned towards Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen and said: "Well you can tell us who has been victorious. Imaam looked at him and replied:

"Yezid, final victory can only belong to those on the right path. Let us look at you and look at Hussain. My father, whom you got killed so mercilessly, was the grandson of the Holy Prophet who had said that "Hussain is from me and I am from Hussain." He was born a Muslim and all his life he upheld the laws and principles of Islam. You are the grandson of Abu Sufiyan and Hinda, who most of their lives fought Islam and the Holy Prophet!"

Yezid was now greatly embarrassed. To silence the Imaam he asked his muezzin to recite the adhaan. When the Muezzin cried out 'ASH-HADU ANNA MUHAMMADAR-RASOOLILLAH' Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen, addressing Yezid, said, "Yezid speak the truth! Was Muhammad my grandfather or your grandfather!"

Yezid ordered the prisoners to be moved to a prison. This was not a prison. It was a dungeon! Only a part of it had any sort of ceiling.

The rest was open to the sky. An iron grill surrounded the place so that no one could get in or out.

Bibi Zainab reports that the place was so cold at nights that no one could have proper sleep. During the day, it got hot like an oven. It is here that our fourth Imaam, still under chains, the ladies and the children spent many days of great agony and discomfort.

Bibi Sakina

Bibi Sakina was the youngest daughter of Imaam Hussain. She was a vivacious child, full of love and happiness. Everyone loved Sakina. She was also a very religious girl. She enjoyed reading the Holy Quraan and never missed her prayers. From the age of two she took great care to make sure that her head and face were properly covered when in public.

Sakina was Imaam Hussain's most beloved child. Our Imaam was often heard to say, "A house without Sakina would not be worth living in!" She always had a sweet and cheerful smile and a very friendly nature. Other children sought her company as much as the grown ups did. She was very generous and always shared whatever she had with others.

There was a special bond between Hazrat Abbas and Sakina. He loved her more than he did his own children. If Sakina requested for anything, Abbas would not rest until he satisfied her request. There was nothing that Abbas would not do to make Sakina happy.

During the journey from Madina to Mecca and then Mecca to Kerbala, Abbas was often seen riding up to the mehmil in which Sakina sat to make sure that she had everything she wanted. Sakina loved her uncle just as much. While in Madina she would,

several times a day, visit the house in which Hazrat Abbas lived with his family and his mother, Ummul Baneen.

Like any other four-five year old when Sakina went to bed at night she wanted to spend some time with her father. Imaam Hussain would tell her stories of the prophets and of the battles fought by her grand-father Ali. She would rest her head on her father's chest and Hussain would not move from her until she fell asleep. When from the second of Muharram the armies of Yezid began to gather at Kerbala, Hussain said to his sister Zainab, "The time has come for you to get Sakina used to going to sleep without my being there!" Sakina would follow her father at night and Hussain had to gently take her to Zainab or Rubaab.

At Kerbala when from the seventh Muharram water became scarce Sakina shared whatever little water she had with other children. When soon there was no water at all, the thirsty children would look at Sakina hopefully, and because she could not help them she would have tears in her eyes. Sakina's lips were parched with thirst.

On the Ashura day, she gave her Mashk to Hazrat Abbas. He went to get water for her. The children gathered round Sakina with their little cups, knowing that as soon as Hazrat Abbas brought any water, Sakina would first make sure that they had some before taking any herself. When Sakina saw Imaam Hussain bringing the blood drenched 'alam she knew that her uncle Abbas had been killed. From that day on Sakina never complained of thirst.

Then came the time when the earth shook and Sakina became an orphan! But even then she always thought of the others first. She would console her mother on the death of Ali Asghar and when

she saw any other lady or child weeping Sakina would put her little arms around her.

Yes Sakina never again asked anyone for water. Bibi Zainab would persuade her to take a few sips, but she herself would never ask for water or complain of thirst!!!!

From the time when Imaam Hussain fell in the battle field, Sakina forgot to smile! Kufa saw her as a sombre little girl lost in thought. Quite often she would sit up at night. When asked if she wanted anything, she would say, "I just heard a baby cry? Is it Asghar? He must be calling out for me!"

Knowing that her weeping upset her mother, Sakina would cry silently and quickly wipe away her tears! In the prison in Shaam she would stare at the flock of birds flying to their nests at sunset and innocently ask Bibi Zainab, "Will Sakina be going home like those birds flying to their homes?"

Then one dreadful night Sakina went to bed on the cold floor of the prison. For a long time she stared into the darkness! The time for the morning prayers came. Sakina was still lying with her eyes wide open. Her mother called out: "Wake up, Sakina! Wake up, it is time for prayers, my child!" There was only the painful silence! Our fourth Imaam walked up to where Sakina lay. He put his hand on her forehead. It was cold! He put his hand near the mouth and the nose. Sakina had stopped breathing. In between sobs Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen said: "INNA LILLAHI WA INNA ILAYHI RAAJI'OON!"

How was Sakina buried? Zainab held the still child as Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen dug a grave in the cell. As the grave was being filled up after the burial the mother let out a scream! How could anyone console Bibi Rubaab? What could they say? They huddled around

her, and the prison walls began to shake with the cry: "YA SAKINA, YA MAZLOOMAH!!" Bibi Rubaab put her cheek on Sakina's grave and cried out: "Speak to me, Sakina! Only a word, my child! Speak to me!!"

Aza-e-Hussain In Shaam

The tragedy of Kerbala had begun to arouse great sympathy for the Ahlul Bait in Hejaaz and Iraq. Even in Damascus some people began to ask whether it was necessary to inflict so much sufferings on the members of the family of the Holy Prophet.

When the charming little Sakina died and the people of Damascus came to learn about the death of the little girl whom they had seen and come to admire, they began to talk openly about Yezid's cruelty. Yezid feared that the people might rise against him. He was now anxious to get rid of the prisoners.

He called Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen and told him that he was prepared to free them, and compensate them for the death of the martyrs. He also asked the fourth Imaam whether they wanted to remain in Damascus or return to Madina. Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen replied that he would consult his aunt Zainab.

When Imaam spoke to Bibi Zainab she was grief stricken at the audacity of Yezid in offering compensation. She said, "Tell Yezid to talk of compensation with the Holy Prophet. We would certainly return to Madina. But first Yezid should provide a house so that we may hold mourning ceremonies for the martyrs in Damascus. We shall then go to Madina via Kerbala to visit the graves of the martyrs."

Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen conveyed the message to Yezid who after some hesitation agreed. In asking for a house to mourn the

martyrs in Damascus, Bibi Zainab scored a major victory over Yezid. When the house was made available the ladies held aza-e-Hussain for seven days in the very city which was the capital of Yezid who had murdered Imaam Hussain. The women of Damascus poured in to offer their condolences and Bibi Zainab and the other ladies would tell them of how the martyrs had been killed, how they had been denied water, how young children had been crying al-atash, how Imaam had taken Ali Asghar and pleaded for a few drops of water and how the baby had been slain. These tales so moved the ladies of Damascus that they would break into sobs and begin wailing and beating their chests.

Thus in the very house of the murderer Bibi Zainab laid the foundation of aza-e-Hussain. This is so much like the story of Hazrat Musa (A.S.). Firaun orders all the male children of Banu Israel to be put to death. Allah's miracle is that his Prophet of wahdaniyyah finds refuge in the palace of the very Firaun who had plotted to kill him!

These majlises have continued to this day. Every Muharram Shiahs all over the world gather together to mourn the tragedy which took place more that 1,350 years ago. These majaalis have a great meaning for us. Firstly, they mean that we love our Imaam and grieve for the suffering to which he was subjected. Secondly they mean that year after year we protest against all that Yezid stood for. We make a solemn promise to Allah never to follow Yezid's foot-steps. In whatever country we may be, we have to remember that taking alcohol or any kind of drugs, is Yezid's way. To keep ourselves ignorant of Quraan or Islamic way of life, is Yezid's way. To oppress anyone, is Yezid's way. To indulge in any un-Islamic activity, is Yezid's way. We can not mourn Hussain and follow Yezid!!

6

The Fifth Journey - Shaam to Medina

After seven days of majaalis in Damascus, Bibi Zainab asked Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen whether they could now proceed to Kerbala. Preparations for the journey began. Mehmils with black curtains were arranged for the ladies.

Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen and Bibi Zainab helped the ladies to mount the mehmils. Suddenly Bibi Zainab noticed that Bibi Rubaab was missing. For a moment there was a panic but soon Bibi Zainab said, "I know where Rubaab is!" Accompanied by Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen Bibi Zainab went to the prison. There, with her face on Sakina's grave, was Bibi Rubaab. Bibi Zainab said to her, 'Rubaab, let us go home!' 'Home?' replied Bibi Rubaab, 'My husband lies at Kerbala, my Asghar lies there also. At least he has his father to look after him. Who will look after my Sakina? Khuda Hafiz, Bibi. You go, I will stay here. '

Bibi Rubaab is the lady whose world had been totally shattered. It was after great persuasion she got up to go, She walked slowly to the door supported by Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen, all the time looking at the grave. Finally she said "Khuda Hafiz my Sakina!!"

So began the fifth and the last journey of tears. This was to take them first to Kerbala and then back home to Madina. How different is this journey from that first journey from Madina to Mecca? How many had left Madina and how many are going back? Where are all those children who at every stop would

gather around Hazrat Abbas? There were over fifty children in the caravan then. Now barely twenty are returning to Madina. The rest lie in Kerbala or along the route Kerbala to Kufa and Kufa to Shaam.

And where is Sakina with her chatter and smile? She is on everyone's mind. Zain ul 'Abideen tearfully says farewell to the prison were lies buried his darling sister.

Of course, unlike during their journeys from Kerbala to Kufa and Kufa to Shaam, this time the ladies are not bare headed nor are they mounted on unsaddled camels. They are at last going to Madina but that very thought frightens them. Bibi Zainab thinks: 'What shall I say when they ask where is everyone?' Bibi Rubaab every so often screams out: "Oh Sakina! Oh Asghar! What shall I say to Fatimah Sugra?"

Who then is the hero and who is the heroine of this journey? Yes, this journey has no hero and heroine. It has memories, fears, nightmares and tears. Few words are said. The thoughts which crowd in every mind are too heart rending to be spoken out.

They arrive at Kerbala!You can well imagine of the suffering of Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen, Bibi Zainab and all the ladies when they arrived at Kerbala. Every grave had a lady weeping for the one buried there, every grave save two. Zainab spent all her time on Hussain's grave and it was young Muhammad Baqir who wept on the graves of Aun and Muhammad.

Bibi Zainab took out a tiny bundle. She lovingly opened it and placed Sakina's earrings on the grave saying: "Brother, do forgive me! This is all that is left of your darling Sakina!!" The ladies were weeping and wailing and Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen was consoling

them. He knew that a very difficult situation was yet to come! The first meeting with Fatimah Sugra!

The journey to Madina was slow. When the city came within sight from the hills surrounding Madina, Bibi Kulthum was heard to recite a poem which means:

"Oh the city of our grandfather, the Holy Prophet,

how can you accept us at all?

We were so many when we left you,

only to return having at Kerbala lost them all!"

Bibi Zainab went up to Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen and said, "My son, pray that Allah grant me courage to face Sugra! How shall I answer her questions?" Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen replied, "May Allah grant you the patience of Fatimah Zahra and the courage of Ali."

Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen instructed the companions who were with him to go to Madina and erect two huge tents on the outskirts of the city. Very early on the following morning they entered the tents. Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen sat in one, and the ladies in the other. Now a messenger was sent to tell the people of Madina that Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen and the daughters of Ali had arrived. The people ran from their houses to the two tents.

The people of Madina had, of course, already heard of the tragedy of Kerbala. They did not, however, know of all the details or that young children had also been killed. The men of Madina came to Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen and the ladies went to the tent where Bibi Zainab and the other ladies were. There was so much weeping and wailing that it could be heard miles away.

Suddenly someone spotted Fatimah Sugra coming. She was supported on one side by Umme Salmah and on the other by Ummul Baneen. Bibi Zainab prayed to Allah for courage. she put on her chaadar and went out to meet Sugra. Neither could utter a word. Bibi Zainab put her arms around Fatimah Sugra and brought her inside the tent. Sugra looked around searching every corner."Where is my sister Sakina?" she cried, "Sakina come over, let your older sister embrace you and give you condolences!" At this there was renewed weeping and wailing. Who could possible have the courage to tell Sugra where Sakina was?

Oh God! Sugra now looked at the lap of Bibi Rubaab, She did not find there whom she was looking for! Then she looked at the lap of each of the other ladies. She could not see what she was looking for. Then she looked outside lest the young child she was looking for had crawled out! Frightened of what Sugra might ask, Bibi Zainab asked for Imaam Zain ul 'Abideen to come over. Our fourth Imaam came. He put his arms around Sugra. In between sobs he said, "Sugra, Oh my dear sister, have patience! Asghar is lying in a grave in Kerbala."

Fatimah Sugra stared at her elder brother in absolute disbelief! And then she screamed and fell unconscious!

Conclusions

We have discussed accounts of how each martyr fell, how even young children eagerly gave their lives to save Islam. We have looked at the misery and suffering of the women and the children. We have talked of the five journeys of tears.

We must now revisit the message of Imaam Hussain. Unless we undertake this journey and make sure that the message of our Imaam for ever remains with us to guide us through our lives, those five journeys of grief and suffering of the martyrs and the captives can not possibly have any meaning for us.

The tears we shed and the maatam we perform will be little more than hypocrisy if we allow ourselves to forget the message of Kerbala until next 'ashra-e-Muharram. If we do so we shall be guilty of having insulted the martyrs in such a manner that our Imaam will never forgive us.

We must remember that mourning for the martyrs is not a ritual we have to perform. We do so out of love for them and to keep their memory alive so that people everywhere in every age will remember what our Imaam lived and died for.

From the day he left Madina on the 28th Rajab in 60 Hijrah, at every stage, our Imaam made his mission clear. He left no doubt as to his intentions. It was not to fight Yezid to get the throne of the empire over which the khalifah ruled. Imaam's mission was to reawaken the spirit of Islam and rekindle the Islamic conscience which was nearing extinction by the conduct of Muawiya and Yezid. Justice and morality were gradually being destroyed by the greed for land and power of those who had become rulers. Where

Quraan insists that distinction can be accorded by piety alone, aristocracy based on nepotism and blood relationship was reigning the social order.

Let us look at some of the statements by Imaam Hussain. Before leaving Madina Imaam Hussain made a will and handed it over to his brother Muhammad Hanafiya. In this will Imaam wrote: "My mission is to reform the muslim community which I propose to do by AMRAL BIL MA'ROOF AND NAHYA ANIL MUNKAR, inviting them to the good and advising them against evil. It is not my intention to set myself as an insolent or arrogant tyrant or a mischief maker."

In Mecca a man came to him and said he was a Shiah of Ahlul Bait. Imaam looked at him and said: "My friend, never claim to be one of our Shiahs lest Allah, on the Day of Judgement, raise you with the liars. No one can be our Shiah except a person whose heart is free of deceit, malice or hatred towards others and free of corruption. If you are not such a person you can claim to be our admirer or supporter but never our Shiah."

Imaam Hussain has defined what being a Shiah means. Can we honestly say that we are Shiahs of Ahlul Bait? Being a Shiah means having a pure mind and soul, free of greed, malice, jealousy, deceit. It means keeping away from back biting and other habit of putting down others. It means having a thirst for knowledge. It means living our lives justly, humbly and being true to ourselves and others.

In Mecca Imaam addressed a large group of scholars who had come for pilgrimage. He exhorted them to do amr bil ma'roof and nahya anil munkar and not to pander to the philosophies of the rulers who paid them to keep away from truth. This was a long

and powerful speech reminding the scholars of their duty to inculcate Islamic concience and not to mislead the masses who trusted them

In a letter which he addressed to the people of Kufa Imaam wrote: "An Imaam is one who judges by the Holy Quraan, upholds justice, professes the religion of truth and dedicates himself to obeying Allah and His Prophet."

When Hur and his army stopped Imaam's caravan from going to Kufa, and Hur told Imam that his order from ibne Ziyad was to ask Imaam for Bai'at to Yezid, Imaam refused to declare Bai'at to someone who was only serving his own ends and not of Islam. Hur said that such an attitude would cost Imaam his life. Imaam replied: "Are you threatening me with death? Death is many thousands of times better than the dishonour of Bai'at to an enemy of Islam. Do you not see that truth is not being practised and falsehood is not being prevented? I see death as a blessing and life with tyrants as the most disgusting state one can be in."

At Kerbala, facing the army of Yezid, Imaam Hussain addressed them as follows:"Remember that when you see a ruler who does what has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, who indulges in sins, who oppresses the people he rules, and you do nothing to stop such a ruler, before Allah you are as guilty as he is." He went on to add: "My parents did not raise me to submit myself to an evil tyrant. I am your Imaam and it is my duty to tell you that you have surrendered the freedom of your mind to the evil ways of Yazeed. If you do not care for Islam, and do not fear the day of judgement, at least do care for that precious gift from Allah, the freedom of your spirit!!"

When Umar Sa'ad called upon the army to attack and kill Imaam Hussain he said: "Death is better that disgrace and disgrace is better than the fire of hell."

From all these sayings of Imaam Hussain, from the ceremonies of mourning in which we have taken part during the 'ashra-e-Muharram, from all the majaalis we have heard and the literature we have read, what are the specific lessons for the youths of the Shiah Ithnasheri Community?

This question has to be answered by the youths themselves. But surely it can not be anything to do with the form of aza-e-Hussain. The form will always remain culture bound and any comparison between the form in one country with the form in another country is an exercise in futility. We have to remember that aza-e-Hussain has tripartite objectives:

(1) Demonstration of personal grief. This is an issue which has by very definition to remain a matter of personal choice and every community has to ponder over it and decide upon the form acceptable to it having regard to its geographic location and its composition.

(2) The dissemination of Hussain's message to the indigenous population. Where such population is Muslim of other persuasions, processions and public maatam have proved very effective. In the west, there is a need to explore other avenues such as-

a) The Blood Bank;

b) Visiting hospital patients with small gifts in the name of the martyrs,

c) Food drive for the homeless, the poor, the aged and those in the homes,

d) Distribution of literature explaining the message of Kerbala.

(3) Finally, and most important, a personal commitment by each one of us to make every effort to get rid of those evil qualities within us which could prevent us from claiming to be the Shiahs of Hussain ibne Ali. Supposing every Muharram we forswear one evil habit like drug addiction, back-biting, arrogance, mischief making or any other un-Islamic habit, what a strong and powerful community we would be, and how sincere our maatam and tears would seem to us!

السَّلامُ عَلَيْكَ يَا أَبَا عَبْدِ اللهِ وَعَلَى الأَرْوَاحِ
الَّتِي حَلَّتْ بِفِنَائِكَ، عَلَيْكَ مِنِّي سَلامُ اللهِ
أَبَداً مَا بَقِيتُ وَبَقِيَ اللَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ، وَلاَ جَعَلَهُ
اللهُ آخِرَ الْعَهْدِ مِنِّي لِزِيَارَتِكُمْ. أَلسَّلامُ عَلَى
الْحُسَيْنِ وَعَلَى عَلِيِّ بْنِ الْحُسَيْنِ وَعَلَى أَوْلاَدِ
الْحُسَيْنِ وَعَلَى أَصْحَابِ الْحُسَيْنِ.

"Greetings be upon you, O' Abā ʿAbdillāh and upon the souls who were annihilated with you. Upon you, from me, is the (prayers) of peace from Allāh for all eternity, as long as the night and day remain. May this visitation of yours not be my last contact with you. Salutations upon Ḥusayn and upon ʿAlī the son of Ḥusayn (ʿAlī al-Akbar) and upon the children of Ḥusayn and upon the virtuous companions of Ḥusayn."