Allamah Ali Naqi Naqvi

The Martyr for Mankind

An Abridgement

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The Martyr For Mankind

(Shahid-e-Insaniyyat)

AN

ABRIDGEMENT

By
'Allamah 'Ali Naqi Naqvi

Translated and Abridged by: S. 'Ali Akthar

Edited by: Dr. I.K.A. Howard

Published by:
The Muhammadi Trust of Great Britain & Northern Ireland



First published in 1986

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ISBN 0 946079 31 5

Produced in Great Britain by
The Muhammadi Trust of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Flat 1, 2 Orme Court, Bayswater Road,
London W2 4RL,
England.

Typeset by:
Banner Publishing House
55 Banner Street, London EC1Y 8PX.

Printed by:
Momento Print Ltd.
19 Broadway Parade, London N8 9DE.
Telephone: 01-340 3490

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TRANSLITERATION

Arabic Letter	Transliteration
ء	'
ب	b
ت	t
ث	th
ج	j
ح	ḥ
خ	kh
د	d
ذ	dh
ر	r
ز	z
س	s
ش	sh
ص	ṣ
ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ
ظ	ẓ
ع	'
غ	gh
ف	f
ق	q
ك	k
ل	l
م	m
ن	n
ه	h
و	w
ي	y
ة	t

Short Vowels

ـَ	a
ـُ	u
ـِ	i

Long Vowels

اَ	ā
وُ	ū
يَ	ī

Diphthongs

ـَوْ	aw
ـَيْ	ay
ـِيّ	iyy
ـُوّ	uww

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FOREWORD

As a result of being asked to edit this work, I have been brought into contact with a piece of scholarship which might otherwise have escaped my notice. In this study, 'Allāma Sayyid 'Alī Naqi Naqvī has presented a volume of outstanding scholarship and great vision. He has sought to put the martyrdom of Imām al-Ḥusayn in the context of world history and religious history. Yet nonetheless he has provided a detailed analysis of the historical sources for the actual event. Thus 'Allāma Sayyid 'Alī Naqvī has had to combine his qualities as a philosopher and theologian with his qualities as a detailed analytic historian. Through this rare combination of qualities, the conception of the man, Imām al-Ḥusayn, as a world figure with an ideal world view as well as practical concern for the immediate implications of events has emerged.

Yet 'Allāma Sayyid 'Alī Naqi Naqvī was also concerned to show the part of heroism that ordinary individuals may play in the cycle of world history. To this effect, he has provided detailed chapters giving accounts of the men and women with Imām al-Ḥusayn when the tragic events of Karbalā' took place. This is extraordinary valuable work that provides the volume with yet another historical dimension.

If there is any criticism of the book and it can only be the narrow carping criticism of Western scholarship – it is that the references to much of this material are incomplete. This was, in some ways, my task as editor to try to complete the references. However, lacking as I do the wide range of scholarship of 'Allāma Sayyid 'Alī Naqi al-Naqvī, I have been unable to provide many of these references. I hope one day to have the opportunity of meeting this great scholar and through his guidance being able to assemble these references.

In providing the references, it should be pointed out that two editions of ***Ta'rīkh al Rusul wa-al-Mulūk*** have been used: the standard Leiden edition and one published in Cairo. The system of transliteration used is that of the United Stated Library of

Congress as outlined in the ***Cataloguing Service Bulletin***, 49 (November, 1958).

I.K.A. Howard
4th August, 1986
University of Edinburgh

PREFACE

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

"All praise be to God, Lord of the universe and blessings be on the chief of His Messengers and his pure progeny."

In Arabia, mostly a vast desert, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh, declaring himself a prophet six centuries after Christ, preached the great revolutionary religion of Islam which uncompromisingly affirmed the absolute unity of God and denounced the worship of idols, self and power. This teaching threatened the power of those then in authority in Arabia, and they accordingly became the Prophet's mortal enemies.

The Umayyads led the opposition to Islam which made the excellence and thoroughness in performing one's duties as a human being the sole criterion of merit and honour. The Umayyads could not measure up to these standards and Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb ibn Umayya bitterly opposed Islam. After suffering great hardships for many years at his home town, Mecca, the Prophet escaped to Medina to save his life. This event was the beginning of the era of the *hijra*.

The Prophet's enemies repeatedly attempted to destroy Muḥammad's influences in Medina. Their attacks led to several battles, of which the principal ones were those of Badr, Uḥud and the battle of the Trench (*khandaq*). The victories of Islam completely shattered the power of the Umayyads who accepted Islam to save themselves, and in due time to utilise the trappings of the new faith to subvert it from within. They had not long to wait, for the prophet's death threw the affairs of the Mulims into

disarray and those who managed to get chosen or appointed as his successors found it expedient to acquiesce in the consolidation of Umayyad power in Syria of which they became rulers. They suppressed Islamic egalitarianism, flouted Qur'ānic injunctions and largely perverted the teachings of the Prophet.

The protagonists of Islam could not tolerate the malpractices of the Umayyads. When 'Alī, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, and his unfailing support, was installed as Caliph, he was engaged in the bloody war of Ṣiffīn with Mu'āwiya, ruler of Syria, a great-grandson of Umayya. 'Alī's work was far from accomplished when he was fatally struck by a sword during his morning prayers. His eldest son, al-Ḥasan, succeeded him and was constrained to treat for peace with Mu'āwiya. The latter broke all commitments which he made and had al-Ḥasan secretly poisoned. Al-Ḥasan was succeeded by his younger brother al-Ḥusayn.

Some years later Mu'āwiya died and his depraved son, Yazīd, became the ruler of Syria. His succession had been arranged by his father but he was aware of the challenge to his authority presented by al-Ḥusayn. He, therefore, ordered al-Walīd b.'Utba b.Abī Sufyān, governor of Medina, to obtain al-Ḥusayn's oath of allegiance to him. This was an impossible request and al-Ḥusayn left Medina for Mecca with all his dependants in search of safety. Mecca is the sanctuary of God and therefore should have been a place of safety. Here also al-Husayn noticed plans afoot for his murder. In days when Muslims from all over the world were repairing to Mecca for the performance of *ḥajj*, al-Ḥusayn left it for Kūfa to which he had been invited and had already despatched his cousin Muslim b.'Aqīl to assess the situation there.

With a few exceptions, the people of Kūfa failed to honour the promises of support conveyed to al-Ḥusayn after 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād took over as governor. Muslim was betrayed and cruelly killed. Al-Ḥusayn could not go back to Mecca, nor move forward to Kūfa from

where an armed force advanced to take him captive. He was constrained to stop at Karbalā'. There large armies converged to coerce al-Husayn to swear allegiance to Yazīd or face destruction and death.

From 7th Muḥarram, al-Husayn and his companions, including small children were prevented from getting water. Al-Ḥusayn negotiated for peace with the commander of Yazīd's armies, 'Umar ibn Sa'd, who was so impressed by his honourable intentions as to write to the governor of Kūfa, suggesting a peaceful solution to the dispute. 'Ubayd Allāh, however, mistook al-Ḥusayn's reasonableness for a sign of weakness, and insisted upon unqualified swearing of fealty to Yazīd. This was rejected.

'Ubayd Allāh's numerous forces opened the attack on al-Ḥusayn in the evening of 9th Muḥarram. Very reluctantly they gave the Prophet's grandson respite for a night to be spent in prayers. Possibly al-Ḥusayn also meant to provide yet another opportunity to friend and foe alike to reconsider the whole matter and to act as he thought best. He even absolved his companions from the oath of loyalty to him, and advised them to take advantage of the cover of night to go away wherever they liked. His loyal companions with one voice refused to forsake him.

Next morning this outrageously unequal battle was joined and till about mid-day of 10th Muḥarram, al-Ḥusayn's friends and followers sacrificed themselves for the glory of truth and justice and of God. Then his relatives arrived in the battlefield. Among them his grown up son, 'Alī Akbar was the first to court death. The last warrior to lay down his life was 'Abbās ibn 'Alī, al-Ḥusayn's valiant brother. His death completely shattered what strength had been left to al-Ḥusayn who then took his infant son, 'Abd Allāh, barely six months old, and raised him on his hands in quest of water. From Yazīd's multitudinous hordes, however, the answer was only an arrow which pierced the innocent infant's neck.

It now remained for al-Ḥusayn to offer the supreme

sacrifice. It would have been easier for him to have done so first of all without parting with faithful followers, old friends, near and dear nephews, sons and brothers. But he deferred his martyrdom till the last so that his trial should be the longest, the most varied and the most painful. Broken-hearted alone, surrounded by countless enemies, al-Husayn was slain after great heroism in the face of his mean and cowardly enemies. His head was then raised on a spearhead, and his body and those of his companions were trampled by horses. His camp was set ablaze and his belongings plundered, and the ladies of the noblest house of Arabia were left without shelter to cover their heads, and were paraded from city to city as prisoners.

The sole surviving male member of al-Ḥusayn's family, his ailing son, 'Alī, was shackled and, along with his female relatives, taken on foot from Karbalā' to Kūfa and Damascus.

This is the barest outline of the tragedy of Karbalā'. It took place in Iraq among the Muslims. The importance of the message of Karbalā' has transcended the narrow limits of locale and communal setting by virtue of its far-reaching relevance for the whole of mankind.

This universal appeal of the events of Karbalā' stems not only from the human tendency to sympathise with the oppressed – and al-Ḥusayn suffered an ordeal of deprivations, bereavements, cruelties and indignities such as no one else has ever been exposed to – but also since he suffered all these inhumanities in defence of a rightful cause, liberty of conscience, truth and justice and to uncover the perversity and tyranny of his tormentors. In offering such inestimable and incomparable sacrifices with firm composure, resolution, patience and an unblemished record of noble deeds, al-Ḥusayn served the objective shared in common by all religions, of the development of human conduct to moral excellence.

It is human to cling to happiness and to avoid sorrow. Accordingly everywhere occasions of cheerfulness are celebrated. It is only al-Husayn's martyrdom which is

commemorated with mourning in all climes. Since this distinguishing feature has marked the solemnization of the tragedy of Karbalā' for over 1300 years, it may well be that from sorrow and tears flow benefits to the mourners.

No incident in history has gathered about itself such a stupendous mass of writing as the tragedy of Karbalā', but there is no single work to which one may readily refer to acquaint oneself with the events of the tragedy in their historical perspective, their consequences and necessary details. It is hoped that the present work will help to meet this need.

S.A.N.N.

★–★–★–★–★–★

CHAPTER I

THE DISTINGUISHED ANCESTORS OF AL-ḤUSAYN

ABRAHAM occupies a universal position, being venerated by the Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. The Qur'ān expressly notices that the Prophet of Islam claimed to follow the faith of Abraham who named his followers Muslims.[1] Traditions concerning his life are part of the Muslim heritage and have significantly influenced Muslim conduct and ethics.

Abraham had two sons, Isaac and Ishmael who were respectively the progenitors of the Israelites and of the prophet of Islam.

Abraham and Ishmael raised the Ka'ba at Mecca which religion made the meeting place of all the peoples of the world. With the passage of time this gave a pivotal position to Abraham's descendants.

Islam attaches great importance to the legend that Abraham was divinely commanded to sacrifice Ishmael, and made ready for the great trial with great composure. Ishmael, also acquiesced in the fulfilment of the divine will, but the actual slaughter was averted at the very last moment, divine intervention replacing Ishmael by an animal which was sacrificed in his place. It was, however, announced that the sacrifice thus postponed would have to be made up by a great slaughter in the way of God.[2] Islam commemorates this event annually as 'Īd al-Aḍḥā or 'Īd al-Qurbān, the festival of sacrifice.

The descendants of two of Ishmael's sons, Nābit and Qaydhan settled down in the Hijāz and multiplied in numbers. One of the Nābit's early descendants, 'Adnān rose to great fame. Twenty-one generations and about 600 years lie between him and the Prophet of Islam whose genealogy to 'Adnān is undisputed, and is given in Appendix 'A'. It is, however, unsettled which of his predecessors earned the appellation of Quraysh.

When one of the Prophet's ancestors, Quṣayy, only five generations removed from him, came to power, he united the

descendants of Naḍr and they ousted the tribe of Khuzā'a being the custodians of the Ka'ba, took possession of Mecca, laid out quarters there, erected a hall of council, codified the rules of social conduct and arranged for the supply of food and drink to the Ḥajj pilgrims.[3]

'Abd Manaf, a son of Quṣayy, won a name for himself in the life time of his father.[4] His son 'Amr, better known as Hāshim, outshone his brothers and was exclusively privileged to arrange for the supply of water and food to Ḥajj pilgrims. He instituted the trading journeys to Syria and Yemen, and in time of scarcity served broken bread soaked in soup to Meccans, earning the name Hāshim, '*hashm*' meaning 'breaking up', 'crumbling' etc. in Arabic.[5]

Hāshim was succeeded by his brother Muṭṭalib who was followed by Hāshim's son, Shayba, known as 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, who excelled his predecessors in glory and power[6] and was entitled Sayyidul-Baṭḥā' (leader of Mecca)[7]. Two of his sons were 'Abd Allāh and Abu Ṭalib.

'Abd al-Muṭṭalib had sworn to sacrifice his son 'Abd Allāh, but was able to avoid doing so by offering the alternative sacrifice of 100 camels[8].

'Abd Allāh predeceased his father, and Abū Ṭālib succeeded to all the offices and dignities of his father. His greatest charge, however, was the fostering care of 'Abd Allāh's orphaned son, Muḥammad.

Early in his life the future prophet won the title of Amîn ('the trustworthy') by virtue of his truthfulness and reliability. The Arabs entrusted their valuables to him for safe custody and accepted his decisions in important matters.

General lawlessness and oppression followed 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's death and injustice against the weak and the foreigners went unpunished. When Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh was about twenty years of age he joined hands with his kinsmen and some other Quraysh tribes men to institute a most excellent covenant (*ḥilf al-fuḍūl*), by which all those involved took an oath which bound them to espouse the cause of the oppressed, get the rights of the abused enforced and their losses compensated.

This oath ran counter to the traditional Arab attitude which involved upholding tribal ties alone, which sometimes aggravated minor disputes into tribal vendettas. Hāshim's progeny

took the lead in trying to get rid of this aspect of the national character and making justice and fairplay universally respected.

'Alī was born to Abū Ṭālib in the Ka'ba at Mecca, a privilege granted to no one else. Muḥammad was then about 30 years of age. While 'Alī was still very young, famine struck Mecca, and left Abū Ṭālib in straitened circumstances, Muḥammad took 'Alī with him to relieve his uncle of part of his burden.

The seventh century of the Christian era was a period of obscurantism when Islam appeared in Arabia. For some years the message of the new faith was privately propagated. Then the Prophet was commanded by God to communicate it to his near relatives[9]. The Prophet accordingly invited all the descendants of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, and declaring himself to be God's messenger, preached the unity of God, and asked the assembled guests who among them would support him in spreading the message of Islam on the clear understanding that he would be the Prophet's brother, testator and successor. This question was repeatedly put, but every time it was only 'Alī, though very young then, who responded, offering him full assistance. The Prophet declared 'Alī his brother, testator and successor.

With the spread of Islam, idolatory came to be openly denounced, and in consequence Quraysh became the Prophet's implacable enemies and resolved to harm him. As long as Abū Ṭālib was alive his powerful personality kept the Prophet of Islam from coming to grief.

After the deaths of Abū Ṭālib and the Prophet's wife, Khadīja, the persecutions which he had to encounter increased in intesity and frequency and the Prophet resolved to leave for Medina. Getting wind of this, Quraysh surrounded his house one night to murder him, but the Prophet had escaped, leaving 'Alī asleep in his bed[10].

The Prophet's escape to Medina, called the *hijra*, did not halt aggressions against the Muslims, and battles like those of Badr, Uḥud and Khandaq (trench) had to be fought and it was invariably 'Alī's sword that won brilliant victories for Islam.

The Prophet gave his daughter Fāṭima in marriage to 'Alī in accordance with the divine command, and rejected the requests of many others for the hand of this part his own flesh and blood[11], leader of the ladies of paradise, for whom he used to stand up whenever she visited him.

Of such venerable parents, 'Alī and Fāṭima, were born two

sons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.

How could al-Ḥusayn forget the high traditions and unmatched distinctions that his family had held ever since the earliest times? He represented a stock which had an unbroken record of sacrifice. He must have heard how his great ancestor, Abraham, had prepared to sacrifice his son in obedience to the divine behest; how his grandfather, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, had offered his father 'Abd Allāh, for sacrifice, how his ancestor, Hāshim, had spent a fortune in the service of mankind, and how his family had played a leading role in taking the *ḥilf al-fuḍūl* to assist the persecuted and ensure justice for the oppressed. Indeed al-Ḥusayn held that the oath continued to be valid.

Al-Ḥusayn knew that his maternal grandfather, the Prophet, had undergone an endless series of persecutions and torture in propagating Islam, that his grandfather, 'Abū Ṭālib, had protected the Prophet and Islam with all his might and force of personality, that whenever danger had threatened Islam, the first to volunteer to challenge and fight it, oblivious of all consequences to himself, had been his father, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.

It is only natural that stories of these splendid deeds and traditions of his ancestors should have fired the imagination of the young al-Ḥusayn and bred in him an ambition to perform similar feats of piety, of obedience to divine will, to serve the truth and uphold the dignity of his glorious family.

1 *Qur'ān*, II, 128.
2 *Qur'ān*, XXXVII, 107.
3 *Ibn Isḥāq, al-Sīra*, 52–56.
4 *Ibn Isḥāq*, 55.
5 *Ibn Isḥāq*, 58.
6 *Ibn Isḥāq*, 61
7 *Ibn Isḥāq*, 25.
8 *Ibn Isḥāq*, 66–8
9 *Qur'ān*, XXVI, 214.
10 *Ibn Isḥāq*, 223.
11 *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhari*, Vol.2 pp.74, 185, 189, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, V.2, p.290

CHAPTER II

THE HĀSHIMITES AND THE UMAYYADS

LEGEND has it that when Hāshim and 'Abd Shams, father of Umayya, were born as twins, a finger of one of them was found sticking to the forehead of the other. It was severed to separate the infants, and the blood that flowed from the wound was held to ominously foreshadow bloodshed between their descendants[1].

Umayya began to create ill-will between himself and his uncle, Hāshim. A great spur to his jealousy was provided when, in a famine, which struck Mecca, Hāshim won popular acclaim by providing to the residents of the city plentiful supplies of food in the shape of broken bread soaked in soup. Umayya sought to match this munificence by acts of unseasonable generosity which were soon enough traced to their unworthy motive. In a fit of discomfiture, Umayya challenged Hāshim to contest his claim to superiority before an agreed independent umpire. One of the conditions was that the unsuccessful party would go into exile from Mecca for 10 years. The umpire ruled against Umayya who retired to Syria for 10 years. Thus sprang the enmity between the Hāshimites and the Umayyads and it persisted between them for generations[2].

The birth of the Prophet among the Hāshimites was a shattering blow to Umayyad prestige. They, therefore, looked upon the prophethood of Muḥammad as the triumph of the Hāshimites and offered him the stiffest resistance.

1 Ṭabarī, *al-Ta'rīkh*, I 1089
2 Ṭabarī, *al-Ta'rīkh*, I 1090

CHAPTER III

ISLAM AND ITS MESSAGE

THE pre-Islamic period of Arabian history is called the 'age of ignorance' or the 'era of darkness'. It should not denote that the Arabs were unaware of the arts and ways of social living. Centuries before the advent of Islam, southern Arabia had fostered a flourishing civilisation and engaged in a prosperous trade. Their poetic compositions, comprising some of the best specimens of Arab literature, show the Arabs possessed the highest standards of bravery, generosity, hospitality, faithfulness, fraternal affection and conjugal love. While they are mostly given to idol-worship, they were not wholly oblivious of the existence of one God. They assembled annually at Mecca for the Ḥajj, but were entirely ignorant of the real significance of these gatherings. Other religions followed in the country were Judaism fire-worship and Christianity. The Arabs took trade caravans to the Hijaz, Iraq and Syria. However, the general conditions of hardship and indigence in the desert had made them avaricious, and they indulged in wars of revenge and retaliation, often spreading over many years. Misconceived notions of self-respect often led them to murder their infant daughters.

The idea of human equality was completely ignored in a society in which personal rivalries, group jealousies and tribal animosities prevailed.

It was in these surroundings that God's chosen Muḥammad b.'Abd Allāh appeared to propagate the message of Islam. He faced an arduous task. It would have been far easier for him to reclaim savages living in a state of nature than to win back to good behaviour a diseased social order. He had to teach tolerance, humility and forgiveness to those to whom these qualities appeared to be signs of weakness. He had to teach human equality and fraternity to those who took pride in their lineage. Islam also prohibited the use of liquor, the practices of

gambling and taking or giving of interest – all very popular among the Arabs. It also frowned upon other immoral practices.

Islam brought a message of freedom for everybody from the shackles of priesthood, from the tyranny of the affluent who misappropriated the fruit of the toil of others, from the cruelties of their masters for the slaves. It also gave relief to women who had been denied even elementary human rights. Islam taught liberty, fraternity and equality and for the first time in human history, bestowed full civil and human rights upon all men, raising new hopes and ambitions in the hearts of the down-trodden and the destitute.

Islam foresaw the impossibility of achieving outward equality while men remained separate in different tribes and nations. The object of Islam could, therefore, be achieved by an intellectual revolution, and it tried to rivet people's attention to one single authority, working out its ends without material intervention. The only way of winning general acceptance for universal equality and brotherhood is the establishment of a direct relationship between plurality and one central unity. For it follows that the constituents of the plurality should then be equal to one another. But the central unity towards which all humanity must converge must of necessity be immaterial, since all that is material would be subject to a variety of limitations like those of distance, space and quantity. It was, therefore, of the highest import that human vision should be fixed at that immaterial, transcendental power which, unfettered by the bounds of space, measure, and degree would bear relationship to everybody, and to which everybody belonged. This power is the one God presented by Islam for universal worship, the Creator of all things.

The realisation that all human beings are God's creatures made the development of a sense of equality and fraternity among men easy enough. Some religions have made God exclusively their own, and their followers claim to be His children. Islam refuted such claims and taught Muslims to declare, "He is our preserver and your preserver". While treating all men as equal, it made excellence and superiority qualities which were judged exclusively by an individual's own conduct: only the discharge of one's duties as a human being attracted the highest distinction. Intrinsic merit was thus denied to seizing power by force of numbers, management and the like.

Excellence of manner and purity of morals were stressed. The Prophet declared his mission to be the improvement of mankind and the perfection of manners.

A Muslim was defined as one who surrendered himself to God. The equality of all, naturally and intrinsically, was declared in the verse of the Qur'ān, "He has created you from one and the same person"[1]. The Arabs were told that precedence does not arise from nationality; a Qurashī was not inherently superior to a non-Qurashī. Practice followed the Prophet's precepts. He appointed Bilāl, an Abyssinian slave, to be his *mu'adhdhin*, and when somebody referred to it disparagingly, a verse of Qur'ān was revealed, saying, "O people, we have created you from men and women"[2], so that all human beings are equal.

Islam really wants to establish a divine government. Islamic government rests solely on justice and equity. The Qur'ān directs the Muslims, "When you arbitrate between men, decide justly[3]," and again, "Let not enmity for any tribe induce you to do injustice to them. Be just, that is nearer to piety and fear God"[4]. Accordingly the Prophet declared, "No one is superior to another except by virtue of his faith and fear of God". Even though he was competent to exercise unrestricted authority over his followers, the Prophet never called himself, or thought that he was, a king.

1 *Qur'ān*, IV, 1.
2 *Qur'ān*, XLIX, 13.
3 *Qur'ān*, IV, 58.
4 *Qur'ān*, V, 9.

CHAPTER IV

ISLAM AND THE FORCES OF OBSTRUCTION CLASH

THE laws, practices and institutions of Islam, in short, its social fabric was established during the life of the Prophet. For effecting this great change, he had to pay very heavily in personal sufferings and hardships and faced the fiercest opposition from those whose position of dominance was threatened by Islam. Among other things, for instance, it banned both the charging and payment of interest, cutting off a fruitful source of income for who those exploited this practice. Islam also taught that precedence among men depended entirely on excellence of conduct and thorough discharge of one's responsibilities. This was a grave threat to those whose social prestige was based wholly on property, wealth, power and similar material resources. On the contrary, Islam held out hopes of the poorest man acquiring distinction if he fulfilled what was required of him in performing his duties and in fear of God.

The Umayyads, under Abū Sufyān, stirred by animosities and jealousies, both ancient and recent, led the opposition to the Prophet. He was pelted with stones. Heaps of rubbish were thrown at him, and endless harassments, tortures and humiliations were employed against him. His life was threatened and his uncle, Abū Ṭālib, removed him to the safety of his mountain fortress where they passed three years in complete isolation. The Quraysh gave up social intercourse with the Hāshimites. Within a year of the closure of this chapter of social boycott, the Prophet's uncle, Abū Ṭālib, and his devoted wife, Khadīja, passed away and the opposition to the Prophet hatched a conspiracy to murder him. He escaped to Medina, leaving 'Alī, his cousin, fast asleep in his bed.

Even at Medina the Prophet and his followers did not find any relief from the unkind attentions of his enemies who raided Medina more than once, forcing the Prophet to fight them.

The first battle of Islam was fought at Badr in which a mere 314 Muslims[1], who had only three horses[2], successfully defeated superior Umayyad forces. Ḥamza ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, 'Ubayda ibn al-Ḥārith and 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib were among the prominent Hāshimite warriors. 'Alī performed such outstanding feats of bravery that the enemy lost heart. A grievous loss to the Hāshimites was that 'Ubayda was killed. The Umayyads had to suffer many losses: Abū Sufyān's son, Ḥanẓala, was killed by 'Alī[3], who took another of his sons, Amr, captive[4]. Hind, wife of Abū Sufyān mourned the deaths of her father, 'Utba, uncle, Shayba, and brother, al-Walīd[5]. These bereavements so overwhelmed Abū Sufyān that he took a vow not to bathe till he had led an attack against the Prophet.

The next important battle between the Prophet and the infidels took place in 3 A.H. at Uḥad[6]. Abū Sufyān had collected an army of 3000 men while the Prophet had with him only 700 men[7] and two horses. A number of women accompanied Abū Sufyān to boost the morale of his army with their martial music and songs. Here too, the Muslims won in the end through the superior swordsmanship of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Ḥamza, the Prophet's uncle was killed in the battle and Hind, Abū Sufyān's wife, in defiance of all human decency tore out his liver and tried to eat it[8]. She decked herself with severed ears and other organs of the bodies of those slain in the battle. Those acts of barbarism serve to underscore the rancour which the Umayyads entertained against the Hāshimites in general and the Prophet in particular.

The Quraysh made a last attempt in 5 A.H. to fight Islam and finish it. They managed to win over the Jews to their cause and emerged with an army of 10,000 men for the "War of Parties" against the Muslims who numbered 3000. They were once again defeated and their hero Amr b.'Abd-Wudd fell to 'Alī's sword. Abū Sufyān left crest-fallen for Mecca and the ambition of again fighting the Prophet had been crushed in the heart.

Finding that the Quraysh had evinced no signs of aggression for quite some time, the Prophet led some Muslims towards Mecca to make the *'Umra* or the lesser pilgrimage, with sacrificial camels. Finding that Khālid ibn al-Walīd was prepared to resist him, the Prophet abandoned the road he was following. This conciliatory gesture of the Prophet led to the signing of a peace treaty between him and the Quraysh. The treaty banned

war between the parties for ten years, and kept it open for others to join either party. It stipulated that the Muslims should go back without performing the pilgrimage and return to Mecca the following year and complete the *'Umra* ceremonies within three days only and then leave the city. It also provided that any defector to Muḥammad without the permission of his guardian should be returned to his guardian, but if a Qurashi went back from Muḥammad's folowing he should not be returned. Some of these conditions were markedly disadvantageous to the Muslims and some thought it to be a sign of weakness to subscribe to such a treaty. Indeed the foundations of the faith of some Muslims were shaken by the pact of al-Ḥudaybiyya, as it is called.

The Prophet accepted the unequal conditions of the treaty in order to avoid being charged with aggression. He observed the terms of the treaty in letter and spirit.

The Prophet returned to Mecca the following year and performed the *'Umra* as provided in the treaty.

The tribes of Khuzā'a and Bakr had long borne feelings of enmity towards each other, the former had allied itself to the Prophet, and the latter had joined the infidels. The peace treaty, as we have seen, provided for a cessation of hostilities between the parties for ten years, and by implication this applied also to the parties allied to the principal signatories to the treaty. The Khuzā'a, therefore, disarmed themselves, and were surprised by the Bakr who, secretly assisted by the Quraysh, killed many of them during their prayers. The story of this massacre was so touchingly recounted to the Prophet and his help was so irresistibly sought for that he at once set out for Mecca to help the Khuzā'a, highly incensed at the breach of the terms of the treaty and the outrageous conduct of the Quraysh. The infidels were in utter disarray and finding no other means of saving his life, Abū Sufyān embraced Islam[9]. The Prophet of Islam gave quarter not only to him but extended it to those who took shelter in his house. Then he set all Meccans free. After this, even Hind, Abū Sufyān's wife, accepted Islam as indeed did all other prominent men of the Quraysh.

The acceptance of Islam by the Umayyads and other opponents of Islam did not necessarily bring about a change in their real feelings for the Prophet.

1 *Ibn Isḥāq*, 336
2 *Ibn Isḥāq*, 741/Ibn Hisham: Sirat, Vol.1, p.407
3 *Al-Mufīd, Irshād*, 45
4 *Ibn Isḥāq*, 313
5 *Ibn Isḥāq*, 358
6 *Ibn Isḥāq*, 370–391
7 *Ibn Isḥāq*, 373
8 *Ibn Isḥāq*, 385
9 *Ibn Isḥāq*, 546

CHAPTER V

THE BIRTH OF AL-ḤUSAYN AND HIS EARLY LIFE

THE second son of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Fāṭima, daughter of the Prophet was born on 5th Sha'bān 3 A.H., and was named al-Ḥusayn by the Prophet.

His father distinguished himself as the invincible warrior of Islam, ready to undertake the most perilous duties in defence of Islam. His mother exemplified the best behaviour for women and supplemented her father's teachings for them by providing a practical demonstration. Al-Ḥusayn and his elder brother were both entrusted to the affectionate care of such a noble preceptor as the great messenger of God himself, whose sole aim was to purify souls[1]. The children brought up in an atmosphere of godliness soon acquired exemplary excellence of manners and perfection of morals.

The fine qualities of his grandchildren made them exceedingly dear to the Prophet. He wished others to share in this affection and declared, 'Any one who loves them, loves me, and anybody who bears them enmity is my enemy[2]. He called upon God to bear testimony that he loved them both excessively[3]. Al-Ḥusayn knew, however, that the Prophet was so devoted to the success and glory of Islam, that he would not hesitate to sacrifice him for it, if the preservation of Islam so required.

The Prophet challenged the Christians of Najran in Yemen to a spiritual contest (*mubāhila*), in which the contestants were to invoke God's curse upon the party whose claim was untrue. The Prophet asked them to bring along their sons, women and themselves. He took al-Ḥusayn, al-Ḥasan, Fāṭima and 'Alī with himself. The Christians were so overawed by the appearance of the Prophet's party that they gave up the contest, and paid a tribute to him[4]. The incident finds mention in the Qur'ān[5], and among the aims it served was to train the members of the Prophet's household in shouldering high responsibilities, and showing the people that they alone could be depended upon to

protect Islam, and that Islam expected everybody – man, woman and child – to contribute his mite for its safety.

The Prophet directed his followers on several occasions to follow his *ahl al-bayt* (members of his household). Once he told them that he was leaving behind him two things of great weight: the Book of God and the members of his household and following both of them would prevent people from going astray. He asserted that al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn were the leaders of the youth of paradise. He pinpointed the crucial importance of al-Ḥusayn when he said, "As al-Ḥusayn owes his existence to me, so do I owe my being to al-Ḥusayn"[6], meaning that his message would be immortalised by Ḥusayn.

Al-Ḥusayn had not reached 7 years of age when the Prophet died in Rabī' I, 11 A.H.

1 *Qur'ān*, II, 129, 151.
2 Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, Vol.1 p.33.
3 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Vol.2, p.282.
4 *Irshād*, 116–119.
5 *Qur'ān*, III, 161.
6 Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, Vol.1 p.33.

CHAPTER VI

THE SECOND PHASE OF AL-ḤUSAYN'S LIFE FROM THE PROPHET'S DEATH TO THE ASSASINATION OF 'ALĪ (11 A.H. TO 40 A.H.)

THE Prophet's death plunged the members of his family in deep mourning. Among those particularly distressed were his daughter, Fāṭima, and his grandsons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn.

So inconsolable was Fāṭima's grief that she wept and wailed for her father day and night without break so that men found it impossible to take their meals or find rest in Medina. Upon repeated complaints made to her of how her lamentations had upset normal life in Medina, she agreed to retire to the grave-yard of al-Baqī' so that she could there unrestrictedly occupy herself with her lamentation for her irreparable loss.

For his grandchildren, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, the death of the Prophet brought untold misery. He had lavished upon them unstinted affection and brought them up with great care and devotion in the ways of Islam. He had taken steps to impress upon his followers how necessary it was for them to love his grandchildren and the slightest lapse in this respect annoyed the Prophet (from being at the centre of affairs of Islam, the young lads found that the members of the Prophet's household, his *ahl al-bayt* were deprived of all power, and had outwardly suffered an eclipse in authority).

Al-Ḥusayn must have noticed that his father, 'Alī b.Abī Ṭālib, had withdrawn himself from the affairs of the world to apply himself solely to the compilation of the Qur'ān in the order of its revelation. The lesson that even in the most adverse circumstances the members of the Prophet's household could not give up serving Islam, and that as the Qur'ān was to keep them constant company, they should preserve and protect it, could not have been lost on al-Ḥusayn.

In this hour of trial, al-Ḥusayn found that some friends like the Prophet's uncle, 'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and some insincere allies like Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb, the Umayyad chief, who had advised 'Alī to try to obtain control of the Islamic

polity for himself. Abū Sufyān had tried to provoke 'Alī, saying, that it was not right that one of the lowest families had gained the upper hand over him and that he would provide mounted soldiers to help him. 'Alī gave him a short shrift telling him, "By God, you are still an ememy of Islam"[1]. This demonstrated how firmly 'Alī placed the collective interests of the community above his personal interest, and also the insincerity of the acceptance of Islam by Abū Sufyān and served as a warning against hypocrisy which in the shape of false friends and insidious enemies works greater damage than do openly declared enemies.

A few months after the Prophet's death, al-Ḥusayn lost his mother also. From the tender age of seven years to the mature age of thirty-eight years, al-Ḥusayn lived under the guidance of his divinely gifted, knowledgeable, sagacious and just father, and must have carried the imprint of this association to the end of his days. He must have noted that, when required, his father had ungrudgingly resolved difficulties that confronted Muslims, and gave his advice about important projects and expeditions readily although he was sorely disappointed by the unjust suppression of his claims for the office of Caliph.

An opportunity offered itself to 'Alī to get installed as Caliph when all members of the advisory board appointed by 'Umar at his death to choose his successor agreed to nominate 'Alī for the office if in addition to following the injunctions of the Qur'ān, the sayings and practices (*Sunna*) of the Prophet, he undertook to follow the sayings and practices of his two predecessors also. 'Alī refused to agree to his last undertaking and spurned the offer of the Caliphate.

From his father's conduct al-Ḥusayn learnt the practical application of an important lesson upon which later on his own behaviour was based. He found that the code of Islam and the deeds of Muslim rulers were distinctly separate matters and that the ways of the rulers could not be construed to be, or be equated with, conduct under the code of Islam. Indeed it was this code which should bind Muslim rulers with the same degree of compulsion as it bound Muslims in general. And when any ruler followed ways contrary to the principles of Islam, it was the duty of Muslims to protect the faith and regard no sacrifice needed for the purpose too dear.

In 31 A.H. the daughters of Yazdigard, King of Persia, were

brought as prisoners to Medina after his murder. 'Alī and al-Ḥusayn saved them from humiliating crowds, and al-Ḥusayn married one of them, called Shahrbānawayh.

Towards the closing years of the rule of 'Uthmān, the third Caliph, people began to feel greatly dissatisfied with his administration, and even resorted to acts of violence. 'Alī intervened several times to bring peace and got some of the complaints redressed. He advised the rioters to disperse and go back[2]. But Marwan, son-in-law and secretary of the Caliph behaved so atrociously that 'Alī's efforts at peace-making failed, and the insurgents besieged the residence of the Caliph whose oral appeal for supply of water was heard by 'Alī. 'Alī delegated his sons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, to supply water to 'Uthmān at great personal risk. The Caliph was, however, murdered by the violent mob.

It is strange that even though the Caliph remained beleagured in Medina for 49 days[3] no resident of the town turned up to his rescue, that he remained unburied for three days and that ultimately his mortal remains did not find a place in a Muslim graveyard[4].

After the disturbances had subsided the Muslims decided to instal 'Alī as their Caliph. On all earlier occasions of the choice of a Caliph, 'Alī had strongly argued the superiority of his claims for the office, but now he was wholly unwilling to accept it. For he saw that in the intervening years, the Islamic government had assumed the complexion and spirit of monarchies which was discordant with the informal simplicity and egalitarianism of Islam. 'Alī could not suffer the current rot in the administration to continue, and he knew that in trying to stop it he would raise a storm of turbulent opposition which would take long to control, and that in the meanwhile he would expose himself to be dubbed an inept administrator. The Muslims, however, insisted that he should accept the Caliphate, and 'Alī very reluctantly agreed to do so. In Dhū al-Ḥijja 35 A.H., the Muslims swore allegiance to 'Alī as their Caliph.

After 'Alī had taken over office, his fears turned out to be true. People were disinclined to carry out his directions. Some prominent Muslims like Usāma ibn Zayd, Ḥassān ibn Thābit 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar and Sa'd b.Abī Waqqās abstained from swearing allegiance to him. 'Alī, however took no action against them since in Islam "there is no compulsion in religion".

Mu'āwiya's hold on Syria had been strengthened by the prolonged period of his governorship of that country and 'Alī was advised to retain him and all officials appointed by 'Uthmān in their posts, as a measure of expediency till they had submitted themselves to his control. 'Alī refused to accept this piece of advice which would mean the upholding of the inequities and corruption of these functionaries as, indeed, in partaking in these evils. 'Alī wrote to Mu'āwiya telling how reluctantly he had accepted the office of Caliph and asked him to obtain the oath of allegiance from his countrymen for the new Caliph. He also asked Mu'āwiya to bring with himself a deputation of the people of Syria[5]. Mu'āwiya did not comply with any of these directions, and old enmity incited him to trump up a false charge of 'Uthman's murder against 'Alī against whom he also rebelled. The great Sunnī scholar, Ibn Ḥajr, has quoted Marwān b.al-Hakam has having conceded that nobody was of greater assistance to 'Uthmān than 'Alī, and as having said that the use of abusive language against 'Alī was made because without it the Umayyads could not have established their authority[6].

Mu'āwiya took a variety of steps to provoke the Syrians against 'Alī. Largely attended meetings were frequently convened in the congregational mosque of Damascus to mourn the assassination of 'Uthmān where his blood-stained shirt and the severed fingers of the Caliph's wife were exhibited to large crowds who raised loud lamentations, and in this frenzy of grief they were exhorted to avenge his murder[7].

While these seditious developments were taking place in Syria, Ṭalha and al-Zubayr set up a strong opposition to 'Alī, with the support of 'Ā'isha, a widow of the Prophet and a daughter of Abū Bakr, the first Caliph.

'Alī had now grown old and had for long led a retired life. He, however, prepared to go to war and fight against 'Ā'isha to defend the law and principles of Islam and of justice with his wonted energy since the responsibility for their defence rested solely upon him. This campaign ended in the Battle of the Camel, since 'Ā'isha commanded her army from her seat on a camel, with her utter defeat on 10th Rabī' II 36 A.H.

In the moment of his triumph 'Alī treated 'Ā'isha with unmatched nobility and generosity and sent her to Medina honourably escorted by soldiers who were all women disguised

as men.

In Syria, disorder and incitement to commotion went on unabated. Mourning for 'Uthmān was observed for a full year and many Syrians took vows to abstain from wordly pleasures till they had put to sword all those who had murdered 'Uthmān, Mu'āwiya thus succeeded in raising his country against 'Alī till at last the Battle of Ṣiffīn came to be fought between him and 'Alī. It must be mentioned that till the very last moment before the commencement of the war 'Alī had persistently endeavoured to advise his opponents to act with prudence and righteousness and to seek to be united with their supposed adversaries. His pacific advice was, however, turned down, and Muslim blood was shed copiously.

As always, 'Alī directed his army not to open the attack, leaving it to the enemy to begin the hostilities. He also forbade the pursuit of a defeated foe, the killing of a wounded enemy, the disfigurement of a dead body, forcing entry into a tent without permission, plundering the property of the enemy and causing hurt to women even under provocation.

During the war, Mu'āwiya's forces seized control of the Euphrates and stopped supplies of water to 'Alī's army which resorted to arms and regained control over the river. 'Alī refused to retaliate by stopping the supply of water to Mu'āwiya's army, and lowering himself to the level of his adversaries.

'Alī was greatly pained at the great bloodshed of Muslims in the Battle at Ṣiffīn, and told Mu'āwiya that since the real fight was between the two of them, it would be honest for them to decide the issue by meeting each other in a single combat. Mu'āwiya made no reply, being afraid that he could not survive such a combat. He, therefore, persisted in sacrificing others in his personal cause. Mu'āwiya rarely visited the battle-field, while 'Alī was to be seen everywhere in it at the head of his army, sometimes directing it and mostly himself in the thick of the battle. He longed to be a martyr and swore that a thousand strokes of a sword on one's head were easier to put up with than a lingering, agonising death in one's bed[8]. His conduct now followed the same pattern of unhesitatingly risking death in the cause of Islam as it had followed early in life when he had slept in the Prophet's bed on the night the latter had escaped to Medina.

Al-Ḥusayn and his brothers were fully involved in the war and served their father with great steadfastness in moments of the greatest peril. They could not have acted differently as they were the sons of 'Alī who had told al-Ḥusayn during this war that it was immaterial whether death fell upon him or he fell upon death[5].

One day while the battle was raging, 'Alī was noticed watching the sun to ascertain if the time for the noon prayers had arrived. Asked whether that was the time to offer prayers in the midst of war, 'Alī replied, "What are we then fighting for?" He taught that the prayers must be offered at the appropriate time, whether it rain arrows or fire.

In order to cut short the battle, one day 'Alī launched an all out attack on the enemy, carrying on the hostilities into the whole of the succeeding night. When day dawned, the Syrians had suffered heavily and huge numbers of them had been killed and wounded. It appeared that they could not ward off defeat for long. 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, counsellor of Mu'āwiya, resorted to the trick of getting the Qur'ān held aloft on spear-heads and the raising of voices loudly pleading that the differences between the parties be referred to the Book of God for decision. 'Alī saw through this trick and advised his followers against falling into this trap laid by those who neither believed in Islam nor had any regard for the Qur'ān. He also reminded them that the same offer made by him before the beginning of the battle had been turned down. But many men of 'Alī's army were misled into defying his orders and turned against him, even threatening his life. When complete indiscipline overtook his army, 'Alī suspended the fighting. The issues between the contending parties were referred to two arbitrators, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ and Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī. The former represented Mu'āwiya and the Syrians, and the latter was imposed upon 'Alī as his representative, much against his will, and as the representative of the residents of Kūfa. Abū Mūsā's earlier conduct had shown his unfavourable attitude towards 'Alī who agreed to his choice only to ward off bloodshed within his party.

The parties agreed to submit themselves to the decision of God and His Book and nothing else. The arbitrators were under an obligation to keep the Qur'ān constantly in view and act upon it, and if they did not find guidance from it, they were to act according to the undisputed practices and regulations of the

Prophet. 'Alī took care to impress upon them that they had not been given any authority to decide according to their personal views. This agreement was drawn up on 13th Ṣafar 37 A.H.

The agreement had hardly been executed when fresh mischief reared its ugly head in the shape of Khārijites who raised in 'Alī's forces the vociferous slogan that there could be no judgement except that of God. They, therefore, held the recent appointment of arbitrators to be wrongful and pressed 'Alī to fight Mu'āwiya, and promised to help him. 'Alī refused to agree saying that the Qur'ān enjoins that the pledged word has to be honoured. The Khārijites turned renegades from Islam and formed a separate party.

The arbitrators completely ignored all the conditions of the instrument of arbitration and disregarded the injunctions of the Qur'ān. 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ was a great master in trickery and made a complete dupe of Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī. He impressed the latter with his respectful behaviour that he really esteemed Abū Mūsā to be his superior, and willingly allowed him to assume precedence. Between themselves, they appeared to have decided to declare both Mu'āwiya and 'Alī unfit for Caliphate and to give the Muslims the right to choose another Caliph. When the time appointed for the announcement of the decision of the Arbitrators arrived, Abū Mūsā was requested by 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ to announce the decision which he did, as agreed between him and 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ. Then 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ stood up to say that as Abū Mūsā represented 'Alī, he accepted his decision to oust 'Alī from the Caliphate. He added that as a representative of Mu'āwiya, he bestowed the Caliphate on him.

This dishonest decision caused uproar among those present, and the arbitrators were treated roughly. The verdict was repudiated on all sides. The contention between the parties remained unresolved. The incident only strengthened the divisive confusion in the ranks of 'Alī's party and gave the Khārijites time to organise themselves so as to oppose 'Alī with stubborn resistance in the Battle of Nahrawān which ensued.

Even after the Battle of Nahrawān in which the Khārijites suffered a crushing defeat, indiscipline, violence and sedition were not wholly rooted out of 'Alī's army. He was indeed in a very unenviable plight. He was burdened with disloyal followers divided by discord and dissension. The Khārijites who had not fought or had escaped at Nahrawān incited rebellious feelings

against him among the people. Mu'āwiya took advantage of the disunity prevalent at Kūfa. He employed his forces to foment trouble in Islamic territories and resorted to such deeds as removing opponents, like Mālik al-Ashtar[10], by getting them poisoned or by other deceitful means, as in the case of Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr, who had been brought up by 'Alī and was one of his devoted supporters. He had been sent as governor of Egypt by 'Alī and at the instance of Mu'āwiya, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ led an army against him in active collaboration with a body of Egyptian conspirators[11]. This resulted in Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr's defeat and murder. His mortal remains were then consigned to the flames[12].

Finding that it was impossible to defeat 'Alī in open, pitched battles, Mu'āwiya took to the method of guerrilla warfare as an effective means of keeping the Islamic territory in a state of constant terror, turmoil, and ferment. A number of such hit and run raids were made by Mu'āwiya's protegés, and some of them were forcibly resisted and driven back. The cruellest of such raids was led by Busr ibn Abī Arṭāt against the Ḥijāz during which he extorted allegiance for Mu'āwiya from the residents of Mecca and Medina, and butchered two young sons of 'Ubayd Allāh ibn 'Abbās in Yemen.

'Alī was engaged in preparations to meet this menace, but at that very time, Ibn Muljam al-Murādī struck him on the head with a poisoned sword while he lay prostrate before God in a mosque in the morning of the 19th Ramaḍān 40 A.H. Three days later, 'Alī was no more in this world.

1 *Irshād*, 136; *Ṭabarī*, I, 1827–8.
2 *Ṭabarī*, I, 2969, 2971.
3 *Ṭabarī*, I, 3009.
4 *Ṭabarī*, I, 3048.
5 *Nahj al Balāgha*, Vol.2, p.140.
6 Ibn Ḥajr, *al-Ṣawā'iq*, 33.
7 *Ṭabarī*, I, 3091.
8 *Irshād*, 177.
9 *Ṭabarī*, I, 3294.
10 *Ṭabarī*, I, 3401.
11 *Ṭabarī*, I, 3404.
12 *Ṭabarī*, I, 3406.

CHAPTER VII

UMAYYAD POWER AND ITS MODES OF POLITICAL PROCEDURE

THE Umayyads had been driven to accept Islam in order to save their lives, and not by any conviction in the excellence of its message. In consequence they continued to entertain, in their hearts, feelings of hate and hostility for their newly acquired faith, and they waited eagerly for an opportunity to damage its cause, for they found it beyond their power to make an open bid for its outright destruction. They thought out an eminently practical plan to disfigure and corrupt those distinguishing traits of Islam, which had crushed their power. It was to use the cover of Islam itself to harm the faith, and to pave the way for the rehabilitation of the pre-Islamic values and privileges. In short, they were hypocrites. The slightest injury suffered or expected to be suffered by the Muslims gave ill-concealed pleasure to the Umayyads. Thus when in the Battle of Uḥud, all but a handful of loyal Muslims had fled, Abū Sufyān expressed his pleasure at what he thought to be the triumphs of the pagan idol al-'Uzzā[1].

The story of how 'Alī had repelled Abū Sufyān's first attempt at disrupting Islam by refusing to accept the military aid offered to him by the latter when Abū Bakr was installed as Caliph in preference to the former's claims has already been recounted. 'Alī had at once seen through Abū Sufyān's game and told him that he was an enemy of Islam and the Muslims.

Abū Sufyān readily changed sides, and successfully negotiated terms of alliance with 'Alī's opponents. The first Caliph sent a large army to invade Syria in 13 A.H., and among those who commanded this army were two sons of Abū Sufyān, Yazīd and Mu'āwiya. Abū Sufyān himself worked as a teller of stories for the entertainment of the war leaders[2], and his daughter and son-in-law also participated in the war. After the conquest of Syria Yazīd ibn Abī Sufyān was appointed governor of the country. When he died he was suceeded by his brother, Mu'âwiya[3].

During the period of the governorship of their sons, Abū Sufyān and Hind, who had been divorced, derived many financial advantages. Hind was advanced a sum of 4000 dirhams from the state treasury which she invested in very profitable trade. Abū Sufyān was paid a hundred dinars as maintenance when he visited Damascus[4], even though he still nursed ill-will against Islam as he could not suppress the feelings of sympathy entertained by him for the Byzantines, then fighting at Yarmūk against the Muslims.

'Uthmān became the Caliph in 23 A.H. and Abū Sufyān advised him to consolidate his power with the support of his kinsmen, the Umayyads. He added that it was only wordly authority that counted, for he could not understand either heaven or hell.

Abū Sufyān and the members of his family turned 'Uthmān's Caliphate to their fullest advantage. Ḥims, Qinnasrîn and Palestine were added to Mu'āwiya's charge and he became the sovereign of the whole of Syria'.

It appears that Abū Sufyān's advice led to 'Uthmān's undoing and ultimately to his assassination. In his first interview with 'Uthmān concerning improvements to be made in the administration, 'Alî had warned him saying, "You give unusual concessions and favours to your kinsmen, ignore their mistakes, do not even warn Mu'āwiya when he does things without your sanction, and do not censure him when he gives out falsely that his actions have your approval".

So much power came to be exercised by Mu'āwiya that it began to be openly said that he would succeed 'Uthmān to the Caliphate. Feeling his future to be quite secure, Mu'āwiya neglected to go to Medina to help 'Uthmān against the rioters, although he had arrived near that city. He preferred to be merely a spectator of the old Caliph's plight from a safe distance. His main counsellor and supporter, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ openly incited violence and revolt against 'Uthmān and retreated to Palestine to await the result of his efforts.

The Umayyads adopted all the ways of kings after they had established themselves in power. In the magnificence and pomp introduced into the life in their palaces, the informality, equality and fraternity of Islam had no place whatsoever, having been thoroughly supplanted by worldly sophistication. Liquor had begun to be used freely especially by the affluent, and when a

Companion of the Prophet ripped open bags filled with liquor, Mu'āwiya was greatly incensed and thought that he was in an advanced stage of dotage. Transgressions against the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the sayings and practices of the Prophet multiplied and the old Companions of the Prophet got increasingly estranged from Mu'āwiya.

It appears that the greater was the measure of Mu'āwiya's power, the lower was his compliance with the injunctions of Islam and its true culture. As a result, the criteria of conduct and the distinguishing features of the practices prescribed by Islam for the life of a simple society became completely neglected, as was exemplified by the exile of Abū Dharr ordered by 'Uthmān at Mu'āwiya's instance. Abū Dharr was a greatly esteemed Companion of the Prophet, but he did not mince his words when it came to telling the truth. He boldly denounced the hoarding of wealth and not spending it for the relief of hunger and distress. He went about the streets of Damascus reciting the verse of the Qur'ān, meaning, "Those who are piling up silver and gold in their treasure chests and do not spend wealth in the way of God, should await the time when their foreheads, sides and backs would be branded with the fire of hell"[6].

Abū Dharr was banished to a desolate place and unable to bear the hardships of life there, died in 33 A.H. His old wife and daughter were with him, and with great difficulty managed to wash his dead body and to provide it with a shroud. By a piece of singular good luck, 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd, a Companion of the Prophet arrived and lamented Abū Dharr's death and misfortunes, and buried his dead body.

1 *Tabari*, I, 1418.
2 *Tabari*, I, 2095.
3 *Tabari*, I, 2860.
4 *Tabari*, I, 2766–7
5 *Tabari*, I, 2866.
6 *Tabari*, I, 2859.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE TRUE CHAMPIONS OF ISLAM AND ITS SYRIAN PROTAGONISTS AFTER THE PROPHET

AFTER the Prophet's death it was undoubtedly the members of his *ahl al-bayt* who kept the cardinal principles of Islam alive and cherished the values he had sought to establish. In the seats of Muslim governments, standards of life vied with imperial magnificence and splendour through money derived from conquest or levied as tributes on subjugated lands. The descendants of the Prophet, however, continued to live simply, unostentatiously and through their own personal exertions, spending what they could to help orphans, widows and the poor generally. The sharp differences that divided their mode of life from the grand life style of those whose object was the seizure of power and its unstinted enjoyment naturally resulted in conflict. Strife between Mu'āwiya and 'Alī could not be averted.

The descendants of the Prophet, as true followers of Islam, stood for the obliteration of all distinctions among the Muslims, and the establishment of equality and fraternity, reserving apportionment of merit only for excellence of conduct and thoroughness in the performance of one's duty as a man. The amassing of wealth in the government treasury for subsequent distribution as special grants or personal privileges smacked of favouritism and tended to encourage rivalry among their recipients 'Alī stopped the practice. He used to distribute daily, with strict regard for justice, everything that was deposited into the treasury. Persons who had enjoyed such privileged treatment before 'Alī's installation as Caliph must have been very adversely affected by 'Alī's mode of distribution of public funds among the Muslims. The Umayyads had no scruples in spending public money as suited their object of winning the people's support, and they succeeded in it, leaving only a minority of people to follow 'Alī. The same result flowed from the straitened circumstances in which 'Alī generally led his life. People usually follow men who are financially sound and who

may help them in time of need. Those who had their eyes fixed on the main chance, therefore, preferred going over to Mu'āwiya to following 'Alī. The Umayyads also favoured the claim of the Arabs, as a race, to be superior to the non-Arabs. This was in direct contradiction of the teachings of Islam, and the sayings and practices of its Prophet. Umayyad discrimination resulted in the eruption of the Arab versus the non-Arab problem. As true upholders of the principles of Islam and its practices, the Hāshimites could not lend countenance to the claim of the Arabs to be superior to non-Arabs. This view finds support from the fact that the 'Abbāsids, who were Hāshimites, found, in their challenge to Umayyad authority, many of their supporters from the non-Arabs of Iran.

For reasons mentioned in the preceding paragraphs and because of the enmity which the Umayyads and some other tribes bore towards them, the Prophet's descendants usually received less support of their countrymen than the Umayyads.

CHAPTER IX

AL-ḤASAN'S TREATY WITH MU'ĀWIYA AND ITS UNHAPPY SEQUEL

BEFORE leaving the world, 'Alī executed a will instructing his sons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, solely about their duties to God, His Book, the poor and the weak, and many similar matters[1]. He directed them to ensure that only his murderer be put to death to avenge his killing[2].

After 'Alī's death, al-Ḥasan was unanimously accepted as their Caliph by the Muslims as proposed by 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās, when all who had assembed for the ceremony joined al-Ḥasan in mourning over the passing away of his great father. Then the Muslims willingly swore allegiance to al-Ḥasan as suggested by 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās. At this crucial moment, al-Ḥasan bade the people to agree to follow him whether he chose to go to war or to live in peace. This was on 21st Ramaḍān, 40 A.H.[3]

While the country was still in mourning, and al-Ḥasan had hardly had time to complete his arrangements for the proper administration of the Islamic territories, Mu'āwiya picked up the threads of his favourite game of stirring up the feelings of disaffection among the residents of Muslim lands. He planted spies and agents provocateurs in places which were hot-beds of intrigue like Kūfa and Baṣra to forment trouble and indiscipline. Al-Ḥasan took exception to these unwarranted intrusions of Mu'āwiya into areas under his authority and wrote to him to draw his attention pointedly to this unauthorised interference. He also complained to Mu'āwiya that the latter had been reported to have reviled the revered 'Alī who was then dead, and told him that it was a very unworthy act. He added that if Mu'āwiya wanted war, he might well prepare himself for it. Further exchanges of correspondence with Mu'āwiya served only to make it clear that he nursed feelings of inextinguishable animosity against 'Alī which even the latter's death had not in least served to abate.

With the passage of time, the unsettling activities of Mu'āwiya's spies and informers assumed increased vigour and thoroughness. Al-Ḥasan was, however, prepared to give battle to Mu'āwiya rather than compromise the principles of truth and justice. The shape of things, however, did not appear to be wholly assuring. For besides Mu'āwiya's evil machinations, the people were exposed to the seditious promptings of the remnants of the Khārijite faction which had been defeated but not been so completely rooted out of society as to leave no active sympathisers for their vanquished group. 'Alī himself had expressed his disgust with the disunity and indiscipline which had latterly crept into his army and on one occasion he had gone even so far as to wish Mu'āwiya would agree to exchange one of his followers for two of 'Alī's men as gold for silver.

Such were the people with whom al-Ḥasan had to work. He knew them fully as did Mu'āwiya through his spies and informers. Encouraged by the prevailing state of things, Mu'āwiya unexpectedly raided Iraq. Ḥujr b.'Adī went round to enlist support for al-Ḥasan, but met with a very unsatisfactory response. Among those who came forward to help were rabble craving for loot, some who had been pressed to do so by their tribal chiefs, the Kharijites who, in any case, wanted to fight with Mu'āwiya, and a sprinkling of loya Shī'a[4]. Al-Ḥasan despatched Qays ibn Sa'd ibn 'Ubāda al-Ansārī at the head of 20,000 men, and himself stayed at Sābāt. When he witnessed the treacherous hostility of his followers he stood up to preach to them the excellence of acting with agreement and unity. He had hardly finished his speech when the Kharijites raised an uproar, crying out, "He has recanted from Islam and turned a heretic"[5]. Al-Ḥasan was assaulted, but the loyal tribes of Rabī'a and Ḥamadān rescued him, and dispersed his assailants.

Al-Ḥasan left for Madā'in where a Kharijite seriously injured him with a dagger. The wound took long to get healed. Al-Ḥasan then resumed preparations to give battle to Mu'āwiya who, however, unilaterally offered peace on any terms that al-Ḥasan would find acceptable. Mu'āwiya also sent to al-Ḥasan letters of those leaders of the latter's army who had invited him to attack their country and had even promised to deliver al-Ḥasan as a captive to him, or to murder him[6].

In these circumstances, it was obviously inexpedient to prolong the state of war and according to what the Prophet and

'Alī had done on similar occasions, al-Ḥasan agreed to treaty for peace with Mu'āwiya. The conditions of the treaty which came into force in Rab' I or Jumādā I, 41 A.H.[7] were:

(1) Mu'āwiya would govern the Islamic territories according to the Book of God, the Sunna of the Prophet and his righteous Caliphs;

(2) Mu'āwiya would have no right to nominate his successor to the Caliphate;

(3) Residents of all Islamic territories like Syria, Iraq, Ḥijaz and Yemen would be protected;

(4) The lives, properties and honour of all the Shī'a of 'Alī, wherever residing would be safeguarded;

(5) Mu'āwiya would not make any attempt, overt or covert, on the lives of al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, or of any one else belonging to the Prophet's family, nor otherwise terrorise, intimidate or harm any one of them.

Al-Ḥasan's conflict with Mu'āwiya had arisen solely from the latter's desire to safeguard the principles of the Sharī'a and of the faith. The first condition of the treaty made it obligatory for Mu'āwiya to act according to the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the Sunna of the Prophet and his righteous successors. It not only established but got Mu'āwiya to concede that prior to the signing of the treaty the governance of Syria had offended against the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the Sunna of the Prophet and his righteous successors. It also established that the principles of Sharī'a and the faith are distinctly separate from the laws of worldly governments and the acts of temporal rulers.

The second article of the treaty prohibited Mu'āwiya from nominating his successor so as to curb the tendency of following the ways of monarchs who named their successors without regard for merit, and also to divest him of authority to nominate as his successor one whose conduct might not conform to the injunctions of the Qur'ān, and the Sunna of the Prophet and his righteous Caliphs.

The conclusion of the treaty brought wholly unmerited contumely on al-Ḥasan from his treacherous followers and a great extension of his territories for Mu'āwiya. Shortly after peace had been restored, Mu'āwiya told a gathering of the Muslims near Kūfa that his sole aim in going to war had been to have himself acknowledged as the overlord of Iraq and other Muslim lands, and that the fulfillment of the conditions of the

treaty with al-Ḥasan depended only upon him[8].

The capture of power by Mu'āwiya emboldened him to revile 'Alī in the presence of his sons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. Al-Ḥasan made a brief but very comprehensive reply. Al-Ḥusayn watched the trend of the objectives of the government of the day closely, and recognised that the final test had to be awaited in silence.

Al-Ḥasan retired from Kūfa to Medina where al-Ḥusayn also joined him. In order to create a rift between the two brothers the Umayyads gave currency to a false rumour that al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn held different views about the peace treaty with Mu'āwiya. The rumour died out quickly enough as the two brothers were completely at one with each other. Al-Ḥusayn knew that al-Ḥasan had decided to give up the worldly authority only to eliminate the possibility of war, although he had not wholly ruled out resort to arms as the ultimate measure to resolve the conflict. Clearly indicative of the inner workings of his mind was the fact that al-Ḥasan was heard frequently to repeat couplets meaning, "Whoever makes the sword his shelter is rewarded with a peculiar peace and freedom from care: either getting out of this world quickly, or remaining in it in the enjoyment of just relief".

"Never seek ease, it is a very undesirable habit. You cannot win respect except through undergoing difficulties"[9].

With the conclusion of the treaty, the Umayyads found themselves quite free to do what they liked, and they neglected to honour the conditions of the treaty.

If Mu'āwiya had fulfilled the first condition of the treaty to act according to the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the Sunna of the Prophet and the righteous Caliphs, he should have been reckoned to have been one of them. But even Sunnī Muslims do not make any such claim for him. They hold that the righteous Caliphate lasted only for thirty years after the Prophet's death, and this period expired with the conclusion of the treaty between al-Ḥasan and Mu'āwiya.

There were many instances in which the requirements of the provisions of the first condition of the treaty were contravened. It appears that political expediency induced Mu'āwiya to declare Ziyād, son of Sumayya, his brother. The story is not without interest and might be briefly told here. Ziyād's mother, Sumayya, was a manumitted slave-girl. She married 'Ubayd who

was a slave of a man of the Banū Thaqīf and gave birth to Ziyād who was brought up by al-Mughîra ibn Shu'ba, and grew up to be an intelligent and well-read youth. 'Umar made him the governor of Baṣra, and later 'Alî appointed him governor of Fars. After 'Alî's assassination, Ziyād initially reacted harshly to Mu'āwiya's threats, but in 44 A.H., Mu'āwiya declared him to be his brother[10] since Abū Sufyān was known to have passed a night in Sumayya's illicit intimacy. The establishment of this relationship between Ziyād and Mu'āwiya caused a stir among the Muslims in general and among the Prophet's Companions in particular, because it was against the oft-repeated saying of the Prophet that a child would be attributed to the spouse, only stones being the lot of the adulterer. Mu'āwiya took no notice of the general resentment because it suited him to purchase the loyalty of Ziyād and his descendants for his purposes.

Mu'āwya introduced many practices opposed to Islamic laws and regulations. Thus he reduced the quantity of the alms tax given at 'Īd al-Fiṭr from one *sā'* to two *mudd* only per head. He wore ornaments of gold, dresses made of skins of carnivorous animals although he was fully aware that those practices had been prohibited by the Prophet.

On the day of 'Arafa during the Ḥajj ceremonies, a set formula of *talbiya* meaning, "O Allāh, here I am at Thy service. Thou hast no partner", used to be repeated as part of the essential practices. Mu'āwiya forbade this practice. 'Abd Allāh bin 'Abbās, a very leanred man, denounced this prohibition of the *talbiya* on several occasions.

Mu'āwiya used to shower his favours on singers although Islam frowned upon music. Sā'ib Khāthir, a man given to evil pursuits, sang his way to great success in Mu'āwiya's court. Ibn al-Faqīh, an eminent scholar, has recorded that Mu'āwiya was the first to establish police outposts, castrate men to make eunuchs and to store money in state treasuries.

Mu'āwiya started the practice of accepting, like kings, presents on the occasions of the Persian festivals of *Nauruz* (new year) and Mihrajān which in some years brought him ten million dirhams.

The observances of Islam had fallen into general neglect. Bukhārî records that once Abū Dardā', a Companion of the Prophet was noticed in a mood of great resentment since he did not find in the people any trace of their following the Prophet,

except that they offered congregational prayers. Mālik recorded that except for the call for prayers, none of the earlier Islamic practices were to be seen. Mu'āwiya did not even mention the Prophet's name with due respect, and a very old man whom Mu'āwiya interviewed pulled him up when the latter questioned him about the Prophet, referring to him simply as 'Muḥammad'. The old man asked Mu'āwiya why he had not uttered the name with the respect due to it and call Muḥammad God's Prophet.

Once, to forestall the malicious ingenuity of 'Amr ibn al-Āṣ to belittle him in the eyes of the Egyptians, he caused members of a deputation of them to be so overawed that all of them addressed Mu'āwiya as God's Prophet. Mu'āwiya did not care to punish them or even to warn them against this blasphemy.

People follow their rulers in religion as in every thing else. When the chief executive authority was so heedless in the observance of the practices of Islam, the people must have been still less inclined to follow them. In fact, faith became an article to be sold by auction.

Once Ḥatāt ibn Yazīd and three others went to see Mu'āwiya who gave Ḥatāt seventy thousand dirhams while the other three received a hundred thousand dirhams each. Ḥatāt protested against this discriminatory treatment and Mu'āwiya told him that the bigger amount represented the price of the faith of the recipients. Ḥatāt at once offered to sell his faith for that amount[11].

The few pious Muslims who were still alive were tired of life. Al-Ḥakam b.'Amr, leading a campaign in the East refused to comply with Mu'āwiya's order to send to the government treasury the spoils of war in 50 A.H. instead of distributing the booty among the soldiers according to the old custom. He was, however, seized with such terror that he prayed for his death and died shortly afterwards[12].

In order to erase the memory of the Hāshimites, Mu'āwiya tried to move the Prophet's pulpit with a view to transport it to Syria. He, however, desisted from carrying out his scheme and was struck with a facial paralysis the same year[13].

Leaving the violations of the second condition of the treaty for narration later, we might deal with the breaches of the third condition which provided that in Syria, Iraq, Ḥijāz and Yemen protection would be provided to people irrespective of the quarter of the country to which they belonged. Grievous indeed

were the violations of this condition. Ziyād ibn Sumayya unleashed an orgy of bloodshed of which the principal targets were the residents of Iraq. Punishments were awarded without any offences being committed, people were imprisoned without inquiry and maiming and killing on the slightest pretext became the order of the day.

When Samura ibn Jundab succeeded Ziyād at Baṣra, he turned out to be a more blood-thirsty tyrant than his predecessor and had no less than 8,000 men put to sword within six months. He killed 47 men who knew the Qur'ān by heart. Samura ordered people not to frequent public streets after midnight. A man arrived from the countryside and was arrested on a public street during the prohibited hours. Samura accepted that he was unaware of his orders but still had him killed for the 'public good'. Another man paid *Zakat* (alms-tax) to Samura and was saying his prayers in a mosque when another man arrived and killed him. Instances of such barbarities could be greatly multiplied.

The fourth condition of the treaty that the lives, properties and honour of the Shī'a of 'Alī should be protected from harm was outrageously violated. The least hardship that the Shī'a of Kūfa and Baṣra were subjected to was that they were forced to vacate their houses to make room for Mu'āwiya's supporters, and were sent to Qinsrīn, a desolate spot in Syria, to live in a military camp.

Ḥujr ibn 'Adī and his companions were summoned to Syria and were put to death although they declared that they were Muslims, that they stood by their plighted word and were not insurgents. Their only and their most unpardonable fault was their refusal to curse 'Alī. Ṣayfī b.Faysal al-Shaybānī, one of the notables among Ḥujr's friends, was mercilessly beaten when he told Ziyād that he held 'Alī in the greatest esteem. The torture was stayed and Ṣayfī was again questioned about how he felt regarding 'Alī. Ṣayfī returned the same reply as before with added strength and point. He was among twelve men, including Ḥujr b.'Adī who were sent to Syria. Two others joined them later on. Of these fourteen persons, seven were released upon recommendations made for them, six were put to the sword, and one 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥassān al-'Anazī was selected for exemplary punishment, being most firmly devoted to the Shī'te cause. Ziyād buried him alive[14].

Ḥujr ibn 'Adī was among those who were put to death. He was greatly esteemed throughout the Muslim world. His murder was profoundly mourned by all the Muslims, the Shī'a of Kūfa considering it to be a great calamity. When 'Ā'isha, a widow of the Prophet, heard that Ziyād had made a report against Ḥujr, she sent him a message through 'Abd al-Raḥmān bin al-Ḥārith bin Hishām to fear God. The messenger was too late in reaching Ziyād, and Hujr had already been put to death. When 'Ā'isha heard of Ḥujr's tragic end, she remarked that if Mu'āwiya had not known that the residents of Mecca had been left with any vestige of courage, he would not have had the courage to call Ḥujr and his companions in chains to Syria and to assassinate him. She added that the son of the woman who ate Ḥamza's liver knew that manliness had ceased to exist. She affirmed that for their knowledge and attainments these men could well be looked upon as the head and brain of Arabia.

When Mu'āwiya came to Medina and called on 'Ā'isha, she appears to have rated him sharply about Ḥujr's fate so that Mu'āwiya had to close the discussion saying, "leave me and Ḥujr alone. The matter will be sorted out before God".

When 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar, a son of the second Caliph heard of Ḥujr's assassination in the market-place, he stood up and raised loud lament.

Rabī' ibn Ziyād al-Ḥārithī, the governor of Khurasān, was so struck with grief at Ḥujr's assassination, and the general apathy of the Muslims that he raised his hands to pray, asking the Muslims who had gathered together for the Friday prayers to say 'Amen'. He prayed, "O God, if there be aught of good for Rabī', deprive him of life". The prayer was granted, and after leaving the mosque, he had not gone far when he collapsed and died.

It appears that Mu'āwiya himself later realised that Ḥujr ibn 'Adī had been wrongfully put to death. He was heard muttering, "O, Ḥujr, I would have to face a long day for your assassination", when he found his end fast approaching.

'Amr ibn al-Ḥamiq al-Khuzā'ī was greatly esteemed as the Prophet had conveyed his greetings to him. He was also assassinated on directions given by Mu'āwiya.

These events greatly distressed the Shī'a of 'Alī. Hearing that many complaints had been made to al-Ḥusayn against the assassination of Ḥujr, and al-Ḥusayn himself had been deeply

moved by the incident and fearing that al-Ḥusayn might rise in revolt against him, Mu'āwiya addressed him a letter replete with threats. Al-Ḥusayn sent him a reply, and laying aside his wonted taciturnity, he recounted, one by one, all the instances in which the terms of the treaty with al-Ḥasan had been violated, and made a moving reference to Ḥujr's fate, and told him that nothing caused greater distress than his Caliphate and rule.

The fifth condition of the treaty obliged Mu'āwiya to make no attempt, open or concealed, to cause injury to al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn or any one else belonging to the Prophet's family. This condition was grossly contravened, even though the Prophet's descendants strictly dissociated themselves wholly from the affairs of the country.

Al-Ḥasan was treated with ill-concealed disrespect by the officials of government. They even some times used abusive language against him, the intention being to provoke the Hāshimites into acts of violence so that Mu'āwiya might get an excuse to shed their blood, but al-Ḥasan's great forebearance precluded such a contingency from materialising. The Umayyads then resorted to covert measures to secure their object, and employed bribery and poison to get rid of al-Ḥasan. Mu'āwiya hired Ju'da, a wife of al-Ḥasan, in return for a hundred thousand dirhams and promise to be later married to Mu'āwiya's son, Yazīd. Al-Ḥasan died, poisoned by Ju'da, on 28th Ṣafar, 50 A.H. He had expressed a wish to be buried by the side of the Prophet, but anticipating trouble, he had enjoined that if his burial in the Prophet's tomb were resisted he be interred by the side of his grandmother, Fāṭima, daughter of Asad in the graveyard of al-Baqī'.

Al-Ḥusayn took his brother's dead body towards the Prophet's tomb, but he was prevented from burying him there by the Umayyads who were led by Marwān. Al-Ḥusayn greatly resented this interference, but in deference to the wishes of al-Ḥasan, he buried him in al-Baqī'[15].

Al-Ḥasan's death was a great catastrophe for the Hāshimites who kept mourning him for a month. Al-Ḥusayn continued to follow the path of peace like his brother. When the Shī'a of Iraq wanted him to accept their allegiance, al-Ḥusayn told them that it would be improper to repudiate the treaty with al-Ḥasan as they were bound by it. He suggested that the whole question

might be reviewed after Mu'āwiya's death.

1 Abū al-Faraj' al-Iṣfahānī, *Maqātil*, 38–40.
2 *Maqātil*, 36.
3 *Irshād*, 280–1.
4 *Irshād*, 282.
5 *Irshād*, 283.
6 *Irshād*, 28.
7 *Ṣawā'iq*, 81.
8 *Irshād*, 286.
9 Ibn al-Faqîh al-Ḥamadānī, *Kitab al-Baladān*, p.53.
10 Ṭabarī, 69–70.
11 Ṭabarī, II, 96–7.
12 Ṭabarī, II, 110–110.
13 Ṭabarī, II, 92.
14 Ṭabarī, II, 142.
15 *Irshād*, 287–8.

CHAPTER X

YAZĪD'S NOMINATION AS MU'ĀWIYA'S SUCCESSOR

MU'ĀWIYA spent his long life in the enjoyment of power and wealth. He long cherished the desire to leave, upon his death, his authority and power to his son, Yazîd.

Two things prevented Mu'āwiya from giving a practical effect to his desire, the treaty with al-Ḥasan which deprived him of the right to nominate his successor and the unworthy conduct of his son, Yazîd. Mu'āwiya had, in a most flagrant manner, violated other provisions of the treaty, and the breach of the condition prohibiting the nomination of his successor did not present him with any difficulty. The really serious obstacle to the realisation of his object was his apprehension that the proposal to nominate Yazîd as his successor in the Caliphate would not only attract little support but also be vigorously opposed by people who mattered and resented by the people in general. He, however, tried to remove those persons, as far as possible, who could be serious competitors of Yazîd for the Caliphate. Thus he got 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khālid poisoned and appointed the murderer as the collector of the tribute of Ḥims'.

Al-Mughîra ibn Shu'ba was not getting on well with Mu'āwiya while working as governor of Kūfa. In order to curry favour with Yazîd he threw out a hint to the latter to get himself declared as the successor to Caliphate. Mu'āwiya who had never entertained any hope of receiving such a suggestion from any sensible person, at once called al-Mughîra to speak to him about his proposal. Al-Mughîra assured him of the success of the scheme at Kūfa and said that, with Ziyād as governor, Baṣra also should respond favourably to Mui'āwiya's desire.

Returning to Kūfa, al-Mughîra summoned the prominent persons known for their pro-Umayyad learnings and exhorted them to wait in a deputation upon Mu'āwiya and urge upon him Yazîd's nomination as his successor. The response to his appeal was discouraging and al-Mughîra spent a sum of thirty thousand

dirhams to get together a passable deputation which his son, Mūsā, led to Mu'āwiya, who was too clever to be taken in by appearances. After giving the usual assurances to the deputationists, Mu'āwiya asked Mūsā privately how much his father had paid to purchase their faith. "Thirty thousand dirhams", was the answer.

Mu'āwiya then called Ziyād whom he had wrongfully declared to be his brother as a measure of political expediency, and acquainted him with his object. Ziyād was greatly in doubt about the fairness of the nomination of a self-willed libertine like Yazīd for the Caliphate in succession to Mu'āwiya, and consulted 'Ubayd ibn Ka'b al-Numayrī who counselled that Yazīd be told to mend his ways if he wished to win over public opinion to support his nomination. Ziyād gave a brief reply to Mu'āwiya saying that undue haste would be injurious to the success of their object[2].

Al-Mughīra died in 49 A.H. or a year later aged 70 years[3]. Ziyād succeeded him as governor of Kūfa. He had been made governor of Baṣra, Khurasān and Sijistān in 45 A.H. by Mu'āwiya who had later added Bahrayn and 'Umān to his charge. In Ramaḍān 53 A.H. Ziyād also died, and apprehending that the remaining supporters might also be shortly die, Mu'āwiya proclaimed Yazīd's succession to the Caliphate and the governed were forced to agree with the arrangement...

It would appear that al-Mughīra had prepared the ground well for a positive response to Yazīd's nomination as Mu'āwiya's successor, as the prominent supporters of the Umayyads at Kūfa had been won over to fall in with the Caliph's desire. Ziyād followed al-Mughīra in the governorship of Kūfa, and while at Baṣra he did not fail to promote the success of Mu'āwiya's scheme though with great caution and unobstrusive enthusiasm. At Kūfa, however, both Ziyād and his son, 'Ubayd Allāh, struck people with such terror that nobody dared oppose their orders. As for Syria, it was the Umayaads' strong-hold, and, as already mentioned, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khālid ibn al-Walīd, a possible competitor for the Caliphate, had been removed from Yazīd's path. Sa'īd, son of the murdered Caliph, 'Uthmān, protested against Yazīd's nomination for the succession, claiming for himself superior parentage, and reminding Mu'āwiya that much of his power had come from 'Uthmān.

These claims were conceded, but Mu'āwiya claimed to have repaid 'Uthman's generosity to him with the help he had given to the deceased Caliph, by wreaking vengeance upon his murderers and claiming the price of his blood. He added that if his house were full of men like Sa'īd, they would be collectively no match for Yazīd.

Mu'āwiya then wrote to Marwān, governor of Medina, to take the oath of allegiance to Yazīd whom he had nominated as his successor, and also to obtain similar oaths from the people of Medina. This enraged Marwān who saw Mu'āwiya at Damascus and strongly protested against Yazīd's nomination to the Caliphate as preferring an inexperienced youth to available men of known administrative experience. Mu'āwiya mollified him by saying that he had been made Yazīd's successor. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr was highly resentful of this nomination, pointing out that Abū Bakr had not made a will in favour of his son's succession, and that Mu'āwiya had followed the ways of Caesars and worldly monarchs. These views were supported by Imām al-Ḥusayn, 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās and 'Ā'isha, a widow of the Prophet.

Mu'āwiya must have known, much to his distress, that all these objectors to Yazīd's nomination as his father's successor in office enjoyed position of outstanding importance in the Islamic world. It may also be noted that all those who, among the various schools of Muslim thought, were looked upon as having inherited a real trust in matters concerning the Muslims, were united in their disagreement with the choice of Yazīd to succeed as the Caliph of Islam. Some of these held their ground and braved dreadful consequences, while others allowed themselves to be forced to abandon their stand.

Mu'āwiya tried to silence them with threats or win them over with lavish offers of money. On his visiting Medina he spoke disrespectfully to Imām al-Ḥusayn, calling him a sacrificial lamb whose blood would be assuredly shed. On meeting 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, whom he likened to a porpoise, he said that his tail would be caught and twisted. He accused 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr of being in an advanced stage of senile dotage. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar fared no better[5].

When threats proved useless, Mu'āwiya offered the allurement of wealth to achieve his object. He sent a sum of ten

thousand dirhams to 'Abd Al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr who refused to barter his faith for worldly gain. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar's reaction was the same to a similar gift. Imām al-Ḥusayn also refused to accept presents and a large amount of money sent to him by Mu'āwiya.

'Ā'isha took a leading part in opposing Yazīd's nomination to the Caliphate. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī records that one day, seeing Mu'āwiya taking the oath of allegiance for Yazīd at Medina, 'Ā'isha called out, saying, "Be silent! What are you doing? Did any previous Caliph ever obtain the oath of allegiance for his son?" Mu'āwiya thereupon closed the proceedings.

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says, "Mu'āwiya did four things, each of which was fit for his destruction: He took possession of the Caliphate with the help of ignorant fools without consulting the whole community, even though Companions of the Prophet were available. He nominated as his successor his son who was a drunkard and remained intoxicated, wore gold and silk, and played on the lute. Thirdly, he declared Ziyād to be Abū Sufyān's son in the teeth of the Prophet's saying which ascribed parentage to the spouse and reserved the punishment of being stoned to death for the adulterer. Fourthly, he put Hujr and his companions to death[6].

Mu'āwiya knew that of prime importance among the group of persons of note opposed to Yazīd's nomination was al-Ḥusayn and he lost no time in telling him during his visit to Medina that all had been won over to his scheme except five persons of the Quraysh led by him. Al-Ḥusayn was surprised, and asked Mu'āwiya if he really thought these persons to be guided by him. As Mu'āwiya repeated the charge, al-Ḥusayn suggested that he should call these, his supposed followers, and ask them to swear allegiance to his son. If they did so, Mu'āwiya need not apprehend any danger from al-Ḥusayn alone.

This device postponed the conflict for the time being and Mu'āwiya returned to Syria.

It became, however, clear to al-Ḥusayn, and no less to Mu'āwiya, that an appeal to arms could not be long avoided. Al-Ḥusayn, however, was unwilling to open hostilities on general principles as well as due to the peace treaty between Mu'āwiya and al-Ḥasan. Mu'āwiya also found it inopportune to open the war, so that an uneasy state of peace prevailed between the parties. Its duration was cut short by Mu'āwiya's

death in 60 A.H.

1 *Tabarî*, II 82.
2 Ibn al-Athîr *al-Kâmil*, III 418.
3 *Tabarî*, 174–5.
4 *Tabarî*, II 234.
5 Ibn al-Athîr *al-Kâmil*, III 421–4.
6 Ibn al-Athîr *al-Kâmil*, II 25.

CHAPTER XI

MU'ĀWIYA'S DEATH AND YAZĪD'S ACCESSION TO THE THRONE

IN 60 A.H. Mu'āwiya fell so seriously ill that he did not recover his health during the protracted course of his malady. Ibn Ḥajr has recorded that one day Mu'āwiya started crying. On being asked the reason, Mu'āwiya replied that if love for Yazīd had not got completely the better of his judgement, he would have found out for himself the right course[1]. Elucidating this statement, Ibn Ḥajr notes that Mu'āwiya has thus fully conceded that fondness for Yazīd had blinded him to the path of righteousness and that he had delivered the Muslims, after his death, into the hands of such a sinner as Yazīd who would lead them to perdition[2].

At the commencement of his illness which terminated his life Mu'āwiya had said to Yazīd, "I have humbled all your enemies, and have made all the Arabs submit to your authority and agree to your succession, but as regards the Caliphate which has been all but settled, I apprehend trouble from four persons: Al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar, 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr and 'Abd al-Raḥmān b.Abī Bakr[3].

When death was fast approaching him, Mu'āwiya sent for Yazīd who was, however, enjoying himself with hunting at Huwwarīn[4]. Mu'āwiya, therefore, charged al-Daḥḥāk ibn Qays al-Fihrī, the head of his *Shurta*, to convey to Yazīd this message as from him, "Treat the people of Hijaz with due regard, receive them at the capital graciously and respectfully, look after the venerable and eminent of them who do not come to the capital appropriately from time to time. Trust the Syrians as your hands and arms taking care that they do not remain long out of Syria lest they should learn the manners of other lands. And know that I apprehend trouble for you from only four persons, namely, al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Ali, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr and 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr[5].

Mu'āwiya died in Rajab 60 A.H.[6] He had become governor of

Syria at 38 years of age, an independent Caliph at 58 years of age and died aged 78 years or between 73 and 85 years according to some historians[1].

Yazîd returned to Damascus only after his father had been buried. He ascended the throne and the people of Syria swore allegiance to him.

1 *Al-Sawā'iq* (margin) 56.
2 *Al-Sawā'iq* (margin) 58.
3 *Ṭabarī*, II 196–7.
4 *Ṭabarī*, II 203.
5 *Ṭabarī*, II 197.
6 *Ṭabarī*, II 198.
7 *Ṭabarī*, II 199.

CHAPTER XII

YAZĪD

YAZĪD's mother, Maysūn, was a daughter of Bahdal ibn Unayf al-Kalbī. Mu'āwiya married her for her exceptional beauty. He built for her a magnificent palace opposite Ghūta in beautiful surroundings, and furnished it with regal splendour. He provided her with a variety of jewels and scores of dresses made of the choicest fabrics, and employed a host of slave-girls to minister to her personal comfort. All the luxuries placed at her disposal by Mu'āwiya failed to impress his wife who was a child of the desert, accustomed to the hard life of the arid wastes, and in love with it. Once, breaking spontaneously into a fit of crying, she said, "The tent unprotected against gusts of strong winds is dearer to me than this palace. The rough woolen gown I wore was far more precious to me than these fine dresses. I relished eating a crumb of dry bread in a corner of my dwelling better than these white fresh loaves of bread and I was fonder of a lean, lank and unsightly youth of my clan and tribe than of a hefty, ill-mannered brute".

When Mu'āwiya heard the story he was greatly enraged, especially at the disparaging reference made to him. He divorced Maysūn who had already become pregnant. He banished her to live with her relations in the desert of Najd[1]. Yazīd was born in 22 A.H.[2], and getting the news, Mu'āwiya sent for him[3].

From early youth, Yazīd took to evil ways and led a dissolute life. The pranks that he used to play with animals have been preserved in histories. He was the first to make a panther ride a horse. He trained a monkey to ride an ass and compete in horse races against reputed horsemen.

Yazīd earned notoriety for addiction to liquor and 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr named him *sakrān*, meaning, 'drunkard'[4]. He could not restrain himself from drinking when he visited Mecca to perform the Ḥajj in order to win public support for his

nomination as his father's successor[5].

Al-Wāqidī quoted 'Abd Allāh ibn Ḥanẓala as saying, "During Yazīd's rule we feared that stones would rain upon us as he did not spare his step-mothers, daughters and and sisters from his lustful advances. He drank liquor freely and neglected to offer prayers[6].

It was not that Yazīd sinned only by acting against the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the Prophet's Sunna, but his thoughts also were equally sinful. His verses, as translated below, in which he makes light of the injunctions of the Qur'ān bear testimony to the truth of this statement:

"I have no time to spare from listening to the guitar and cymbals to hearken to the call for prayers and I have elected the nymph of the cup instead of the hourīs of paradise".

He even denied belief in resurrection as he says in verses translated below:

"Sing to me of Abū Sufyān's exploits at Uḥud when he plunged the homes of his enemies into mourning. Have no hopes of our meeting after parting caused by death. You might have heard about a second life, but these are old yarns which mislead men".

These verses clearly indicate that Yazīd was governed by beliefs of the pre-Islamic period of darkness, and that he entertained the passions which led the infidels to fight against the Prophet of Islam. His verses composed after the martyrdom of al-Ḥusayn, and again when the members of the latter's family arrived as prisoners before him at Damascus manifest the same reactionary feelings against Islam and its Prophet.

It was a terrible irony that such a man should not only have assumed the office of the Caliph of Islam, but should also have been accepted as such by a majority of the Muslims. The inevitable result was that the general attitude of the Muslims towards their faith grew apathetic, and they remained only indifferent spectators of the prevalent pursuit of sensuous pleasures and violations of the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the Sunna of the Prophet.

1 *Hayat al-Hayawān*, Vol.2, p.207.
2 *Tabarī*, Vol.4, p.259.
3 *Hayat al Hayawān*, Vol.2, p.207.
4 *Al-Akhbar al-Ṭiwal*, 265
5 *Kamil*, Vol.4, p.63.
6 *Al-Ṣawā'iq*, 135

CHAPTER XIII

AL-ḤUSAYN's NOBLE MANNERS, HIGH ATTAINMENTS AND PRECIOUS SAYINGS

CHARACTER is shaped by a variety of factors of which the most important are family characteristics including ancestral traditions, environment, upbringing, education and significant experiences in life. The noble traits of al-Ḥusayn's family were not shared by any other family in Arabia and even Yazîd once conceded in his court that al-Ḥusayn's mother was better than his own mother, and that al-Ḥusayn's maternal grandfather was superior to his own maternal grandfather[1]. The distinguishing marks of his family held out a promise of the excellence of al-Ḥusayn's disposition, and his upbringing ensured nobility of conduct and refinement of manners. He had also lived through many vicissitudes and learnt to be guided more by reason than by emotions. This had given him a sober maturity in his outlook and also steady firmness and quick resourcefulness.

When experts of biography tried to give a brief description of al-Ḥusayn's qualities and many attainments they had to employ eloquent expressions. Ibn Abî Shayba, an authority on traditions, in describing Ḥusayn said, "He was very well-versed in the Qur'ân and acted in accordance with it. He was God-fearing, abstinent, of pure habits, abstemious, generous, sweet of expression, eloquent, percipient of God, and a proof of God's exalted being". Finding the usual complimentary expressions inadequate to do justice to al-Ḥusayn's outstanding qualities, Ibn Abî Shayba added the last phrase that al-Ḥusayn was proof of God's exalted Being. Ibn al-'Arabî, likewise said that, al-Ḥusayn, one of the Prophet's grandons, was among the signs of God.

It is due to al-Ḥusayn that some of those who are inclined towards agnosticism sometimes feel drawn towards belief in God. As Josh of Malihabad, the celebrated Urdu poet, has put it, "Yes, that al-Ḥusayn, whose steadiness wedded to eternity, occasionally confides even to the philosophers that veiled in the

multicoloured secrecy of the universe there is a Mind that works and a Being who knows. He draws our attention from prostrating ourselves in prayer to the object of this prostration. He alone points out the One worshipped."

Even in the restricted sense with which worship is usually associated, the adoration of God by al-Ḥusayn and his prayers remain unapproached. He performed 25 pilgrimages on foot.

One may get a true ideal of al-Ḥusayn's devotion to God's worship from the plea advanced by him in the afternoon of the 9th of Muharram at Karbalā' for a truce so that he might spend the respite from war in prayers to God, the recitation of the Qur'ān and similar prayerful pursuits. This request was reluctantly granted and al-Ḥusayn and his companions spent the night in prayers and the sound of their voices resembled, in the stillness of the night, the humming of bees. Again, in the afternoon of the 10th of Muharram, al-Ḥusayn offered his afternoon prayers with his companions on time right in the battle field when the war was at its bloodiest stage. Two of al-Ḥusayn's companions stood in front of him to intercept arrows while he said his prayers. One of them, Sa'īd ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥanafī fell dead as soon as the prayers came to an end.

Al-Ḥusayn was very generous, and noticing this quality in him the Prophet had said, "al-Ḥusayn has my generosity and courage." In distributing his favours he discriminated between the applicants on the basis of the degrees of their attainments and good qualities and their perception of God. A Bedouin once called on him to ask for help. He told al-Ḥusayn that the Prophet had advised him to ask, when in need, for help to one who was either a noble-hearted Arab, or a liberal chief, or an upholder of the Qur'ān or handsome. He then told al-Ḥusayn that he found all these qualities fully represented in him, and sought his help. Al-Ḥusayn explained to him the criteria by which he judged the claim of those who approached him for assistance. He then told the Bedouin that he would put him three questions, and that for every correct answer, his reward would be one-third of the money he then had in his purse. The conversation is interesting enough to be quoted:

"What is the best thing to do?"
"To believe in God."
"What is the best means of man's deliverance from destruction?"

"Trust in God."
"What is man's ornament?"
"Knowledge associated with intelligence."
"If this be not available, what then?"
"Wealth accompanied with generosity."
"What if this be out of reach?"
"Poverty allied with patience."
"What if this too be not practicable?"
"Let lightening consume the man to ashes."

Al-Ḥusayn smilingly gave his purse to the Bedouine[2].

A collection of some of al-Ḥusayn's prayers and supplications to God, unexcelled for the description of the relations between God and His creatures, known as the *al-Saḥīfa al-Ḥusayniyya* is extant. A large number of his pronouncements about Muslim law, jurisprudence and theology are to be found in the various collections of Traditions. Besides these, quite a few of his addresses and verses, instructing men in the knowledge of God and exhorting them to follow the ways of rectitude are also met with.

It was on account of al-Ḥusayn's pre-eminent position as regards knowledge about God, and piety and erudition that among his companions at Karbalā', there were men of notable virtue and outstanding achievements. It was, indeed, the flower of the Muslim society as it was at the time and a treasure of knowledge and deed that sacrificed itself with al-Ḥusayn. His companions included men who knew the Qur'ān by heart, were deeply learned in it and were the bearers of the traditions of Islam. Such persons could have been attracted only by al-Ḥusayn about whose unqualified superiority to them no doubt whatever could be entertained.

Even those who had inherited enmity for al-Ḥusayn knew and acknowledged his great worth and high rank. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ was noted among the Umayyads for abstinence, fear of God, devoutness and undertaking austerities. He had fought by the side of his father, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ against 'Alī in the Battle of Ṣiffin and al-Ḥusayn gave up speaking to him. Once, when al-Ḥusayn passed by a gathering in which 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ was present, he told his companions that among the residents of the earth, the dearest to the

denizens of the sky was al-Ḥusayn. He added that if by any means he could get reconciled with al-Ḥusayn, it would be dearer to him than red Camels'.

Even as a boy, al-Ḥusayn had the courage to speak the truth. He took exception to the second Caliph, 'Umar, occupying the Prophet's pulpit, and called out, "Get down from my father's seat." The Caliph agreed, "It is your father's pulpit, indeed, and not one of my father."

A proof of al-Ḥusayn's truthfulness in the face of imminent peril is provided by the fact that he made no attempt whatever to conceal at any stage of his journey from Mecca to Karbalā' any of the dangers that lay ahead or the discouragements and disasters that had overtaken him. On the contrary, he repeatedly warned his companions of the impending dangers surrounding them, and acquainted them with the truth. The number of his sympathisers for reasons of worldly gain, therefore, continued to decline. He persisted in repeating warnings of danger till every possibility of any one adhering to him from any misconception had ceased to exist.

Al-Ḥusayn was so devoted to peace that he tried to make peace with his enemies till the very last moment at Karbalā'. Yet he possessed the courage, steadfastness and patience, to pay with his head for the righteous cause he had chosen to support.

Al-Ḥusayn was an infallible judge of men. It is surprisingly true that not one of those whom he had chosen to accompany him on his journey to Karbalā' shirked sacrificing himself for al-Ḥusayn. He also showed himself to be a very talented organiser of men, and he led his small party of companions so well that, helped by their marvellous spirit of sacrifice and courage, it kept the vastly out-numbering forces of Yazīd engaged for the greater part of the 10th of Muḥarram.

The words of most men in exalted positions are often markedly at variance with their deeds. Their sayings are, therefore, apt to be better preserved than the records of their deeds. This is not so with al-Ḥusayn. His character and work and exploits were in themselves of such high order as to more than suffice to catch the attention of the writers and speakers of the world. No great effort was, therefore, spent on collecting his maxims which are met within various books, both in prose and verse. Some of them follow:—

(1) One who is liberal becomes a leader, the close-fisted earns humiliation.
(2) He is the most generous of men who confers favours even upon those who do not hope for them.
(3) Receipt of favours from God entails the obligation to do favour to others.
(4) That men come to you when in need is in itself one of God's blessings.
(5) Make the Creator rather than his creatures the centre of your hopes, and you would be independent of the liar and the truthful alike.

Beg for your daily bread of the bountiful God, for none else supplies the daily bread.

One who imagines that men would supply his wants lacks trust in God.

One who thinks that men would suffice for him heads for great humiliation.

(6) Whosoever increases his wealth increases his worries.
(7) Attachment to God parts men from all else.
(8) Ibn Kathîr reports on the authority of Isḥāq ibn Ibrāhîm that once, on visiting the graves of martyrs in al-Baqî', al-Ḥusayn recited couplets meaning:

"I called the occupants of the graves and they remained silent, but the dust of their graves made a reply about their silence.

It said, "Do you know what I have done to those who reside in me. I have reduced their flesh to tiny fragments and have torn their skins into pieces;

"I have filled their eyes with earth although earlier a small particle of straw getting into their eyes used to deprive them of rest;

"As for their bones, I have reduced them to small pieces so that their joints and ligaments are clearly to be seen;

"I have separated them from one another, so that they show the unmistakable signs of decay and dissolution."

(9) Ibn Sabbā' al-Malikî has ascribed to al-Ḥusayn some couplets in the *al-Fuṣūl al-Muhimma*, which are translated below:—

"When the fangs of time wound you, never bow to men.
And except God who provides the means of subsistence never beg your daily bread from anyone.
For if you even make a round of the earth from the west to east,
You would not come across any body who may mar or mend what is destined.

(10) Even if the world be a desirable place, God's reward and recompense rank higher;

And as bodies are born to die, it is better for a man to be put to death with a sword in the path of God.
And since it is certain that the share of everyone in the daily bread has been allotted, a man should restrain his avarice for it.
And when it is certain that wealth is hoarded to be left behind, would it not be unwise to act like a miser?"

(11) Once somebody requested Ḥusayn to give him some piece of advice within a short sentence. In reply Ḥusayn said,

"Whoever desires to win his object through disobedience to God, would be frustrated in his hopes and would find himself nearer peril."

The translations of some of his devotional compositions which he used to repeat in his daily prayers are as given below:

(1) O God! Thou art the originator of largesse and beneficence, and whatever there is of power and strength is Thine and Thy strength prevaileth. This being the case, I seek shelter with Thee, and look to Thy power and might for support. I submit to what Thou has decreed for me since before. I would treat the path on which Thou hast set me and I intend only what accords with Thy pleasure. I do not in the least spare myself nor do I countenance any laxity in my endeavour to obey Thy commands. On the contrary I move with alacrity along the course Thou hast pointed out to me. I desire to discharge fully the duties Thou hast entrusted to me. Thou mayest Thyself now support me with Thy assistance, and deprive me not of Thy favour or Thy power, nor separate me from the object through

which I desire to accomplish Thy pleasure. Let my behaviour be based on prudence and my rule of conduct on true guidance. Let my path be directed towards the correct destination so as to lead me to the fulfillment of my desire, and bring me to the journey's end which Thou hast intended for me and for which Thou hast created me, and towards which Thou hast directed my attention[4].

The words of this prayer indicate that al-Ḥusayn had dedicated his life to some special object and that every moment of his life was spent in obedience to God's directions. In 61 A.H. these sayings assumed the shape of his unmatched sacrifice at Karbalā'.

(2) O God! if anybody take shelter with some one other than Thou, let him do so. Thou art my refuge, my only refuge. If anybody look to any one other than Thou for support, he is free to do so, but Thou art my support, my only support. Let Thy greatness, which cannot be influenced by any perverse desire or prejudice, and in which casual bias can have no say, protect me in my trial from getting involved in any mischief or overawed by any satanic group till I go back to Thee, obedient to Thine will, my heart free from evil ideas, others entertaining no evil opinion of me, neither I being in doubt about others, nor others being in a state of uncertainty about me.[5]

(3) al-Ḥusayn used to repeat the following prayer in the morning and evening:

"O God! I have submitted myself to Thee, and have turned myself to Thee, and have placed my hands in Thy hand. O God! Thou canst protect me from the mischief of every one else, but nobody except Thee may save me from Thy wrath."

Was it possible for such a man as is revealed by al-Ḥusayn's sayings and prayers to yield to the forces of insubordination to God, to swear allegiance to a sinner like Yazīd? The answer must be an emphatic no. Even when alone, and surrounded by a huge army at Karbalā', al-Ḥusayn stood firm in his convictions. True, al-Ḥusayn and his companions were slaughtered, but when the consequences of the battle of Karbalā' began to unfold themselves, it was found that in reality it was al-Ḥusayn who had emerged as the victor.

The philosophy of al-Ḥusayn's life, as taught by his father,

'Alī, was, "Abide by the truth, even if it be bitter."

1 *Ṭabarī*, Vol.6, p.266.
2 Al-Razī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, p.272.
3 Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-Ghâba*, Vol.III, p.235.
4 *Majmū' Du'ât* pp.71–72.
5 *Ibid*, 73.

CHAPTER XIV

YAZĪD'S INSISTENCE UPON AL-ḤUSAYN'S OATH OF ALLEGIANCE AND AL-ḤUSAYN'S REFUSAL

ON ascending the throne, Yazîd found himself in the possession of untold wealth and unrestricted power. One thing about which his father had warned him from his death bed, however, kept him painfully anxious. It was that a few men of note among the Quraysh had dissented from pledging their allegiance to him. The chief person among the objectors, whose numbers included 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar and al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī.

Yazîd lost no time in writing to his cousin, al-Walîd ibn 'Utba ibn Abî Sufyān, governor of Medina, of Mu'āwiya's death and directing him to force al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alî and 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr to take the oath of allegiance to him, and not to spare them before they had done so.

Despite his close relationship with Yazîd, al-Walîd entertained feelings of great respect for al-Ḥusayn on account of the elevation of his rank. The directions received from Yazîd, therefore, seriously agitated him. Although he had not been on the best of terms with Marwān for some time, he consulted the latter in this connection to acquaint himself with the current trend of Umayyad thinking. It may also be mentioned that Marwān had behaved so despicably during the Prophet's life that he was banished along with his father from Medina by the Prophet himself. Marwān told al-Walîd to shed all anxiety about 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar as he would not claim the Caliphate. He urged that the oath of allegiance to Yazîd be taken from al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alî and 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, and that, should they demur, they be put to death before the news of Mu'āwiya's death was published, for in that event, he thought, both of them would endeavour to rally support for their claims, and openly defy Yazîd[1].

Al-Walîd sent for al-Ḥusayn and 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr who were both in the Prophet's mosque. It was an unusual hour

for al-Walîd to summon people at such a time and they could guess that Mu'âwiya had expired and that they had been called to swear allegiance to Yazîd. Al-Ḥusayn collected his kinsmen and friends and took them to the governor's house. He told them to wait at al-Walîd's door when he went in to see the governor, but to enter into the residence should he call them or al-Walîd raise his voice.

Al-Walîd broke the news of Mu'āwiya's death and after the usual forms of condolence had been gone through, he requested al-Ḥusayn to swear allegiance to Yazîd. Al-Ḥusayn replied that probably it would be considered insufficient that a man like him should take the oath privately instead of doing so publicly. Al-Walîd agreed to take al-Ḥusayn's oath when he publicly announced Mu'āwiya's death, and called upon all others to pledge their obedience to Yazîd, for that would be the appropriate time for this question to be finally resolved. Marwân, who was watching these proceedings and disapproved the accommodating attitude of al-Walîd towards al-Ḥusayn, raising his voice said, "If al-Ḥusayn escapes now, without taking the oath, you would never again get such an opportunity, unless it be after much bloodshed. It is better to arrest him here and now and prevent his return unless he takes the oath or else put him to death."

This enraged al-Ḥusayn who got up saying, "Marwân, how can you dare kill me? By God you have spoken in error and committed a sin." Al-Ḥusayn then left for his home[2].

Why should Yazîd have insisted with such relentless vigour upon obtaining al-Ḥusayn's oath of allegiance for himself? It should be evident that howsoever numerous the crowd that Mu'âwiya might have managed to collect at Mecca and Medina to swear in favour of Yazîd, there must have been hundreds of people at both these places who might well have stayed at their homes and not taken the oath. No notice, whatever, seems to have been taken of such omission. Again, nobody other than al-Ḥusayn, who belonged to the Prophet's family, or was descended from 'Alî, was asked to declare his allegiance to Yazîd, even though Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya, 'Abd Allâh ibn Ja'far and 'Abbâs ibn 'Alî were there. In a democracy the acknowledgement by the majority of the lawfulness of a government is sufficient, and the opinion of the dissenting minority is simply ignored. The minority is not coerced into the

abandonment of its views, nor any of its members threatened with violence, or subjected to it. In all previous Caliphates there were people who did not take the oath of allegiance to the Caliph. During the Caliphate of 'Alī himself, Ḥassān ibn Thābit, Ka'b ibn Mālik and Zayd ibn Thâbit, among many others, did not swear allegiance to him, without being visited with any unpleasant consequences. Why, then, was the entire machinery of the Syrian government put into motion to extort the oath of allegiance from al-Ḥusayn alone? It was so because Yazīd wanted to be acknowledged as a Caliph of Islam, despite all his transgressions of the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the Sunna of the Prophet, not by ordinary men, but by al-Ḥusayn upon whom, as the most senior member of the Prophet's family, and his rightful successor, was the sole responsibility of succouring Islam and upholding the truth. Yazīd would have done without al-Ḥusayn's pledge if his pretensions had extended to worldly power only, but since he wished to control the religion as well, and make it subservient to his will and desire he had to obtain al-Ḥusayn's oath of allegiance. Al-Ḥusayn, however, withheld his hand and offered his head in sacrifice for Islam.

1 *Ṭabarī*, p.217.
2 *Ṭabarī*, p.218.

CHAPTER XV

AL-ḤASAN'S INACTIVITY AND AL-ḤUSAYN'S ENTERPRISE

A question, sometimes discussed, is why al-Ḥusayn had not chosen to come to terms with Yazīd as his elder brother, al-Ḥasan, had done earlier while dealing with Mu'āwiya. The question does not take into account the difference in the status of the two brothers which grows in importance with the weight attached to outward forms. For according to the Shī'ite belief al-Ḥasan succeeded 'Alī as the Imam, and al-Ḥusayn succeeded al-Ḥasan in the same capacity as ordained by God. The two brothers, therefore, enjoyed the same status in the eyes of the Prophet and of God. But al-Ḥasan had also been installed as a Caliph. Finding that Mu'āwiya had succeeded in secretly sowing the seeds of discord and dissent among the Muslims, and had induced feelings of great insecurity by undermining the machinery for the maintenance of peace, law and order, al-Ḥasan had deemed it expedient to enter into a treaty with him under which he abdicated in favour of his adversary only the adjuncts of worldly power. He did not dissociate himself from spiritual primacy at all, and continued to be the spiritual leader of the Muslims. Mu'āwiya violated the conditions of the treaty during al-Ḥasan's life, and it was whittled down to be a mere pact of non-intereference by al-Ḥasan with Mu'āwiya. After the conclusion of the treaty, Mu'āwiya tried his best to divest al-Ḥasan of the spiritual primacy, and for twenty years al-Ḥusayn remained bound by the conditions of the treaty made by his brother. After both the signatories to the treaty had passed away, al-Ḥusayn did not open any negotiations for peace, knowing full well that the policy as disclosed by the treaty with al-Ḥasan of depriving spiritual leadership of worldly power had been replaced by one of the capture or assumption of spiritual leadership by the ruler, himself. Links in the chain of the execution of this policy were the flagrant violations of the conditions of the treaty with al-Ḥasan, and the latter's murder

by one of his wives, Ju'da, who poisoned him on Mu'āwiya's secret instructions.

Another pointer in the direction mentioned in the preceding paragraph is furnished by the difference in the manner and form in which Yazīd made people swear allegiance to him from the ways and forms which prevailed in the days of the earlier Caliphs. On such occasions they used to undertake to uphold the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the Sunna of the Prophet. Yazīd's impertinence and arrogance made the oath an abject acknowledgement by the swearer that he was the slave of the Caliph who could dispose of his life, property and offspring in any manner deemed fit. Yazīd ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Rabī'a b. Aswad was prepared to swear in accordance with the old practice but he demurred to swear allegiance to Yazīd in the form proposed. He was put to death. This was at Medina.

Where, then, was there any point in al-Ḥusayn trying to make up to Yazīd? Al-Ḥusayn had been closely associated with al-Ḥasan during all the years covered by the latter's treaty with al-Ḥasan, and had noticed the advancing perversion of the prevailing attitudes towards the faith and the lack of response to his own oral and written protests against what was happening in the lands of Islam. He must have foreseen that an exemplary resistance, if necessary, to the bitter end, would have to be offered to save Islam. He, however, did not rush into action. On assuming power, the first political step that Yazīd took was to demand al-Ḥusayn's oath of fealty to him under threats of violence. This is where al-Ḥusayn found himself placed in circumstances which were markedly different from those which confronted al-Ḥasan who had abdicated only his temporal power in favour of Mu'āwiya for the restoration of peace and order in his domain. He had, however, retained his spiritual primacy and leadership of the Muslims. Al-Ḥusayn was called upon not only to divest himself of the spiritual primacy, but also to swear allegiance to Yazīd who held the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the Sunna of the Prophet in scant regard. It was on this account that none of the friends and relatives of al-Ḥusayn, while trying to dissuade him from leaving for Kūfa, and advising him to stay on at Medina, or to reside at Mecca, or to repair to al-Ṭā'if or Yemen, suggested to him to subscribe to the oath of allegiance to Yazīd. It was recognised by them all that this kind of oath was entirely out of the question as far as al-Ḥusayn was

concerned, being destructive of all that was noble and high-minded, and amounted to bartering away all the various rights of the Muslims, and his own righteous claims.

CHAPTER XVI

AL-ḤUSAYN'S STAND – AN INTERPRETATION

SETTLEMENT with Yazîd being wholly out of the question, the only alternative course open to al-Ḥusayn was to oppose Yazîd to save the values of Islam from further degradation and to protect the faith itself from the destructive inroads of pre-Islamic revivalism. He could, however, have entertained no illusions about the kind of support he could hope to enlist for himself in any conflict with Yazîd. The exceedingly unhappy position in which his elder brother, al-Ḥasan, had found himself through the treacherous withdrawal of the support given to him in his confrontation with Mu'âwiya, the abdication, under constraint, by al-Ḥasan, of his temporal powers, in favour of Mu'âwiya, and the latter's violation of all the conditions of his treaty with al-Ḥasan without incurring any punishment for it were only recent history, and their import could not have been lost on al-Ḥusayn. He, therefore, thought of an entirely new strategy for war with Yazîd, since, in any case, war it had to be. He made no attempt to meet Yazîd's martial might with his own military strength. He built no hopes on numerical strength for the success of his cause, or on any other material means. Al-Ḥusayn decided to give battle to Yazîd on the spiritual plane, to oppose Yazîd's might with his nobility of character, confront power with powerlessness, meet multitudes with want of material support and defy oppression with suffering and martyrdom.

The great wealth which flowed into the lands of Islam as a result of territorial conquests made by the Muslims and the luxurious ways of life of the rulers and the affluent made them neglect their duties to God and their fellow men. It was only a short step for the people generally to adopt the attitudes of their social superiors. Beyond paying lip service to certain Islamic beliefs, and the perfunctory performance of some Islamic practices, the spirit of Islam had become virtually dormant in

Muslim society.

In order to perpetuate their power the Umayyad rulers sought from the Muslims unquestioning obedience to their rule. This could be unobstrusively achieved by inducing a torpor of the mental faculties and depriving people of the urge and courage to speak up. Some people of note who did not volunteer to assist the established order in furthering this conspiracy of silence, this deadening of the sensibility of the masses and this suspension of the free and frank expression of opinions, were won over to do so with the grant of favours or holding out threats of mortal consequences to them, and the state campaign to divest the people of the power of thinking independently and the courage of speaking out flourished.

Al-Ḥusayn's chief method of opposition to Yazīd's power was to revive in the people the capacity to feel, awaken in them the power to think for themselves independently, and to restore to them the courage to give free expression to the dictates of their conscience. The Umayyads, who outwardly professed Islam, had tried to destroy Islam from within by perverting its teachings, and depriving the Muslims of their capacity to feel, and the spirit to speak out. Al-Ḥusayn resolved, therefore, to tear the mask of Islam from the face of the Umayyad rulers to reveal to the world how far they were from bearing genuine traces of Islam, and to alienate the Muslims from their misguided mentors, so as to deliver the succeeding generations of Muslims from venerating the precedents created by them in the name of Islam, so that whenever the evil ways of the Umayyads were referred to in disparagement of the faith, his own blameless character and conduct could at once be cited to save the Muslims from embarrassment. The aims al-Ḥusayn had in view could not have been achieved if he had fought with material assistance. Such wars cause deaths of men and destruction of property, but not the extermination of an ideology. Slaughter of men and destruction of property were no part of al-Ḥusayn's objective and the extermination of the ideology which was undermining the faith could not have been achieved by a war on the material plane. Moreover, war fought on the basis of military strength might well have been confused with a war between two contenders for power which was far from true with regard to al-Ḥusayn was. Such a war might, in any event, have ended in Yazīd's success and might have left Yazīd still draped

in the garb of Islam, while al-Ḥusayn's war, fought on the spiritual plane, so disgraced the ruler that he forfeited all human sympathy.

CHAPTER XVII

AL-ḤUSAYN'S DEPARTURE FROM MEDINA AND TAKING ASYLUM AT MECCA

AL-ḤUSAYN left Medina on the 28th of Rajab, 60 A.H., and arrived at Mecca within a week on the 3rd of Sha'ban.

It would be against the testimony of facts, which al-Ḥusayn must have himself seen, to think that if he had stayed at Medina, the residents of that city would have kept him out of the reach of his enemies, or come to his assistance. For after the death of the Prophet, certain influences, not favourably disposed towards the Prophet's *ahl al-bayt* (the members of the Prophet's household), had acquired power. So it was that when the Prophet was no more, his daughter, Fāṭima, was exposed to many indignities, injuries and the confiscation of her property at Medina. It was again at Medina that for a quarter of a century 'Alī had to put up with the bitterest of his disappointments and the supersession of his rightful claims for succession to the Prophet, and also to bear neglect and insult. No solace, no help and no word of encouragement was offered either to Fāṭima or 'Alī, by any resident of Medina, in their misfortune. And then it was at Medina that the Umayyads had used violence to prevent the dead body of al-Ḥasan from being taken to the Prophet's tomb. No resident of Medina raised his voice in protest against this iniquity.

These facts and later developments showed that if al-Ḥusayn had not anticipated trouble at Medina, and left for Mecca, Marwān would have provoked Yazīd to take very stern action against him, so that al-Ḥusayn's blood would have been shed in the city of Medina itself. The letters exchanged between al-Walīd, governor of Medina, and Yazīd show that the stage was all set for al-Ḥusayn's murder. Al-Walīd had reported, "... al-Ḥusayn does not acknowledge your Caliphate... now all depends upon your pleasure." Yazīd replied, "Send me a complete list of all persons of note who have made the oath of allegiance to me and of those who have not done so. The head

of al-Ḥusayn b.'Alī should accompany your reply." This reply reached al-Walīd after al-Ḥusayn had left Medina.

If al-Ḥusayn had been murdered at Medina the Umayyads would have represented the event as an ordinary incident. Al-Ḥusayn's sacrifice would have been presented in a very inconsequential aspect. A contemptible assassin like Ju'da, daughter of al-Ash'ath, or some renegade from Islam, like Ibn Muljam, would have been hired to murder al-Ḥusayn, so that the blame for the crime could not be laid at the door of the government of Syria. Al-Ḥusayn's sacrifice at Karbalā', however, placed Yazīd in the dock, as an enemy of Islam, and made al-Ḥusayn its saviour.

Al-Ḥusayn took with him all the descendants of his grand-father, Abū Ṭālib, and his sisters, Zainab and Umm-Kulthum. Muḥammad ibn al-Hanafiyya did not accompany al-Ḥusayn on account of some difficulty, and Umm Hānī', his father's sister, was left behind due to her old age. Except the progeny of Abū Ṭālib, no other descendant of Hāshim was with al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā'.

The fact that al-Ḥusayn had taken with him only his closest relatives made it evident that he was not motivated by any war-like intent when he left Medina. His destination, Mecca, was also a very strong pointer in the same direction, since Mecca is traditionally a place of peace where it is not permissible to deprive any of God's creatures of its life.

At Mecca al-Ḥusayn lived at Shi'b 'Alī in peaceful inactivity. He took no interest in the day to day administration or matters of state policy. He did not enter into communication with anybody and did not exhort people to extend their assistance to him.

'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr who had arrived at Mecca a few days earlier than al-Ḥusayn had begun to attract visitors on account of his unexpected appearance there, and had, therefore, acquired a prominent position, which he soon enough lost to al-Ḥusayn on the latter's arrival. 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr recognised al-Ḥusayn's higher merits and elevated rank and deemed it expedient to visit him very regularly.

Al-Ḥusayn resided at Mecca as a place of refuge. In outward appearance, his stay there was permanent. he had before him no particular object. It was only the asylum which Mecca afforded him at the time that had taken al-Ḥusayn to the place.

And this accorded with the advice tendered by Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya to him that if things turned out unpropitiously, he should betake himself to the deserts and the vast expanses of infertile land and mountainous tracts and shift from city to city till he could form a clear idea of people's attitude so as to arrive at a final decision.

CHAPTER XVIII

INVITATIONS FROM KŪFA AND MUSLIM'S EMBASSY

AFTER the success of the Muslims at al-Qādisiyya, and other theatres of war, it was found necessary to station the Muslim army permanently in Iraq. Kūfa was selected as a suitable site for the purpose and a mosque and residential quarters were laid out there[1]. In 17 A.H. Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ transferred his headquarters from Madā'in to Kūfa which had, to begin with, a population of a hundred thousand soldiers.

When 'Alī was installed as the Caliph, and instigated by Ṭalḥa and al-Zubayr, 'A'isha rose against him in rebellion at Baṣra, she was defeated in what is known as the "Battle of the Camel." It was after this event that he made Kūfa the seat of his government, in 36 A.H.

Later in the Battle of Ṣiffīn against Mu'āwiya, and in the Battle of Nahrawān against the Khārijites, the residents of Kūfa for the most part fought on 'Alī's side so that they came to be known as the Shī'a of 'Alī. It was not that all of them were of the Shī'ite conviction that no one intervened in the Caliphate between the Prophet and 'Alī, but they preferred being called 'Alī's Shī'a than to be named as the Shī'a of the Umayyads.

As soon, however, as Mu'āwiya obtained control of the territories of Islam and Ziyād ibn Abīhi was appointed governor of Kūfa, a reign of terror was established against the Shī'ites; there was no place for them in Iraq, and they genuinely deemed every breath taken by them to be possibly their last. And this life of extreme hardship was spread over no less than twenty years. In these most trying conditions, Shī'ite belief had come to be secretly confined to a very small minority which was passing its days in utmost peril in various cities of Iraq and Ḥijāz in complete anonymity.

In Rajab 60 A.H., Mu'āwiya died, and he was succeeded in the Caliphate by his son, Yazīd, whose dissolute ways, addiction to liquor, lust, complete freedom from the constraints of

religion and decency were well-known among the people. A general feeling of abhorrence and disgust took possession of all men, and a mental search seems to have commenced for one who could deliver the faithful from this Caliph of evil repute and abominable character. This search must have received a positive direction from what must have become common knowledge by then that the grandson of the Prophet had refused to take the oath of allegiance to Yazīd, and had retired to Mecca.

It was in these circumstances that some friends of 'Alī, seeing a ray of hope for their deliverance from their oppressors, met at the house of Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad, a Companion of the Prophet, an experienced man and a veteran of many wars fought in 'Alī's company. Systematically presenting his views, he mentioned the news of Mu'āwiya's death, and the refusal by al-Ḥusayn to pledge his allegiance to Yazīd as Mu'āwiya's successor to the Caliphate. He added that al-Ḥusayn had retired to Mecca. He told his friends that if they felt sure that in no circumstances whatever they would be remiss in assisting al-Ḥusayn, and in fighting against his enemies, they might well correspond with him. He warned them that if they apprehended any slackness of effort or weakness of purpose on their part, they must not, for the sake of God, imperil al-Ḥusayn's life by raising false hopes[2]. In the heat of the moment some of those present appear to have over-estimated their power of acting up to their words, for all of them unanimously voiced their determination to fight al-Ḥusayn's enemies till they were themselves dead in sacrificing their lives for al-Ḥusayn[3]. A letter was addressed to al-Ḥusayn saying:

'This letter is being addressed to al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī on behalf of Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad, al-Musayyab ibn Najaba, Rifā'a ibn Shaddād, and Habīb ibn Muẓāhir, and other friends from among the Muslims and believers of Kūfa.'

It then dealt with the death of Mu'āwiya and the succession of Yazīd, and went on to say, "There is no Imām over us. Come, through you God may unite us in truth."

This letter was the first to be received by al-Ḥusayn who got it on the 10th of Ramaḍān. Those who had first met at Kūfa at the house of Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad then secretly propagated their

movement so that within a couple of days no less than fifty-three petitions were written, every one signed by between one to four persons.

The spiritual agitation caused to all generally, irrespective of the religion or the school of thought to which one belonged, on account of Yazīd's succession to the caliphate made the proposal of Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad and his friends acceptable to everybody. Even those who did not share Shī'ite convictions actively supported the proposal, not on account of any faith in al-Ḥusayn's leadership, but owing to the belief that he was decidedly better than a drunkard like Yazīd.

Al-Dīnawarī records that all these petitions and letters and their bearers reached Ḥusayn one after the other within two days, and after a few days the volume of correspondence rose so as to fill up two saddle-bags[4].

The speech of Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad and an examination of later developments lead one to conclude that al-Ḥusayn: **(i)** had not refused to swear allegiance to Yazīd and later left for Mecca due to any outside incentives, or prior private understanding with the residents of Kūfa; **(ii)** had not even thought of going to Kūfa when he was leaving Medina; and **(iii)** did not initiate any movement in his favour among the residents of Kūfa, and did not communicate with any one there to propagate his views.

What course should al-Ḥusayn have adopted when he received scores of petitions from Kūfa inviting him to go to that city to guide them? There were undoubtedly some men like 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās, who tried to dissuade him from undertaking the journey to Kūfa on the plea that no reliance could be placed on the promises made by the people of Iraq. Al-Ḥusayn was determined not to swear allegiance to Yazīd. This had endangered his life at Medina which he had left for Mecca. His stay at Mecca could at best have earned for him a brief respite from harm, for Yazīd could by no means have been expected to desist from using violence against him at Mecca itself. Moreover, despite the fact that his departure from Medina must have become widely known he had received no offer of help, or any invitation from al-Ṭāif or Yemen, Baṣra or Yamāma. The invitation from Kūfa assumed special significance for al-Ḥusayn at this time of crisis for him. It was spontaneous and came from friend and foe alike and was backed by no less than fifty five petitions and two saddle-bags of letters. It

originated from Kūfa, an important centre in the most densely populated region of Arabia, and the first petition to reach him bore the signature of Habīb ibn Muẓāhir, Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad and Rifā'a ibn Shaddād in whom al-Ḥusayn reposed implicit confidence. The residents of Kūfa had also helped his father, 'Alī, in his wars.

In reply to those who stressed the unreliability of the people of Kūfa to dissuade him from undertaking the journey to Kūfa, al-Ḥusayn never said that he reposed trust in the promises made by the people of Iraq, or that they would assuredly help him if he went to Kūfa. Usually he maintained silence in the matter. Sometimes he explicitly made a hint that even if he prolonged his stay at Mecca he would surely get killed, and that then it would be on account of him that the Ka'ba would be desecrated, as when he told 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, "My father told me that there would be a man like a ram who would cause the desecration of the Ka'ba. I do not wish to be that ram[5]." On another occasion he said, "By God, it is much more agreeable to me to be killed one span outside than one span inside the precincts of Ka'ba, and by God, if I were to reside in the burrow of vermin, these people will take me out so that they might do to me what they wished. By God, these men will commit excesses against me just as the Jews made transgressions against the Sabbath[6]."

In the aspect in which things outwardly presented themselves there appeared to be little choice left to al-Ḥusayn except to accept the requests addressed to him and the invitations made to him from Kūfa, for the very laudable object of guiding the residents of that town spiritually, morally and religiously. Even so, he showed no undue haste in undertaking this mission. He took the precautionary step of sending to Kūfa his cousin, Muslim ibn 'Aqīl, who had accompanied him from Medina, as his representative, to study the situation' there and report his own estimate of it.

Al-Ḥusayn, however, sent a letter to the residents of Kūfa through Hāni' ibn Hāni' and Sa'īd ibn 'Abd Allāh, before he left for that town. It said:

"Hanī' and Sa'īd have brought your letters to me, and both these men sent by you are your last messengers to come to me. I have carefully read and understood what you have written to me. Most of you call me to yourselves as you have no Imām at

your head, so that God might unite you through me. Accordingly, I am sending to you my cousin, a son of my uncle, as one in whom I repose my special trust, to inform me about your affairs. If he sends me word that your ranks and those at the helm of your affairs are united about what you have said in your letters I would presently join you...[8]

It appears that misfortune overtook even the initial stages of Muslim's journey to Kūfa. He had engaged two men as his guides and they were very well acquainted with the route to Kūfa. Both of them lost their way, and strayed into the desert and at least one of them[9], if not both[10], died of thirst.

It was with great difficulty that Muslim and his companions reached a spring from where he reported his bad luck to al-Ḥusayn, adding that he did not find it in his heart to pursue the journey further. He had, however, to continue in his ill-fated course on al-Ḥusayn's directions.

On reaching Kūfa, Muslim had to put up at the house of al-Mukhtār ibn Abī 'Ubayd al-Thaqafī[11] since Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad had gone out of the town.

The news of Muslim's arrival spread and was welcomed everywhere. Visitors poured in to see him, and Muslim read out al-Ḥusayn's letter to a large gathering of those who had come to meet him. This occasioned the expression of much impassioned fervour by the audience which was addressed by 'Ābis ibn Abi Shabīb al-Shakirī, Habīb ibn Muẓāhir and Sa'īd ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥanafī. The speakers, each giving his own views, assured Muslim of their determination to fight on his side against his enemies, and to ply their swords till each was dead, their object being only to seek God's pleasure. The gathering then dispersed.

The alienation of the people from Yazîd due to his evil ways, al-Ḥusayn's popularity on account of the distinction of his family and his own excellence of character and attainments, and the fair name and influential position in society of the promoters of the movement in his favour were among the chief reasons which drew 12,000[12] or 18,000[13] residents of Kūfa within a week to swear allegiance to him at the hands of Muslim. Were all these men 'Alī's friends? Could such a large number of 'Ali's genuine friends have been spared in Kūfa during the rule covering more than twenty years of Ziyād and his descendants when men were put to the sword without compunction for showing the least

signs of devotion for 'Alī? The answer must be emphatically in the negative. True Shī'ites were small in number even earlier, and they had been almost exterminated by Mu'āwiya and Ziyād. Only the very few Shī'ites who had managed to conceal themselves had escaped death. All others who ranked 'Alī as the fourth Caliph were also classed as Shī'ites only in the literal sense of the word on account of their association with him. Naturally, the support of such men, and others, who might have been attracted to the movement only on account of its breaking new ground, lacked stability. It is not surprising that when the promoters of the movement, born and bred at Kūfa, failed to detect the weakness of the base upon which the support of the vast majority of men of their town rested, Muslim was also taken in by the warmth of reception accorded to him by all the people of the town. The promoters of the movement in favour of al-Ḥusayn, however, stood firmly by their plighted word, and paid bravely with their lives for supporting him.

Finding that the people of Kūfa had acted according to their promises, Muslim wrote to al-Ḥusayn requesting him to expedite his departure for Kūfa[14]. The local governor, al-Nu'mān ibn Bashīr, acted with tolerance and announced from the pulpit that he would take no action so long as he was not aggressively opposed[15]. An ally of the Umayyads did not like the accommodating attitude of the governor towards Muslim, and wrote to Yazīd complaining against the governor's weak handling of the situation at Kūfa where Muslim ibn 'Aqīl had arrived and his supporters had taken the oath of allegiance to al-Ḥusayn. He suggested that al-Nu'mān ibn Bashīr be replaced by a strong man if Yazīd wanted to retain Kūfa in his possession. 'Umāra ibn 'Uqba and 'Umar ibn Sa'd also wrote to Yazīd to the same effect with the result that Yazīd wrote to 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād, saying: "... Muslim ibn 'Aqīl has reached Kūfa and is raising an army to foment dissension and discord among the Muslims. Proceed to Kūfa as soon as you receive this letter and on getting hold of Muslim, imprison, behead or exile him[16]." This letter was sent with an order appointing 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād as the governor of Kūfa. 'Ubayd Allāh left Baṣra, where he had been in office as the governor, for Kūfa quickly. He had kept his movements entirely secret, so that his arrival at Kūfa should be both unexpected and sudden. In order to travel through the desert, he had

wrapped a piece of cloth round his face to protect it from the sand. He appeared rather dramatically, mounted on an Arab horse, wearing the black head gear of a noble Arab, and followed by retinue. As people were then waiting for al-Ḥusayn's arrival, it was thought that it was the Prophet's grandson who had arrived in the town, and people poured in from all directions to greet him as such. 'Ubayd Allāh continued his way without acknowledging the greetings. The throng of those who had turned out to welcome the one mistaken for Ḥusayn, impeded 'Ubayd Allāh's progress and Muslim b.'Amr al-Bāhilī who had accompanied him shouted, "Make way, he is 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād." Dismay quickly replaced the mood of happiness of the people. Memories of the inhuman brutalities of Ziyād extending over more than twenty years must have been revived by the appearance of his son with his father's authority.

'Ubayd Allāh announced his appointment as governor of Kūfa in the congretational mosque there. He then directed all responsible persons of the various quarters of Kūfa to give him lists of all residents of their respective quarters, specifying names of new arrivals and of those who posed a threat to the government of Syria. If they could not furnish the list in detail they should furnish a pledge that no one in their part of Kūfa would join in any subversive activity. In case of a breach of this pledge, the chief of the concerned quarter of the city would be impaled in front of his own house[17].

This drastic measure brought in its train a plethora of spies and informers and life in Kūfa became highly unsafe. Men were afraid of stirring out of their houses and visiting friends. Meetings and discussions even in very small groups on any question could simply not even be thought of.

Apprehensive about the safety of his life and the survival of his mission, Muslim gave up residing at the house of al-Mukhtār ibn Abī 'Ubayd al-Thaqafī, who besides being out of Kūfa, did not then command much influence. He put up with Hāni' ibn 'Urwa, the head of his tribe. Hāni' kept Muslim's stay with him a closely guarded secret, sharing it with only his most trusted men.

In view of the imminent danger of the use of violence against Muslim ibn 'Aqīl, the promoters of the movement to invite Ḥusayn to Kūfa radically changed their objective of giving all possible help to Muslim to obtain from the people of Kūfa their

plighted word for al-Ḥusayn in order to take measures to protect Muslim from the great danger that threatened his life. Muslim ibn 'Awsaja engaged himself in obtaining covenants from the people for the assistance and protection of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl and Abū Thumāma al-Sā'di took upon himself the responsibility of collecting arms and funds for the purpose[18].

'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād was very anxious to discover the place where Muslim ibn 'Aqīl had concealed himself, and asked his slave, Ma'qil to find out where Muslim had gone into the hiding. Ma'qil went to the mosque of the big congregational prayers and, by sheer chance, noticed Muslim ibn 'Awsaja also praying. Since Muslim ibn 'Awsaja took long to conclude his prayers, Ma'qil waited for him, and told him that he was a Syrian, devoted to the members of the Prophet's household, and had heard that someone belonging to the Prophet's family had arrived in the city and that he was taking the oaths of allegiance for al-Ḥusayn. He produced 3000 dirhams and said that he wished to give the money to al-Ḥusayn's representative if he knew his address. All was said by Ma'qil in a manner which inspired complete confidence in his sincerity and he managed to deceive Muslim ibn 'Awsaja into taking him to Muslim ibn 'Aqīl. Ma'qil, in the course of his prolonged visits to Muslim ibn 'Aqīl, gathered complete information about the purpose of the latter's visit to Kūfa. He passed on all the information collected by him to 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād[19].

Hāni' ibn 'Urwa had long been acquainted with 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād, but had latterly been avoiding seeing him on the pretext of indisposition lest the latter should have got wind of the stay of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl with him. On getting informed about it through Ma'qil, 'Ubayd Allāh decided to summon Hāni' to the palace. Not apprehending any danger, Hāni' went to see 'Ubayd Allāh alone, unaccompanied by his soldiers, and without informing anybody of 'Ubayd Allāh's summons. He found that 'Ubayd Allāh's attitude towards him had wholly changed when he said to Hāni', "How outrageous it is that you have made your house a hot-bed of intrigue against the Caliph of the day and against all the Muslims. You have called Muslim ibn 'Aqīl and have been entertaining him at your house, collecting arms for him, enlisting men for his help and maintaining them in houses situated in your neighbourhood. Do you think these things would remain concealed from me?[20]"

Hāni' after initially denying the truth of these allegations, realised, when Ma'qil was produced, that he had been spied upon and said, "Now hear the truth and believe me. I call God to be my witness that I did not call Muslim ibn 'Aqīl, nor was I aware of any movement in his favour. He came to me of his own choice, and expressed a desire to stay with me. I could not in honour refuse to maintain him at my house. I, therefore, received him as a guest to stay under my roof. However, I do promise, I would commit no act of aggression against you; and would give myself up to you presently. However, before I do so, I seek permission to tell Muslim to leave my house and go where he may have a mind to, so that I may be quit of my responsibility of affording him shelter. I would then have nothing to do with him[21]."

'Ubayd Allāh, however, insisted that Muslim ibn 'Aqīl be delivered to him and proposed to detain Hāni' till then. Hāni' made it plain that it was impossible for him to hand over his guest to certain death. The argument between the two got so heated that 'Ubayd Allāh struck a blow at Hāni's face with a stick, and blood flowed from the injury caused. Hāni' was then thrown into prison[22].

'Amr b.Hajjāj, a brother-in-law of Hāni' ibn 'Urwa and head of the tribe of Zubayda surrounded the governor's palace with a large following of horsemen on hearing a rumour that Hāni' had been killed. They withdrew when the qāḍī Shurayḥ announced that Hāni' had been only temporarily detained[23].

Would it have been appropriate for Muslim ibn 'Aqīl to have remained in concealment even at this stage, or to imperil further the safety of another loyal friend by seeking shelter with him? Both these courses were unacceptable according to the principles of Hāshimite chivalry. Ṭabarī has clearly stated that Muslim went out to fight his enemies without informing his friends or without there being any other arrangement.

While 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād was delivering a threatening speech in the mosque, people rushed in to announce that Muslim ibn 'Aqīl had arrived. 'Ubayd Allāh hurriedly descended from the pulpit and shut himself up in his palace.

Considering the sudden and unexpected turn the events had taken at Kūfa, it could not have been hoped that the 18,000 men who had pledged allegiance to al-Ḥusayn at the hands of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl would rally round him in this hour of mortal

peril at once. These supporters came from various quarters of the city. These quarters were fairly distant from one another and the news of happenings in one quarter took time to reach the remoter ones. Most of these supporters were unthinking men, and lacked sincerity of conviction and their devotion for the members of the Prophet's household had not been tested. In the quarter in which Muslim ibn 'Aqîl had taken shelter, 4,000 of these sympathisers lived, and on hearing the Prophet's war-cry they did turn up. Being wholly unprepared and untrained they could not confront the regular forces of the government. When Muslim led them to raid the governor's residence he had only 300 of them left with him when he reached his destination.

'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād had since the morning detained the tribal chiefs and other prominent persons with him as a precautionary measure. He also had all points of access to the town and to Muslim ibn 'Aqîl sealed, so as to prevent outside help from reaching Muslim and keep those in the town from joining him. All help was cut off from him so that even devoted men of undoubted constancy like Habîb ibn Muẓāhir, Muslim ibn 'Awsaja and Abu Thumāma al-Sā'idî could not contact Muslim that fateful day. The various tribal chiefs climbed to the roofs of the governor's residence and exhorted Muslim's supporters to disperse, declaring upon their oaths that large armies would shortly arrive from Syria and would crush all supporters of Muslim ibn 'Aqîl. The result was that only 30 men were left with Muslim in the evening. Even these men abandoned him when he left for prayers in a mosque[24].

Wandering alone, and in search of somewhere to find shelter, Muslim reached after night-fall the house of Ṭaw'a, a freed slave-girl of Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath, who had a son, Bilāl. She offered Muslim a room in her house on hearing of his tragic story. When her son arrived late at night, she was forced reluctantly to disclose Muslim's identity to him. She bade her son to keep the secret strictly to himself.

When 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād found that the danger had subsided, he had it proclaimed that everyone should be present in the mosque, adding that non-compliance with the order would absolve the government of responsibility for the safety of the person concerned. This order had the effect of crowding the mosque even some time before the arrival of the hour of the

night prayers. After the prayers 'Ubayd Allāh announced that he would not be responsible for the safety of anyone in whose house Muslim ibn 'Aqīl was found hiding himself, and then he set up a search for Muslim from house to house.

Ṭaw'a's son, Bilāl, went to see 'Abd al-Raḥmān, a young son of Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath at daybreak and told him about Muslim's presence in his house. 'Abd al-Raḥmān contacted his father and the latter broke the news to 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād who sent a force under Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath to take Muslim captive. Fighting alone Muslim succeeded twice in throwing the soldiers out of Ṭaw'a's house. In the course of the fighting one of his lips was cut and the other wounded, and two of his teeth were dislodged. Finding that the usual methods of fighting were ineffective, the men climbed up the roof of the house and pelted stones at Muslim. They also threw at him lighted sheaves of reeds to cause him burns. Attacked in this manner, Muslim went out of the house to fight with his sword. Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath called out to him saying that he would be given security and asked him to give up fighting. Muslim, however, did not end the strife and recited verses meaning, "I have taken a vow not to be put to the sword except as a free man. Death is, indeed, unpleasant, but to everybody come it must one day. I apprehended lest I should be told lies and be deceived." Exhausted by the fight as he was, Muslim asked whether the security would really be given. Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath and all his associates, except one who refused, assured Muslim that he was safe. Muslim again told them to remember that he was putting his sword into its sheath only because he had been given security, otherwise he would not have delivered himself to them. Muslim was given a horse to ride. The soldiers then surrounded him and deprived him of his sword. This broke Muslim's heart as the first betrayal of his trust. Then he began to cry, and on being asked the reason he said, "By God, I do not weep for myself, but my heart melts for al-Ḥusayn and his companions who would set out for Kūfa on receiving my letter." He then asked Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath to inform al-Ḥusayn that Muslim had been taken captive by his enemies and expected to be put to death by the evening, and to request him not to think of coming to Kūfa, and not to be deceived by the promises made by the residents of that town as they were all false, and their covenants and engagements were

all unreliable.

Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath then told 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād that he had granted security to Muslim, but 'Ubayd Allāh refused to recognise the former's competence to do so. He told Muslim that he would presently be put to death. Muslim replied that he was prepared for that end. His wish to communicate his last wishes to someone present there was granted and Muslim chose 'Umar ibn Sa'd for the purpose. He refused to oblige Muslim lest he should offend 'Ubayd Allāh, who reproved 'Umar ibn Sa'd for his reluctance to hear Muslim's parting wishes. Muslim then told him that his last wishes were that: **(a)** a debt of 700 dirhams incurred by him during his stay at Kūfa be discharged with the price of his sword and armour; **(b)** that his dead body be buried; and **(c)** a messenger be sent to al-Ḥusayn to tell him of Muslim's fate so that he might go back and be not deceived by the promises made by the residents of Kūfa.

After hearing Muslim's last wishes, 'Umar ibn Sa'd went to 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād and told him all that Muslim had said to him. This disgraceful conduct gave offence to 'Ubayd Allāh himself, and he repeated an Arab saying, meaning, "A trustworthy man will not betray you, but sometimes a dishonest man is trusted[25]. He then gave decisions on Muslim's requests himself. "I have no interest in your belongings which will be sold to discharge your debts. I have nothing to do with al-Ḥusayn, if he does not come this way. I am unable to make any promise of being considerate in the disposal of your dead body since you rebelled against me and raised the people so as to create dissension and discord among them[26].

Muslim replied to these allegations and completely exposed the falsehood of the charges levelled against him. 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād then ordered Muslim ibn 'Aqīl to be taken to the roof of his palace and executed there. His body was then to be thrown down to the ground below. Muslim ascended the roof of the palace with great composure, magnifying God and invoking His benediction.

Bakr b. Ḥumrān al-Aḥmarī who had wounded Muslim's lips and mouth executed him and threw his body down to the ground of the palace[27].

Muslim had started his struggle on 8th of Dhū al-Ḥijja 60 A.H.[28] and was martyred the following day. After this incident terror gripped Kūfa, and people gave up stirring out of their

houses for quite some time.

Yet another exceedingly regrettable incident in the same context was that Hāni' ibn 'Urwa was dragged to the market-place, tied with ropes and put to the sword by a Turkish slave of 'Ubayd Allāh [29] without attracting any particular notice.

1 *Ṭabarī*, I 2389.
2 *Ṭabarī*, II 234 *Irshad* 303
3 *Ibid*
4 *Al-Akhbār at-Ṭiwāl*, 229
5 *Ṭabarī*, II 272
6 *Ibid*
7 *Ṭabarī*, II 236
8 *Ṭabarī*, II 235
9 *Ṭabarī*, II 228
10 *Ṭabarī*, II 237
11 *Ṭabarī*, *Ibid*
12 *Ṭabarī*, II 220
13 *Ṭabarī*, II 264
14 *Ṭabarī*, II 264
15 *Ṭabarī*, II 228
16 *Irshād*, 308, *Ṭabarī*, II 240
17 *Ṭabarī*, II 241
18 *Ṭabarī*, II 249; *Irshād*, 310–11
19 *Ṭabarī*, II 249; *Irshād* 311
20 *Ṭabarī*, 251; *Irshād*, 312
21 *Ṭabarī*, II 251–2; *al-Irshad*, 312–3
22 *Ṭabarī*, II 253; *Irshād*, 313–4
23 *Ṭabarī*, II 255; *Irshād*, 315
24 *Ṭabarī*, II 258 ; *Irshād*, 317
25 *Ṭabarī*, II 266
26 *Ibid*
27 *Ṭabarī*, II 267
28 *Ṭabarī*, II 271
29 *Ṭabarī*, II 268; *Irshād*, 325

CHAPTER XIX

AL-ḤUSAYN'S JOURNEY TO KARBALĀ' AND ITS STAGES

NEWS in those days of primitive means of communication travelled far too slowly to admit of the people of Mecca hearing of the radical changes that had affected the political set up at Kūfa and the martyrdom of Muslim ibn 'Aqil and Hāni' ibn 'Urwa before Ḥusayn's departure from their midst.

Why did al-Ḥusayn leave Mecca? Muslim's letter, despatched on 12th of Dhū al-Qa'da', i.e. 27 days before his tragic end, requesting al-Ḥusayn to proceed to Kūfa in response to the invitations received from there, and mentioning the enthusiastic welcome extended to him, did not impart that measure of urgency to his leaving for Kūfa at all which would have induced al-Ḥusayn, so particular about the observance of all practices enjoined by Islam, to leave Mecca without performing the full *Ḥajj* which could be done only a couple of days later, and for which Muslims even from remote places all over the world were coming to Mecca. Al-Ḥusayn, however, contented himself with performing the *Umra*, i.e. the lesser pilgrimage. The reason for al-Ḥusayn's hurried departure from Mecca was that he had noticed the arrival of soldiers in the garb of pilgrims of *Ḥajj*, obviously to take him captive at Mecca.

Al-Ḥusayn was fully aware of his ultimate end, viz. martyrdom, and this is borne out by the speech he delivered on leaving Mecca, "Death is like a wreath round a man's neck and I desire to meet my forefathers as intensely as Jacob longed to see Joseph. I see clearly with my mind's eye the scene when the enemies of all humane instincts, like beasts of prey, would be tearing my body to pieces. There is no remedy against fate. We, the members of the Prophet's household, acquiesce in God's pleasure, remain patient in trials decreed by Him, and earn the reward of those who resign themselves to His will. Pieces of his flesh cannot be separated from the Prophet. Whoever is prepared to sacrifice his life with me and meet his God may

accompany me on my journey." At every stage of his journey he would often remember the martyrdom of Yaḥyā ibn Zakariyyā (John the Baptist) saying that in the eyes of God it was sufficient to show the worthlessness of the world that the head of Yaḥyā was severed from his body to be presented to an adulteress among the Israelites[2].

The reason why al-Ḥusayn chose to go to Kūfa even though dissuaded from doing so by genuine well-wishers have been given in the preceding chapter and need not be repeated here.

Besides those of his principal relatives who had accompanied him from Medina a few of his friends from Ḥijāz and Baṣra also went with al-Ḥusayn on the fateful journey[3].

As far as it could be ascertained, the various stages of al-Ḥusayn's journey to Karbalā' may be chronologically arranged in the following order:–

(i) Safāḥ: He passed through Safāḥ without actually staying there. Here he met al-Farazdaq[4], the poet who, giving his own estimate of the situation prevailing at Kūfa, said, "The hearts of the residents of Kūfa are on your side, and their swords on the side of the Umayyads." Al-Ḥusayn agreed with al-Farazdaq's opinion and said that he would be thankful if God's decree accorded with his wishes... and that if the will of God hindered him, it would be no mean achievement for any man that his intentions were pure and conscience clean[5].

(ii) Tan'īm: Al-Ḥusayn hired some camels here from a Yemen caravan for the transport of his effects and some of his companions. This showed that he had left Mecca without proper preparations as he was pressed for time. It was at this state that 'Abd Allāh ibn Ja'far, and Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd ibn al-'Āṣ, a brother of the governor of Medina and Mecca, met al-Ḥusayn to dissuade him from proceeding to Kūfa. 'Abd Allāh was al-Ḥusayn's cousin and had earlier also tried to prevail upon him by letter not to go to Kūfa. Now, he had obtained a written order from the governor of Medina granting security to al-Ḥusayn, and in order to impart greater strength and credibility to this grant of security, he had also brought with him the governor's brother, Yaḥyā. Al-Ḥusayn knew the worth of the security gven by a local authority against the policy of the central power. He disagreed with the views of 'Abd Allāh ibn Ja'far as before. Leaving his sons, 'Awn and Muḥammad to

accompany al-Ḥusayn, 'Abd Allāh ibn Ja'far went back to Medina[6].

(iii) Dhāt 'Irq: After the departure of 'Abd Allāh ibn Ja'far, al-Ḥusayn stopped here[7].

(iv) Al-Ḥājir in Baṭn al-Rumma: From here al-Ḥusayn sent a letter to the residents of Kūfa telling them of the receipt of the letter of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl, his own departure from Mecca on the 8th of Dhū al-Ḥijja, and of his arrival at Kūfa shortly, and asking them to make all necessary arrangements[8].

The messenger who was taking this letter to Kūfa, Qays b.Mushir, was arrested at al-Qādisiyya by men of 'Ubayd Allāh and sent to 'Ubayd Allāh who wanted him to speak ill of 'Alī if he wanted to save himself. Qays ascended the pulpit and eulogised al-Ḥusayn, and asked everybody to respond to his call. Naturally he lost his life[9].

On leaving this stage, al-Ḥusayn met 'Abd Allāh ibn Muti' who was coming from Iraq. He also disagreed with his plan of going to Kūfa.

(v) Zarūd: It was at this stage that Ḥusayn won for himself a friend from amongst those who were indifferent in their regard for the members of the Prophet's household. Zuhayr ibn al-Qays was one such Muslim, subscribing to what was then known as the party of 'Uthmān. He was on his way to Kūfa after performing the Ḥajj, and was camping near Zarūd. Imām al-Ḥusayn sent him word expressing a desire to see him. On hearing this request refused, Zuhayr's wife rated him so severely for his lack of civility to the Prophet's grandson that he went to al-Ḥusayn himself, and was so impressed by the clarity of his arguments, that he directed that his tents be pitched near al-Ḥusayn's tents. He divorced his wife and told her that he had resolved to die for al-Ḥusayn. Then every one else who had accompanied him also left him[10].

It was here that two men of the tribe of Asad saw a man approaching al-Ḥusayn from the direction of Kūfa. Seeing him, al-Ḥusayn made a halt in order to find out from him how things were shaping themselves at Kūfa. The man, on seeing al-Ḥusayn's caravan, changed the course of his movement, at which al-Ḥusayn resumed his journey. The two men of Asad, however, caught up with the man who told them that both Muslim ibn 'Aqīl and Hāni' ibn 'Urwa had been killed[11]. They kept the information to themselves and passed it on to

al-Ḥusayn the following evening.

(vi) Tha'labiyya: It was here that the two men of the tribe Asad told al-Ḥusayn, with his permission, in the presence of all others then present, the tragic news of the martyrdom of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl and Hāni' ibn 'Urwa.

Leaders of men ordinarily conceal such tragic losses of trusted lieutenants and workers in order to keep up the morale of their followers. Here al-Ḥusayn had known much in advance that material victory would not be his, and he was wholly indifferent to the number of his followers. Indeed, he was mentally prepared to allow all of them to leave him to his fate, for he knew full well that it was only his blood that Yazīd wanted to shed. He, therefore, received the tragic news with the repetition of the usual formulas, "Indeed we belong to God and to Him we shall return," and "Let God's mercy be shown them." He then resumed silence[12]. Al-Dīnawarī says that al-Ḥusayn also said, "We render the account of our lives to God," meaning that 'we sacrifice our lives in His path and it is He who awards us recompense'.

The two men of Asad who had been deeply moved by the tragic developments found it impossible to suppress their feelings any more. They addressed al-Ḥusayn to say, "For the sake of God, do not expose the lives of your entire family to danger and return from this very stage as there is no one at Kūfa to help or befriend you. On the contrary we apprehend that the whole of Kūfa would be hostile to you." Such evidently sincere and sympathetic advice could not, perhaps, be satisfactorily repudiated by the employment of reason alone. Al-Ḥusayn was, from the very beginning, aware of the tragic conclusion of the journey on which he had set out, and the sad news which had been received made no difference to him personally. He, therefore, thought that it would be eminently suitable to find the reactions to the news of quite another set of his companions. Addressing 'Aqīl's progeny, he asked them, "What do you think now that Muslim has been martyred?" All of them sprang to their feet and cried out, "By God, we shall not return till we have avenged Muslim's death or have ourselves drunk the cup of death as Muslim has done." Al-Ḥusayn then told the men of the Bani Asad tribe, "If they give up their lives, what purpose would my survival serve?[13]" Among those present, some one remarked that al-Ḥusayn

occupied a much higher position than Muslim ibn 'Aqīl, and that the residents of Kūfa would rush to the former's assistance. Al-Ḥusayn did not support this view and maintained silence[14].

After spending the night here, and taking with himself sufficient supplies of water early in the morning, al-Ḥusayn resumed his journey and arrived at Zubāla[15].

(vii) Zubāla: It was here that al-Ḥusayn received a message[16] from Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath, sent in compliance of one of last wishes of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl to warn him against going to Kūfa where he would find no help. The messenger also brought the news that Qays ibn Mushir had also been put to the sword.

It appears that those companions of al-Ḥusayn who had heard the news of the martyrdom of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl at Tha'labiyya had kept it to themselves. Al-Ḥusayn did not consider it appropriate to withhold it from the other members of his caravan which had in its course attracted many who thought that al-Ḥusayn was going to a country where he would assuredly be made the ruler, and they would be richly rewarded for accompanying him. He wished to disabuse the minds of these persons of such false ideas. Addressing them, he said, "I have received the painful news that Muslim ibn 'Aqīl and Hāni' ibn 'Urwa have been put to the sword. Those who professed to be prepared to help us have gone back on their promises. Whosoever of you, therefore, wishes to go back may do so, he owes no explanation to me." Hearing these words many of his party now left so that it consisted of only those who had accompanied him from Medina[17].

(viii) Batn al-'Aqaba: al-Ḥusayn got the information here that 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād had posted guards on the entire route between al-Qādisiyya and 'Udhayb. He was also solemnly requested by the informant not to go to Kūfa but to go back. Al-Ḥusayn made a slight change in the course of his journey, so as to by-pass al-Qādisiyya and resumed his travel.

(ix) Sharāf: Al-Ṭabarī and Shaykh al-Mufid have both stated that al-Ḥusayn saw to it that all water skins and leather bottles were filled with water before he departed from here.[18] The Muḥarram moon had just been sighted for the year 61 A.H., when al-Ḥusayn set out on his journey. They had reached somewhere near al-Qādisiyya, when some horses were dimly seen advancing towards them.

(x) Dhū Ḥusum: Al-Ḥusayn speedily betook himself to the

mountain of Dhu Ḥusum near by to protect himself from being attacked from the rear or getting surrounded by the enemy. It transpired that al-Ḥurr ibn Yazīd at the head of a thousand soldiers had been sent to obstruct al-Ḥusayn's progress, since he had learnt of the change in the route of al-Ḥusayn to bypass al-Qādisiyya to avoid confronting the army there. In order to get to al-Ḥusayn, al-Ḥurr and his men had to exert themselves so much in the heat of the desert that they were stricken with an incapacitating thirst. Their horses were in no better condition. It was in this state of extreme distress that al-Ḥurr, his men and their horses appeared before al-Ḥusayn who in a generous manner supplied water to man and and animal alike, so that their thirst was wholly quenched. The mid-day prayers were led by al-Ḥusayn, and al-Ḥurr and his men joined them.[19] Before the prayers al-Ḥusayn had addressed al-Ḥurr and his soldiers saying, "I did not come to you till letters reached me inviting me to guide you so that you might possibly unite in the path of righteousness through me. If you stand by your words, I am already here to fulfil my aim. If, however, you do not relish my coming to you, I will go back where I came from." Nobody made any reply to this.[20] In the evening also he similarly led the prayers. Al-Ḥusayn again told al-Ḥurr and his men that if they held an opinion different from what they had conveyed to him in their letters and through their messengers, he would go back. Al-Ḥurr now solemnly affirmed that he was not aware of the letters to which reference had been made. Al-Ḥusayn thereupon produced two saddle-bags full of letters inviting him to Kūfa as he had stated. Al-Ḥurr replied that he had not sent any of these letters and also disclosed that he had been charged to accompany al-Ḥusayn so as to take him to 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād. On hearing this, al-Ḥusayn told him loudly, "Death shall be nearer to you.[21]"

Al-Ḥusayn then gave up the idea of going to Kūfa and addressing his companions, he dwelt on the changes that had come to pass, and how the times were out of joint for the good and the virtuous, and remarked that it was a curse to live in the midst of these inequities. Zuhayr ibn al-Qayn then rose to reassure al-Ḥusayn about his loyalty to him, saying, "Even if the world had lasted for us, and parting with it resulted only from our assistance to and sympathy for you, we would have opted for assisting you rather than for remaining alive in this world."

Nāfi' ibn Hilāl referring to the treachery and untrustworthiness of some of the friends of al-Ḥusayn's maternal grandfather, the Prophet, and of his father, 'Alī b.Abī Ṭālib, said that it was now his turn to be confronted with the same conditions. He then assured al-Ḥusayn of his unalterable devotion for him and his resolve to follow him wherever he might take him. Burayr ibn Ḥuḍayr al-Hamadānī also spoke in the same strain.

Al-Ḥusayn then ordered that everybody with him should get mounted and that they should go back along the way they had come. Al-Ḥurr stopped them from doing so, as he wanted to take him to 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād. Al-Ḥusayn swore by God that it was impossible for this desire to be fulfilled. After much argument it was decided that since al-Ḥurr had been directed to follow al-Ḥusayn till he arrived at Kūfa which had ceased to be al-Husayn's destination, the latter should adopt a route which led neither to Medina nor to Kūfa, and that al-Ḥurr might follow him as ordered.

(xi) Al-Bayḍa: In a speech addressed to the men of al-Hurr's army and his own companions, al-Ḥusayn reminded them of a saying of the Prophet that whosoever finds a ruler who oppresses and persecutes his subjects, permits what God has forbidden, breaks his vows to God, opposes the teachings and practices of the Prophet and acts sinfully towards God's creatures, and allows these things to go unchallenged by his words and deeds and made no attempt to mend matters, would deserve being reckoned by God in the same category as the ruler. Commenting on the situation in the country, al-Ḥusayn said, "The Umayyads have adopted the ways of Satan, renounced submission to divine commands, misappropriated what belongs to the Muslims, permitted what God had forbidden, and prohibited what God had allowed. In these circumstances, upon whom does the responsibility of improving matters rest more heavily than upon me?[22]"

(xii) 'Udhayb al-Ḥijārāt: Five men, viz Amr ibn Khālid al-Ṣaydāwī, his slave Sa'd, Mujammi' ibn 'Abd Allāh al-'Ā'idhī, his son, 'Āidh, and Janāda ibn Ḥārith al-Salmānī arrived from Kūfa mounted on horses and also brought with them a horse. Al-Ḥurr threatened to arrest them as they had not been among the original members of al-Ḥusayn's body of companions. Al-Ḥusayn, however, urged that they were his friends and allies and were under his protection. Al-Ḥurr raised no difficulties

afterwards.

Mujammi' ibn 'Abd Allāh informed al-Ḥusayn that the important men of Kūfa had been heavily bribed to oppose him, and that while the hearts of others were still in his favour, their hands and swords would be raised against him. Al-Ṭirimmah told al-Ḥusayn that he had seen such a huge army at al-Kūfa that he had never seen the like of it, and that as it would be impossible to give battle to such a vast force, he advised al-Husayn to accompany him to mount Aja' where 20,000 men of the tribe of Ṭayyi' would be at his service in a land where powerful kings had in the past failed to defeat them. Husain declined to accept the proposal.[23]

(xiii) Qaṣr Banī Muqātil: Al-Ḥusayn found 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥurr al-Ju'fī, a brave and renouned horseman of Kūfa staying here, and asked for his assistance. 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥurr declined to help him, only to regret for the rest of his life this denial of help. Ultimately he joined hands with those who rose to avenge al-Ḥusayn's assassination.

On leaving this place, al-Ḥusayn had not gone far when he felt drowsy and dreamt that he had seen a rider saying, "These men pursue their journey, and death is drawing towards them." He thereupon repeated the usual formula, "Verily we are for God and verily to Him we return." He narrated his dream to his son, 'Alī al-Akbar, who inquired whether they were not pursuing the right course. Al-Ḥusayn told him that there could be no doubt about it. 'Alī al-Akbar then remarked that in that case they need not care about death.

(xiv) Nineveh: An armed rider brought a letter from Kūfa from 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād for al-Ḥurr at this stage. It directed al-Ḥurr to prevent al-Ḥusayn from advancing further, wherever the letter might reach him. It went on to say that the messenger had been charged to accompany al-Ḥurr and to inform 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād of the action taken by the latter, and not to leave him till the order had been fully compiled with.[24]

Possibly 'Ubayd Allāh had heard of al-Ḥurr's considerate behaviour towards al-Ḥusayn, and he had come to entertain doubts about his loyalty. Al-Ḥurr acquainted al-Ḥusayn with the full contents of the letter and, therefore, rejected al-Ḥusayn's request to dismount at any point beyond where he had reached.

(xv) Al-Ḥusayn was stopped by al-Ḥurr at Karbalā' from proceeding further, and therefore he set up his camp here. It

was the second day of Muḥarram 61 A.H., when al-Ḥusayn arrived here.

What is now Karbalā' was then really a conglomeration of several separate hamlets, the names of some of which like Nineveh and Ghādariyya are still heard in the context of the events of Karbalā'. The Euphrates proper is not directly related to the site of Karbalā'. A small branch of the river separates itself from the main stream at Rizwaniyya and meanders towards the area where lies the tomb of 'Abbās, al-Ḥusayn's brother and standard-bearer. This branch of the river is called 'Alqāma, and on account of its origin it is sometimes called the Euphrates also. It meets the main stream against west of Dhū Kifl. "Ṭaff' means the bank of a river, and the term was applied to that bank of Euphrates which extended in the south from Baṣra to Hīt, and therefore it was applied to that bank of the 'Alqāma on which Karbalā' was situated. Karbalā' is also called Shāṭṭ al-Furāt.

It would, perhaps, be useful to recapitulate some of the aspects of al-Ḥusayn's journey as below.

Al-Ḥusayn never intended to wage a war against Yazîd with material strength to win worldly power for himself. He aimed only to arouse the Muslims from apathy and indifference to the injunctions of the Qur'ān, and the teachings and practices of the Prophet, and to bring about a spiritual revolution so as to enable them to see the grave threat which Yazîd's accession to the Caliphate held to Islam. He had, therefore, refused to swear allegiance to Yazîd who had directed that he be put to death. Al-Ḥusayn did not wish to sacrifice himself at Medina, since some one could have been hired like Ju'da, wife of al-Ḥasan, who poisoned her husband, to murder him also, leaving the instigator of the crime, Mu'âwiya, entirely undiscovered. This would have deprived al-Ḥusayn's sacrifice of one of its chief aims – to expose the unworthy Caliph to universal disapproval. He then went to Mecca where he spent his time peacefully. With the advent of the Ḥajj season, al-Ḥusayn noticed, among the gathering crowds of pilgrims, assassins attired as pilgrims to take him captive or to murder him. The threat to his life grew so imminent that though only a couple of days were left for the Ḥajj al-Husain contented himself only with performing the *'Umra* (the lesser pilgrimage) and left Mecca with the members of his family and friends.

Al-Ḥusayn did not wish to sacrifice himself at Mecca as this would have violated the sanctity of Ka'ba. Moreover, in the huge gathering of the pilgrims, the assassin could have easily disappeared, making his identification as an agent of the government impossible. In any case his departure from Mecca exactly when the Muslims from all Muslim countries were coming to it, acquired great publicity in the peninsula, and thousands of people from far and near must have been forced to discuss and debate the causes of al-Husayn's departure, and the balance of public opinion must have inclined in his favour.

It was only to be expected that al-Ḥusayn should now go to Kūfa from where he had received persistent invitations for his visit to guide the people to religious unity. He could not have refused to undertake this laudable duty and rejected the requests of the people of Kūfa on account of their supposed unreliability. Or should al-Ḥusayn have gone somewhere else as an uninvited guest?

It may be noted that some of his relations and sincere friends and all those who had met on the various stages of his journey towards Kūfa had tried to dissuade al-Ḥusayn from going to Kūfa; in their support, some had pleaded the unreliability of the residents of that town, some had testified to the manifestations of hostility by the people there, and others had urged the impossibility of successfully confronting the huge army got together at Kūfa to give battle to him. But since al-Ḥusayn had not undertaken the journey with any hope of success on the material plane, even the very distressing news of the martyrdom of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl failed to induce any change in his resolution.

1 *Ṭabarī*, II 289
2 *Al-Irshād*, II 377
3 *Ṭabarī*, II 278/*Irshād* I 327
4 *Ṭabarī*, II 277–8
5 *Ṭabarī*, II 278
6 *Al-Irshād*, 328–9
7 *Al-Irshād*, 329
8 *Ṭabarī*, II 288–9
9 *Ṭabarī*, II 289
10 *Ṭabarī*, II 290/*Irshād*, 330–1
11 *Ṭabarī*, II 291–2/*Irshād*, 332–3
12 *Ṭabarī*, II 292–3
13 *Ṭabarī*, II 292–3/*Irshād*, 333
14 *Ṭabarī*: *Ibid.*
15 *Ṭabarī*, II 293
16 *Ṭabarī*, II 264
17 *Ṭabarī*, II 294/*Irshād*, 333–4
18 *Ṭabarī*, II 295/*Irshād*, 334
19 *Ṭabarī*, II 297/*Irshād*, 335–6
20 *Ṭabarī*, II 297/*Irshād*, 336
21 *Ṭabarī*, II 298–9/*Irshād*, 336–7
22 *Ṭabarī*, II 300
23 *Ṭabarī*, II 304
24 *Ṭabarī*, II 306–7/*Irshād*, 339–340

CHAPTER XX

THE FORCES ASSEMBLED AGAINST AL-ḤUSAYN

AFTER the assassination of Muslim ibn 'Aqîl at Kūfa, 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād adopted measures of unlimited severity to stamp out from the minds of the people all thought of loyalty to al-Ḥusayn to whom large numbers of them had sworn allegiance at the hands of Muslim. Those against whom even the slightest suspicion of loyalty for al-Ḥusayn could be entertained were put to the sword or thrown into prison without any inquiry. Mitham, who used to sell dates and Rashîd al-Hajri were put to death during this reign of terror. Al-Mukhtār ibn Abî 'Ubayd al-Thaqafî was also imprisoned, although he was not in Kūfa when Muslim was put to death, and had, as a matter of expediency accepted the shelter to life and property announced at Kūfa to those who sought it under a banner raised by 'Amr ibn Ḥurayth.

Having eradicated all opposition to the ruler, Yazîd, in the town, 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād took steps to provide against danger to the established government arising in territories bordering upon Kūfa, which he arranged to be heavily guarded. The commander of the Shurṭa, al-Ḥusayn ibn Tamîm, was sent at the head of 4000 men to al-Qadisiyya where the highways from Hijaz, Iraq and Syria met. Troops were deployed on all sides of the highways coming from Baṣra and Syria and at other sensitive and vulnerable points so as to intercept all sympathisers of al-Ḥusayn and prevent them from entering Kūfa to create trouble there.

Just then the tribe of Dailam revolted and took possession of Dastaba, which was outside Arab territory. 'Umar ibn Sa'ad was sent with 4000 men to suppress the rebels, and in return for the services, he was given a written order appointing him ruler of Rayy, Dastaba and Dailam. The army had moved towards Iran, and he was himself on the point of leaving when the question of dealing with al-Ḥusayn assumed urgency. 'Ubayd Allāh ibn

Ziyād asked 'Umar ibn Sa'd to bring the campaign against Husain to a successful end, and then go to Iran.[1]

'Umar ibn Sa'd had been born the day, 'Umar the second Caliph had died. He must, therefore have seen many Companions of the Prophet, and heard from them those traditions of the Prophet which showed the immense love he had for his grandsons, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. He must also have personally observed al-Ḥusayn, and found him a man of noble manners. Related to his comparatively recent stay at Mecca, stories of al-Ḥusayn's abstinence, fear of God, nobility of character may well have been also heard by him.

For the reasons mentioned in the preceding paragraph 'Umar ibn Sa'd did not like to fight against al-Ḥusayn, considering it sinful to do so. He wished to be freed from the obligation to undertake the campaign against al-Ḥusayn. 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād thereupon demanded the return to him of the order appointing 'Umar ibn Sa'd as a ruler of Rayy, and this confronted the latter with a conflict in his desires. He asked for a day to think over the matter. His friends advised him against fighting againsit al-Ḥusayn. One of them said, "By God, if all the world's wealth and government were to be in your possession, and were to be lost to you, it would be far better than that you should take upon yourself the task of shedding al-Husayn's blood.[2]" Love of high office pulled him in the opposite direction and he was mentally in deep distress.

In the end, however, he allowed the glamour of passing worldly power to pervert his judgement, and he agreed to fight against al-Ḥusayn; and left for Karbalā' with his army. He reached Karbalā' on the 3rd of Muḥarram.[3] Together with the one thousand soldiers under Hurr, the strength of the army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd rose to 5000 men, but 'Ubayd Allāh, knowing the traditional valour of al-Ḥusayn's family sent the remaining 3000 soldiers of the garrison at al-Qādisiyya also to Karbalā'. General recruitment to the army was announced at Kūfa, and 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyad went to Nukhayla which lies on the route to Karbalā' to inspect the forces and despatch them to Karbalā' without any break. Important leaders of Kūfa were directed to go to Karbalā' with their followers. Every one of them had to leave with a large troop, and non-compliance with this order was on no account excused. Terror was struck in the hearts of those who returned to Kūfa only after once appearing

before 'Ubayd Allāh. When he learnt of this practice, he sent Suwayd ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān Minqarī with some horsemen to Kūfa to arrest everybody there who had not left the town till then to join the war against al-Ḥusayn. Suwayd found a Syrian who was on a visit to Kūfa in connection with a disputed succession to property. He was sent to 'Ubayd Allāh who had him beheaded at once. Everybody then went to Karbalā' to fight against al-Ḥusayn.

It is, therefore, not necessary to verify figures given by various historians – 20,000 by Ibn Ṭāwus; 30,000 by al-Majlisī; 35,000 by Ibn Shahrashub and 100,000 by others – as the number of men who had turned up to fight againsit al-Ḥusayn. The measures taken to raise the army to fight al-Ḥusayn suffice to indicate that the whole population of the big city of Kūfa, fit for military duty, was literally poured into Karbalā' in the form of Yazīd's troops.

1 *Ṭabarī*, II 308
2 *Ṭabarī*, II 308–9
3 *Ṭabarī*, II 309

CHAPTER XXI

AL-ḤUSAYN'S FRIENDS, THEIR DEFICIENCY IN NUMBERS AND ITS REASONS

THE general massacre and incarceration, at Kūfa, of everybody suspected of sympathy for al-Husayn, under the directions of 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād, could have hardly left behind unscathed anyone except a very small number of those persons who could really understand their duty of giving him assistance. Such friends from Kūfa or other localities must, however, have found it exceedingly difficult to join al-Ḥusayn in order to help him, since all routes of access to him at Karbalā' had, at all important and strategic points like al-Qādisiyya, Khattān, Quṭquṭāna and La'la', had been placed under military pickets with orders to arrest all those who wished to proceed to help al-Husayn.

Another reason for the very small number of men who turned up to assist al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā' was that his arrival there was unexpected and sudden, and was quite unknown in the suburbs of Kūfa, so that even days after the tragic events had taken place at Karbalā', many men were unaware of them. Even so, those of the Shī'a who had initiated the movement to invite al-Ḥusayn to Kūfa, and on arrival of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl at Kūfa, had pledged loyalty to him at the first meeting and had taken a vow to sacrifice themselves in assisting al-Ḥusayn, did reach Karbalā', and did sacrifice themselves for al-Ḥusayn, and none of them, who could not go to help al-Ḥusayn was found to have fought against him.

The army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd consisted of the common people of Kūfa and the tribesmen living in the suburbs of the town. They could not be expected to possess the strength of will, spirit, courage and constancy of the friends of al-Ḥusayn. These men were no better than men trained only to blindly obey their tribal leader, unmindful or even ignorant of the issues involved in the battle in which they were engaged. Some of them were not even willing to fight against al-Ḥusayn, but they lacked the

moral strength to act in accordance with the dictates of their own conscience. They were largely kept together by the desire to win merit in the eyes of their social superiors, and rewards and promotions promised by the government.

On the contrary, all the men of Kūfa who were with al-Ḥusayn constituted the spiritual elite of the town, and were masters of their will and actions in the face of great trials. Many of them were well-known people of Kūfa, and enjoyed considerable influence in the town. The men of Kūfa, in general, could not understand why such men, devoted to prayers, and abstemious, had engaged in war. These persons sometimes cast such powerful influence upon their adversaries as to unnerve them. In the account of the battle of Karbalā' one frequently comes across accounts of the flight of the enemy before al-Ḥusayn's warriors. These hasty withdrawals were the result only of the pricks of the conscience felt by the enemy in the presence of men of such excellent characters as al-Ḥusayn's friends.

CHAPTER XXII

PEACE PARLEYS

LOVE for worldly power and glory had made 'Umar ibn Sa'd agree to 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād's bargain, which he knew to be bad, of leading his army to Karbalā' to shed al-Ḥusayn's blood in return for the rulership of Rayy. He longed to wriggle out of this dirty business and on reaching Karbalā', he tried to explore the possibility of a peaceful solution to the quarrel between the parties.

He sent Qurra b.Qays al-Ḥanẓalī to al-Ḥusayn to find out from him the object of visiting Iraq, by coming all the way from Ḥijāz. Al-Ḥusayn told Qurra that the residents of Kūfa had invited him to their town, and that since they had grown apparently to dislike his presence there, he was prepared to go back. Qurra conveyed this clear reply to 'Umar ibn Sa'd who saw in it a possible prelude to peace. He communicated to 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād all that had transpired between him and al-Ḥusayn. On receiving this letter 'Ubayd Allāh recited' a couplet, meaning, "Now that they are in the grip of our talons, they plead for release. They cannot escape us." He wrote back to 'Umar ibn Sa'd, saying, "...you may now suggest to al-Ḥusayn that he and all his companions should take the oath of allegiance to Yazīd. I shall consider the matter again when this has been done."

This letter destroyed 'Umar ibn Sa'd's hopes for peace between the parties. The raising of the question of al-Ḥusayn swearing allegiance to Yazīd was wholly uncalled for. Also, even if for the sake of argument, one were to concede that the impossible might happen, no promise for any favourable treatment seemed to have been held out for al-Ḥusayn. The government could even then award what punishment it deemed fit.

'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād completely failed to understand the import of al-Ḥusayn's reply to 'Umar ibn Sa'd. It was simply

based on an attempt to end all argument and remove the possibility of a war between the parties. 'Ubayd Allāh thought that al-Ḥusayn had been frightened by the big armies sent by him to Karbalā' and had, therefore, offered to go back. 'Umar ibn Sa'd, who had observed al-Ḥusayn at close quarters, knew better, and said, "I knew that 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād does not want peace.[2]" He sent his letter to al-Ḥusayn who made only this reply, "This can never be so. The utmost that can befall me is death and I am prepared to welcome it.[3]"

1 *Ṭabarī*, 311
2 *Ibid*
3 *Al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, 254

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SUPPLY OF WATER TO AL-ḤUSAYN STOPS. OVER-POWERING THIRST AFFLICTS HIS PARTY

THE plan to prevent water from reaching al-Ḥusayn and members of his party including small children must have been taking shape in the mind of 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād for sometime when he wrote a letter to al-Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Riyāḥī which the latter received at Karbalā' on the second day of Muḥarram 61 A.H. He directed al-Ḥurr in this letter that al-Ḥusayn should be forced to stay where water supply was scarce.

In compliance of the orders received by al-Ḥurr, al-Ḥusayn's camp was established on a patch of sandy, shadeless land removed from the river, and the heat of the sun in the day was a source of much hardship to all, and to small children in particular.

It appears that 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād's orders had become generally known in the army, and some men in trying to ingratiate themselves with their superiors made the work of supplying water to al-Ḥusayn, difficult as it was, dangerous as well.

On the 7th Muḥarram 'Umar ibn Sa'd received another letter from Ibn Ziyād directing him to stop the supply of water to al-Ḥusayn and his companions so that they might not get a drop of it like 'Uthmān ibn Affān, the third Caliph.[1]

'Umar ibn Sa'd charged 'Amr ibn Hajjāj al-Zubaydī with the duty of keeping a strict watch on the banks of the river and guard against even a single drop of water from reaching al-Ḥusayn. He gave 'Amr 500 soldiers to assist him in performing this duty. This stoppage of water supply led to greater intensity in the thirst felt by al-Ḥusayn and the members of his party. To add insult to the injury, the enemies sometimes addressed al-Ḥusayn, saying, "There is water here. Dogs and swine drink it, asses and even wolves partake of it, but you cannot have a drop of it." It is even likely that some at least of

al-Ḥusayn's enemies might have thought that thirst by itself would kill him and his companions, and that the stage of war being prepared for would never arrive. The comrades of al-Ḥusayn, however, sometimes managed to fetch water for al-Ḥusayn forcibly from the river. The last such successful attempt was made by al-Ḥusayn's brother, 'Abbās, on the night before the 8th Muḥarram.

It is an example of the unmatched loyalty of a considerable number of persons to their leader, that even though some of al-Ḥusayn's relatives and friends did sometimes succeed in reaching the river, none of them cared even to moisten his lips with water which was not available to quench al-Ḥusayn's thirst.

Al-Ḥusayn did not use force in order to obtain water. He tried all the three days he remained deprived of water to awaken the conscience of his enemies so as to accede to his repeated requests to be given water. He allowed his friends also to make such requests. Burayr al-Hamadānī met 'Umar ibn Sa'd and said, "What kind of a Muslim are you to be prepared to slay the offspring of the Prophet and also aggravate the crime by preventing al-Ḥusayn, and the members of his family and his friends, now dying of thirst, from obtaining for their use the water of the Euphrates, freely drunk by dogs and swine?" 'Umar ibn Sa'd pleaded his helplessness unless he gave up the rulership of Rayy, which he could not do at any cost.

On the 10th of Muḥarram when al-Ḥurr deserted from 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army, and went over to al-Ḥusayn he expressed great regret for, among other things, having caused al-Ḥusayn to set up his camp away from the river. He must have been tormented by the memory of the generous manner in which al-Ḥusayn had a little earlier relieved him and the men under him and their horses of their exceedingly distressing thirst.

After braving the extremely rigorous hardship of thirst for three days, and valiantly discharging their duty of waging a holy war, al-Ḥusayn and his companions met their martyrdom.

1 *Ṭabarī*, II 312

CHAPTER XXIV

THE LAST ATTEMPT FOR PEACE AND HOW IT ENDED

IN order to avert war and prevent Muslims getting engaged in mutual bloodshed, al-Ḥusayn tried to open negotiations for peace with 'Umar ibn Sa'd at Karbalā', and invited the latter through Quraẓa ibn Ka'b al-Ansārī to meet him on the land which lay between the positions of their forces. The talks were prolonged far into the night. Then the participants retired to their camps.[1]

The proceedings of the meeting were secret, but it transpired at al-Ḥusayn was prepared to leave Iraq, and even to quit the whole of Arabia and retire to some remote place[2] in the world. In reality this also amounted to the achievement of al-Ḥusayn's object for which he laid down his life, not to swear allegiance to Yazîd as the Caliph. Al-Husayn's manners were so mild and accommodating that 'Umar ibn Sa'd at once conceded that he wanted to tread the path of peace and was really averse to engage in violence. He informed 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād of the conditions for peace accepted by al-Ḥusayn, and said, "God be praised that the fire of mischief has been extinguished, a possibility of the Muslims remaining united has emerged, and the affairs of the followers of Islam are on their way to improvement." He added that there remained no more cause for dispute, and that the matter might be closed.[3]

It has been reported that Ibn Ziyād was disposed to agree with 'Umar ibn Sa'd's opinion which was very strongly opposed by Shimr[4] who argued that if al-Ḥusayn was allowed to escape then, he would rightfully claim power and honour. Granting the wishes of al-Ḥusayn was in his eyes a sign of weakness which would only bring humiliation. He advised that al-Ḥusayn should be told to surrender his arms unconditionally, and bow his head in obeisance to Ibn Ziyād, who might then put al-Ḥusayn to the sword which would be entirely justified, or grant him pardon. He complained against 'Umar ibn Sa'd, saying that he spent

whole nights in talking to al-Ḥusayn.

With these words, at once minatory and adulatory, Ibn Ziyād was impressed and considered Shimr to be his sincere advisor and well-wisher. He entertained doubts about the loyalty of 'Umar ibn Sa'd to whom he wrote a letter saying, "I did not send you to al-Ḥusayn to pay attention to him, or to prolong your proceedings or to give him hopes of survival or to make recommendations in his favour to me. Note it carefully that if Husain and his friends submit to me, and leave themselves to my mercy, send them quickly to me, and if they refuse to do so, advance against them, put them to the sword, and tear them to pieces for this is what they deserve." To his eternal shame he added, "If al-Ḥusayn is slain, his chest and back should be trampled under the hooves of horses since he is a rebel... I add this since I have said that I would deal with al-Ḥusayn in this manner if I got him put to the sword. If you execute these orders you would be duly rewarded. If you do not wish to do as ordered here, hand over charge of your office to Shimr." 'Ubayd Allah ibn Ziyād then gave the letter to Shimr and told him verbally that if 'Umar ibn Sa'd did not comply with his orders quickly enough, he should be deemed to have been removed from office and that Shimr would be treated as his successor. He then told Shimr to fight with al-Ḥusayn, kill 'Umar ibn Sa'd and send his head also to him."

'Umar ibn Sa'd was quite sure that al-Ḥusayn would neither swear allegiance to Yazīd, nor unconditionally surrender himself and his companions to Ibn Ziyād, but the presence of Shimr by his side made the threat to his continuance in high office, and the peril to his life so imminent, that he ordered preparations to bie made for the attack on al-Ḥusayn soon after receiving Ibn Ziyād's letter. It was on the 9th of Muḥarram before evening that the assault was actually led against al-Ḥusayn without giving him any prior notice. Al-Ḥusayn was sitting at the door of his tent, when worried by the sound of advancing troops, his siter, Zainab, called his attention to the noise. Al-Ḥusayn told her in reply that he had dreamt that the Prophet had told him that he would see the latter shortly. In the meantime 'Abbās brought to al-Ḥusayn the news of the attack, and of the orders which had been received from Ibn Ziyād. Al-Ḥusayn suggested that the enemy be asked to postpone the war for the night so that he might spend it in prayers to God, reciting the Qur'ān,

begging pardon of Him and imploring Him for mercy. 'Umar ibn Sa'd, feeling the need to exercise caution in taking a decision on al-Husayn's request as Shimr was present, asked his views about it. Shimr refused to oblige him saying that since he was in command, it was for him to decide the matter. He then looked to other officers for their opinions. 'Amr b.Hajjāj al-Zubaydi said, "Even if these men belong to the tribes of Turks and Dailam, and requested that petty concession, you ought to grant it.'[7] At least the war was postponed for the night.

1 *Ṭabarī*, II 313–4
2 *Ibid*
3 *Ṭabarī*, II 315/*Irshād*, 343
4 Shimr's name was Shurahbīl ibn 'Amr ibn Mu'āwiya, of the progeny of al-Wahīd of the tribe of Banū 'Āmir, *al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, 267
5 *Ibid* 253
6 *Ṭabarī*, II 315–6/*Irshād*, 344
7 *Ṭabarī*, II 319–320

CHAPTER XXV

THE EVE OF THE 10th DAY OF MUḤARRAM

THE primary object, exceedingly dear to al-Ḥusayn for which he had asked the grant of a brief truce, was to enable himself and his companions to spend the last night of their existence in prayers to God, reciting the Qur'ān and imploring the Alimighty for mercy. One of the other important objects of his seeking this short respite was that he wished to afford friend and foe alike yet another opportunity to examine the righteousness of the stand taken by them in this war, and choose, without fear or favour, freely, the best course, now that death seemed to be certain for his friends, and not quite so certain for many of his enemies. At evenfall on 9th of Muḥarram, al-Ḥusayn called a meeting of his friends and after paying high tributes to their loyalty and other excellent qualities, he said, "A battle will most certainly be fought tomorrow. I set you all free of your oaths of allegiance to me and give you full permission to betake yourself wherever you may like to go. Utilise the cover of the night and depart. Everyone of you may also hold one of my relatives by the hand and take him away also. For the enemies are thirsting for my blood only, and once they have killed me they would not look out for anyone else.[1]"

'Abbās ibn 'Alī, al-Ḥusayn's brother, stood up and said, "Why should we do as suggested? To live after you are no more? No, may God keep us from such a black day!" Similar sentiments were expressed by the descendants of 'Aqīl.

Then Muslim ibn 'Awsaja stood up, and said, "We are incapable of forsaking you. I shall fight with my lance... with my sword and if deprived of weapons, I shall pelt them with stones till I have sacrificed myself at your feet."

Sa'īd ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Hanafī said, "...By God, if I get to know that I shall be put to the sword, and again brought back to life, and would then be burnt alive, and my ashes dispersed in the air and that I would be similarly treated seventy times, I

will not leave you till for the last time until I die at your feet."

Zuhair ibn al-Qayn said, "By God, it is my earnest desire to be put to the sword, be revived and again done to death. This may be repeated a thousand times if the impending calamity may be averted from overtaking you and these brave men of your family."

Similar sentiments of unflinching loyalty to al-Ḥusayn were expressed by other companions of al-Ḥusayn.

Al-Ḥusayn made no efforts to keep people with him by rousing their sentiments or fostering false hopes or avarice. Instead he wished his comrades to go to safety if any chance offered itself. On the 10th of Muḥarram, it transpired that 'Amr, a son of Bishr b.'Amr al-Ḥaḍramī, had been arrested on the borders of Rayy. Bishr remarked that he left his son and himself to God, and that if he had to live, he would not have liked his son to remain under arrest. Al-Ḥusayn heard this and calling Bishr to himself told him that he had been freed from his oath of allegiance to al-Ḥusayn and should proceed to get his son released. Bishr replied, "Let carnivorous animals devour me alive, if I were to leave you. How can this be?" Al-Husain then asked him to send another of his sons, Muḥammad, to his brother and gave him cloth worth about 1000 dinars for his expenses."

As already mentioned, al-Ḥusayn's object in asking for a temporary cessation of war for a night could well have been intended to give his enemies as well time to think about the merits of the issues involved in the war and to draw their own conclusions about them. The defection of al-Ḥurr and a few soldiers of 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army to al-Ḥusayn on the 10th of Muḥarram shows the success achieved by al-Ḥusayn in bringing home the truth of his cause to those prepared to listen to him and to think freely.

Al-Ḥusayn and his comrades spent the night in prayers to God, invocations and supplications to him, in recitation of the Qur'ān and like practices, the sounds of their voices breaking the stillness of the night like the humming of bees.

Measures to ensure greater safety to the existing arrangements during the war were taken. The tents were pitched closer to each other and the ropes of each tent were secured by fastening them with those of the adjacent ones. A depression at the back of the tents was deepened so as to form a moat.

Firewood was stacked in it so that when it was set ablaze, no hostile attack could be readily led against the tents from the rear.

1 *Ṭabari*, II 320–1

CHAPTER XXVI

THE COMPLETION OF ARGUMENT AND THE OPENING OF WAR

AT early dawn on the 10th day of Muḥarram, al-Ḥusayn led the small number of his assembled companions in the congregational prayers.

They saw the huge army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd, wanting little by way of physical necessities confronting their small group, tormented by the extremes of thirst. Their faces, however, bore no indications of discouragement, much less of despair. On the contrary the certainty of shortly meeting their deaths made their faces beam with happiness. Indeed, one of them, Burayr ibn Ḥuḍayr al-Hamadānī, departed from the usual gravity of his speech and tended to spice his words with light playful humour. When exception was taken to this unseasonable trend in his talk he said, "By God, what separates us from abiding felicity is simply the delay which the enemy makes in falling upon us with their swords. Indeed I long for the hour when their swords start striking us.[1]

Meanwhile 'Umar ibn Sa'd arranged his army, consisting of at least 20,000 soldiers in the field of battle. To 'Amr ibn Ḥajjaj al-Zubaydī and Shimr were respectively assigned the commands of the right and left wings of the army. 'Azra ibn Qays al-Aḥmasī was placed a the head of the infantry and Shabath ibn Rib'ī was to lead the cavalry. Durayd, a slave of 'Umar ibn Sa'd, was given the standard of the army.[2]

Al-Ḥusayn also led his small party into the battlefield. It is estimated to have consisted of 72 men, 32 of them cavalry and 40 infantry.[3] It is for this reason that the number of those who sacrificed themselves at Karbalā' is usually taken to be 72. From different sources which are available, it appears that the number of those who fought on al-Husayn's side was between a hundred and two hundred.

On the entering the battlefield, al-Ḥusayn made a supplication to God of which the words show an implicit, unshakable

trust in God. To this prayer the speech of Christ on the Cross, "God, why hast Thou forsaken me?", as mentioned in the New Testament, would hardly bear comparison. In the extremity of his misery al-Ḥusayn prayed, "God, Thou art my support in all hardships, and to Thee I turn with hope in all my troubles, and in Thee I repose my trust in all my trials..."

Al-Ḥusayn then arranged his small army, entrusting its right wing to Zuhayr b.Qayn, its left wing to Ḥabīb ibn Muẓāhir and the standard to his brother, 'Abbās.[4]

The Umayyads had systematically propagated in the lands subject to their control that they were the only heirs of the Prophet who had died without any children. It was, therefore, necessary for al-Ḥusayn that he should make his name, the names of his ancestors, the distinguishing traits of his family and the Prophet's sayings about and behaviour towards himself so widely and unmistakably known that no one could be left with any room to plead ignorance about him, his family, and the traditions current in Islam about him. This was of great importance in order to make the wickedness and the cruelty of his oppressors self-evident to every one.

It was with the object mentioned in the preceding paragraph that before the commencement of the war, al-Ḥusayn mounted a camel, put the Qur'ān before him[5] and addressing the ranks of 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army, delivered the oration, "...be not rash. Let me discharge the duty of giving you the warning and guidance I owe to you, and putting before you the real facts about coming to you. If you believe my words and act fairly towards me, it would be fortunate for you, and you will know that you can have no reason to oppose me. If you do not trust what I may have to say to you, and do not deal with me justly, you are welcome to rally your forces... and put an end to my life... My Creator is sufficient for me... Ponder over my name and ancestory, and try to realise who I am and be ashamed. Consider whether it is legitimate for you to shed my blood or to degrade my high rank. Am I not the grandson of your Prophet, and the son of his cousin who was the executor of his will, the first to accept and vouch for Islam? Have you not heard the Prophet's well-known saying about my brother and me that we are the leaders of the young men of paradise? Was not Ḥamza, the leader of the martyrs, my father's uncle, and Ja'far al-Ṭayyār my own uncle? If you accept what I tell you as true,

and it is undoubtedly true, since I have never uttered a falsehood, nothing remains for me to add or explain. Should you, however, treat my statement to be untrue, there are still to be found people who would tell you the truth if you ask them. Ask Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Anṣāri, Zayd ibn Arqam and Anas ibn Mālik. Is it then insufficient to deter you from shedding my blood." After some interruption, he resumed his speech saying, "If you doubt the authenticity of the Prophet's sayings about me, do you make any manner of doubt about my being his grandson? By God, neither in the west nor in the east, no grandson of the Prophet, other than me survives, neither amongst you nor in any other tribe. I am a grandson of your Prophet. Tell me why you are bent upon killing me? Do you wish to avenge the murder of anyone amongst you that I may have committed? Do you want the restitution of any of your property that I may have destroyed? Do you desire to take revenge for any injury I may have caused to anyone of you?" Dead silence reigned over the whole army, and nobody dared make a reply. Al-Ḥusayn then started naming those officers of 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army, Shabath ibn Rib'ī, Ḥajjār ibn Abjar, Qays ibn al-Ash'ath and Yazîd ibn al-Ḥārith, who had put their signatures to letters inviting him to Kūfa, and asked them if they had not done so. Everyone of these men commanded not less than 500 men, and their duplicity was being exposed now, and their whole future was at stake. They accordingly denied having communicated with al-Ḥusayn who charged them with a shameless denial of the truth. He then argued that if they did not really want him to visit Kūfa, they should permit him to go somewhere to spend his life in peace and safety. Qays ibn al-Ash'ath, a brother Ju'da who poisoned al-Ḥasan, and of Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath, who was responsible for the capture of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl, remarked, "Why do you not swear allegiance to Yazîd?" Al-Ḥusayn replied, "You would certainly suggest this. Do you not deem it enough to have to answer for the slaughter of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl? I would not deliver myself into your hands with humiliation, nor would I flee from you like a slave to save my life." Al-Ḥusayn then concluded his speech, and got down from his camel.[6]

Most of the men of the army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd belonged to Kūfa and speeches addressed to them by their prominent townsmen carried great weight with them. Zuhayr ibn al-Qayn

had the advantage, till before swearing allegiance to al-Husayn, of belonging to the pro-'Uthmān group like many of the residents of Kūfa. His loyalty to al-Ḥusayn being of very recent origin, he was more acceptable to his townsmen than Ḥabīb ibn Muẓahir, long known as one of the Shī'a of 'Alī, and one of those who had first invited al-Ḥusayn to Kufa. Addressing the enemy's army, al-Zuhayr said, "Residents of Kūfa, fear God's wrath... He has put you and us to the test through the descendants of His Prophet, Muḥammad, the Selected One, so that He might see how we deal with them and how you conduct yourselves towards them. I appeal to all of you to help them and give up obedience to 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād. You will never be treated well by Yazīd and Ibn Ziyad during the entire period of their rule. They will continue to pull out your eyes, cut off your hands and feet and hang you and put to death such virtuous persons as Ḥujr ibn 'Adī, his associates, who knew Qur'ān by heart, and Hāni' ibn 'Urwa.?"

Zuhayr's speech was many times interrupted by the sycophants of Ibn Ziyād. Shimr then shot an arrow towards him shouting, "Be silent. May God silence your tongue." Zuhayr, however, continued speaking and was again interrupted by Shimr who said, "You would presently see your leader and you you all put to the sword." Zuhayr gave the spirited answer, "You frighten me of death? By God, it is more to my liking to die with them than to remain alive with you for ever." He then resumed his speech and admonished, "O men, allow not yourselves to be misled by such slaves of riches. By God, the intercession of God's Prophet shall not be available to them as they shed the blood of his descendants whose supporters they put to death." Finding that words spoken from his side brought arrows in reply, and that complete arguments had been furnished to the enemy to give up their oppression, al-Ḥusayn asked Zuhayr to conclude his speech.[8]

It became clear, when somewhat later in the day al-Ḥurr deserted from the enemy's army to join al-Ḥusayn, that the latter's intention of reforming the enemies of his truthful statements and edifying instructions had all succeeded in influencing them and winning for him friends from amongst them; his success is not to be measured by the number of men converted to his ideals, but by the circumstances in which he achieved it, in the unparalleled trials that he was undergoing at

the time including the certainty of his own slaughter, and the undoubtedly mortal peril to the convert's life.

Ever since the supply of water was stopped, and thirst tormented al-Ḥusayn's companions, including small children, al-Ḥurr had been mentally much disturbed as he held himself responsible for al-Ḥusayn being at Karbalā' and pitching his tents at a place remote from the river. Memories of the very generous manner in which al-Ḥusayn had supplied water to him, his men and their horses when they were greatly distressed on account of thirst must have been still fresh in his mind. He had noticed that 'Umar ibn Sa'd desired peace with al-Ḥusayn, and he had thought that war would not take place against al-Ḥusayn whose speech on the 10th Muḥarram made a great impression on al-Ḥurr but its cold reception militated against his hopes. He saw 'Umar ibn Sa'd and asked him whether he would really give battle to al-Ḥusayn. 'Umar answering affirmatively, al-Ḥurr asked him whether none of the terms suggested by al-Ḥusayn for the restoration of peace was acceptable. 'Umar ibn Sa'd replied, "By God, if the decision had rested with me I would have certainly accepted al-Ḥusayn's proposals. What can I do, since your ruler does not agree."

Al-Ḥurr had nothing to wait for, and the stage had definitely arrived for the decisions which he had mentally taken, after searching the depths of his heart a great deal, to be given a practical shape.

Al-Ḥurr took great pains to conceal his intentions till the very last moment, for fear of being taken captive if even the slightest suspicion of his disloyalty came to be entertained. His agitation, when he left for al-Ḥusayn's camp was, however, noticed by al-Muhājir ibn Aws, a man of his tribe, who asked him, "Al-Ḥurr, what are your intentions? Do you want to launch an attack?" Al-Ḥurr kept silent, but a slight shiver went through his body. Al-Muhājir at once marked this and asked, "How are you, al-Ḥurr? I have never seen you in this state. Whenever I was asked to name the bravest man in Kūfa, your name used to spring to my lips. What lies behind this change in behaviour?" Al-Ḥurr replied, "I have before me the choice between paradise and hell at the moment, and I would not prefer anything to paradise, even if I am torn to pieces and committed to flames." Saying this, he lashed his horse and crossed over to al-Ḥusayn's camp. Presenting himself to al-Ḥusayn, he said, "O son of the

Prophet, may my life be sacrificed for you. I am the guily one who intercepted you on your way, dogged your steps during your journey and made you encamp here. By God, I never entertained the slightest notion that these men would turn down all your terms for peace, and that things would come to this state, or else I would never have conducted myself towards you as I have done. Here I am now, thoroughly ashamed of myself, and I beseech pardon of my God so that I might with all my heart and soul share your trials till I have sacrificed myself at your feet." Al-Ḥusayn assured al-Ḥurr that his repentance would be accepted by God. Thus assured, and also after obtaining pardon from al-Ḥusayn, al-Ḥurr thought that a few words of advice and admonition might well be addressed by him to the army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd. He addressed himself to the soldiers of Kūfa, saying, "Brothers, why do you not accept one of the terms offered by al-Ḥusayn, so as to prevent war against him." The soldiers suggested the matter be referred to 'Umar ibn Sa'd. But 'Umar ibn Sa'd said that the choice in the matter did not rest with him, otherwise he would have done as proposed. This threw al-Ḥurr into a rage who fulminated, "Men of Kūfa, may God destroy you! You invited this highly venerable person here and upon his arrival you delivered him to his enemy. You had held forth the promise of sacrificing your life for him, and you have made it impossible for him to breathe freely, and are now bent upon strangling him. You have encircled him and have kept him from going wherever he might choose on God's spacious earth, and he is like a prisoner in your hands. He has been rendered helpless, and you have withheld from him, his ladies and children, the running waters of the Euphrates of which the free enjoyment is open to the Jews, the fire-worshippers and the Christians, and in which wallow the swine and dogs of Iraq. It is only al-Ḥusayn and his party who have been brought to the doors of death on account of thirst. Reprehensible, indeed, is the treatment which you have given to Muḥammad's descendants after him. May God not quench your thirst on the Day of Judgement when consuming desire for water would overtake you, if you do not reproach yourself for your deeds, and turn over a new leaf here and now." Al-Ḥurr was greeted by the release of arrows aimed at him, and he went back to al-Ḥusayn.[10]

The day had considerably advanced when 'Umar ibn Sa'd

called Durayd, the standard-bearer of his army, and shot the first arrow towards al-Ḥusayn's army and called upon Yazīd's troops to bear testimony that he had been the first to take the offensive in the war by shooting an arrow towards the adversary.[11]

Beyond heralding the commencement of the battle, the arrows shot by the enemy did not cause much damage and al-Ḥusayn's comrades retaliated by sending a shower of arrows towards the enemy.

1 *Ṭabarī*, II 326
2 *Ṭabarī*, II 327
3 *Ṭabarī*, II 325–6
4 *Ṭabarī*, II 326/*Irshād*, 350
5 *Ṭabarī*, II 329–330
6 *Ṭabarī*, II 330–1/*Irshād*, 352
7 *Ṭabarī*, II 321–2
8 *Ṭabarī*, II 232
9 *Ṭabarī*, II 332–3
10 *Ṭabarī*, II 334–5/*Irshād*, 353–4
11 *Ṭabarī*, II 335/*Irshād*, 354

CHAPTER XXVII

AL-ḤUSAYN'S FRIENDS AND THEIR AMAZING SACRIFICES

IT is proposed to give in the following paragraphs, along with the account of the progress of the battle of Karbalā', brief sketches of the lives and distinguishing traits of al-Ḥusayn's friends:–

(1) 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umayr al-Kalbī, a companion of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, was a very brave and noble resident of Kūfa. He had married Umm Wahb, a daughter of 'Abd. After Muslim ibn 'Aqīl had been martyred, when the troops were being inspected at Nukhayla before being sent to Karbalā', 'Abd Allāh, whose house was not far learnt that they were intended to go to fight al-Ḥusayn. He had always longed to fight against the polytheists, and considering those who waged war against al-Ḥusayn to be no better than idolators, he decided to fight such infidels. His wife agreed with him and accompanied him to Karbalā' to join al-Ḥusayn.[1]

'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umayr was the first among al-Ḥusayn's followers to take to the battlefield where Yasār and Sālim, retainers of Ziyād and his son 'Ubayd Allāh, had held out a challenge to anybody who might dare fight them. They declined to fight with 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umayr who, they said, was not known to them. Enraged at this, 'Abd Allāh killed both of them, but in the struggle against Sālim, the fingers of his left hand were severed. Wounded but successful, 'Abd Allāh recited verses setting forth his qualities, and significantly added, "O Umm Wahb, I promise I would repeatedly advance to give thrusts of my lance and blows with my sword as becomes a dashing young man who believes in God." Hearing 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umayr, Umm Wahb, his wife, rushed into the battlefield, calling out loudly, "My parents be sacrificed for you, spare no effort in helping the descendants of the Prophet." Jealous of his honour, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umayr tried to persuade her to go back to her tent without delay, but she was in no mood to agree

and said, "I would not leave you alone in the battlefield, not before I am also put to death." She was then called back by al-Ḥusayn who told her that women were exempted from the duty of waging the *Jihād*. She then came back to the ladies of al-Ḥusayn's family. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umayr also came back from the battlefield.[2] He joined the battle again at a later stage and was martyred after Muslim ibn 'Awsaja.

(2) Al-Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Riyāhī came of an ancient and esteemed family. 'Attāb, at four removes from al-Ḥurr in the ascending order of his lineage, was one of the special courtiers of Nu'man ibn al-Mundhir, King of Hīra. One of his sons, Qays, rose to high office after him. A grandson of Qays, Zayd ibn 'Umar ibn Qays, was a poet and a Companion of the Prophet. He was an uncle of al-Ḥurr, being a cousin of his father, Yazīd.

One of the nobles of al-Kūfa, al-Ḥurr was an officer in the army of 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād was deputed to al-Qādisiyya to keep a strict watch on the roads. He was later ordered to intercept Ḥusayn so as to prevent him from reaching Kūfa. As already mentioned, al-Ḥurr had personal experience of the nobility of al-Ḥusayn's character and his open-handed liberality when, in order to relieve al-Ḥurr, his men and their horses of excessive, unbearable thirst, the latter had supplied them all with water. Later al-Ḥurr forced al-Ḥusayn to abandon his plan of going to Kūfa and to encamp at Karbalā' at a place removed from the river. On the 10th of Muḥarram al-Ḥurr deserted from the army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd and joined the companions of al-Ḥusayn.

Al-Ḥurr begged al-Ḥusayn to be allowed to sacrifice himself before all others, since it was he who had offered him initial resistance. Getting al-Ḥusayn's permission, al-Ḥurr took to the battlefield and attacked the enemy vigorously. Earlier, when al-Ḥurr had deserted from 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army, Yazīd b.Sufyān al-Tamīmī, a soldier in the army, had remarked that he would have despatched al-Ḥurr with a single thrust of his spear if he had noticed the latter's desertion. When al-Ḥurr was using his sword with great effect in the battlefield, an officer in the army reminded Yazīd b.Sufyān about his intention to kill al-Ḥurr, at which the man asked al-Ḥurr to agree to fight with him. This being settled, al-Ḥurr immediately killed his adversary.[3] This inspired such awe in the hearts of the enemy

that nobody dared to stir out to fight with al-Ḥurr who then retired from the battlefield. He met his death later and details about it will presently be furnished.

(3) Muslim ibn 'Awsaja al-Asadī was a distinguished supporter of al-Ḥusayn. Prayerful, fond of midnight prayers, he had seen the Prophet. He was an expert horseman and had rendered a creditable account of himself in previous wars, as in the conquest of Azerbayjān in Iran in 20 A.H. He is considered a dependable source of the traditions. He was much esteemed throughout Arabia.

After 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād had been appointed governor of Kūfa, Muslim ibn 'Aqīl stayed with Hāni' ibn 'Urwa and undertook the reorganisation of those who had sworn allegiance to al-Ḥusayn. Muslim ibn 'Awsaja had then acted as his special representative in taking oaths of allegiance and promises of loyal support for the members of the Prophet's household. It remains obscure where he had gone after the martyrdom of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl and how he contrived to reach Karbalā', being then much advanced in years.

After 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umayr and al-Ḥurr, Nāfi' ibn Hilāl al-Jamalī joined the battle, and killed Muzāhim ibn al-Ḥārith. The losses suffered by Ibn Ziyād's army at the hands of al-Ḥusayn's supporters greatly worried 'Amr ibn al-Ḥajjāj, and he warned the men of his army against meeting al-Ḥusayn's warriors in single combat, as the latter were the pick of the country's horsemen who were fighting for their lives. He then attacked al-Ḥusayn's force with the entire right wing of the army under him. This assault was resisted with such determination that it had to be withdrawn, but it left Muslim ibn 'Awsaja rolling on the ground in his blood. Ḥabīb b.Muẓāhir asked him if he had any last wishes. Muslim pointed towards al-Husayn in reply and said, "Whatever last wishes I have concern him only." Thus died the first of al-Ḥusayn's followers in sacrificing his life for the Prophet's grandson.

While the news of the death of Muslim ibn 'Awsaja was received with great jubilation in the ranks of the enemy's forces, Shabath ibn Rib'ī, who commanded the infantry in 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army burst forth saying, "What an outrage! A man like Muslim ibn 'Awsaja has been killed and you are rejoicing over his death.[4] By God I have witnessed the feats he performed for Islam."

The death of Muslim ibn 'Awsaja boosted the morale of the soldiers of the enemy. Shimr ibn Dhī Jawshan, therefore, attacked the left wing of al-Ḥusayn's army and was vigorously resisted. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umayr of those exploits mention has already been made, exerted himself again with great courage and killed two soldiers of the enemy. He was then attacked by Hāni' ibn Thubayth al-Ḥaḍramī and Bukayr ibn Ḥayy and killed, being the second supporter of al-Ḥusayn to meet his end.[5]

'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umayr's wife, hearing of her husband's death took to the battlefield to see his dead body and sitting by it she started removing dust and blood from his face, saying, "Accept my congratulations on winning paradise." Exceeding cruelty however, prompted Shimr to get this defenceless lady put to death.[6]

(4) Burayr ibn Ḥuḍayr al-Hamadānī belonged to Kūfa and was an aged companion of 'Alī, devout and devoted to offering prayers. He knew the Qur'ān by heart and used to instruct people in the Qur'ān in the mosque of Kūfa, and was called the leader of those who knew the Qur'ān by heart. He joined al-Ḥusayn somewhere in the course of his journey to Karbalā'.

Accounts of his speech in reply to al-Ḥusayn's address, of his light-hearted remarks when only a few hours separated him from death have already been given.

When Yazīd ibn Ma'qil issued forth from the army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd to challenge al-Ḥusayn's companions to single combat, he called out Burayr whom he had known for a long time. They also used to argue at each other about the religious validity of the stands taken by 'Alī and Mu'āwiya. Yazīd ibn Ma'qil referred to the question again, and it was decided that both of them should pray to God to curse the liar of the two of them and get him put to the sword by the one who was in the right. Then they began fighting each other. Yazīd struck the first blow which caused only some superficial injury, but Burayr, who dealt the second blow, cut Yazīd's iron helmet and his sword penetrated into his head. Yazīd fell down from his horse. While Burayr was pulling out his sword, Raḍī ibn Munqidh attacked him. Throwing him to the ground, Burayr sprang on his chest. His cries brought Ka'b ibn Jābir b.'Amr al-Asadī to his help. He attacked Burayr but another soldier of 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army bade him not to do so as Burayr knew the Qur'ān by

heart and taught others how to memorise it. Ka'b ibn Jabir, however, killed Burayr.'

(5) Munhij ibn Sahm was the son of a slave-girl of al-Ḥusayn, named Ḥusayniyya. She had married Sahm, and worked for 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn whom she accompanied with her son on al-Ḥusayn's journey to Karbalā'. Munhij was killed at the very beginning of the battle.

(6) 'Umar b. Khālid was from among the nobles of Kūfa and was sincerely devoted to the members of the Prophet's household (*ahl al-bayt*). In the beginning he had supported Muslim ibn 'Aqīl, but when the majority of the residents of Kūfa deserted him, and all hopes of the success of his cause had to be abandoned, 'Umar ibn Khālid went into hiding. When he heard the news that al-Ḥusayn had reached Ḥājir on his way to Kūfa, 'Umar ibn Khālid, his *mawlā*, Sa'd, Mujāmmi' ibn 'Abd Allāh, his son, 'A'idh, and Jābir ibn al-Ḥarith al-Salmānī joined al-Ḥusayn at 'Udhayb al-Hijānāt. In the meantime al-Ḥurr had reached there to obstruct al-Ḥusayn from pursuing the course of his journey, and he objected to the inclusion of 'Umar ibn Khālid and his associates in al-Ḥusayn's party. On al-Ḥusayn's insistance, the objection was withdrawn.

On the 10th of Muharrum, 'Umar ibn Khālid and his four compatriots attacked the troops of the enemy jointly with their swords. The enemy's soldiers surrounded these men and isolated them from the rest of al-Ḥusayn's companions. Al-Ḥusayn sent his brother, 'Abbās, to their rescue. All by himself, 'Abbās drove away the enemy, and made these gallant men ride ahead of him in order to ensure their safety. However, as soon as they saw the enemy following them, they got so greatly enraged that they rushed at their pursuers, attacking them with all their strength, till every one of them died fighting at the same spot.[8]

Accounts of Sa'd, Mujammi', 'Ā'idh ibn Mujammi' and Jābir ibn al-Ḥārith appear under their names listed **(7)** to **(10)**.

(7) Sa'd, *mawlā* 'Umar ibn Khālid, was martyred as already stated.

(8) Mujammi' ibn 'Abd Allāh was born while the Prophet was still living. His father was a Companion of the Prophet and he himself was a companion of 'Alī on whose side he had fought at Ṣiffīn. He had told al-Ḥusayn that the leading men of Kūfa had been bribed and had sold their loyalty to the government, and

were, therefore, all against him. The hearts of the common people were, according to him, favourably inclined towards al-Ḥusayn, but in the event of a war, their swords would be raised against him. He was martyred as already stated.

(9) 'Ā'idh ibn Mujammi' was a son of Mujammi' ibn 'Abd Allāh and was martyred as already stated.

(10) Jābir ibn al-Ḥārith al-Salmānī, a leading member of the Shī'a of Kūfa was born during the life of the Prophet and fought on 'Alī's side in the battle of Ṣiffīn. He had taken the oath of allegiance to al-Ḥusayn at the hand of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl, and had taken part in the fight which Muslim ibn 'Aqīl had put up. Things, however, took a disastrous turn for Muslim ibn 'Aqīl and Jābir concealed himself. He achieved martyrdom as already stated.

(11) Jundub ibn Ḥujr al-Kindī was a distinguished member of the Shī'a of Kūfa and a companion of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. He had commanded the regiments of Kinda and Azd in the battle of Ṣiffīn. He met al-Husayn on the latter's journey to Kūfa before al-Ḥurr's arrival to check his progress towards Kūfa.

He died fighting for al-Ḥusayn in the early stage of the battle on 10th of Muharram at Karbalā'.

(12) Yazīd ibn Ziyād ibn Muḥāsir al-Kindī was a brave warrior from the Shī'a of Kūfa. He joined al-Husayn before al-Ḥurr's arrival, and remained with the former during his journey. When near Karbalā' Ibn Ziyād's messenger brought for Ḥurr a letter directing him to compel al-Ḥusayn to break his journey as soon as the addressee received the letter, Yazīd ibn Ziyād recognized the messenger as one belonging to his own clan of Kinda. He, therefore, severely censured him for bringing this sinful message.[9]

He was an expert archer, and on the 10th of Muharram he shot a hundred arrows, only five of which missed their target. When he came to the end of his arrows, he took to the battlefield where he was killed at the beginning of the hostilities.[10]

THE FIRST GENERAL ATTACK

It is no less amazing than it is memorable that the body of al-Husayn's supporters, not exceeding 150 at the outside, worn

out by the thirst of three days, should not only have kept at bay 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army of at least 30,000 men, but should have also made inroads, frequent and effective, into the enemy's cavalry to put it into disarray. This unequal fight had dragged on from the morning till about noon, and officers of the enemy's army found it difficult to decide upon the course of action best calculated to bring about an early favourable conclusion. After some bickering between the commanders of the cavalry and the infantry, al-Husayn ibn Tamîm was directed to advance with the army deployed at al-Qadisiyya to shut up all access to and from Kūfa. He was also given 500 archers to shoot arrows on al-Ḥusayn's camp.[11]

A veritable rain of pointed steel must have fallen on al-Ḥusayn and his companions who met this attack bravely, using their swords as their shields, and mounted a determined assault on the enemy. This great assault which saw fierce fighting is called the first general attack and was made an hour before noon. While the supporters of al-Ḥusayn threw back the enemy, they suffered heavily. Fifty men out of their small number were killed as also all their horses.

It is not possible to determine the order in which these fifty supporters of al-Ḥusayn had been put to death but their names have been given separately or in groups as below and brief accounts of their lives have also been given where feasible.

(13) Al-Ḥārith ibn Banhān
(14) Shabīb ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Nahshalī.
(15) Qarīb ibn 'Abd Allāh.
(16) Naṣr ibn Nayzar.

These had accompanied al-Husayn from Medina. Al-Ḥārith served 'Alī, and then al-Ḥasan and then kept al-Ḥusayn company on his journey. Shabīb had fought on 'Alī's side in the battles of the Camel, Ṣiffīn and Nahrawān. Qarīb's mother, Fākiha served Sakīna's mother, a wife of al-Ḥusayn. Naṣr's father claimed regal descent and was instructed by the Prophet. Naṣr spent his youth in the company of 'Alī, and then he kept the company of his sons:

(17) Janāda ibn Ka'b al-Anṣārī,
(18) 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd Rabb al-Ansārī joined al-Ḥusayn

at Mecca.
(19) Jabîr ibn Ḥajjāj al-Taymî,
(20) Jabla ibn 'Alî al-Shaybānî,
(21) Ḥubāb ibn 'Āmir ibn Ka'b al-Taymî, and
(22) Zarghama ibn Mālik al-Taghlabî.

These had in the beginning supported Muslim ibn 'Aqîl, but when 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād managed to turn the people away from supporting him, they went into hiding, and later on hearing of al-Ḥusayn's journey towards Kūfa, they contrived to join him at Karbalā'.

(23) Al-Hārith ibn Imru' al-Qays ibn 'Ābis al-Kindî,
(24) Juwayn ibn Malik ibn Qays al-Taymî,
(25) Ḥalas ibn 'Amr al-Azdî,
(26) his brother al Nu'mān,
(27) Zuhayr ibn Salîm ibn 'Amr al-Azdî,
(28) Mas'ūd ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Taymî,
(29) 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Mas'ud,
(30) 'Abd Allāh ibn Bishr al-Khath'amî,
(31) 'Amr ibn Zabî'a ibn Qays al-Taymî,
(32) Qasîm ibn Ḥabîb ibn Abi Bishr al-Azdî,

These had reached Karbalā' with the army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Mas'ūd and Mas'ūd b.Ḥajjāj went to al-Ḥusayn on 7th Muḥarram to pay their respects to him and never went back to their military service. The first five men of this group went over to al-Ḥusayn when all offers of peace made by him were rejected, and war became unavoidable. The remaining three also went over to him at unspecified points of time.

The Shî'a of Baṣra used to meet at the house of a lady, Māriyya, daughter of Munqidh, who was devoted to the members of the Prophet's household. When news arrived at Baṣra of al-Ḥusayn's intended departure for Kūfa, and of the sealing of roads leading to that city by the governor of Baṣ, Yazîd ibn Nubayṭ had expressed his desire to go to al-Husayn's help. As the project was dangerous many men did not share Yazîd ibn Nubayt's enthusiasm. He, however set out on this perilous journey with two of his sons,

(33) 'Abd Allāh, and
(34) 'Ubayd Allāh.[12],
(35) Adham ibn Umayya,
(36) Sayf ibn Mālik al-'Abdī,
(37) 'Āmir ibn Muslim al-'Abdī al-Basrī,
(38) Sālim, the slave of 'Āmir ibn Muslim

They met al-Husayn at al-Abṭaḥ within the boundaries of Mecca, and accompanied him to Karbalā'.

(39) A faithful slave of al-Ḥasan, Salîm by name, was also martyred in this assault.

It appears that in the course of his journey, many Arabs had been attracted to al-Ḥusayn's caravan by unfounded hopes, and that they abandoned him as soon as they realised the truth. But some adhered to him and they fell dead in the first charge. They were:

(40) 'Abd ibn Muhājir al-Juhanī,
(41) 'Uqba ibn Ṣalāt al-Juhanī,
(42) Mujammi' ibn Ziyād ibn 'Amr al-Juhanī.
(43) Qasît b. Zuhair b. al-Ḥārith al-Taghlabī,
(44) Muqsit, the brother of Qasit,
(45) Kardūs, also brother of Qasit.

These brothers were Companions of 'Alī. Then they kept al-Ḥasan's company till he left for Medina. Thereafter these brothers took up residence at Kūfa and upon al-Ḥusayn's arrival at Karbalā' managed to join him.

(46) Umayya ibn Sa'd ibn Zayd al-Ṭā'ī was a veteran who fought in the battle of Ṣiffīn on 'Alī's side. He reached Karbalā' when al-Ḥusain was holding peace talks with 'Umar ibn Sa'd.
(47) Ẓāhir ibn 'Amr al-Kindī was a Companion of the Prophet. He took part in the battle of Khaybar, and was known for his bravery, and was intensely devoted to the Prophet's *ahl al-bayt* (members of the household). When Ziyād was governor of Kūfa and 'Amr b.Ḥamiq al-Khuzā'ī rose against him, Ẓāhir joined him. He, however, managed to conceal himself and escaped arrest. He performed the Ḥajj in 60 A.H. and met al-Ḥusayn,

and joining the ranks of his companions he remained with him and accompanied him to Karbalā'.

(48) Suwār ibn Abī 'Umayr al-Nahmī was a narrator of traditions who reached Karbalā' after al-Ḥusayn had opened negotiations for peace. On the 10th of Muḥarram he took part in the *Jihād*, was wounded and arrested and taken to 'Umar ibn Sa'd who wanted to put him to death. The soldiers of his tribe resisted this and took him away. He, however, died of the wounds.

(49) Shabīb ibn 'Abd Allāh belonged to Kūfa and was a *mawlā* of al-Hārith b. Sarī' al-Ḥamadānī, and a Companion of the Prophet. He had taken part in the battle of the Camel, Ṣiffin and Nahrawān on 'Alī's side and reached Karbalā' with Sayf and Mālik, sons of his master.

(50) 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Kadan al-Arḥabī was a member of the second deputation of the residents of Kūfa which saw al-Ḥusayn. After the assassination of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl and the arrival of al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā' he managed to join al-Ḥusayn.

(51) 'Ammār ibn Abī Salama al-Dulānī had fought on the side of 'Alī in the battles of the Camel, Ṣiffīn, and Nahrawān.

(52) 'Ammār ibn al-Ḥasan al-Tā'ī was a distinguished Shī'ite. His father had been killed in the battle of Ṣiffīn, being a companion of 'Alī. 'Ammār accompanied al-Ḥusayn from Mecca to Karbalā'.

(53) Kināna ibn 'Atīq al-Taghlabī belonged to Kūfa, and was noted for his valour. He was given to prayers and knew the Qur'ān by heart. He joined al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā' before the battle was joined.

(54) Muslim ibn Qasīr al-Azdī was crippled while fighting in the Battle of the Camel. He went from Kūfa to help al-Ḥusayn.

(55) Na'īm ibn 'Ajlān al-Anṣārī and his brothers, Nasr and al-Nu'mān, were companions of 'Alī. His brothers had predeceased him. When al-Ḥusayn reached Iraq, Na'īm managed to join him at Karbalā' from Kūfa.

(56) Habsha ibn Qays al-Nahmī was the grandson of a Companion of the Prophet, and was himself a narrator of traditions.

(57) Ḥajjāj b. Zayd al-Taymi belonged to Baṣra. When leaving Mecca, al-Ḥusayn had sent letters to the leading men of Baṣra, including Mas'ūd b. 'Amr al-Azdī. Mas'ūd had collected the

Banū Tamīm, Banū Ḥanẓala, Banū Sa'd and Banū 'Āmir clans of his tribe and had exhorted them to go to al-Ḥusayn's help and a group of men from amongst them promised to do so. Mas'ūd wrote a letter in reply and entrusted it to al-Ḥajjāj to deliver it to al-Ḥusayn. The messenger delivered the letter and also sacrificed himself for al-Ḥusayn.

(58) Ḥabāb ibn al-Ḥārith.
(59) Ḥanẓala ibn 'Umar al-Shaybānī.
(60) Zuhayr ibn Busr al-Khath'amī.
(61) 'Imrān ibn Ka'b al-Ashja'ī.
(62) Māni' ibn Ziyād.

nothing is known of these.

THE ATTACK ON AL-ḤUSAYN'S CAMP

Encouraged by the heavy casualties suffered by al-Ḥusayn's small band of loyal and intrepid warriors the army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd launched an attack on al-Ḥusayn's camp. Their object was to get behind al-Ḥusayn's camp, and surround his men from the back where stood rows of the tents of al-Ḥusayn's men, fastened to one another with ropes so securely that they looked like a strong wall or fortification. Noticing this, 'Umar ibn Sa'd ordered the ropes to be severed. Al-Ḥusayn's warriors thereupon retired to the tents and ambushed and killed the intruders. At this failure of his attempt to surround al-Ḥusayn's men, 'Umar ibn Sa'd ordered the tents to be set on fire. The burning tents themselves defeated the enemy's aim, and in exasperation Shimr wanted to put al-Ḥusayn's tent on fire so as to kill its occupants. Shabath ibn Rib'ī, commander of the infantry in 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army told Shimr, "I have not yet heard a more sinful thing uttered." He was not allowed to carry out his cruel designs by the opposition voiced by members of his own party. Meanwhile Zuhayr ibn al-Qayn made a vigorous attack on the enemy with the help of ten of his friends, and pushed Shimr far back, killing one of Shimr's select men. This provoked the enemy to open a counter-offensive of great violence, causing much bloodshed. The enemy was again defeated. Only two supporters of al-Ḥusayn lost their lives. They were:

(63) Bakr ibn Hayy al-Taymī who had joined al-Husayn after coming to Karbala with the armies of 'Umar ibn Sa'd.
(64) 'Amr b. Janāda b.Ka'b al-Khazrajī, a lad hardly ten years of age who had accompanied his parents to Karbalā'. After his father had attained martyrdom at Karbalā' in the first general attack of the enemy, his mother directed him to fight for al-Ḥusayn. 'Amr begged al-Ḥusayn's leave to do so, but permission was not given. 'Amr pleaded that his mother had herself directed him to fight for al-Ḥusayn. He then received the permission to go. He took to the field of battle and a soldier of the enemy beheaded him. At this his mother cried out, "Well done, my son! you have rejoiced my heart in sacrificing yourself for al-Ḥusayn." The enemy had thrown her son's head to her, but she threw it back to them, and picking up an iron club went out to fight the enemy herself. She was forbidden by al-Ḥusayn from doing so as women have been exempted from performing the *Jihād*.

THE OFFENSIVE AT THE TIME OF NOON PRAYERS

In the meantime the hour for the noon prayers arrived. Abū Thumāma 'Amr ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ṣā'idī submitted to al-Ḥusayn that the enemy had drawn very near him, and expressed the wish to say the noon prayers with al-Ḥusayn as they were going to be the last he would live to offer with the Imām. Al-Ḥusayn asked him to request the men of the enemy to stop the fighting for the duration of the prayers. Ḥuṣayn ibn Tamīm emerged from the ranks of the army and said, "Your prayers would not be accepted." Ḥabīb ibn Muẓāhir rejoined, "Not acceptable? Do you imagine that the prayers of the son of the Prophet are not, and yours are, acceptable?" This led Ḥuṣayn to attack him, and a combat between the two followed and Ḥuṣayn got the worst of it, but was led away to safety.
(65) Ḥabib b. Muẓāhir now entered the lists. He was among the select band of 'Alī's disciples like Mītham al-Ṭammār and Rashīd al-Hijrī, and also one of his and al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn's Companions. It will be recalled that he had taken a leading part in sponsoring the movement to invite al-Ḥusayn to Kūfa, and that the first letter addressed by the Shī'a of Kūfa to al-Husayn bore his signatures. Also, on his arrival at Kūfa

Muslim ibn 'Aqīl had been promised all assistance by him. On several other occasions, Ḥabīb had tried to reason opponents of al-Ḥusayn out of their evil ways. On the eve of the 10th Muḥarram, he had won over a number of men of the clan of Banū Asad who lived in the vicinity of Karbalā' to support al-Ḥusayn. 'Umar ibn Sa'd, however, got wind of Ḥabīb's mission, and sent 500 mounted soldiers to prevent the Banū Asad from following Ḥabīb.

Ḥabīb was the commander of the left wing of al-Ḥusayn's forces, and he fought with great valour and killed a Tamīmī warrior with one stroke of his sword. Another soldier of the enemy attacked him with a spear, and Ḥabīb fell from his horse, and his once defeated adversary, Ḥuṣayn ibn Tamīm struck him on the head with his sword and Ḥabīb fell down dead.

The martyrdom of Ḥabīb noticeably affected al-Ḥusayn. The conclusion of al-Ḥurr's *Jihād* now remains to be described. His horse had been already killed.

After Ḥabīb's death, al-Ḥurr decided to sacrifice himself. He started fighting alongside Zuhayr ibn al-Qayn, but this arrangement broke down under the pressure of the enemy's infantry which isolated and surrounded al-Ḥurr. Al-Ḥurr was as a result struck down. When al-Ḥurr's body was brought back from the battlefield, al-Ḥusayn himself removed the dust and blood from the face, and said, "Al-Ḥurr, you are *ḥurr* (meaning, a free man) in this world as also in the world to come."

(66) Abū Thumāma al-Ṣā'idī, an ace horseman of Arabia, a distinguished member of the Shī'a of 'Alī whom he accompanied in all the wars fought by him, had made Kūfa his home after al-Ḥasan had left it. He supported Muslim ibn 'Aqīl actively on the latter's arrival at Kūfa. When the situation had become dangerous, Muslim ibn 'Aqīl entrusted Abū Thumāma with funds and the duty of collecting arms. After Muslim ibn 'Aqīl's martyrdom, he left Kūfa with Nāfi' ibn Hilāl and joined al-Ḥusayn on his journey to Iraq. On the 10th Muharram he had expressed to al-Ḥusayn his desire to join the prayers led by him before going to meet his God. Al-Ḥusayn blessed Abū Thumāma for remembering the offering of prayers at such a time of peril. He also asked him that the men of the enemy be requested to stop the war for the duration of the prayers. This

touched off the outbreak of violence in which Abū Thumāma was among those who were killed.

THE ẒUHR (NOON) PRAYERS

The fighting was not suspended. In moments of danger and fear a shortened form of prayers has been prescribed, called *salāt al-khawf*. Placing absolute confidence in the constancy and bravery of his friends, al-Ḥusayn directed Sa'id ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥanafi and Zuhayr ibn al-Qayn to stand in front of him so that he might offer the noon prayers. Both these self-sacrificing companions advanced with about half of al-Ḥusayn's supporters, and standing before him, shielded him as he had directed.

(67) Sa'īd ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥanafī was a prominent member of the Shī'a of Kūfa and was known for his valour and devotion to prayers. He had pledged loyal support to Muslim ibn 'Aqīl on the latter's arrival at Kūfa. He proved the genuineness of the eloquent words in which, on the eve of the 10th Muḥarram, he had pledged to sacrifice himself for al-Ḥusayn, by standing, with Zuhayr ibn al-Qayn, in front of al-Ḥusayn in the battlefield to protect him from the arrows while he offered his noon prayers. No less than thirteen arrows had pierced his body before the prayers concluded. He then fell dead.

(68) Zuhayr ibn al-Qayn ibn Qays al-Bajalī belonged to Kūfa and was among the gentry of Arabia. He had fought in many wars and was generally counted among those who called for vengeance for 'Uthmān, known as the 'Uthmaniyya as distinguished from the 'Alawiyya, who were the supporters of 'Alī. It has already been recounted how, on his way back after the *ḥajj* that year, he had met al-Ḥusayn at Zarūd and how quickly and completely he had been converted to al-Ḥusayn's ideals. He was put in command of the right wing of al-Ḥusayn's forces. Passionate expressions, in word and deed, of his lasting devotion to al-Ḥusayn have also been mentioned. He was assigned the duty of standing with Sa'īd ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥanafī in front of al-Ḥusayn to protect him from arrows during his noon prayers. Sa'īd had died of injuries caused to him by the arrows and Zuhayr was also grievously hurt. When

he saw that the enemy were dangerously near al-Ḥusayn, he made his last charge and fell fighting.

(69) Salmān ibn Muzārib ibn Qays al-Bajalī, a cousin of Zuhayr ibn al-Qayn had accompanied Zuhayr and he was martyred in the afternoon.

(70) 'Amr ibn Qurāẓa ibn Ka'b al-Anṣārī was a son of a Companion of the Prophet and belonged to Kūfa. He reached Karbalā' in Muḥarram 61 A.H. and was sent by al-Ḥusayn to 'Umar ibn Sa'd to suggest to him to open talks for peace. In the afternoon of the 10th Muḥarram, 'Amr joined battle and after doing some fighting he went back to al-Ḥusayn to protect him from the arrows, using his own body as a shield till he was martyred.

(71) Nāfi' ibn Hilāl al-Jamali was the chief of his tribe and knew the Qur'ān by heart. He had fought on 'Alī's side in the battles of the Camel, Ṣiffīn and Nahrawān and joined al-Ḥusayn on his journey to Iraq. When the enemy started to prevent water reaching al-Ḥusayn, he went with 'Abbās and twenty others to take water by force. They pushed back the guards posted at the river and succeeded in bringing some water for al-Ḥusayn's camp. Nāfi' was an expert bowman and in the afternoon of 10th Muḥarram he killed twelve men of the enemy besides wounding many others with his arrows. He was captured by the enemy and both his arms were broken. He was taken to 'Umar ibn Sa'd, where Shimr killed him while Nāfi' thanked God that he was dying at the hands of the worst of His creatures.

(72) Shawdhab ibn 'Abd Allāh was a slave of 'Ābis ibn Abi Shabīb al-Shakrī and had accompanied his master to Mecca. The latter had brought al-Ḥusayn a letter from Kūfa written by Muslim ibn 'Aqīl. Both master and slave had accompanied al-Ḥusayn on his journey to Karbalā'. When questioned by his master on 10th Muḥarram about what he proposed to do, Shawdhab at once replied that he had no intention except to fight for al-Ḥusayn and be put to the sword. Shawdhab then paid his last respects to al-Ḥusayn and went out to fight and achieved martyrdom.

(73) 'Abis ibn Abī Shabīb al-Shakhrī was among the leaders of the Shī'a of Kūfa, a practised speaker, prayerful, and accustomed to keep awake at night. When Muslim ibn 'Aqīl had read over al-Ḥusayn's letter to a gathering of the residents of Kūfa, he had made a forceful speech and had assured Muslim of

his help so long as he lived. After 18,000 men had taken the oath of allegiance to al-Ḥusayn, Muslim wrote a letter to al-Ḥusayn, sending it by 'Ābis who proceeded on the errand with his slave Shawdhab, and they delivered the letter to al-Ḥusayn at Mecca. 'Ābis and his slave then journeyed with al-Ḥusayn from Mecca to Karbalā'. After Shawdhab had sacrificed himself, 'Abis requested al-Ḥusayn to permit him to take to the battlefield. Receiving the permission, 'Ābis approached the ranks of the opposing army, and challenged every one of the enemy's forces to meet him in individual combat. Such, however, was the awe struck by him that nobody dared to accept his challenge. 'Umar ibn Sa'd ordered that 'Ābis be stoned to death. Accordingly stones began to rain on 'Ābis from all sides. At this cowardly manner of fighting, 'Ābis put off his helmet and charged at the enemy, flourishing his sword, and drove hundreds of soldiers before him. Then a huge number of soldiers surrounded and killed him.

(74) 'Abd Allāh and

(75) 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Urwa were the grandsons of Ḥarāq al-Ghiffarī, a companion of 'Alī. They reached Karbalā' together and sacrificed themselves al-Husayn in the afternoon of 10th Muḥarram.

(76) Ḥanẓala ibn Asad al-Shaybānī was a leading member of the Shī'a of Kūfa, and a good speaker. He knew the Qur'ān by heart. He joined al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā', and on the 10th Muḥarram in the afternoon, after many friends of al-Ḥusayn had been killed, he addressed the enemy, severely admonishing them for the sinful course they had taken. He asked them to be afraid of God's anger on the Day of Judgement, and to desist from slaying al-Ḥusayn. Then he went to fight, and was, after some time, killed.

(77) Saif ibn al-Hārith ibn Sārī' and

(78) Mālik ibn 'Abd ibn Sārī' ibn Jābir al-Hamadānī were first cousins. They joined al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā' when negotiations for peace were in progress between al-Ḥusayn and 'Umar ibn Sa'd. Both of them died fighting for al-Ḥusayn.

(79) Jawn, an Abyssinian, was a slave of Faḍl ibn 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib who sold him to 'Alī. Alī gifted him to Abū Dharr. After Abū Dharr's death, Jawn returned to Medina to serve 'Alī, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn in succession. On 10th Muḥarram, he insisted on sacrificing himself for al-Ḥusayn so as

to deserve paradise. He found it impossible to forsake al-Ḥusayn in the time of his adversity. He went into battle and after some time he got killed.

(80) A Turkish slave was given to al-Ḥusayn by his son, 'Alī. He knew the Qur'ān by heart. Upon getting permission to fight, he entered the battlefield, and after killing many soldiers of the enemy he fell down mortally wounded. Al-Ḥusayn went to him, and put his arms round his neck, while his face touched the face of the dying slave, he opened his eyes, smiled and expired.

(81) Anas ibn al-Ḥārith al-Asadī had been amongst the Prophet's Companions and recounted his traditions. he had heard the Prophet foretell the sacrifice to be offered by al-Husayn, and had been desirous to be on his side, should that event happen in his life-time.

Anas was far advanced in age when the Battle of Karbalā' was fought. He reached Karbalā' with al-Husayn and getting permission to fight, he lifted his sagging eyebrows by securing them with a kerchief, and girded his waist tightly with his turban, and died fighting for al-Ḥusayn.

(82) Hajjāj ibn Masrūq al-Ju'fī was a respected member of the Shī'a of Kūfa, and a companion of 'Alī. He joined al-Ḥusayn at Mecca, and acted as *mu'adhdhin* of prayers led by al-Ḥusayn. He fought and killed many men of the enemy. At last he was martyred.

(83) Ziyād ibn 'Ārib al-Hamdānī was prayerful and abstemious and was esteemed for his valour. He put up a spirited fight and was martyred.

(84) Sālim ibn 'Amr ibn 'Abd Allāh was a slave of the clan of Banu Kalb of Medina. He joined Muslim ibn 'Aqīl when the latter fought for his life. After Muslim's martyrdom Sālim was arrested, but managed to escape and conceal himself. When he heard of al-Ḥusayn's arrival at Karbalā', he joined him and was martyred on 10th Muḥarram.

(85) Sa'd ibn al-Ḥarith was a slave of 'Alī who accompanied al-Ḥusayn from Medina to Karbalā' where he was martyred.

(86) 'Umar ibn Jundab al-Ḥadramī was one of the Shī'a of Kūfa, and fought on 'Alī's side in the battles of Camel and Siffin. In 51 A.H. when Ḥujr ibn 'Adī fell foul of the Umayyad government, he joined Ḥujr's supporters, but when Ḥujr was arrested and sent to Syria, 'Umar hid himself. He was among the supporters of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl and secretly joined

al-Ḥusayn after Muslim's martyrdom and was himself martyred on 10th Muḥarram.

(87) Qa'nab ibn 'Amr al-Numarī belonged to Baṣra, and attained martyrdom on the 10th Muḥarram.

(88) Yazīd ibn Thubayt al-'Abdī belonged to Baṣra. The circumstances in which he led a group of the residents of Baṣra to Imām al-Husayn and met him at al-Abṭaḥ near Mecca, have already been narrated in the account of the martyrdom of his sons, 'Abd Allāh and 'Ubayd Allāh.*

He went to fight on 10th Muḥarram after his sons had been killed and he also attained the martyr's crown.

(89) Yazīd ibn Mughfil al-Ju'fī was one of 'Alī's companions, and had been appointed to command the right wing of an army sent to quell an insurrection at Ahwāz. He had fought in the war of Ṣiffīn on 'Alī's side. On 10th Muḥarram he fought al-Ḥusayn's enemies and achieved martyrdom.

(90) Rāfi' ibn 'Abd Allāh was a slave of Muslim ibn Qasīr, the cripple. Arriving at Karbalā' with his master, he fought for al-Ḥusayn and achieved martyrdom on 10th Muḥarram.

(91) Bishr ibn 'Amr al-Ḥaḍramī al-Kindī came originally from Ḥadramowt, but had taken up residence at Kūfa. One of his sons was arrested within the limits of Rayy, but he sent another of his sons to arrange for his brother's release, preferring to stay in al-Ḥusayn's company which he had joined while negotiations for peace were being held at Karbalā'. At last he sacrificed himself for al-Ḥusayn on the 10th Muḥarram.

(92) Suwayd ibn Abī al-Matā' al-Khath'amī was advanced in years, given to prayers, and abstinent, who had performed conspicuous deeds in many wars. After fighting the enemy, he fell down so extensively injured that he was given up for dead. He had, however, some life left in him, and when he heard that al-Ḥusayn had been martyred, he raised himself with uncontrollable emotion, and started attacking the enemy near him with a big knife still left with him. He was then set upon by the soldiers and put to death.

Who were all these person who rallied to al-Ḥusayn's support in the face of untold hardships and the certainty of death?

One thing stands out, namely, that most of these persons

were by no means obscure or unimportant individuals. Eight of them were the Companions of the Prophet, viz., (1) Muslim ibn 'Awsajah, (2) Ẓāhir ibn 'Amr al-Aslamī al-Kindī, (3)Shabib ibn 'Abd Allāh, (4) 'Abd al-Raḥmān b.'Abd Rabb b.al-Anṣārī, (5) 'Ammār ibn Abī Salama al-Dulanī, (6) Muslim ibn Qasīr al-Sadafī, (7) Habīb ibn Muẓāhir, and (8) Anas ibn al-Ḥarith al-Asadī.

The Battle of Karbalā' took place fifty years after the Prophet's death, and those of his Companions who were alive in 61 A.H. must have been considerably over 50 years of age at the time of the battle of Karbalā'. Some of them must have been much older, like, (1) Muslim ibn 'Awsaja, (2) 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd Rabb ibn al-Anṣārī, (3) Ḥabīb b.Muzāhir, (4) Anas ibn al-Ḥārith, and (5) Suwayd ibn 'Amr al-Khath'amī. Men of this age-group do not allow themselves to be drawn into a battle merely on the basis of sudden impulses and temporary passions.

Amongst those who offered the supreme sacrifice for al-Ḥusayn, the following were the companions of 'Alī and are, therefore, ranked in merit to be only lower than the Companions of the Prophet:–
(1) 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar al-Kalbī, (2) Mujammi' ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Muzhiji, (3) Janāda ibn al-Ḥārith al-Salmānī, (4) Jundab ibn Ḥujr al-Kindī, (5) Umayya ibn Sa'd al-Ṭā'ī, (6) al-Ḥārith ibn Bahban, (7) Shabīb ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Nahshadī, (8) Na'īm ibn 'Aljān al-Anṣārī, (9) Ḥulās ibn 'Umar al-Azdī, (10) al-Nu'mān ibn 'Umar Azdi, (11) Qasīt ibn Zuhayr al-Taghlabī, (12) Jabala ibn 'Alī al-Shaybānī, (13) Kardūs ibn Zuhayr al-Taghlabī, (14) Miqsat ibn Zuhayr al-Taghlabī, (15) Abū Thumāma al-Ṣā'idī, (16) Shazīb ibn 'Abd Allāh, (17) Jawn, slave of Abū Dharr al-Ghiffārī, (18) Hajjāj ibn Masrūq, (19) Sa'd ibn al-Ḥārith, (20) 'Amr ibn Jundab al-Ḥaḍrami, and (21) Yazid ibn Mughfil al-Ju'fi. Many of them had fought on 'Alī's side in the battles of the Camel, Ṣiffīn and Nahrawān, and some of them had been his disciples.

Of the martyrs, quite a few knew the Qur'an by heart. They were (1) Burayr b. Ḥudayr al-Hamdānī, (2) 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd Rabb al-Anṣārī, (3) Nāfi' ibn Hilāl al-Jamalī, (4) Ḥanẓala ibn Asad al-Shaybānī, (5) Kināna ibn 'Atīq al-Taghlabī,

and (6) a Turkish slave.

The following among the martyrs were learned men and sources of Traditions, namely, (1) Muslim ibn 'Awsaja, (2) Habsha ibn Qays al-Nahmī, (3) Ẓāhir ibn 'Amr al-Aslamī, (4) Suwār ibn Abī 'Umayr al-Nahmī, (5) 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd Rabb al-Anṣārī, (6) Ḥabīb ibn Muẓāhir, (7) Nāfi' ibn Hilāl al-Jamalī, (8) Shuwayb ibn 'Abd Allāh and Anas ibn al-Ḥārith.

Brave Warriors and those noted for their war-like attainments and exploits were also represented among the companions of al-Ḥusayn about whose martyrdom we have so far written. They were (1) al-Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Riyāhī, (2) Muslim ibn 'Awsaja, (3) al-Ḥārith ibn Imru' al-Qays al-Kindī, (4) 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Kadan al-Arḥabī, (5) Mas'ud ibn Ḥajjāj al-Taymī, (6) Sa'īd ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥanafī, (7) Zuhayr ibn al-Qayn al-Bajalī, (8) 'Ābis ibn Abī Shabīb al-Shākrī, (9) Ziyād ibn 'Arib al Hamdānī, and (10) Suwayd ibn 'Amr ibn Abi al-Matā' al-Khath'amī.

Many of those whose names appear in various categories in the foregoing paragraphs were well-known for their prayerfulness, abstemiousness, fear of God and these men were a credit to their times in their various ways. Their lives were exemplary in all respects and they furnished living examples of Islamic morals and qualities. It was with these rather than the ordinary run of men that al-Ḥusayn desired to be supported in his war with Yazīd.

Al-Ḥusayn could select only the pick and flower of the God-fearing, devout, abstemious men of his time as his companions, with a fair sprinkling of men, much advanced in years, ready to lay down their lives, so that their appearance in the battlefield should by itself open the eyes of the Muslims and force them to ponder the plight to which Islam had been reduced.

History has recorded some anecdotes about the reactions of the army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd when some companions of al-Ḥusayn came to grief. These reactions are highly complimentary, and were recorded by those who could not have been keen to praise al-Ḥusayn and his companions. Nor could they have been solicitous of recording all such traditions. The

immense esteem in which some of the companions of al-Ḥusayn were held by the people in general is reflected in such spontaneous tributes as that paid to Muslim ibn 'Awsaja by a commander of 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army, Shabath ibn Rib'ī, when seeing men of his army rejoicing at the death of that companion of al-Ḥusayn, he exclaimed, "What a pity! a man like Muslim ibn 'Awsaja is dead and you indulge in expressions of happiness! I have myself seen the feats he performed in the cause of Islam." If al-Ḥusayn had gone to Karbalā' with the members of his family alone, it might have been said, as is indeed even now some try to argue that the battle was a feud between two branches of the same family – the Hashimites and the Umayyads – who were perpetually at war with each other. But al-Ḥusayn had with him distinguished persons drawn from almost all the tribes and places of Arabia and the uniting bond between them was none other than the respect for principles and the existence of a special object – fulfilment of religious duty.

The significance of these bonds which united his supporters in Karbalā' to al-Husayn was underscored by the fact that al-Husayn pressed every one of his companions on several occasions, and even after nightfall on 9th Muḥarram to leave him alone to face the enemy. It was part of al-Ḥusayn's method and design to make people think for themselves, to take decisions according to the voice of their own conscience, wholly uninfluenced by extraneous circumstances and to take full responsibility for their actions. On 10th Muḥarram, it was not that al-Ḥusayn presented so many of his supporters in order to achieve his object, but rather every one of his companions, of his own free will, sacrificed himself for the objects which al-Ḥusayn had in view. The stimulus for their acts, individually and jointly, was provided by the voice of conscience of every one of them, and this was the major reason for their constancy and determination.

★ Of Nos. 34–38

1 *Ṭabarī*, II 335
2 *Ṭabarī*, II 335–7
3 *Ṭabarī*, II 342
4 *Ṭabarī*, II 343
5 *Ṭabarī*, II 344
6 *Ṭabarī*, II 346
7 *Ṭabarī*, II 338–9
8 *Ṭabarī*, II 356
9 *Ṭabarī*, II 307
10 *Ṭabarī*, II 355–6
11 *Ṭabarī*, II 345
12 *Ṭabarī*, II 235–6

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SACRIFICES OFFERED BY THE HĀSHIMITES

WHEN after giving battle to the army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd on the 10th of Muḥarram 61 A.H. at Karbalā', all the friends of al-Ḥusayn had attained martyrdom, his relations took to the field of battle to fight the enemy and sacrifice themselves for al-Ḥusayn. It is a rare manifestation of the devotion and loyalty of al-Ḥusayn's companions for him that so long as even one of them remained alive, none of the Hāshimites was left to come to grief.

Brief accounts of the lives of al-Ḥusayn's relations and of their *jihād* in the order in which they took to the battlefield follow.

(1) 'Alī al-Akbar was a son of al-Ḥusayn and the first of the Hashimite martyrs.[1] His mother, Laylā, was a daughter of a sister of the ruler of Syria, Mu'āwiya, and a cousin of Yazid. He was held in esteem by friend and foe alike. Mu'āwiya once told his courtiers that 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn was the most rightful person for the Caliphate, as he was a grandson of the Prophet and combined in himself the valour of the Hāshimites, the liberality of the Umayyads and the self-respect of the tribe of Thaqīf from which his mother had sprung.

According to al-Mufīd, 'Alī al-Akbar was nineteen years old when the tragedy of Karbalā' took place. He was unmatched in manly beauty and grace.[2] He was especially dear to al-Ḥusain because he bore a marked resemblance to the Prophet in his features and bearing. He was called 'Alī al-Akbar as he was older than his brother 'Alī al-Asghar ('Abd Allāh) who was also martyred at Karbala. He was, however, younger than his brother, 'Alī Zayn al-'Abidīn.

After al-Ḥusayn's friends had sacrificed themselves, 'Alī al-Akbar was the first among his relatives to request al-Ḥusayn

to permit him to perform the *Jihād*. Raising his hands, al-Ḥusayn said, "God! be my witness of the cruel oppression of these men towards whom goes that handsome youth who most of all resembles Thy prophet in looks and nature. When we longed to see Thy prophet, we used to look at his face." This brief prayer speaks volumes about the anguish of al-Ḥusayn's soul and restraint.

'Alī al-Akbar then introduced himself to the enemy with the couplets meaning, "I am Alī, son of al-Ḥusayn and grandson of 'Alī. By the God of Ka'ba, we have the best claim to succeed his Prophet. By God the progeny of one of illegitimate birth cannot decide matters about us.[3]"

Here no words have been spent to impress the reader with the valour of the speaker, because it was unnecessary to do so after the announcement that the speaker was a Hāshimite. 'Alī al-Akbar went straight to the heart of the matter in dispute, and claimed for Hāshimites the best title to succeed the prophet as his Caliphs, decrying, with brief and telling references, Yazīd's pretensions to the Caliphate.

'Alī al-Akbar attacked the enemy several times, always intoning the couplets already mentioned. Although profusely wounded, he persisted in making attacks upon the enemy in quick succession, till, getting an opportunity Murra ibn Munqidh, a soldier, struck him with a lance which pierced his chest. 'Alī al-Akbar fell down from his horse, and the enemies surrounded him and cut his body with their swords into pieces.

'Alī al-Akbar's death was naturally a great calamity for al-Ḥusayn who exclaimed, "May God destroy the men who killed thee, my son! Life after thee is as worthless as dust.[4]" The dead body of 'Alī al-Akbar was then picked up by several young Hāshimites and brought to a tent treated as the observation post of al-Ḥusayn's army.

(2) 'Abd Allāh ibn Muslim ibn 'Aqīl was a son of Ruqayya, daughter of 'Alī b.Abī Ṭālib, and, therefore, in addition to being a son of al-Ḥusayn's cousin, Muslim, he was also a son of his sister, Ruqayya. He was the first martyr at Karbalā', from amongst the descendants of 'Aqīl. He was a very young lad at the time. 'Alī al-Akbar's death caused such loud lamentations in al-Ḥusayn's camps that some young boys, including 'Abd Allāh ibn Muslim, rushed out in great sorrow and agitation. This gave

a soldier of the enemy an opportunity to kill him with an arrow shot at him.[5] Another version of the incident is that a heartless soldier attacked him with a spear and killed him.[6]

(3) Muḥammad ibn Muslim ibn 'Aqīl was a brother of 'Abd Allāh ibn Muslim by a different mother. After 'Abd Allāh's death, the progeny of 'Aqīl made a concerted attack on the enemy, and al-Ḥusayn called out to them, "Sons of my uncle, triumph over death!" At last an arrow shot at him killed him.

(4) Ja'far ibn 'Aqīl took to the field after 'Abd Allāh ibn Muslim had been martyred. He prefaced his strife with the words, "I am a resident of Mecca, and belong to the family of Ṭālib, the stock of Hāshim and the house of Ghālib. Assuredly we are the leaders of all the tribes and al-Ḥusayn is the purest of pure men." He was killed with an arrow.

(5) 'Abd al-Raḥman ibn 'Aqīl came to the battlefield and recited prefatory war verses. He then joined the battle and after some time an arrow shot at him by the assassin of his brother, Ja'far, killed him also.

(6) Muhammad ibn Abī Sa'īd ibn 'Aqīl fought in the battle of Karbalā'. He was mortally wounded in the forehead with an arrow, and shortly afterwards joined the ranks of the martyrs.

(7) Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Ja'far b.Abī Ṭālib was a son of al-Ḥusayn's cousin, 'Abd Allāh, by Khawṣā, daughter Ḥafsa bint Thaqīf, and she belonged to the tribe of Bakr ibn Wā'il. Muḥammad and his brother, 'Awn, who was a son of Zaynab, daughter of 'Alī, had been sent by their father to accompany al-Ḥusayn. The two brothers had met al-Ḥusayn shortly after he had left Mecca, and thereafter they journeyed with him to Karbalā'. He took to the battlefield after 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Aqīl, and after offering a brief battle met his martyrdom, having been killed by 'Āmir ibn Nahshal al-Tamīmī.

(8) 'Awn ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Ja'far was a son of al-Ḥusayn's sister, Zaynab, and entered the battlefield after his brother Muḥammad, and shortly afterwards 'Abd Allāh ibn Quṭba al-Ṭā'ī killed him.

(9) Al-Qāsim ibn al-Ḥasan was al-Husayn's nephew. He was a minor when the battle of Karbalā' took place, and was an exceedingly beautiful youth, so that a soldier of the enemy described his appearance in the battlefield as the glimpse of the new moon. He was not wearing a coat of mail when he went to fight and the strap of one of his shoes was broken.[7] These were

clear indications that he had not been armed for the battle, but had simply gone out to fight in his eagerness to help al-Ḥusayn.

'Umar ibn Sa'd ibn Nufayl al-Azdī struck a blow at al-Qāsim's head with his sword which felled al-Qāsim from his forse. Al-Ḥusayn rushed to al-Qāsim's help and severed the assassin's forearm from near the elbow with his sword. The hostile army charged at al-Ḥusayn to save the assassin of al-Qāsim, but they did so in such disorderly a fashion as in fact to trample the assassin himself to death.

The crowd then dispersed, al-Ḥusayn stood a while near the dead body of al-Qāsim, stricken with inexpressible sorrow. Then he took it to where the dead bodies of 'Ali al-Akbar and other relatives had been kept.

(10) Abū Bakr ibn al-Ḥasan was slain with an arrow. His mother was Umm Isḥāq, daughter of Ṭalha al-Tamīmī.

(11) Muḥammad ibn 'Alī b.Abī Ṭālib was younger than his brother, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya. After 'Alī's death, he resided successively with his brothers, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. On the 10th of Muharram he took part in the *jihād* at Karbalā', and after disposing of many enemies, he was himself killed with an arrow. His head was severed and taken to 'Umar ibn Sa'd.[8]

(12) 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Alī was one of the four sons 'Alī had by their mother, Umm al-Banī Fāṭima, daughter of Ḥizām, who belonged to a family known for its valour. The other three sons were: Abū al-Faḍl 'Abbās, the eldest, 'Uthmān and Ja'far, the last being the youngest of them.

'Abd Allāh ibn Abī Mahl, a leading person of Kūfa, was present in the court of 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād when Shimr left for Karbalā', with a letter addressed to 'Umar ibn Sa'd directing him to put to death al-Ḥusayn and his companions if they refused to take the oath of allegiance to Yazīd. 'Abd Allāh ibn Abi al-Mahl obtained from 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād a guarantee for the safety of the sons of Umm al-Banīn who were then with al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā', as their mother was related to him, and he sent that guarantee of security to 'Abbās and his brothers through one of his slaves. The four brothers, however, told the messenger that they did not require Ibn Ziyad's warrant for security, and that God's safe-keeping was quite sufficient for them. Shimr also belonged to the same family as Umm

al-Banīn, and after delivering 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād's letter to 'Umar ibn Sa'd, he met 'Abbās and his brothers to tell them that they had been guaranteed security. They spurned the security as it had not been extended to al-Ḥusayn.[9]

On the 10th of Muḥarram, 'Abbās sent his brothers to fight for al-Ḥusayn before he himself went to sacrifice himself. 'Abd Allāh who was the eldest after 'Abbās took to the field of battle and after a fierce fight he met a martyr's death.

(13) 'Uthmān ibn 'Alī was so named because 'Uthmān ibn Maẓ'ūn an illustrious Companion of the Prophet, was 'Alī's personal friend. He fought for al-Ḥusayn and fell wounded with an arrow. He was then beheaded.
(14) Ja'far ibn 'Alī participated in the battle of Karbalā' after 'Uthmān ibn 'Alī and was killed.
(15) Abū al-Faḍl 'Abbās was born in 26 A.H., and was fourteen years old when 'Alī was martyred. Al-Hasan then looked after him, and after al-Ḥasan's death in 50 A.H., 'Abbās spent his life with al-Husayn. He was 34 years of age when the tragic events of Karbalā' occurred.

'Abbās was noted for beauty, grace, height, strength and valour and was called the *Qamar* (full moon) of the Hāshimites. Al-Husayn made him the standard-bearer of his small army and on the 10th of Muḥarram, 'Abbās held that standard high with rare valour and distinction. His devotion to al-Ḥusayn made him follow the latter in the battlefield like his shadow. When all other friends and relatives of al-Ḥusayn had died as martyrs, 'Abbās stood alone in front of his brother to protect him. Finding life to be unbearable he requested al-Ḥusayn for permission to fight. The permission was very reluctantly given, and al-Ḥusayn asked him to fetch some water. 'Abbās took a water-skin and proceeded towards the river. He succeeded in fighting his way to the river and filled the water-skin with water. He was himself exceedingly thirsty and took a handful of water to his lips as if to drink it, but reminded of the thirst of al-Husayn and his children, he at once threw away the water, tasting not a drop of it. Carrying the water-skin on his shoulders he emerged from the river and made for al-Ḥusayn's camp. The enemy now concentrated all their efforts on preventing even a drop of water from reaching al-Ḥusayn. They, therefore,

surrounded 'Abbās who was encumbered with the water-skin flung on his shoulders with the standard of al-Husain's army in one of his hands. 'Abbās, however, made vigorous attacks on the enemy to disentangle himself from the hostile throng but Ḥukaym ibn Ṭufayl severed his right hand with his sword. In order to maintain the dignity of the standard, 'Abbās transferred it to his left hand which was also, shortly afterwards, severed by Zayn ibn Warqa al-Juhnī. 'Abbās strove to support the standard of his army with his breast by leaning on the back of his horse when a blow with a club threw him to the ground. When al-Ḥusayn reached Abbas, he was at the last gasp.

It has been noted by 'Alī in the *Nahj al-Balāgha* that the Prophet of Islam used to keep the members of his household and family in the forefront of wars on occasions of danger, using them to shield his Companions. A departure from this principle was made in the battle of Karbalā'. Al-Ḥusayn's supporters and friends wet out first to give battle to the enemy and to achieve the glory of martyrdom. They were followed by al-Ḥusayn's relatives, and last of all went al-Ḥusayn to wage the holy war. The reasons for this departure can be traced to the radical difference between the anticipated result of the Battle of Karbalā' and the results that could be reasonably expected of the wars fought earlier. In all other wars, it was reasonably expected that some of the participants would remain safe and alive at the end of the engagement. In order, therefore, to ensure that most of those who remained safe and unscathed were his Companions, the Prophet used his relatives to meet the most perilous situations. On the 10th of Muḥarram, everyone of al-Ḥusayn's followers, friends and relatives alike, had volunteered to court death, and no question arose of al-Ḥusayn's relatives being sent out first to fight in order to save his friends. The circumstances prevailing at Karbalā' were such that minute by minute the trial of al-Ḥusayn's friends and relatives, and indeed, of al-Ḥusayn himself, increased in arduousness with advancing heat and the torments of thirst.

Al-Ḥusayn had implicit confidence in the constancy and loyalty of his friends and relatives. He did not, however, consider it fair to expose them to trials so severe as to put avoidable strain on their power of endurance. It was, therefore, understandable that he should have decided to send them to fight in the order that he did, in the full knowledge of their, and

his own, powers of endurance.

It would have been simple enough for al-Ḥusayn to sacrifice his own life first of all in the path of the truth. This sacrifice would not have ranked higher than the sacrifice, say of Christ, who according to the Christians, was crucified for propagating the true faith, or of Socrates who drank poison in defence of his principles.

The special distinction and significance of al-Ḥusayn's sacrifice arose from the fact that he endured the sacrifice of everyone of his supporters and friends and relatives before his own eyes. To part with one's loyal supporters and old friends, one by one, for ever, to see one's young and beautiful nephews ruthlessly done to death, to witness one's handsome and promising son speared and hacked to death, and to see one's brother, the standard bearer of one's army, maimed and killed, to mention only a few instances of the heart-rending bereavements, were calamities, of which everyone was more unbearable than one's own death. Al-Ḥusayn's crowning feat was not just that he sacrificed his life in the cause of truth, but that, for the pleasure of God, he suffered the sacrifice, one after another, of men who were dearer to him than his own life and that he kept himself from offering the sacrifice of his own life till he had gone through all these harrowing experiences.

Nobody else seems to have achieved this towering degree of patience and fortitude. Could al-Ḥusayn expect it of anybody whom he should have left to die after him?

(16) 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥusayn, better known as 'Ali-Aṣghar, an infant, was in the hands of his father, al-Ḥusayn, when an arrow shot by an enemy killed him.[10] According to another tradition, al-Ḥusayn had raised him on his hands when at the instance of 'Umar ibn Sa'd, Ḥarmala ibn Khalīl al-Asadī shot an arrow aimed at the innocent baby, killing him.

This act of surpassing cruelty directed against an innocent infant has met with the strongest condemnation from people all over the world, without distinction of creed or clime. It exposed to abiding shame the enemies of al-Ḥusayn as men who had stifled all stirrings of conscience, all human feelings and had allowed themselves, for the love of worldly power, to be reduced to levels lower than those of the brutes.

Notes on page 140

1 *Ṭabarī*, II 256–7
2 *al-Irshād*, 358
3 *Ṭabarī*, II 356/*Irshād*, 358
4 *Ṭabarī*, II 357
5 *Ṭabarī*, II 357
6 *al-Irshād*, 359
7 *Ṭabarī*, VI 256/*Irshād*, 253–4
8 *Ṭabarī*, VI 257
9 *Ṭabarī*, VI 237/*Irshād*, 242
10 *Ṭabarī*, VI 257/*Al-Akhbar al-Tawal*, p.255/*Irshād*, 154

CHAPTER XXIX

THE LAST JIHĀD AND MARTYRDOM OF AL-ḤUSAYN

AFTER 'Alī al-Asghar's death, apparently the only thing which remained for al-Ḥusayn to do was to die. This purpose could have been easily served by putting up a feeble resistance to the enemy and allowing his head to be severed from his body following a nominal engagement. His instinctive reactions to his situation must have been very different. How could he have forgotten the exploits of Ḥamza, Ja'far and 'Alī and the matchless valour which marked the battles of Badr, Uḥud, Khandaq and Ṣiffīn?

He went to his tent to take his last leave before going to fight, and tore a Yemen sheet at several places in it, and put it on underneath all his other garments,[1] possibly hoping that this ragged covering might be left on his body when, after his assassination, it had been deprived of all other clothes.

Sad, broken-hearted and intolerably thirsty as he was when he charged at the enemy all by himself, sword in hand, al-Ḥusayn inspired feelings of such dread in the hearts of his adversaries that none of them had the courage to confront him. Noticing this demoralisation in the enemy, Shimr tried to encourage them. Re-arranging the ranks, he put the infantry before the cavalry and ordered the archery to rain arrows towards al-Ḥusayn. So copiously were the arrows showered on him, that al-Ḥusayn's body resembled that of a porcupine.[2]

Shimr then shouted orders to his soldiers to put al-Husayn to death. The multitudinous army of 'Umar ibn Sa'd then launched an attack upon al-Ḥusayn from all sides, and swords, spears and arrows were freely used against him. His horse must have been so profusely wounded that al-Ḥusayn dismounted. Even though he was on foot, he continued to attack his enemies, and once putting the entire army to flight, he got to the river. Apprehending that al-Husayn might drink some water to quench his thirst, al-Ḥuṣayn ibn Tamīm shot an arrow which struck

al-Ḥusayn's mouth from which gushed forth blood. Al-Ḥusayn took a handful of the blood and threw it up towards the sky, and thanked God.[3]

In the meantime Shimr advanced with a detachment of the army towards the tents of al-Ḥusayn's ladies in order to plunder them. Al-Ḥusayn admonished them, asking them to stick at least to the norms of chivalry and not to trespass against the ladies of his house. Shimr withdrew, ashamed of what he had done.[4] Shimr then surrounded al-Ḥusayn with his foot-soldiers who were pushed back and driven away whenever al-Ḥusayn confronted them. A soldier of the army said of al-Ḥusayn, "I have not seen any man who had been wounded, whose off-spring, relatives and friends had all been put to the sword, but who still appeared to be steady and unruffled and who confronted his enemies with such conspicuous courage as al-Ḥusayn. Men of the infantry surrounded him from all sides, but whenever he charged at them with his sword, they used to flee to the right and the left as sheep are put to flight by a charging wolf.[5]"

Meanwhile al-Ḥusayn kept on repeating words which were meant to give guidance to the enemy and also foreshadowed the aftermath of the battle. Then al-Husayn was powerfully and repeatedly attacked. He fell down, covered with numerous wounds and unable to stand up owing to weakness.

A son of al-Ḥasan, younger than his brother, al-Qāsim, named 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan, seeing his uncle, al-Husain, prostrate on the ground went running to him when Baḥr ibn Ka'b ibn 'Ubayd Allāh al-Taymī was going to attack al-Ḥusayn with a sword. 'Abd Allāh reproved him, but Baḥr severed one of his hands with his sword, and Ḥarmala released an arrow towards him which killed him.

Al-Ḥusayn remained prostrate on the ground, profusely wounded and exhausted, for a fairly long time because everyone tried to avoid participation in the heinous crime of putting him to death. At last Shimr called out to his men, "What are you now waiting for?" At this al-Mālik ibn Naṣr al-Baddī advanced, and struck al-Ḥusayn on the head with a sword which pierced his scalp,[6] and finally Zur'a ibn Sharīk's sword,[7] Sinan ibn Anas's spear,[8] and Shimr's dagger put an end to the life of that embodiment of righteousness. Thus the head of the martyr for truth, of the martyr in the path of God, was raised on

spear-head.

It was on Friday, the 10th of Muharram 61 A.H. that this dreadful event took place.

1 *Ṭabarī*, vol.6, p.240
2 *Al-Irshād*, vol.6 p.257
3 *Ṭabarī*, vol.6, p.250
4 *Ṭabarī*, vol.6, p.253
5 *Al-Irshād*, p.257/*Al-Akhbar al-Tawal*, p.255
6 *Ṭabarī*, p.257/*Al-Akhbar al-Tawal*, p.255
7 *Al-Akhbar al-Tawal*, p.255
8 *Ṭabarī*, vol.6 p.260/*Al-Akhbar al-Tawal*, p.256

CHAPTER XXX

AFTER AL-ḤUSAYN'S MARTYRDOM

EVEN after al-Ḥusayn and all his friends and relatives had met the death of martyrs, the oppressions of Yazīd, Ibn Ziyād and their henchmen did not come to an end. Only the forms of the oppression underwent changes; murder was replaced by loot, arson and hoisting the heads of martyrs on spearheads. Ladies of al-Ḥusayn's family, safe from indignities during al-Ḥusayn's lifetime were now relieved even of veils used by them to cover their heads, and were exposed to many insults and taken from place to place as ordinary prisoners.

Al-Ḥusayn's dead body was robbed of the turban, shirt, Yemenī sheet, and undergarments which he had last worn. His sword was also taken away. The army then plundered the tents occupied by the ladies of al-Ḥusayn's family[1] from whom they snatched away even the cloths that covered their heads.[2] The tents were then set on fire, and ten mounted soldiers trampled al-Ḥusayn's dead body under the hoofs of their horses.[3] Al-Ḥusayn's severed head was the first to be sent to ibn Ziyād through Khawalī ibn Yazīd al-Asbahī.[4] Then the heads of some other martyrs were also sent to him.

Among al-Ḥusayn's survivors were an ailing son, 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, some ladies and some children.

On the 11th of Muḥarram, 'Umar ibn Sa'd buried the bodies of the men of his army, after observing due funeral rites. He, however, left the bodies of al-Ḥusayn and his supporters unburied and uncared for. In the evening he took the remaining members of al-Ḥusayn's family as prisoners to Kūfa, and those heads of martyrs which had not already been transmitted to Ibn Ziyād were also carried away by the army. It was only after the armies of Yazīd had left for Kūfa that the headless bodies of martyrs were buried by some men of Banū Asad tribe who resided near Karbalā'.

The heads of the martyrs were presented to 'Ubayd Allāh ibn

Ziyād at Kūfa and he insolently poked al-Ḥusayn's lips and teeth with a stick. This infuriated Zayd ibn Arqam, a Companion of the Prophet, who recalled having seen the Prophet kissing those lips and teeth. Zayd then started crying. Ibn Ziyad spared him from being ordered to be put to death on account of his old age.

Before the arrival of the sad caravan of al-Ḥusayn's plundered survivors at Kūfa, it was proclaimed that nobody should stir out of his dwelling, and pickets had been posted at a number of places on account of some special apprehension. Most of the people believed that the prisoners for whose arrival the market place had been decorated were the women of vanquished enemies of Islam, and the majority of spectators were happy. Some of them were, however, full of sorrow as they had learnt the truth.

The heads of martyrs, held aloft on spearheads, led the prisoners belonging to the Prophet's family when the caravan entered Kūfa. A woman who had been witnessing this spectacle from the roof of her house, asked the prisoners about their family and learning that they were the descendants of the Prophet, she and with her the whole crowd of spectators broke out in loud laments. 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn in his weak and tremulous voice told the people, "It is you who have shed our blood, and now your women shed tears over our misfortune. God will decide between you and us." The crowd, hearing these words sighed and sobbed and cried all the more loudly. At this stage Zaynab addressed the multitudinous gathering of men saying, "...Men of perfidy and imposture! You weep? May God never stop your tears. Let not the sounds of your laments be silenced. Are you truly weeping and screaming in lamentation? Really it is good for you that you should weep more and laugh less. Did you ever try to find out how you have rent the heart of God's Prophet, exposed the venerable ladies of his family to the view of the strangers, and insulted them? Are you surprised that the sky shed tears? This is nothing compared to the punishment in the life to come which would indeed be very severe. There would then be nobody to help you. Do not be happy with this brief respite. God has no need to act in haste since He does not apprehend that He would miss the opportunity of punishing you. Undoubtedly He will leave you to yourselves for a time." It has been reported that during this

moving speech, the whole audience remained greatly agitated and all were crying. Of Zaynab's speech, Bashīr ibn Ḥuzaym al-Asadī said, "I have never seen a lady, who lived in seclusion, deliver such a forceful speech. It seemed as if her father, 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib, were delivering an oration. She silenced the crowd with a gesture of her hand and a solemn stillness prevailed.

The people were then addressed by Fāṭima bint al-Ḥusayn and Umm Kulthum bint 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn. This opened the eyes of the residents of Kūfa, and shattered the deceitful spell cast on the people by the Umayyads.

Ibn Ziyād then ordered that al-Ḥusayn's survivors be brought to his court. The insolent manner in which he had behaved with al-Ḥusayn's head, and Zayd b.Arqam's reactions to it have already been recorded.

When upon his enquiry, Zaynab was pointed out to Ibn Ziyād, the following interchange of speech took place between them:

"God be thanked that He has humiliated you, slain you and exposed your falsehood."

"All praise be to God who conferred honour upon us with Muḥahhad, the chosen one, and who declared us to be as pure as purity itself could as of right claim. We are not what you say. Disgraced is one who is sinful and unchaste. The falsehood is exposed of one who does not always have the truth as one's goal. Others, and not we, are such persons."

"Have you seen what God has done to your brother and other relatives?"

"I have seen that God has dealt with them only favourably. They were the chosen men of God who were destined to achieve martyrdom. They walked to the altar of sacrifice on their own feet. The day is not far off when you would confront them before God to answer for your evil deeds."

"God has fulfilled the desire of my heart by destroying your refractory brother and your other recalcitrant and rebellious relations."

"Yes, you have certainly put my kith and kin to death. If this satisfies your desire, please yourself with it."

'Ubayd Allāh then turned to 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, and not

getting the better of him in argument he ordered his execution. Zaynab clung to her nephew and asked to be put to death with him. Ibn Ziyad relented and spared the life of 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn who addressed the following memorable words to him, "Do not try to cow me down with the threat of death. Do you not know that it is our way to get slain and that martyrdom is our distinction."

Feeling greatly ashamed, Ibn Ziyad dismissed the court for the day, ordered the prisoners to be kept in captivity till the return of his messenger from Damascus, and that all residents Kūfa should assemble in the principal mosque of the town, where, ascending the pulpit he made the most disparaging references of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Afīf, one of the Shi'a of Kūfa, who had lost both his eyes, when fighting for 'Alī in different wars, stood up, and contradicted Ibn Ziyād and severely berated him. He was ordered to be arrested, but seven hundred warriors of his tribe rescued him, and took him to his house. He was, however, pitilessly done to death the same night.

Next day, al-Ḥusayn's head was paraded through the market-place and the streets of Kūfa and then hung at the entrance to Ibn Ziyād's palace.[5]

Orders came from Yazīd that the prisoners be sent to Damascus. 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād directed that al-Ḥusayn's head, held aloft on the point of a spear, be taken round the town and then the heads of all the martyrs be despatched to Damascus. The ladies were mounted on camels, and 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, indisposed and encumbered with a chain of iron round his neck, followed them under the supervision of Shimr and Muḥaffiz ibn Tha'laba al-'Āidhī.[6]

On its way to Damascus this hapless caravan of the Prophet's family passed through many townships and inhabited sites and at quite a few places angry demonstrations were staged at the humiliating treatment of al-Ḥusayn's survivors, and deep feelings of sorrow were expressed over the slaughter of al-Ḥusayn and his relatives and supporters.

After suffering great hardships, al-Ḥusayn's survivors entered Damascus at daybreak. The bazaars of the town had been specially decorated for the occasion, and the crowd of the spectators was so great that it was not until the aftenoon that the sad caravan reached Yazīd's palace.

Ibn al-Qiftî has recorded that when the heads of the martyrs along with the prisoners who belonged to the Prophet's family were being escorted into Damascus, Yazîd was watching their entry from his palace at Yahrūn, and as soon as he saw the heads of the martyrs, he read verses of which the central idea was that he thought he had squared accounts with the Prophet.

Yazîd's hall of audience had been specially adorned for the occasion and he was engaged in playing chess. The members of the family of the Prophet were presented to Yazîd like slaves and slave-girls from Abyssinia or Dailam or from among the Turks. A very misleading account of the battle of Karbalā' was given by Ṣahr b. Qays, while Yazîd recited, in a state of intoxication, verses meaning, "would that my venerable ancestors of the battle of Badr had witnessed how the supporters of Muḥammad's faith were thrown in confusion with thrusts given with spears, for then they would have greeted me with blessings, and might have said, 'May Yazid never get palsied'. The Banū Hāshim played a trick to win power. In truth, no intimation came to them, nor was any revelation made."

Hearing this, Zaynab commenced a very forceful speech to expose the hollowness of the foundations on which Yazîd's rule and authority rested. She said, "How truly has my God stated that the evil-doers at length come to falsifying and ridiculing divine symbols. Yazîd, do you imagine that since you have barred all the doors to us, in the sky and on the earth, and have reduced us to the predicament of prisoners, we are in the eyes of God also contemptible, and you are honourable, or that this ostensible success has been given to you due to your being near to God. Happy in this thought you glance at your shoulders since at the moment you only see the world subject to your commands, the affairs of your country in due order and good shape, and your rule and government made safe from all dangers. Have you forgotten God's warning, '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 indulge in sin to their heart's content, for in the end, humiliating punishment has been kept ready for them'. Does the excellence of the Islamic sense of honour require you to preserve the seclusion of your women and even of your slave-girls and imprison the grand-daughters of your Prophet and make them run about from pillar to post and wish to be patted on the back

by your unbelieving forebears? Do not take leave of your senses, for very shortly you would also fare thus. You will then long that your hands had been bereft of motion and your tongue deprived of speech, that you had left undone what you have done, and had left unsaid what you have said. What can be worse for you than that on the Day of Judgement, God will be the arbiter of your case, Muḥammad, the chosen will be the complainant and Gabriel his witness. Then those also who have aided and abetted you in your misdeeds and supported you in seizing power over the Muslims, learn how terrible is the revenge taken on tyrants and oppressors. Although the changes wrought by time have reduced me to the unenviable position of having to address such a one as you, wholly unworthy as you are in my eyes, I consider it a piece of great misfortune even to reprimand you, but I am unable to control myself. What a great pity that those who worship God should meet their deaths at the hands of the devil's hordes! O Yazîd, if you take a vow not to leave any stone unturned or any effort unmade, by God, you shall not blot out our memory, nor wipe out our existence, nor succeed in damaging our real objective. The stain of this unjust bloodshed shall stick to you till the Last Day and you shall never be able to wash it away. Your judgement is undoubtedly perverse, your life is very brief, and the crowd of those who surround you would soon vanish into thin air. The day is at hand when it will be proclaimed, 'God's curse lies on oppressors'. Thanks be to God who ordained that the end of our venerable predecessors should be in goodness, and felicity, and that of our last departed venerable soul in martyrdom and His mercy. He alone is sufficient unto us and our best support and help."

Yazîd then turned towards 'Alî ibn al-Ḥusayn, and in order to hurt his feelings, recited a verse of the Qur'ân, meaning, "Whatever misfortune befalls you is of your own making." 'Alî ibn al-Ḥusayn told him that the verse did not apply to him and to his party, and that the verse of the Qur'ān which did apply to him and his supporters was a different one meaning that the misfortune which overtook them was in fulfilment of a plighted word which had been written from the beginning of the world, and of which the fulfilment was necessary.

Assuming that nobody would have the courage to take exception to any disrespect he might show to al-Ḥusayn's head

at Damascus, he repeated what Ibn Ziyād had done at Kūfa. He touched al-Ḥusayn's lips and teeth with a stick. Abū Barza al-Aslami at once reminded Yazīd that God's Prophet used to kiss al-Ḥusayn's lips and teeth, and he added that on the Day of Judgement only Ibn Ziyād would intercede on behalf of Yazīd.

A stage arrived when Yazīd sensed that every one in his own court thought him to be guilty. In his attempt to defend himself, besides exposing his own depravity, he allowed himself to be so far carried away by the intoxication of success as to depart from the old Umayyad policy of keeping people in general unacquainted with and forgetful of the Prophet's family. He asked people, "Do you know why calamity overtook al-Ḥusayn? Just because al-Ḥusayn thought that his father, mother and grandfather were superior to my father, mother, and grandfather. Now these questions are set at rest by the fact that when his father fought against my father, the world knows in whose favour the verdict of war was pronounced. It is, however, true that his mother was better than my mother and also that his grandfather was better than my grandfather since no Muslim may consider any other as an equal of the Prophet. They, however, lost sight of the verse of the Qur'ān, meaning that God is the Lord of power and rule. He gives power to whom He pleases and strips off power from whom He pleases. He endues with honour whom He pleases and brings low whom He pleases. Verily, He has power over all things."

It would appear from this speech that with regard to the possession of qualities which confer distinction Yazīd did admit his inferiority to al-Ḥusayn. He based his final argument to establish his superiority to al-Ḥusayn on conquest and capture of power. This argument would also serve other known tyrants and scourges of mankind to prove them just and innocent. The verse does not make the achievement of victory and the capture of power the criteria of righteousness.

Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥakam, an Umayyad, was so greatly grieved by the atrocities perpetrated against al-Ḥusayn and other members of Prophet's family that he began to express his sorrow over al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom openly and to speak ill of 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād. Yazīd struck his hand at Yaḥyā's chest and said, "Will you not keep quiet?" Yazīd's wife Hind bint 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Āmir rushed into his court lamenting, "Alas, the head of the darling of Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, in this sad

plight."

The survivors of al-Ḥusayn were not speedily sent to their home at Medina, but remained for a long time in captivity at Damascus. Yazīd set them free and provided them with a house only when signs of rising restlessness and dissatisfaction with his rule manifested themselves in the country and the Umayyads realised their political mistakes. Ladies of selected families then went to ladies of al-Ḥusayn's family to condole the death of the martyrs, and mourning was observed there for three days.

Al-Nu'mān ibn Bashīr al-Anṣārī who had been removed from the governorship of Kūfa for not having treated Muslim ibn 'Aqīl upon his arrival at Kufa harshly was now directed to arrange to take al-Ḥusayn's survivors to Medina with due care and respect. Yazīd sent thirty of his men with al-Nu'mān ibn Bashīr who treated the members of the Prophet's family with respect and consideration throughout the journey to Medina.

This was part of Yazīd's unsuccessful bid to absolve himself of the crime of the slaughter of al-Ḥusayn and his companions and relatives. Speaking to 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn in privacy, he said, "May God curse Marjāna's son. If I had met your father directly, I would have agreed to whatever he had wished, and would never have consented to his death. In any case, whatever had been decreed by God has come about. Now you may go to Medina, correspond with me and let me know what you are in need of."[9]

Unprecedented in intesity and prolonged in duration were the wails and lamentations which broke out in Medina on the arrival of the caravan of al-Ḥusayn's survivors there. A lady belonging to the family of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, her hair dishevelled, was reciting the woeful verses meaning, "What answer would you give to God's Prophet when he asks you on the Day of Judgement 'How did you behave with my descendants after me? They have now been reduced to such a state that some of them are captives, and of some of them have had their blood spilled and are covered with dust. Was this the reward of my services that you should treat my progeny in this fashion?'"[1]

1 *Akhbar al-Tawal*, p.256
2 *Ṭabari*, vol.6, p.260
3 *Ṭabarī*, vol.6, pp.261–2/*al-Irshād*, p.258
4 *Akhbar al-Tawal*, p.256
5 *Al-Irshād*, p.260
6 *Ṭabarī*, vol.6, pp.264/*al-Irshād*, p.260
7 *Ṭabarī*, vol.6, p.265
8 *Ṭabarī*, vol.6, p.269/*al-Irshād*, p.263
9 *Ṭabarī*, vol.6, p.221

CHAPTER XXXI

A DETAILED CONSIDERATION OF THE CAPTIVITY OF THE LADIES OF AL-ḤUSAYN'S FAMILY

YAZĪD's object was not only to slay al-Ḥusayn on the pretext of the latter's refusal to swear allegiance to him but also to destroy that spiritual centre which being the guardian of the teachings of Islam, could not co-operate with any one in the exercise of unlawful power. The entire series of events which commenced with the rendering of al-Ḥusayn's stay at Medina a source of danger to his life, his journey from Mecca under similar conditions and the great slaughter at Karbalā' and the subsequent imprisonment and parading of the ladies of al-Ḥusayn's family from place to place, in captivity, were prompted without any manner of doubt, by Yazīd's directions. If 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād had not sent the ladies to Damascus in captivity at Yazīd's behest, and if the latter had not really wished to humiliate them, they should have been sent to Medina. Instead of receiving them considerately, Yazīd ordered them to be presented to him in his audience chamber in front of his courtiers and behaved insultingly towards al-Ḥusayn's head in their presence. It was only after a fairly long time that Yazīd gave a house for the residence of the ladies of al-Ḥusayn's family. Ladies of some selected families of Damascus then visited the ladies of al-Ḥusayn's family to give their condolences for the death of the martyrs.

Al-Ḥusayn had been advised against taking ladies and children with him when he started on his journey from Mecca to Kūfa. He however, stuck to his decision, saying sometimes that it was God's decree that they should be made prisoners, or else he would say that whatever had been fated, must come to pass. This attitude shows that knowing full well all the perils and drawbacks which attended the presence of ladies with him on his journey, al-Ḥusayn chose to take them along with him. Was it al-Ḥusayn's view that the presence of ladies with him would serve an essential factor in the achievement of his objective?

Al-Ḥusayn never intended to fight with material resources to win material gains. He had refused to pledge obedience to Yazîd to safeguard truth and righteousness. He had resolved to stick to his refusal till the last breath of his life, so that truth might be there – clear and unmistakable for all to see – and also in order that no one should ever be misled into holding that Yazîd's deed and conduct carried the sanction of, or were in any manner related to, Islam. It was of the highest importance for the fulfilment of his object that his enemy should find it impossible to misinterpret any of his acts. This object was most successfully achieved by the presence of the ladies of his house with him at Karbalā', and his righteousness, and the untold oppression and countless wrongs which he endured shone out with such brilliance that no amount of misinterpretation would throw even the shadow of suspicion or doubt on them.

The Umayyads had employed against the Hāshimites the very effective stratagem of presenting 'Uthmān as a wronged and persecuted Caliph, holding the Hāshimites in general, and 'Alī, in particular responsible for his murder. In order to lend point and strength to this propaganda, the bloodstained shirt of 'Uthmān and the severed fingers of his wife, Nā'ila, were exposed to public view at meetings held frequently to mourn 'Uthmān's death in the principal mosque at Damascus. Big crowds of people were kept busy crying and beating their heads and breasts in mourning over the dead Caliph. The 'Umayyads won people's sympathy by posing as successors of 'Uthmān and demanding revenge for his blood. The baneful effect of this false propaganda could not have been dissipated unless the descentants of the Prophet suffered some similar misfortune at the hands of the successors of Abū Sufyān.

By slaying al-Ḥusayn, the enemy unwittingly accomplished a revolution in people's hearts and brought about the diversion of public sentiment in favour of the Prophet's family. Intoxicated with success, the Umayyads were slow to realise this complete and unexpected reversal of public feeling. Till the 10th of Muḥarram they used to refer to 'Uthmān's murder in justification of their actions: the stoppage of the supply of water to al-Ḥusayn and his companions was held by them to be the retribution for denial of supplies of water to 'Uthmān, although no Hāshimite had anything to do with it. The enormities committed at Karbalā', beginning with the merciless slaughter of

al-Ḥusayn's companions and relatives, including his infant son, his own slaughter, the trampling of his dead body under the hoofs of horses, the plunder and setting on fire of the tents occupied by the ladies of al-Ḥusayn's family, the raising of al-Ḥusayn's severed head on a spear and the untold hardships and indignities to which al-Ḥusayn's survivors were exposed were so revoltingly cruel that the friends of the Umayyads were silenced and they avoided talking of 'Uthmān's misfortunes in the context of the events of Karbalā and their immediate sequel.

It is interesting to observe that while 'Uthmān's bloodstained shirt and the severed fingers of his wife, Nā'ila, were displayed by men who belonged to the party of the dead Caliph, and had with them no evidence to identify those who had committed the crime, the severed heads of the martyrs of Karbalā', raised on spears, and the captive members of al-Ḥusayn's family with al-Ḥusayn's head accompanying them, were led about by the murderers themselves, making any time-consuming investigation to ascertain the criminals or locate them wholly unnecessary. The result was that the sympathies of even those who, on account of their partiality for 'Uthmān, had favoured the Umayyads, were alienated from them and transferred to the Hāshimites. If al-Ḥusayn had not taken the ladies of his family with him, it would have been impossible that the tragedy of Karbalā' should have been so widely and effectively published in so short a time, and the depravity of the Umayyads made so forcibly and so quickly manifest to the people. It is important that truth came to be known and recognised in this instance for cases are not scarce in the lands of Islam, as indeed elsewhere also, in which the light of truth about an incident has been snuffed out, and nobody has succeeded in getting at the truth through the enveloping gloom. Al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī was poisoned, and even now the identity of the person ultimately responsible for the crime has been kept open to doubt. If 72 or 125 men, the estimated number of those who had sacrificed themselves for al-Ḥusayn and his principles, had been killed at Karbalā', walled in by the iron curtains of the weapons of Yazīd's hordes, so securely isolated from the rest of the world that, not to mention the possibility of human access to them, even the sending of news to them had been rendered impossible, it would have been very easy for Yazīd and his henchmen to give any twist to an account of the event, if it become necessary to give

any account at all. For only the murderers would have been the witnesses of the event and they could have imparted to it any colour that suited their object. Who would have been there as eye-witnesses of the entire events to give the lie directly to the falsehoods which might be given out by the enemies of al-Ḥusayn? They could well have presented al-Ḥusayn's conduct in a totally different manner. For instance, he might have been accused of contemptuous defiance of established authority. Or doubts might well have been raised about al-Ḥusayn's motives and conduct, despite all his great and unmatched sacrifices undertaken to usher in a renaissance of virtue and righteousness. In the pages of history Yazid might well have emerged as a defender of Islam, and al-Ḥusayn as a rebel and mischief-maker.

No substitute for the friendless and pure ladies of his family, led about from city to city as prisoners, their hearts afire with sorrow and passion, the blood of 'Alī and Fāṭima coursing through their veins, their tongues giving utterance to the most touching of speeches, reminiscent of the eloquence of the Prophet and of 'Alī, could possibly have been available to al-Ḥusayn for the propagation, after him, of the philosophy of martyrdom and the dissemination of righteousness and truth.

CHAPTER XXXII

BRIEF NOTES ON THE PRISONERS BELONGING TO AL-ḤUSAYN'S FAMILY

NOTES have been given in an earlier chapter about every martyr of Karbalā'. Now follow short notes about the prominent among the survivors of al-Ḥusayn who were held as captives.

(1) 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn was al-Ḥusayn's eldest son, born in 38 A.H. when his grandfather, 'Alī was the Caliph and was less than three years of age when the latter was murdered in 40 A.H. He was slightly over 22 years old when he accompanied his father on the journey to Iraq. It was not known when exactly he fell ill, but on the 10th of Muḥarram 61 A.H. he was too weak even to sit up, and could not, therefore, take part in the *jihād* at Karbalā'. After the slaughter of all supporters, friends and relatives of al-Ḥusayn, and al-Ḥusayn himself, 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn was held as a captive and was put in chains. He had to undertake the most painful and humiliating journey from Karbalā' to Kūfa and thence to Syria on foot with the ladies of his family. Not less mortifying must have been his experience of attending the court of Ibn Ziyād at Kūfa and of Yazīd at Damascus, where he, his mothers, aunts and other ladies of his family were presented as prisoners.

After he was set free at Syria he went to Medina to spend the rest of his life in prayers. He died in 96 A.H. His well-known titles are Zayn al-'Ābidīn and Sayyid al-Sajjād and he has left a collection of his own supplications and prayers known as the al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Kāmila which is greatly esteemed. Al-Farzdaq's *qasīda* (eulogy) about him is a classic in Arabic literature.

(2) Zaynab was the eldest daughter of 'Alī and Fāṭima, the Prophet's daughter. She occupied the most conspicuous position among al-Ḥusayn's survivors. She was very young when her mother died. Her father brought her up and gave her in

marriage of 'Abd Allāh, a son of his brother, Ja'far.

She accompanied al-Ḥusayn from Medina to Karbalā' and was then about 50 years of age.

Once, upon hearing from al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā' that he had finally prepared himself for death, as there was no alternative left to him, when Zainab slapped her face and tore her shirt in excess of grief, al-Ḥusayn had adjured her not to tear her dress or scratch her face or raise loud lamentations for him after his death. Zaynab took these instructions to heart and in the most trying of situations she did not betray any signs of unseemly trepidation so as to occasion rejoicings among the enemies at her sufferings. It was she who gave al-Ḥusayn the covering he wore under all his other garmet, and tore it at several places to make it unfit as an object of plunder after his death.

When after the 10th of Muharram, the caravan of al-Ḥusayn's survivors left Karbalā', preceded by the heads of the martyrs raised on spears, with 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, weak and chained, following on foot the camels carrying the ladies and children, and arrived at Kūfa, the seat of 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād's government, the town had been trimmed, the market place decorated and spectators thronged all points of vantage to see the caravan of those who, they were told, were enemies of the Muslims. In these surroundings which were wholly unfriendly and in the circumstances immeasurably depressing and mortifying, Zaynab delivered a forceful speech in which she did not dwell on her woeful condition, nor beg for mercy but in a scathing criticism she reviewed the scandalous deeds of her enemies and asked them to search their hearts and ponder over their atrocious crimes. All eyes that had been raised to witness the misery of the prisoners were bent towards the earth in shame. The same eloquence attended her speech in the court of Yazīd at Damascus.

(3) Umm Kulthūm was 'Alī and Fāṭima's second daughter, younger than Zaynab. Her name was Zaynab al-Sughrā and Umm Kulthūm her *kunya*. She was married to her cousin, Muḥammad ibn Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib and was widowed while her father was alive. After the death of her husband, she lived with her brothers. She accompanied al-Ḥusayn when he left Medina for Mecca and remained with him till his martyrdom. She also

gave a very stirring speech in the market place of Kūfa after Zainab.

(4) Ruqayya was a daughter of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib by Umm Wahb, daughter of Rabī'a. Ruqayya and a brother, 'Umar, were born as twins. She was married to Muslim ibn 'Aqīl.

With her husband she accompanied al-Ḥusayn from Medina, and continued to remain with him when her husband was sent towards Kūfa from Mecca. When in the course of al-Ḥusayn's journey from Mecca news arrived of the martyrdom of her husband, she continued to travel with her brother till, arriving at Karbalā', she sacrificed her son, 'Abd Allāh ibn Muslim ibn 'Aqīl for al-Ḥusayn on the 10th of Muharram 61 A.H. She shared with Zaynab and Umm Kulthum, her sisters, all the great hardships and mortifications which the survivors of al-Ḥusayn were exposed to, and ultimately went back with them to Medina.

(5) Laylā al-Thaqafiyya was the mother of 'Alī al-Akbar ibn al-Ḥusayn. Mention of her relationship with Mu'āwiya and Yazīd has been made in the notes concerning 'Alī al-Akbar. She was with al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā' and shared the hardships and indignities of captivity with the sisters of al-Ḥusayn.
(6) Rabāb bint Imru' al-Qays was the mother of Sakina bint al-Ḥusayn and her brother 'Alī al-Aṣghar ibn al-Ḥusayn ('Abd Allāh). She was at Karbalā', having accompanied al-Ḥusayn from Medina. She underwent all the trials that the surviving ladies of al-Ḥusayn's family had to put up with, but instead of going back with them to Medina when restored to liberty, stayed at Karbalā' in a tent at al-Ḥusayn's grave for one year, and kept up holding gatherings day and night to mourn al-Ḥusayn's slaughter.

Rabāb went back to Medina after a year and there also she spent her time in lamentations for al-Ḥusayn, and this lasted for a long period.

(7) Fāṭima bint al-Ḥusayn's mother was Umm Ishāq bint Ṭalḥa b. 'Ubayd Allāh al-Taymī. Al-Ḥasan al-Muthannā, a son of al-Ḥasan, asked his uncle, al-Ḥusayn, to give one of his

daughters in marriage to him. He was, however, prevented by modesty to indicate his choice. Al-Husayn selected Fāṭima for the proposed union as she resembled his own mother, Fāṭima, the Prophet's daughter.

When al-Ḥusayn was leaving for the last *jihād* he entrusted his will and other important documents to Fāṭima to be delivered to 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn when he regained consciousness. She remained alive long after the tragedy of Karbalā' and is considered as a reporter of traditions. Her son, 'Abd Allāh al-Maḥd, used to recount traditions on her authority.

When her husband, al-Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥasan, died she fasted in the day and spent the whole night in prayers regularly for a year in a tent pitched at his grave. Then she went back to Medina.

(8) Sakīna bin al-Ḥusayn was 'Alī al-Aṣghar's full sister. She was very young when the battle of Karbalā' was fought. The accounts of her life, after that event lack authentic confirmation.

Now follow brief accounts of ladies who were in some special manner connected with the events of Karbalā' although they were not with al-Ḥusayn on the 10th of Muḥarram.

(1) Umm Salama was an exceedingly good natured lady among the Prophet's wives, whom he had married in the second year after leaving Mecca. She remained particularly devoted to the members of the Prophet's household even after the Prophet's death.

Al-Tirmidhī has reported that on 10th of Muḥarram she saw in a dream the Prophet crying, his head and beard covered with dust, and telling her that al-Ḥusayn had just then been killed.

(2) Umm al-Banīn Fāṭima bint Ḥizām ibn Khālid had been selected by 'Aqīl at the request of his brother 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, as a lady sprung from a family conspicuous for valour, so that his offspring by her may also be very brave and highly gifted with martial qualities. She had four brave sons of whom 'Abbās was the eldest and they all sacrificed themselves for al-Husayn on the 10th of Muḥarram.

It is impossible to express the intense feelings of grief felt by

a mother who had lost four brave sons in one day within a few hours. It is reliably reported that upon getting the news of the tragedy of Karbalā', Umm al-Banīn used to go daily to the graveyard of al-Baqī' with a young son of 'Abbās, called 'Ubayd Allāh, to recite there an elegy about 'Abbās which was so agonising as to attract not only the people of Medina but also sometimes such a great enemy of the members of the Prophet's household as Marwān to hear it recited. It would be appropriate to add short notes here about those ladies also who were related to some of the followers of al-Ḥusayn, and did something of special importance in connection with the events of Karbalā'. These notes follows:–

(1) Dalham bint 'Amr was the wife of Zuhayr ibn al-Qayn. She had gone with her husband to perform the *ḥajj* in 60 A.H. and on their return they happened to stay at Zarūd where al-Ḥusayn was also staying on his way from Mecca to Iraq. Zuhayr ibn al-Qayn was then among the 'Uthmānī group of Muslims and had little to do with the members of Prophet's family. Al-Ḥusayn sent some one to Zuhayr to ask the latter to see him. Zuhayr was not disposed to meet al-Ḥusayn, and it was his wife, Dalhan, who pointed out to him how outrageously unseemly it would be for him to refuse to go to see the Prophet's grandson. Zuhayr thus spurred by his wife met al-Ḥusayn and returned an entirely changed man, a friend of al-Ḥusayn who sacrificed himself for al-Ḥusayn. Zuhayr divorced Dalham and sent her back to her mother, and accompanied al-Ḥusayn to Karbalā'.

(2) Umm Wahb bint Ma'bad was the wife of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umayr al-Kalbī. They lived at Kūfa. When 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umayr learnt of the war-like preparations of 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād at Nukhayla, and of al-Ḥusayn's arrival at Karbalā', he communicated his intention of going to help al-Ḥusayn to his wife who readily agreed and asked him to take her also with him to Karbalā'. Accordingly, both of them left Karbalā' one night and joined al-Ḥusayn and his friends. She was the only woman killed at Karbalā' and the innocent blood of this defenceless lady spilled at Karbalā' added a new feature to the atrocities committed there.

(3) The wife of Muslim ibn 'Awsaja came with her husband to Karbalā'. He sent his wife to live in the tents occupied by the ladies of al-Ḥusayn's family.

(4) Baḥriyya bint Mas'ūd was the wife of Janāda ibn Ka'b al-Anṣārī. She accompanied al-Ḥusayn with her husband from Mecca. She sent her young son, 'Amr ibn Janāda to sacrifice himself for al-Ḥusayn, after Janāda had himself met a martyr's death. She threw back her son's head to the enemy who had thrown it towards al-Ḥusayn's army and applauded her son for his glorious sacrifice which had made her exceedingly happy.

CHAPTER XXXIII

AL-ḤUSAYN'S PERSONALITY AND ACHIEVEMENTS REVIEWED

ALL sacrifices in defence of truth and righteousness before the tragedy of Karbalā' were made by individuals acting alone, like Zakariayyā' and John, and many other messengers of God including Christ who, according to the Christians, was crucified, or like Socrates who drank a cup of poison. The sacrifices offered at Karbalā' radically differed from all other sacrifices as they were made by a group of men and women and children of whom the men laid down their lives after enduring untold hardships and the women and children had to suffer the most unbearable hardships and deprivations with the indignities attending captivity.

These men, women and children belonged to age-groups sometimes far removed from one another, and their number exceeded one hundred, and among them, besides free men were frequently to be met slaves, Arabs and Turks, Abyssinians and Persians, belonging to all reputable sections of society. They had no common meeting point between them except community of purpose. Undoubtedly so many persons had voluntarily and with express resolve and choice merged their thoughts, intentions, ambitions and motives of action in those of their leader, al-Ḥusayn. It is, therefore, entirely correct to say that the world has no leader and no body of men to show who might even remotely resemble al-Ḥusayn and his followers.

It must be considered to be nothing short of the marvellous that the quality of al-Husayn's leadership was such that he received devotion from a large number of his supporters, so divided in sex, age, origin, background and social standing so that not a single instance may be cited when any of his supporters expressed any sentiment which might have had to least tendency to be contrary to his own views.

It is remarkable that while al-Ḥusayn addressed many speeches to his enemies to persuade them to give up oppressing

him, he did not even once speak to his friends and relatives to exhort them to his support. On the contrary, he took every opportunity to discourage them from keeping him company, while they lost no occasion to express to him their strongest sentiments of affection. By the example of his own unchangeable determination to uphold truth and righteousness, al-Ḥusayn mentally trained his followers to tread in the path of goodness and defend truth and righteousness for their own sake and to sacrifice themselves for these objects. In the battle of Karbalā', therefore, everyone of those who were with al-Ḥusayn stepped forward willingly to meet death looking at it straight in the eye, thoroughly confident of the rightfulness of his cause.

The matchless pre-eminence of al-Ḥusayn's personality.

Al-Ḥusayn would have been singled out for nobility of character if he had raised his lonely voice against the Caliphate of Yazid after it had been acquiesced in by most people, but he rose to higher eminence, when he persisted in his challenge and confronted Yazid's multitudinous hordes.

Al-Ḥusayn would have acquired a very high position as a martyr if after suffering all his trials, he had sacrificed only himself. He rose to unapproachable heights of martyrdom by sacrifice of all his loyal supporters, dear friends and very near relatives and his own sacrifice at Karbalā'.

Al-Ḥusayn would have been an unrivalled leader of men if, in the most depressing, disheartening and forbidding circumstances in which he found himself at Karbalā', he had been able to retain his followers by addressing them with hortatory speeches. He rose to greater, indeed, unequalled eminence by taking every opportunity to dissuade his companions from keeping him company and meeting certain death. His own righteousness and firm determination to defend the truth left such a lively imprint on the minds of his followers, that every one of them acquired the stamp of his own firmness and resolution.

Al-Ḥusayn would have remained incomparable if he had courted death before his friends and relatives had been slaughtered. he acquired a higher level of achievement by adding to his sorrows the heart-break attending the slaughter of all his dear companions and near relatives.

Al-Ḥusayn added to his spiritual stature by unfailingly observing every teaching of Islam and every duty enjoined by it even when subjected to the most agonising afflictions. He

conformed to the egalitarianism of Islam by carrying the dead bodies of the slaves who had sacrificed themselves for him in the same manner from the battlefield as of those of his dearest companions and near relatives. He offered the noon prayers at the appointed time even when the battle was at its fiercest. Al-Ḥusayn was performing a *jihād* and at once making its objective known by practical demonstration.

Al-Ḥusayn's greatness would have remained unequalled if his *jihād* had ended with the sacrifices of his friends and relatives, and his own sacrifice. He added to his greatness by taking with him – against the advice of his friends who cared to express their views in the matter – the ladies and even children of his family on his journey to Iraq. He provided in this way for the publication of the object of his martyrdom in a manner in which none else could have done so, for every one of them was so profoundly conscious of his duty and upholding the truth that even in the court of 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād at Kūfa, and that of Yazîd at Damascus, not one from amongst al-Ḥusayn's survivors bowed his head before Umayyad authority and the defiance hurled by him at Yazîd was held out after his death, not only by 'Alî ibn al-Ḥusayn, Zaynab and Umm Kulthūm, but also by children like Sakîna and Muḥammad ibn 'Alî ibn al-Ḥusayn.

CHAPTER XXXIV

WHO WON AT KARBALĀ'?

IN all wars the participants have certain aims to achieve and success is apportioned to the party which attains its object and defeat to the party which fails to realise its goal. What were the aims of al-Ḥusayn in the Battle of Karbalā' and how far did he succeed in attaining his purpose? What did Yazīd wish to accomplish by engaging in a war with al-Ḥusayn? Did he succeed in winning his object?

Al-Ḥusayn did not oppose Yazīd on account of any personal enmity for him. If Husain had wished only to remain alive in the world or if Yazīd had only desired that al-Ḥusayn should sever all connections with the political affairs, no occasion for a strife between the two could have arisen. What made a war between them inevitable was that after getting himself foisted as a Caliph upon the Muslims, Yazīd also claimed succession to the Prophet of Islam. In the achievement of this object Yazīd saw al-Ḥusayn as the only real hindrance, even though the latter might quietly avoid pledging allegiance to him. Yazīd actively promoted the revival of pagan materialism, but al-Ḥusayn was the bulwark of spiritualism and worship of God. Yazīd practised and abetted repression and tyranny, but al-Ḥusayn had been charged with upholding the truth and righteousness. Yazīd was determined to destroy the laws and the distinctive features of Islam which al-Ḥusayn considered it his duty to uphold and defend. It was for these reasons that while explaining his aim in fighting al-Ḥusayn, Yazīd revealed his imperialistic outlook by saying that al-Ḥusayn had made people aware of their rights and had, therefore, endangered the existence of vast mansions and grand palaces, and that he had to fight al-Ḥusayn in order to protect his regime and safeguard his wealth. Al-Ḥusayn, on the contrary, defined his struggle against Yazīd in couplets meaning:

"God is well aware that whatever Yazīd possesses belongs wholly to others. He had no right to appropriate it to his own

use. If, embezzler as he is, he had chosen to act fairly, he would have changed his ways and mitigated his mischief".

Like all tyrants Yazīd aimed at paralysing the sensibilities of people and crippling their spirit to speak out. People had given up using their brains in reflecting upon the rightfulness of the claim of their ruler to power. Even if by some unusual chance one did think about it, one's courage failed to announce an independent verdict. Al-Ḥusayn's object was that men's sensibilities which had been atrophied and their courage to be plain spoken which had been sapped, should be revived and restored.

In 60 A.H. the Muslims frequently witnessed the wicked and detestable acts of the government of Syria, but they had been overcome by a general apathy and lack of feeling. The sudden occurrence of an unusual event was required to shake men out of their mental inertia and arouse their feelings. Al-Ḥusayn's martyrdom accomplished this in a most effective manner. His noble example gave men the courage to express their feelings.

Noticing that it was not al-Ḥusayn alone, but his old and young companions also who had sacrificed their lives with complete composure, or hearing reports of such behaviour, men came to consider death much easier in a righteous cause than they had ever before considered it to be.

Overdoing often produces consequences which are the reverse of what is intended. Yazīd piled oppression upon oppression against al-Ḥusayn in order that his miserable end should serve as a warning to others inclined to oppose him. Al-Ḥusayn confronted all his cruelties with such serenity and patience, that in his obsession with violence, Yazīd failed to recognise the limit to which people could possibly put up with oppression, and beyond which their numbed feelings would get aroused with such vehemence as to make oppression recoil upon and destroy itself.

Al-Ḥurr b.Yazīd al-Riyāhī, an officer and some men of Yazīd's army joined Husain on the 10th of Muḥarram. On the third day of al-Ḥusayn's slaughter when 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād showed disrespect to al-Ḥusayn's head, Zayd b. Arqam, an old Companion of the Prophet, remonstrated against it. When Yazid repeated at Damascus Ibn Ziyād's act of hideous disrespect to al-Husayn's head, not only Abū Barza al-Aslamī but the Christian ambassador of the King of Rome berated him

roundly.

This was al-Ḥusayn's victory. Falsehood came to be openly challenged and provoked spontaneous dissent.

Before the battle of Karbalā', who could have the courage to refer to al-Ḥusayn respectfully in Yazīd's court? After al-Ḥusayn's ruined and plundered survivors had been presented in his court as prisoners, Yazīd had to listen quietly to praise lavished on al-Ḥusayn.

One of the surest signs of defeat is that the vanquished party withdraws from the stand it had taken prior to the beginning of the hostilities. That which caused the war is found to be impossible of accomplishment. The war between al-Ḥusayn and Yazīd had been caused because Yazīd had insisted upon obtaining from al-Ḥusayn the oath of allegiance to himself. Al-Ḥusayn refused this with the greatest firmness. Did Yazīd stand fast by his demand? Yazid had wished to have the oath from al-Ḥusayn, not in the latter's capacity as an individual, but in his capacity as the spiritual heir of the Prophet. After al-Ḥusayn's death, his son, 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn occupied exactly the same position as his father. 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn and all survivors of al-Ḥusayn's family after the battle of Karbalā' had been reduced to the status of prisoners. Had Yazīd not yielded on the question of the oath of allegiance, he ought to have repeated his demand to 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn. Nothing of the kind was even suggested to him, which shows that Yazīd had retreated from his earlier stand.

As a result, it must be conceded that in the end, of the two contestants, al-Ḥusayn emerged as the victor and Yazīd as the vanquished.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE GUILTY FEEL ASHAMED

SO vastly outnumbered by Yazīd's hordes were the forces at al-Ḥusayn's disposal at Karbalā', that it could have been easily foreseen that notwithstanding the very stiff resistance expected to be put up, Yazīd's armies must in the end prevail. As for al-Ḥusayn, he had no doubt that the war would end in disaster for him. He, however, adhered to the course he had chosen for himself, and neither he nor anyone of those who died with him nor any of his survivors ever regretted what he had done or its consequences. On the contrary, not only his enemies and assassins but also those who had failed to assist him were smitten with shame.

Al-Ḥurr ibn Yazīd al-Riyāhī, an officer in the army of the enemy deserted his post and joined al-Ḥusayn on 10th of Muḥarram in expiation of the trouble he had caused to the latter by preventing him from proceeding to Kūfa and making him set up his camp at Karbalā' at a place not easily within reach of the river.

A sense of guilt was felt by those residents of Kūfa who had pledged their support to al-Ḥusayn through Muslim ibn 'Aqīl but who could not go to Karbalā' to help al-Ḥusayn or made no attempt to join him there. The sincerity of their remorse was shown when shortly after the tragedy of Karbala, they came to be called "the penitents" for their exertions to avenge al-Ḥusayn's assassination.

Among those who had lagged behind in going to al-Ḥusayn's help was 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Hurr al-Ju'fī. On his way to Kūfa, al-Ḥusayn had himself asked him for assistance but 'Abd Allāh did not comply with the request so as not to imperil his life.[1] Shame pursued him throughout his life and he expressed his remorse in verses meaning, "I shall continue to feel sorry that al-Ḥusayn asked for my assistance, and I did not earn the blessing of complying with his wishes.[2]" After the tragic events

of Karbalā', when Ibn Ziyād complained to 'Abd Allāh about his neglecting to see him for long and not going to fight against al-Ḥusayn, and hinted at the suspicion of sympathising with his enemies, 'Abd Allāh's emotions burst forth in couplets meaning, "The ruler who is a past master in perfidy asks me why I had not joined in the battle against Fāṭima's son, while I am struck with shame for omitting to assist al-Ḥusayn. Indeed, he who does not choose the right course must feel ashamed." He then left Kūfa.[3]

Qurra ibn Qays, who was 'Umar ibn Sa'd's messenger to al-Ḥusayn used to say afterwards in his life that he would certainly have accompanied al-Ḥurr to join al-Ḥusayn's company, had al-Ḥurr informed him of his intention to quit Yazīd's service.[4]

Raḍī ibn Munqidh al-'Abdī who put Burayr al-Hamadānī to death with the help of Ka'b b.Amr al-Abdī used to express his shame in the following words, "if it had not been so fated, I would not have joined this battle to get beholden to Ibn Jabir... I wish I had been dead and buried before the assassination of Burayr and the battle against al-Ḥusayn.'" Shabath ibn Rib'ī, one of the important commanders of 'Umar ibn Sa'd's army was heard saying, "God will do no good to the people of this country. How atrocious it is that for five years we fought against the descendants of Abū Sufyān on the side of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and his son, al-Ḥasan, and then we joined the descendants of Mu'āwiya and Ziyād in making an assault against al-Ḥusayn who, for personal accomplishments, was superior to every body on earth. This was an aberration which remains unequalled.[6]"

Greater than these men in his crime was 'Umar ibn Sa'd, commander of Yazīd's forces at Karbalā'. One of his friends, Ḥumayd ibn Muslim, has reported that on his return from Karbalā', when asked about the happenings there, 'Umar ibn Sa'd had said, "Do not ask me about anything. No traveller will arrive at his destination heading for such an evil end as I. I made the proximity of relationship of mighty little consequence and have committed a heinous crime.[7]"

The crimes of 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād, governor of Kūfa were even more heinous. He sent all the armies to Karbalā' under his own supervision and ordered 'Umar ibn Sa'd to put al-Ḥusayn and his comrades to death. When Yazid died, a general uprising broke out throughout Iraq and Ibn Ziyād had

to flee from Baṣra,. He took with him a guide. In the course of the journey he told the man that since al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī had opposed the ruler, the latter had ordered him to put al-Ḥusayn to death. He, therefore, maintained that the responsibility for al-Ḥusayn's assassination must rest with Yazīd and not with him.[8] This worthless explanation is only an attempt to shift his responsibility to Yazīd and springs from a sense of remorse at having taken a prominent part in the assassination of al-Ḥusayn. Otherwise when Yazīd wanted Ibn Ziyād to attack Ḥijāz with an army and fight 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, why should he have refused to oblige Yazīd saying, "I have slain the grandson of the Prophet at the behest of this malefactor, and I cannot now attack the Ka'ba.[9]"

The greatest criminal of them all was Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya. This is proved by Ibn Ziyād's statement already quoted. Learning that al-Ḥusayn intended to go to Kūfa, he made Ibn Ziyād the governor there to ensure that the harshest measures would be taken against al-Ḥusayn. It was on obtaining his permission that after the battle of Karbalā', the heads of al-Ḥusayn and other martyrs of Karbalā' along with al-Ḥusayn's survivors were sent to Damascus by Ibn Ziyād. Indeed he had himself treated al-Ḥusayn's head with great disrespect. After becoming acquainted with all the cruelties to which al-Ḥusayn and his companions, and after his death, his survivors, had been subjected, Yazīd betrayed no signs of displeasure with Ibn Ziyād. On the contrary, he allowed him to continue in the governorship of Kūfa. One of his brothers, 'Abd al-Raḥmān, who had been governor of Khurāsān since 58 A.H. went to Damascus on hearing of al-Husayn's martyrdom, and obtained a grant[10] of two crore dirhams from the treasury of Khurāsān where, according to an agreement with him, the amount had remained deposited. After 'Abd al-Raḥmān the governorship of Khurāsān was granted to his brother, Salm ibn Ziyad.[11]

In the beginning Yazīd greatly rejoiced at al-Ḥusayn's death. When, however, it appeared that a revolution was brewing, Yazīd's eyes were opened and he used to lament, "Alas! by putting al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī to death Ibn Ziyād has disgraced me and made me the object of hatred in the eyes of the Muslims. he has sown the seeds of enmity and rancour against me in their hearts. The good and bad alike among the Muslims look upon al-Ḥusayn's assassination as the vilest crime and they detest me

to a man. What alas has the son of Marjāna done! May God Curse him.[12]"

1 *Irshad:* 237
2 *Al-Akhbar al-Tawal,* 258
3 *Ṭabarī,* vol.6, 270
4 *Irshad:* 249/*Ṭabarī,* 244
5 *Ṭabarī,* vol.6, 248
6 *Ṭabarī,* vol.6, 250
7 *Al-Akhbar al-Tawal* 257
8 *Ṭabarī,* vol.6, 250
9 *Ṭabarī,* vol.6, 6
10 *Al-Wuzara Wa-al-Kuttāb,* 18
11 *Al-Wuzara Wa-al-Kuttāb,* 19/*Ṭabarī,* vol.6, pp.271–2
12 *Ṭabarī,* vol.7, 19

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE REACTIONS OF THE MUSLIM WORLD

WHEN the details of the inhuman cruelties to which al-Ḥusayn and his friends and relatives had been subjected at Karbalā' became known, every Muslim heart was thrown into a storm of grief and rage. The perpetrators of the crimes were abominated, and al-Ḥusayn's assassination branded them with abounding disgrace.

As the residents of Kūfa appeared to be greatly responsible for the great tragedy, they earned such a bad name for themselves that it took them centuries to get over the stigma Abū 'Uthmān al-Nahdī, a Companion of the Prophet, gave up residence at Kūfa, declining to stay where the Prophet's son had been put to death. The disgrace arising out of the tragedy extended to the entire territories of Iraq.

Some of those who had slain the martyrs of Karbalā' were abhorred by their near relatives. The wife or sister of Ka'b ibn Jābir who had killed Burayr al-Hamadānī refused to speak to him as he had fought against Fāṭima's son, and killed Burayr al-Hamadānī.[1] Margana, mother of Ibn Ziyad, cursed him for fighting against al-Ḥusayn and getting him killed.[2]

Even before Yazīd commenced shifting the blame for the assassination of al-Ḥusayn to Ibn Ziyād and to speak ill of him, some of his courtiers had already begun to make contemptuous references to Sumayya, grandmother of Ibn Ziyād, and Yazīd had to hear these aspersions in silence. Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥakam recited couplets meaning, "The heads severed from their bodies in the plain of Karbalā' were more closely related to us than Ibn Ziyād, born of a slave, sprung of a contemptible stock. Alas! Sumayya's progeny have multiplied like gravel, and the descendants of the Prophet's daughter have been wiped out.

Not only did Yazīd's contemporaries hold him in disfavour but also some of his descendants knew and hated his evil deeds. His son, Mu'āwiya ibn Yazīd publicly admitted the misde-

meanours of his father and refused to occupy the throne vacated by him. 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-Azîz, an Umayyad Caliph in the second century of the hijira, odered twenty lashes of the whip to be applied to one who had prefixed the words, Amir al-Mu'minîn (Commander of the faithful) to the name of Yazîd.

Al-Ḥusayn's assassination, and Yazîd's caliphate were considered as branding the Muslims themselves when the celebrated philosopher and poet, Abû al-'Alâ' al-Ma'arrî, writing in the 4th century of the hijra said, "The changes of the times present me sights so strange that I have lost all desire to witness them. Why! Did not your Qurashites assassinate al-Ḥusayn, and did not a malefactor like Yazîd mount the throne of your Caliphate?"

Obviously hatred so deeply and generally felt by the people against a regime responsible for the assassination of al-Ḥusayn was a prelude to a revolution.

Tabarî, vol.6, 247
Tabarî, vol.7, 7

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE SIGNS OF REVOLUTION

SYMPTOMS of an impending revolution were to be noticed ever since the survivors of al-Ḥusayn, consisting mostly of ladies, some children, and his grown-up, but very weak and unwell son were led about as prisoners on the streets of Kūfa. The prisoners were not allowed to cry and although it was arranged that the occasion should be observed with rejoicing, lamentations were raised by the spectators on seeing the sad survivors of al-Ḥusayn and hearing the powerful speeches of Zaynab, Umm Kulthūm and 'Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn.

Yazīd's officers were not allowed to enter many localities on the route from Kūfa to Damascus when they were leading al-Ḥusayn's survivors to Syria. At many places people offered armed resistance, and violence was actually used at quite a few inhabited sites.

Medina and Mecca were the nerve-centres of the Muslim world. Medina was the city of the Hāshimites, many of whom were descended from Abū Talib, and had left the city with al-Ḥusayn. Other members of the family were all at Medina.

'Abd al-Mālik b.Abī al-Hārith al-Sulamī who took the news of al-Ḥusayn's assassination to Medina says that when it was announced, such loud outbrusts of lamentation and bewailing went up from the homes of the Hāshimites that he had never before heard the like of it.

Howsoever insensitive the people of Medina might have been, they could not remain coldly indifferent to the heart-breaking grief of so many sorely afflicted souls for long. In consequence, the residents of Medina felt that it was necessary to inquire, as early as may be possible, into the conduct of Yazīd. In 62 A.H., a commission consisting of some of the leading men of Medina, including 'Abd Allāh ibn Ḥanẓala, left for Syria to proble Yazīd's conduct. Even though they had been paid large sums as bribes, the members of the commission, on their return from

Syria reported, "We have come come back from one who follows no faith, drinks, plays the tambour, listens to the music of female singers, sports with dogs and spends his time with drunkards and debauchees in idle chitchat. We therefore disavow the allegiance we had pledged to him."

Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūtī has recorded in the Ta'rīkh al-Khulafā' that the members of the mission had stated, "We elected to oppose Yazīd when we apprehended that God's punishment would assume the form of stones raining upon us from the sky, since he is one who deems it lawful to sleep with slave-girls who have shared his father's bed, and with his daughters and sisters, drinks and omits to say his prayers."

A member of the mission, al-Mundhir ibn al-Zubayr said, "Yazid has paid me one hundred thousand dirhams which would not deter me from acquainting you with the true facts. I tell you plainly that he gets so drunk that he misses saying his prayers." He also coroborated what other members of the mission had said about Yazīd.

The conduct of Yazīd so estranged the residents of Medina from him that at the commencement of 62 A.H. the people of Medīna turned out their governor, 'Uthmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Sufyān, a cousin of Yazid, and laid siege to about a thousand Umayyads who lived at Medina. This led to the taking of retaliatory repressive measures by Yazīd, followed by the demonstration of their abhorrence and hatred by the Muslims. Yazīd sent an army under Muslim ibn 'Uqba to suppress the rising in Medina. Burning with rage, he ordered that Medina should be given over to rapine and murder for three days without break and that the army might appropriate whatever it might capture, including the prisoners of war.

The captives of Medina must have included the ladies and children of the families of the companions of the Prophet and their followers. Yazīd's orders were explicit that they would be divided among the soldiers of the army. The remaining citizens of Medina took the oath of allegiance to Yazīd as his slaves, giving him plenary powers over their lives, properties and dependents. When Yazīd ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Rabī'a ibn Aswad, son of a daughter of Umm Salama', widow of the Prophet, refused to swear allegiance to Yazīd in this form, he was forthwith executed. When Yazīd heard the full account of these incidents, he recited couplets of which the general connotation

was that the onslaught on Medina was by way of revenge for the defeat suffered by his kinsmen at Badr.

Things at Mecca also had changed. When 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, who had long been desirous of winning the office of Caliph, noticed the general wave of great anger among the people against Yazīd for having brought about al-Ḥusayn's assassination at Karbalā', he considered it as a very suitable opportunity to advance his own interests, and delivered a powerful speech, castigating the residents of Kūfa for their inconstancy, and, eulogising al-Ḥusayn, and making open references to Yazīd's faults. As a result of the speech, the residents of Mecca, in general, agreed to swear allegiance to 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr.

These were very unwelcome developments and occasioned a great deal of anxiety to Yazīd. He tried to win over as many leading men of Mecca as possible, but the crime of getting al-Ḥusayn put to death was so heinous that even though some people did not wish to take the oath of allegiance to 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, they held Yazīd in abhorrence. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās was one such man. He was a son of the Prophet's uncle, 'Abbās.

Yazīd addressed a letter to 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās, complimenting him for not swearing allegiance to 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, and sought to make it appear as a mark of loyalty to himself. He promised to send him a suitable reward presently. On the day following 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās gave a biting reply to Yazīd in which he detailed all the steps Yazīd had taken to constrain al-Ḥusayn to leave Medina and Mecca and the cruelties to which he had been subjected at Karbalā'. He said that even after their deaths al-Ḥusayn and his companions were not buried, that the ladies of his family were deprived of cloths to cover their heads and were led about from iraq to Syria as prisoners. He expressed the hope that God would visit Yazīd with His wrath, and spurned the offer of reward promised to him. He added that for his unbelieving, sinful and unchaste forebears slain in the battle of Badr, Yazīd was taking revenge on the Prophet's descendants.

On reading this insulting letter, Yazīd's anger knew no bounds, and he thought of getting 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās killed, but as he was then engaged in hostilities with 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr, he could not proceed against him.

After the rapine and ravage of the inhabitants of Medina, Muslim ibn 'Uqba advanced towards Mecca as directed by Yazîd, but he died in Muharram 64 A.H. He had, however, nominated al-Ḥuṣayn ibn Numayr as the head of the army as directed by Yazid. Al-Ḥuṣayn invaded Mecca and besieged the Ka'ba, and on the 3rd of Rabi I, 64 A.H. not only stones but burning fire also was rained on God's House which caught fire.[2]

This was Yazîd's last achievement. he died on 14 Rabi I, 64 A.H. With his death the hostilities concluded, and al- Ḥuṣayn ibn Numayr went back.

Al-Fakhrî says that the total period of Yazîd's rule was three years and a half. In the first year of his rule he put al-Ḥusayn ibn 'Alî to death, in the second year he invaded Medina and abandoned it to sack and pillage for three days, and in the third year, he despatched an expedition against Mecca which set the Ka'ba on fire. Of these three atrocious crimes, the tragedy of Karbalā' gave such a frightful shock to the Muslim world that no sensible person who learnt the details of the tragic episode could help being affected by it. This act of Yazîd was not only a sin and a crime, but also a flagrant political blunder on account of which Yazîd and his depraved and contemptible advisors like 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād and Shimr antagonised even those who, despite their belief in the greatness of the God's Prophet and attachment to the faith of Islam, wished to stick to the last to their policy of non-interference with, and toleration of, the Umayyad Government, even though they entertained no sentiments of attachment or loyalty to it.

After Yazîd's death in 64 A.H., the pent up feelings of hate entertained by the people of Iraq against 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād found such violent expression that he had to flee from Baṣra unattended.[3] And he could not have been reassured when in the course of the journey he heard a camel-driver chanting verses meaning, "O God! Execrate Ziyād and his progeny who put to the sword, without any crime or fault, many Muslims who used to offer prayers regularly, stay awake at night and were God-fearing and abstemious."

The state of feelings at Kūfa in the circles to which Ibn Ziyad himself belonged may be gauged by the fact that when after the death of Yazîd, a movement was started that Ibn Ziyād be recognised as the ruler, Yazîd ibn al-Ḥarith al-Shaybānî, a member of Yazid's army, opposed it, saying, "We desire to get

rid of Sumayya's son. Certainly we cannot accept his rule.'"

The climax in the expression of disgust with Yazīd was reached when his son and successor, Mu'āwiya b. Yazid, who had been accepted as the ruler after Yazīd, ascended the pulpit and said, "O men! The institution of the Caliphate was God's strong rope, but my grandfather, Mu'āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān, disputed the title to it with 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib who, in the truest sense, was the best entitled to it, and adopted the reprehensible ways which are known to you all. In any case, he has reached his grave surrounded by his sins. The office of Caliph then went to my father, who also did not at all deserve it. He put al-Husayn, a son of the Prophet's daughter, to death. Finally he too reached the end of his days and his grave, trapped in his sins." He then broke down and cried, "The greatest misfortune for us is the feeling within us that he came to an ignominous end since he put the progeny of the Prophet to the sword, allowed drinking and profaned the sanctity of God's House. Now, since I have been a stranger to the pleasures of the Caliphate so far, why should I taste its bitterness? Look after your affairs yourself. I have nothing to do with the Caliphate. Even if the world is desirable and a blessing, we have already had enough of it and if it is in reality undesirable, whatever we have been receiving as our share of it is more than sufficient."

He then retired into the palace, and died forty days later. Turbulence then broke out in Khurasān and Umayyad governors posted there were turned out. People engaged themselves in fighting till at last the office of Caliph was lost to the descendants of Abū Sufyān for ever, and old Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam was acknowledged as the Caliph in Syria, and the office was held for long by his descendants.

1 *Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 6–7
2 *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol.1, 420/*Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 14
3 *Al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*, 276–277
4 *Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 28

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE PENITENTS

WHEN 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād had returned from his military headqurters at Nukhayla to Kūfa after the carnage at Karbalā', the Shī'a of 'Alī were stung with shame at their neglect to go to al-Ḥusayn's help. They held themselves responsible for the heart-rending circumstances in which al-Ḥusayn was put to the sword, as it was at their invitations and promises of help that he had left Mecca for Kūfa. They decided that the great crime of inconstancy, of being untrue to their plighted word and, in consequence, of leading al-Ḥusayn to his death, had so stained their name that they could not hope to rehabilitate their reputation except by putting to death all those who had a hand in the assassination of al-Ḥusayn and his comrades and, if necessary, sacrificing their lives in achieving this aim. They, therefore, contacted five men devoted to the members of the Prophet's household, Sulaymān ibn Surad al-Khuzā'ī, a Companion of the Prophet, al Musayyab ibn Najaba, a distinguished companion of 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib, 'Abd Allāh ibn Sa'd ibn Nufayl al-Asadi, 'Abd Allāh ibn Wālin al-Taymī and Rifā'a ibn Shaddād al-Bajalī. They and many others met at the house of Sulaymān ibn Surad.

Al-Musayyab ibn Najaba then made a speech sharply reproaching his townsmen with the crime of inviting al-Ḥusayn to Kūfa with promises of help, and not going to his assistance at Karbalā' where, after suffering indescribable cruelties, he was assassinated. He told them that the disgrace with which they had covered themselves might be alleviated if they put to the sword all those who had taken any part in al-Ḥusayn's assassination, or laid down their lives in making this attempt. Rifā'a ibn Shaddād followed with a speech supporting al-Musayyab. Other speakers also expressed similar views, and Sulaymān ibn Surad al-Khuzā'i was unanimously selected as the leader of the group.

Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad then rose and delivered a speech, full of sorrow and very impassioned. Some extracts from his speech might well be given here. He said, "We awaited eagerly the arrival of the members of the Prophet's household, but when they arrived, we acted with such indifference and laxity that in our land and not far from us, the Prophet's son was put to the sword. When he raised his voice in asking for justice and help, there was nobody to respond to him. The men of sin made him the target of their arrows and spears and killed him. They did not stop at this, but divested him of his garments after his death. Now if you wish to do anything, arise. God's wrath has been stirred. Resolve here and now, not to return to your wives and children till you have taken steps to win God's pleasure. By God, I conceive He will not be pleased with you so long as you have not paid the evil-doers in their own coin or have sacrificed yourself in the endeavour. Be forewarned. Be not afraid of death, for whosoever fears death, loses honour."

A great upsurge of emotion seized the assembly on hearing this moving speech. 'Abd Allāh ibn Wālin al-Taymī was appointed the treasurer of the movement.

Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad wrote a letter to Sa'd ibn Ḥudhayfa b.Yamān of Madā'in and to others as well to acquaint them with the rationale and objects of the movement sponsored by the group presided over by him. The letters in general repeated what he had said in the speech of which an extract has already been given.

Sa'd read over Sulaymān's letter to the Shī'a of Madā'in, and they all agreed to assist those who proposed to fight the enemies of the members of the Prophet's household. Sa'd sent a reply to Sulayman ibn Ṣurad accordingly. Similar was the response made by others also. All these proceedings were taken in strict secrecy, and a large number of persons fell in with the proposed movement, but no steps could taken to give a practical shape to its objects till after the death of Yazīd in Rabi I, 64 A.H. The movement became so strong with the demise of Yazid that it came to be openly propagated. It reached Egypt also, and great enthusiasm was generated there by the series of speeches on the subject delivered by 'Ubayd Allāh ibn 'Abd Allāh, who spoke of al-Ḥusayn's assassination in very moving words.

As decided previously, all the volunteers to the movement assembled at Nukhayla on 1st of Rabī' II, 65 A.H. However,

out of 10,000 men who had promised to turn up only 4000 men presented themselves for participation in the movement.[1]

Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad's suggestion that the greatest available criminal in connection with al-Ḥusayn's assassination was Ibn Ziyād, and that he should be the first to be killed was accepted.[2] On 5th of Rabī' II 65 A.H. these seekers of revenge for al-Ḥusayn's slaughter left for Syria.[3]

First of all they visited al-Ḥusayn's grave where they spent a day and a night in lamentation and prayers. The speeches of Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad and others spurred enthusiasm and fervour of the audience to frenzy.

These warriors put themselves in battle array at 'Ayn al-Warda. Syrian forces under Ibn Dhī al-Ṭilā' and al-Ḥuṣayn ibn Numayr arrived after five days to give them battle. After making his final arrangement, Sulaymān ibn Surad announced that in the event of his death he would be succeeded by al-Musayyab ibn Najab, Sa'd ibn Nufayl, 'Abd Allāh ibn Wālin and Rifā'a ibn Shaddād in the order in which their names are given.

On the 8th of Jumādā I the first encounter took place, and the penitents who numbered only 4,000 defeated the enemy who were 10,000 in number, but the following day a re-inforcement of 8,000 troops was received from 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād. This turned the scales against the penitents, who fought fiercely till late at night but suffered heavy casualties. The following day their position became worse, and Sulaymān ibn Ṣurad was killed. Al-Musayyab ibn Najaba succeeded him as the leader and fought bravely. He too was killed. 'Abd Allāh ibn Nufayl then assumed the leadership of the penitents when the news arrived that help from Madā'in and Baṣra would soon reach the penitents. It, however, appeared that no hope could be entertained of its arrival during the life of those engaged in the fighting. In the meantime 'Abd Allāh ibn Sa'd and 'Abd Allāh ibn Wālin had also been killed.

As evening had set in, the battle was suspended. Out of five persons nominated as leaders of the penitents, only Rifā'a ibn Shaddād had survived with only a few hundred men, many of whom had been wounded or left unfit for fighting. In so hopeless a situation, the penitents withdrew at night. Thus ended the first attempt to avenge al-Ḥusayn's slaughter.

1 *Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 67 2 *Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 69 3 *Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 74

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE UNJUST BLOODSHED AVENGED

THE penitents had not succeeded in their attempt to take revenge from those responsible for al-Ḥusayn's slaughter due only to the enemy's numerical superiority. Not long afterwards there emerged al-Mukhtār ibn Abī 'Ubayd al-Thaqafī who was destined to exact full retribution from almost all those who had participated in putting al-Ḥusayn to the sword.

Al-Mukhtār's father had distinguished himself in the battles fought during the conquest of Persia by the armies of Islam. Amongst the Shī'a of Kūfa, al-Mukhtār was known for his devotion to the members of the Prophet's household, and Muslim ibn Aqil had stayed for some time at his house, but al-Mukhtār had left Kūfa on private business before developments tragic in their consequences for Mulsim ibn 'Aqīl had begun to take shape. He returned to Kūfa only after Muslim and Hāni' ibn Urwa had both been killed, and found that 'Amr ibn Ḥurayth had erected a standard to guarantee the safety of the life and property of those who took shelter under it. Considering it expedient to do so, al-Mukhtār took shelter under the banner. He was, however, denied safety of person and property, and 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād beat him with a stick, causing serious injury to one of his eyes. He was then thrown into the prison, and was in gaol when the tragedy of Karbalā' took place. His sister was 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar's wife, and since Yazid did not then wish to annoy 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar, he ordered the immediate release of al-Mukhtār at his request. Ibn Ziyād, however, released al-Mukhtār on condition that if he did not leave Kūfa within three days, his assassination would become lawful. Accordingly al-Mukhtār left Kūfa as stipulated.[1]

For more than a year, al-Mukhtār travelled from place to place in Hijāz, all the time expressing his intention to avenge al-Ḥusayn's slaughter, and not to rest till he had done so.[2]

Al-Mukhtār was at Mecca when the Syrian army under al-Ḥuṣayn ibn Numayr advanced against 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr and besieged Mecca. When on the 3rd Rabi I, 64 A.H., the Ka'ba was set on fire, and al-Ḥuṣayn's forces entered Mecca, al-Mukhtār fought against the Syrians with great bravery and the invaders were defeated. In the meantime, Yazīd's death was announced, and the invasion was called off. Al-Mukhtār, however, stayed on with 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr for over five months.

During this long interval, a revolution had taken place at Kūfa, and Ibn Ziyad's deputy, 'Amr ibn Ḥurrayth, had been turned out by the residents of Kūfa. They had made 'Āmir ibn Mas'ūd the governor of Kūfa and he had pledged allegiance to 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr and made the people of Kūfa accept him as the Caliph. This unsettled position was considered by al-Mukhtār to be appropriate for implementing the plans of taking revenge from al-Ḥusayn's assassins, and he left for Kufa.[3] Prominent members of the Shī'a of Kūfa agreed with his views.[4]

When the remaining members of the group of the penitents returned with Rifā'a ibn Shaddād after suffering defeat, al-Mukhtār was in prison.[5]

It was again through the good offices of 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar who wrote both to 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr and Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṭalḥa, governor of Kūfa, that al-Mukhtār regained his freedom.

Many prominent and brave men including Ibrāhīm ibn al-Malik al-Ashtar united with al-Mukhtār in the furtherance of the object of wreaking vengeance for the spilling of al-Ḥusayn's blood. It was decided that on 14th of Rabi' I 66 A.H., steps should be taken to commence doing what the movement aimed at.[6]

Al-Ḥusayn's assassins were at Kūfa itself. They were in the pay of the government of Syria and owed their loyalty to the rulers of that country. They were also the residents of Kūfa which was under the sway of 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr. Any action taken by al-Mukhtār against such criminal residents of Kūfa would have involved him in trouble with 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr. If this difficulty had to be met, why not try to resolve it at the beginning? Al-Mukhtar, therefore, managed to turn out the governor of Kūfa appointed by Ibn al-Zubayr, not by the direct use of violence, but by so exerting pressure against

him that the governor fled from Kūfa. Al-Mukhtār set up his own government there. He carried out his task and in the process confronted some difficult situations.

'Ubayd Allāh ibn Ziyād invaded Mosul with a Syrian army and al-Mukhtār sent Yazīd ibn Anas with 3000 men to fight him. The enemy was defeated, but when Yazīd ibn Anas, who had been unwell, died, Warqa ibn 'Āzīb decided to suspend the fighting till the arrival of re-inforcements from Kūfa in view of the numerical superiority of the enemy. On getting news of this situation, al-Mukhtār despatched 7000 men under Ibrāhīm ibn al-Malik al-Ashtar to relieve Warqa. The chief of the enemy's army finding that al-Mukhtār had been left almost alone, since Ibrāhīm had been sent out to Mosul, considered it to be an excellent opportunity of rebelling against al-Mukhtār, and they launched an attack against him. Prominent among these chiefs were Shabath ibn Rib'ī, Shimr ibn Dhī al-Jawshan, Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath, Zaḥr ibn Qays, Ḥajjār ibn al-Abjar, Yazīd ibn al-Ḥarith al-Shaybānī and 'Amr b.al-Ḥajjāj al-Zubaydī.

Al-Mukhtār kept up the fight with the enemy, and sent word to Ibrāhīm ibn al-Malik al-Ashtar to return to Kūfa at once. He returned on the third day.

The time was now ripe for the punishment of the enemies of the Prophet's descendants and their arrests began to be made.

When the first group of five hundred persons arrested in this connection was brought to al-Mukhtār, he announced that those present at Karbalā' at the time of al-Ḥusayn's slaughter should be pointed out to him as he would not spare them to remain alive. All others were set free after taking from them the oath of loyalty.[7]

On 24th of Dhū al-Ḥijja 66 A.H. it was announced that whosoever shuts up the doors of his house and stayed in it would be given security unless he had participated in the slaughter of the Prophet's descendants.[8]

As the assassins of al-Husayn had also concealed themselves in their houses, Abū 'Amra Kaysān, head of the Shurṭa, who knew them all, was ordered to proceed with one thousand labourers and pull down the houses of all those who had participated in the inhumanities of Karbalā'. Many houses were demolished and many enemies of *ahl al-bayt* were killed.

Prominent among the assassins of al-Ḥusayn who were put to the sword were: Shimr ibn Dhī al-Jawshan, 'Abd Allāh ibn

Asad, al-Mālik ibn Naṣr al-Badī, Ḥaml ibn Mālik al-Muḥarabī, Ziyād ibn Mālik, 'Imrān b.Khālid, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b.Abī Khushkara al-Bajalī, 'Abd Allāh ibn Qays al-Khawlānī, 'Abd Allāh ibn Ṣalkhab, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ṣalkhab, 'Abd Allāh ibn Wahb, 'Uthman ibn Khālid al-Juhanī, Bushr ibn Sāt, Qubayz Khawtī, Yazīd al-Aṣbaḥī, 'Umar ibn Sa'd, Ḥukaym ibn Ṭufayl al-Ṭā'i, Zayd ibn Rifād al-Juhanī, Ḥarmala ibn Kāhil al-Asadī, 'Amr ibn Ṣabīḥ al-Sa'dī and Qays ibn al-Ash'ath.

After concluding his task at Kūfa, al-Mukhtār sent Ibrāhīm ibn al-Malik al-Ashtar again to give battle to Ibn Ziyād. After a fierce battle the Syrian army was defeated at Khāzir and Ibn Ziyād was killed. Al-Ḥuṣayn ibn Numayr al-Sakunī and Sharḥābīl ibn Dhī al-Kalā' were also killed. Ibrahim severed Ibn Ziyād's head, and sent it to al-Mukhtār who forwarded it to Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya.[9] Ibrāhīm then subjugated Mosul and the country surrounding it. He then went to stay at Niṣibin and al-Mukhtār remained alone at Kūfa.

Enmity had already sprung up between al-Mukhtār and 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr who was still in possession of Baṣra in Iraq, and had replaced the governor of Baṣra with his own brother Mus'ab ibn al-Zubayr.

Al-Ḥusayn's murderers who had managed to escape death at al-Mukhtār's hands like Shabath ibn Rib'ī, Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath, Murra b.Munqidh al-'Abdī, Sinān ibn Anas and 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Urwa al-Khath'amī fled from Kūfa and went directly to 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr at Baṣra.[9] They pressed him to fight al-Mukhtār. Gradually, about 10,000 residents of Kūfa left for Baṣra and, led by Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath they assured Ibn al-Zubayr of gaining victory over al-Mukhtār.

In the meantime, 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr had thrown Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya, his dependants and those residents of Kūfa who were at Mecca into prison, indicating a time limit within which they should swear allegiance to him, failing which he would get them burnt alive. Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya informed al-Mukhtār about this predicament and the latter despatched an army from Kūfa which set the captives free and was even prepared to kill 'Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr. Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya forbade this as it amounted to the desecration of the Ka'ba.

At length, most probably in conformity with the wishes of his elder brother, Mus'ab ibn al-Zubayr invaded Kūfa at the head

of a huge army. Ibrāhīm was at Nisibin, and al-Mukhtār alone confronted him. He fought very bravely for a number of days losing some of the chief men of his army like Aḥmar ibn Shumayṭ and 'Abd Allāh ibn Kāmil. One of the chief enemies of the Prophet's descendants, Muḥammad ibn al-Ash'ath, was also killed in the battle.[11]

At last when all his faithful comrades had been killed and the people thrown into confusion, al-Mukhtār found himself besieged in a fort. Al-Mukhtar then came out with the remaining few of his supporters and fought his last engagement with great valour and died fighting on 14th of Ramaḍān 67 A.H., aged 67 years.[12]

The enmity and callousness of his enemies descended to the lowest depths of hideousness when al-Mukhtār's wife was publicly slaughtered on her refusal to revile her dead husband.[13]

1 *Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 59
2 *Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 62
3 *Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 63
4 *Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 64
5 *Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 80
6 *Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 100
7 *Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 121
8 *Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 121
9 *Al-Akhbar al-Ṭiwāl:* 288
10 *Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 124, 128–130, 146
11 *Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 151
12 *Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 155, 161
13 *Ṭabarī*, vol.7, 158

CHAPTER XL

THE FALL OF THE UMAYYADS

IT is historically true that when any people acquire that degree of power which provides those at the helm of their affairs, not only with the necessities of life but also with superabundant luxuries, they fall a prey to love of pleasure, meanness, egotism, want of foresight and taking the course of least resistance. In consequence they become cowards.

The Umayyads vied with the Roman and Persian monarchs in wealth and splendour and in the extent of their territorial possessions. Their doom was hastened by Yazīd, who put al-Ḥusayn to the sword, heedless of his spiritual greatness and the invincible power of righteousness.

It was the cruel and unjust assassination of al-Ḥusayn which provided 'Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr with the excuse to challenge Yazīd's authority, turned the formerly indifferent residents of Medina against him, urged the party of the penitents to open a vigorous though unsuccessful campaign of taking revenge on al-Husayn's assassins, prompted al-Mukhtār to engage in a number of battles to kill al-Ḥusayn's murderers, drove Zayd ibn 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn in 112 A.H.to rebel against the Umayyads, and leave behind a party which was politically very harmful to the Umayyads, even though he was himself unsuccessful. Lastly, it was the same yearning for retribution for the shedding of al-Ḥusayn's blood which helped the 'Abbāsids to exterminate the Umayyads.

Some of these movements were purely political in nature from which al-Ḥusayn's descendants wholly dissociated themselves.

When Abu Muslim al-Khurāsānī raised the standard of revolt against the Umayyads at Merv with the declared object of taking revenge for al-Ḥusayn's slaughter, thousands of men rallied to his support and the last Umayyad king Marwān ibn Muḥammad was killed in the battle of Zāb[1] and with him perished Umayyad power for ever.

1 *Ṭabarī*, vol.9, 136

CHAPTER XLI

THE RULE OF THE 'ABBĀSIDS

THE claim for the caliphate advanced by the descendants of 'Abbās, uncle of the Prophet, for themselves sometime after al-Ḥusayn's slaughter at Karbalā' and the success which attended the efforts of Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī in advancing the interests of the 'Abbāsids and alienating the sympathies of the Muslims for the Umayyads rested mainly on the tender feelings of the people for the members of the Prophet's household.

Although the wearing of black by the 'Abbāsids had nothing to do with any expression of grief over the slaughter of al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā', those who did not know the real facts considered it to be a manifestation of sorrow at al-Ḥusayn's assassination. This impression was reinforced by the fact that it was the 10th of Muḥarram 132 A.H. when, after the murder of the last Umayyad Caliph, Marwān, the 'Abbāsids and their supporters, dressed in black, gathered in the congregational mosque of Kūfa. Really this gathering had been got together to grieve over the death of the founder of the movement, Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbas,[1] and the assassination of Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad,[2] the leader of the group who was also a son of the founder.

People had been attracted to the movement by referring to the superior merits and claims of the members of the Prophet's household to the caliphate.

The oath of allegiance which used to be taken from the people by the 'Abbāsid propagandists was not for any ruler by name. It was in the following form:—

"I take the oath of allegiance from you for obedience to God's Book, the Sunna of the Prophet and the person approved of by the members of the Prophet's household."[3]

When on the 11th of Muḥarram 132 A.H. the establishment of the Hāshimite rule was proclaimed, Abū Salama Ḥafṣ ibn

Sulaymān, a friend of the members of Prophet's house was appointed a minister, and Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī was called "the trusted one of the descendants of the Prophet."[4]

The responsible descendants of the Prophet knew that their name was being used in connection with the movement only to serve political purposes. Accordingly, when a letter offering the caliphate to him was received by Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq he burnt it forthwith, saying that the people of Khurāsān were not 'Alī's genuine Shī'a, and that Abū Salama had been deceived and would soon be murdered.[5]

Shortly after the accession of Abū al-Ṣaffāḥ 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās to the Caliphate, Abū Salama was put to death[6] and after al-Ṣaffāh, the Prophet's descendants received from the 'Abbāsids, from time to time, the same bad treatment as they had received from the Umayyads. This, however, does not alter the fact that the 'Abbāsids rose to power on the wave of hatred against the Umayyads for al-Ḥusayn's slaughter.

1 *al-Akhbar al Ṭiwāl*, 324
2 *Ibid*, 243
3 *Ṭabarī*, vol.9, 99
4 *Ṭabarī*, vol.9, 142
5 *Al Wuzarā' Wa-al-Kuttāb*, 57
6 *Ibid*, 60

CHAPTER XLII

THE CHANGE OF MENTALITY

AL-ḤUSAYN's immediate objective was not the destruction of Umayyad power or Yazīd's rule materially, for the achievement of that aim, would have required adequate military support and other material equipment. He attempted to open a novel front, making people's minds the target of his attack. He wished to usher in a spiritual revolution. Yazīd's armies could kill al-Ḥusayn; they could be no means kill the ideas which al-Ḥusayn wanted people to acquire from the example set by him.

The Qur'ān directs the Muslims to obey God, the Prophet and the men of authority from among them. The majority of Muslims considers the Caliph as a person in authority whom they are obliged to obey. Some power to make even religious regulations has also been conceded to the Caliph. Accordingly, the ways of every Caliph should have been accepted as righteous, but the majority of Muslims, barring the Shī'a who do not accept the generally received modes of the installation of Caliphs as at all warranted, divide the Caliphs into two classes, 'the rightly-guided Caliphs' and 'others'. Generally speaking, the Caliphate of 'Alī, and the period of al-Ḥasan's Caliphate prior to his treaty with Mu'āwiya are considered to close the duration of the rightly guided Caliphate. Mu'awiya, Yazīd and other Caliphs including the 'Abbāsid Caliphs are considered to be other than the rightly-guided Caliphs. This distinction among the Caliphs and the down-grading of most of them must be taken as the result of al-Ḥusayn's challenge and special manner of *jihād*.

After al-Ḥusayn's firm resistance at Karbalā', it was permanently settled that no Caliph was empowered to make religious laws, and that he was as sinful for his evil deeds as any other Muslim, or even more. It was also decided that the duty of obedience to the person for the time being in authority

extended only to the point where contravention of the divine purpose was not involved, and that when satisfaction of divine law was possible only by resisting the person in authority, it became obligatory for every one to prepare to offer resistance to him as enjoined by God.

The mentality of blindly following the ruler like dumb, driven cattle which had prevailed till 60 A.H. was replaced, as a result of al-Ḥusayn's sacrifice, with a sense of the recognition of one's duties and a desire to call tyrants and oppressive governments to account, so that since then no government has allowed itself to indulge in self-satisfied heedless somnolence.

Al-Ḥusayn's patience and steadiness became an example to remember in all misfortunes, and have taught stability and resolution to wavering hearts. In 71 A.H., the forces of Mus'ab ibn al-Zubayr were overawed and put into disorder when 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān attacked Mus'ab with a much bigger army. Mus'ab asked 'Urwa ibn al-Mughīra ibn Su'ba to recount to him how al-Ḥusayn had refused to obey the orders of Ibn Ziyād, and how he had steeled himself to carry on the *jihād*. Upon hearing 'Urwa's account, Muṣ'ab's courage was restored and he recited a couplet meaning:

"The members of Hāshim's family have set an example at Karbalā' which is best for the noble minded." Muṣ'ab then confronted the enemy and died fighting.

In the same way the strength of patience shown, and the courage of giving uninhibited expression to one true feelings produced by al-Ḥusayn, have ever since been signals of danger to the powers of tyranny and oppression, and the message given by al-Ḥusayn to human feelings will last for ever.

CHAPTER XLIII

MORAL CONSEQUENCES

IT would be doing violence to the spirit of Islam and its comprehensiveness that the consequences of the sacrifice of al-Ḥusayn be deemed to be confined exclusively to any particular section of mankind. The benefit which flow from his sacrifice may be shared by all who wish to learn from it about how to conduct themselves in their lives. The benefits which accrue to religion, humanity and Islam from the events of Karbalā' are briefly mentioned here.

Power of Religion and Spiritualism Demonstrated

Materialism and Spiritualism have always been at war with each other. Religion upholds spiritualism even now although spiritualism is not in fashion in the world today. The war of Karbalā' was one of religion against materialism. Despite its vastly superior might, Yazīd's army could not extort from al-Ḥusayn the coveted oath of allegiance to its ruler. In the final reckoning it was al-Ḥusayn who, though slain and outwardly vanquished, emerged victorious, and with him triumphed spiritualism.

Establishment of the Truthfulness of Islam and its Propagation

An important mark of the truthfulness of a religion is the unflinching patience and steadfastness with which its founders face hardships and adversity, and stick to their principles till the end of their days.

The support rendered to their religion by its ordinary followers braving extreme hardships and sacrificing themselves would not conclusively prove the truthfulness of their faith, for they might have been duped or might be otherwise ignorant of

the reality. But if the founder of a religion, his confidants and members of his family who are privy to the secrets of his personal life, and are intimately acquainted with the state of his morals and other qualities, undertake to face trial in support of his principles, and if necessary, to lay down their lives in vindication of the tenets of his faith, the truthfulness of its principles is undoubtedly established.

With al-Ḥusayn, all his friends and supporters and relatives sacrificed themselves after suffering the greatest persecution and oppression.

Al-Ḥusayn's sacrifice was not silently suffered. He continued steadily to invite people to genuine Islam.

On the 9th of Muḥarram, when the enemy advanced against al-Ḥusayn in the evening without previous announcement, he sued for the suspension of hostilities for a night solely to spend it in his last supplications and prayers to God. Al-Ḥusayn and his followers devoted the whole night to the purpose which the truce was meant to serve. In doing so, they demonstrated that in the most trying circumstances the principles of religion should be kept in view and that spiritual strength is superior to all worldly power.

A still more difficult set of circumstances prevailed when on the 10th of Muḥarram al-Ḥusayn led the noon prayers in the field of battle in a shower of arrows after many men of his small group had already been slain.

These were the demonstrations of the truthfulness of the teachings of Islam which filled the world with the rousing call of righteousness, awakened Muslim conscience, and exposed the cruelty of Yazīd and his antagonism to Islam.

Every member of al-Ḥusayn's party acted as a missionary. Burayr's contest with Yazīd ibn Ma'qil and invoking God's imprecations upon whosoever of them told lies, and Zuhayr ibn al-Qayn's speeches may be cited from among a very large number of the instances in which al-Ḥusayn's friends elucidated the reasons which had induced al-Ḥusayn to take the course he had taken. It is immaterial that these efforts did not yield immediate success, for the duty of a missionary consists solely of calling people to the truth of his mission even in the most disheartening of circumstances.

Moral and Social Lessons which may be derived from the Tragedy of Karbalā'

Simultaneously with being immeasurably tragic the events of Karbalā' are not an invitation to lamentation alone. They also instruct and edify so as to exalt human existence to the highest levels of grace and godliness.

Some of the cardinal teachings of the events of Karbala have been noted and briefly illustrated under the following heads:

Liberty: Liberty means freedom to act according to the dictates of one's conscience without any hindrance. Among the hindrances to freedom of action is one's fondness of pleasure and of things of which continued enjoyment is jeopardised by following the dictates of one's conscience. Emancipation from desire defies all earthly power to enslave one. By acting according to the precepts of his conscience al-Ḥusayn showed his freedom from desires in circumstances of the most forbidding hardship.

According to the import which al-Ḥusayn's struggle gave to liberty, the citizens of a free country are in reality slaves if they pursue evil objects. Conversely the citizens of an enslaved country are free if, despite suffering from oppression, they follow righteousness and worship God.

Steadfastness: It is steadfastness if, in pursuing an arduous and dangerous course of action, one neither falters nor flinches and maintains one's composure and serenity. In the possession of these qualities, the martyrs of Karbalā' occupy the foremost position.

Al-Ḥusayn had refused to swear allegiance to Yazîd after probing the depths of his heart, and after weighing in the inmost recesses of his mind the perils of the situation, and after satisfying himself that however great the severity of his afflictions might rise, the firmness of his resolution would remain unshaken. All the supporters of al-Ḥusayn at Karbalā', including children, stood firm in giving effect to al-Ḥusayn's resolute resistance to Yazîd.

On al-Ḥusayn's way to Kūfa, al-Ḥurr had met him and foreseeing al-Ḥusayn's assassination if he persisted in following his course to Kūfa, he had requested him to take pity on himself

and abandon his scheme. Al-Ḥusayn had replied that death did not matter if one stood by righteousness. This is what 'Alī al-Akbar ibn al-Ḥusayn, had also once observed.

Al-Ḥusayn's enemies knew the strength of his resolution. When on the 9th of Muḥarram, 'Umar ibn Sa'd received Ibn Ziyād's letter directing that he should obtain from al-Ḥusayn an unconditional oath of allegiance to Yazīd or give battle to him. 'Umar ibn Sa'd at once observed, "Al-Ḥusayn will never submit in this manner. His father's heart throbs in his breast." And everybody saw that al-Ḥusayn, like a bulwark of steadfastness and resolve, withstood the deluge of suffering and affliction which had engulfed him in the battlefield.

Group Organisation: Community of feelings, thoughts, objectives and action is required for the organisation of groups of men. The singleness of purpose which may mark the conduct of the leader is no guarantee that he would collect around him followers who fully share this quality with him. We know the many favours which the Israelites obtained through Moses, but when they were called upon to fight to capture the Holy House (*al-bayt al-muqaddas*) all of them, except two, refused to give battle to the Philistines. The experience of Christ was no better. The number of those who accepted faith at his hands was small. And it was one of them who betrayed him and got him arrested.

The Bible tells us that Christ had told his companions that there would be none among them who would not fall into error about him. One of his select disciples, Peter, denied Christ thrice. The other disciples extended no help to Christ and did not stick to the path of righteousness. Similar events happened in Islam, and that too during the Prophet's life. One such incident, recounted in the Qur'ān, relates to the battle of Uḥud, when the men posted under 'Abd Allāh ibn Jubayr to guard the pass in Mount Uḥud and not to quit their post under any circumstances, left the pass unguarded to plunder the vanquished enemy, and thus brought the Muslims to defeat. The companions of al-Ḥusayn did not, however, betray any signs of variance in word or deed from their leader in the battle of Karbalā'.

Self-respect: Islam recognised the human instinct to save life and the Qur'ān made self-defence obligatory when it said, "Do not

place your life in peril." The path marked out by al-Ḥusayn for himself for the due discharge of his duties conformed to the principle expressed by him in the words, "Death is preferable to humiliation and disgrace," and "An honourable death is better than life in discredit." These words are the foremost maxims of self-respecting men and nations of the world. To these brief phrases, charged with nobility of mind and informed with self-respect, al-Ḥusayn added the weight of his own example and presented them to the world for its edification.

Patience: The quality of patience has been so completely identified with al-Ḥusayn that he is called 'Sayyid al-Ṣābirīn', "the leader of those who remain patient." It was not that unexpected reverses of fortune overtook al-Ḥusayn and his companions at Karbalā', against which no choice was available, and which had perforce to be endured. The sufferings were undertaken as calculated risks, as welcome developments in order that the truth might prevail. The fact that al-Ḥusayn sent all his followers, friends and relatives to the battlefield, to do their duty and die, without himself engaging in the fight was an ordeal, which called forth the supreme degree of patience, which al-Ḥusayn only could manifest. The spirit was, however, fully shared by all companions of al-Ḥusayn. The exhortation of Abū al-Fadl 'Abbās to his brothers, "Go forward so that I might witness your getting killed," expresses the same urge to suffer with complete resignation.

Bravery: Valour, in its real sense, requires not only that one should put up a fight, when it is appropriate to do so, and should then do all that duty might suggest, regardless even of deadly consequences, but also that one should exercise patience when fighting would be inappropriate, and only nonchalance and indifference would do, even though such a course might be full of difficulties.

It is only one aspect of al-Ḥusayn's bravery which was highlighted at Karbalā'. The other aspect of his courage was presented by him earlier when he had continued to observe for ten years the terms of the treaty concluded by his brother, al-Ḥasan, with Mu'āwiya. During this long period of time, many painful incidents had taken place, but al-Ḥusayn had put up with them without doing anything to make things worse in an

already difficult situation. It was only when he thought it to be his duty to challenge and fight the forces of tyranny and inequity that al-Ḥusayn outdid mountains in steadiness and composure.

The feats of heroism accomplished by al-Ḥusayn and his comrades at Karbalā' amaze men even today. What surpassing courage was shown by al-Ḥusayn and his companions when they said their congregational noon prayers in the battlefield of Karbalā' when the battle was at its fiercest and arrows were being showered on them by the enemy, so that one of al-Ḥusayn's companions, Sa'īd ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥanafī, who stood in front of him to shield him from arrows fell dead due to the profusion of wounds inflicted on his body, as soon as the prayers had concluded!

Self-denial: Giving precedence to the needs of others over one's personal wants means self-denial. The finest examples of this quality were presented by al-Ḥusayn and his supporters at Karbalā'.

Al-Ḥusayn gave a memorable lesson in self-denial when, on his way to Iraq, without taking care of his own future needs, he placed the water stored with him at the disposal of al-Ḥurr and his men who were dying of thirst, even though they were enemies who had been deputed to obstruct his progress towards Kūfa.

At Karbalā', every one of Husain's companions and relatives attached such primacy to the preservation of al-Ḥusayn's life in comparison to their own lives that they behaved as if they had already bidden farewell to their existence. Sa'īd ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥanafī's standing before al-Ḥusayn to shield him from arrows for the duration of the noon-prayers is indeed an unforgettable instance of self-denial.

Everyone of al-Ḥusayn's followers tried to sacrifice himself before the others in order to save them, even though it be for briefest while. All were aware that none would survive, still everyone tried to keep others safe so long as he himself lived.

'Abbās and his brothers had received two offers of security, one through 'Abd Allāh ibn Abī al-Maḥall, their mother's nephew, and the other through Shimr. Both the offers were unceremoniously spurned. It is no ordinary manifestation of the spirit of self-denial to court death for the sake of another person

when the road to safety is wide open. It was the self-denial of al-Ḥusayn and his followers that in order to defend the faith and deliver humanity from tyrannous persecution they sacrificed themselves completely at Karbalā'.

Perfection in Social Intercourse: In prosperity and peace, social decencies are generally observed. It was, however, al-Ḥusayn alone who, amidst the pleasure of the desperate circumstances and mounting afflictions at Karbalā', managed to fulfil completely the exacting demands of perfection in social intercourse by never losing sight of the claims of anyone of his followers, as diverse as supporters, friends, and relatives, upon his regard and sympathy, showing undue partiality to none nor withholding individual recognition where rank and status provided the justification.

The battlefield was fairly distant from al-Ḥusayn's camp. Whenever he permitted any one of his supporters or friends to go to fight, he used to watch the enounter, and when his warrior fell wounded, al-Ḥusayn used to visit him. It must have been exceedingly difficult for al-Ḥusayn to make such visits in the hot sun, since all his men ultimately fell fighting.

In the most difficult and dangerous moments through which al-Ḥusayn was passing at Karbalā', when the human mind loses control over its functioning, it was al-Ḥusayn's achievement that he paid the fullest attention to the obligations of the social proprieties. On the 10th of Muḥarram, news came of the arrest of a son of Bishr ibn 'Amr in the territory of Rayy. Al-Ḥusayn asked Bishr to go to assist his son by getting him released. When Bishr refused to leave al-Ḥusayn, the latter asked him to send another son of his, Muḥammad, to his brother's help. Al-Ḥusayn also gave some pieces of very valuable cloth to Bishr, so that the price which the cloth might fetch, could be used to secure the release of Bishr's son.

Whenever anyone from amongst al-Ḥusayn's comrades and relatives fell down from his horse during the Battle of Karbalā', he would call out to al-Ḥusayn who thought it his duty to respond to such summonses and to give all possible assistance. He also endeavoured to ensure that none of his fallen comrades be beheaded and it is a fact that except those who could not call out to al-Ḥusayn, none of his comrades was decapitated.

Al-Ḥusayn tried to ensure that the dead bodies of his

comrades were accorded due respect. When anyone of them was killed, al-Ḥusayn was usually accompanied by others who arranged for the safe-keeping of the dead body of their friend. When, however, al-Ḥusayn's relatives commenced sacrificing themselves, the duty of taking their dead bodies from the battlefield to his tent mostly fell upon al-Ḥusayn himself. Al-Ḥusayn made young Hāshimite youths responsible for taking the dead body of 'Alī al-Akbar to his tent from the battlefield and himself carried al-Qāsim's dead body to the tent. Al-Ḥusayn got no opportunity to bury the remains of grown up men, but he did not wholly omit the duty of burying the dead. He himself buried the small dead body of 'Alī al-Asghar.

Plain-speaking: Al-Ḥusayn's endeavour from the beginning to the end of the tragedy of Karbalā' was to disabuse the minds of the people of all mistaken notions about his prospects, so that men may not support him on account of false hopes. He used to tell people over and over again the truth about his expectations and to declare repeatedly that the final outcome of his journey would be death.

When al-Ḥusayn prepared to leave Mecca, people had built rosy hopes about his future, since Kūfa was the capital of Iraq and had been 'Alī's seat of government. They thought it would be full of the friends of 'Alī. They had also heard that 1200 letters had been received from Kūfa inviting al-Ḥusayn there and promising him the help of the residents of the town to the last drop of their blood. They had also heard that 18,000 men of Kūfa had pledged allegiance to al-Ḥusayn at the hands of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl. A general climate of optimism prevailed about al-Ḥusayn'a prospects at Kūfa, but al-Ḥusayn thought it necessary that the people be told that their hopes were wholly unfounded.

A day before leaving Mecca, al-Ḥusayn delivered a memorable address, saying, "Death follows man like a wreath round his neck.... Very dear to me is the spot where, upon my assassination, I shall fall down.... Whosoever wishes to sacrifice his life with me, and is ready to die, may accompany me." Can there be any better proof of plain-speaking, truthfulness and candour?

After al-Ḥusayn had left Mecca, some nomadic tribes and other ignorant persons attached themselves to his caravan on

learning that he was going to Iraq upon invitations received from Kūfa. Their number was so large that the small caravan which al-Ḥusayn had led from Mecca looked like an army. To an unscruplous contender for power this uninvited crowd would have come as a boon, and he would have tried his best to retain its sympathies by false promises and raising unfounded hopes. Al-Ḥusayn, however, did not allow the misconception to last for any length of time.

On receiving the news of the assassination of Muslim ibn 'Aqīl and Hāni' ibn 'Urwa at Kūfa, he halted at Zubāla, and broke the sad tidings to the assembled caravan, saying, "whosoever of you wants to go back may do so, and I shall not hold him accountable for this." After this most of the new adherents to al-Ḥusayn's caravan went their way, leaving only a few and those with him who had accompanied him from Medina.

Pacifism and Tolerance: Peace and the policy of 'living and letting live' are denoted by the word, 'Islam' which is derived from '*salām*' which means peacefulness. Islam requires its adherents to cause no injury to others, nor to foment trouble, nor to fall out with others without due reason. A concomitant principle of Islam is that wrong and iniquity should never be sanctioned, and that right should not be allowed to come to grief as a result of one's actions.

These principles were exemplified in the lives of the Prophet, 'Alī, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn. A remarkable instance was furnished by the Prophet when the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya was made. Al-Ḥasan's treaty with Mu'āwiya is also another example. Al-Ḥusayn spent twenty years of his life in tolerant acquiescence in his brother's treaty with Mu'āwiya, ten during al-Ḥasan's life and ten after his death, although during this long period many things had happened in complete transgression of the terms of the treaty which had very sorely tried al-Ḥusayn's patience.

The multiplicity of Mu'āwiya's manoeuvres to get his son, Yazīd, installed unlawfully as a caliph after him did not incite al-Ḥusayn to take measures to thwart Mu'āwiya's designs. The only step which he did take was to refuse to pledge his allegiance to Yazīd. For he thought his refusal would by itself tell the truth of the matter to the Muslims if they had been left with any power of discrimination and understanding, and, in any

case he would not be exposed to the charge of countenancing inequity and wrong. He might have felt unconcerned about how the world at large reacted to Mu'awiya's endeavours; it might accept Yazid as a king or Caliph, provided it did not trouble him about these questions, and did not require him to swear fealty to Yazîd. Recognising this guiding principle of al-Ḥusayn's life, Mu'awiya had considered it unnecessary to take any harsh steps against him, because he knew that al-Ḥusayn would uphold peace, and continue in a peaceful course so long as he was not forced to swear allegiance to Yazîd.

When Yazîd succeeded his father, Mu'āwiya, he demanded al-Husayn's oath of allegiance through the governor of Medina, al-Walîd, who had insufficient military support. If al-Ḥusayn had been so inclined he could possibly have established himself as the ruler of Medina. That would, however, have meant bloodshed and preparation for a prolonged war. Al-Ḥusayn, therefore, chose to depart from Medina in order to avoid spilling Muslim blood, and went to Mecca to show that his object was to avoid upholding wrong, and also to save his life and the lives of his dependants, since Mecca was considered to afford shelter and safety to everybody.

At Mecca, al-Ḥusayn did nothing whatsoever to suggest that he had any but the most peaceful intentions. 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr was not held in such high esteem by the Meccans as al-Ḥusayn on account of the latter's close relationship with the Prophet. If 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Zubayr could get together an army strong enough to keep the established government engaged in a trial of strength for a long time, it would have been much easier for al-Ḥusayn to enlist a stronger military force in his support. Al-Ḥusayn, however, stayed peacefully at Mecca all the time he was there.

When the people of Iraq learnt of al-Husayn's refusal to swear allegiance to Yazîd, they addressed to him 1200 petitions and letters inviting him to Kūfa. Some of these letters even suggested that if al-Ḥusayn so wished, the people of Kūfa would turn out the local governor and replace him by al-Ḥusayn, who did not in the least encourage the idea, and in reply said, "An Imām (leader) is one who acts according to God's Book, is bound by justice, makes righteousness the principle of his life, and devotes himself exclusively to winning God's pleasure."

Muslim ibn 'Aqîl who, preceded al-Ḥusayn to Kufa furnished

proof of the altruistic aims of his cousin by acting in the spirit of the latter's letter, partly quoted above, so long as circumstances allowed him to do. He did not in the least interfere with al-Nu'mān ibn Bashīr, the governor of Kūfa, or with the machinery of his government, even when 18,000 men of Kūfa had sworn allegiance to al-Ḥusayn. Al-Nu'mān himself felt that Muslim's behaviour towards him was not that of an antagonist, so that when henchmen of the government charged al-Nu'mān with inactivity, even though very large numbers of people had been pledging loyalty to al-Ḥusayn, his reply was that he would fight only with one who fought with him, and attack one who attacked him and would not act on mere suspicion.

Al-Ḥusayn's sudden departure from Mecca when only a couple of days were left for the performance of the *ḥajj* is an eloquent testimony of the imminence of danger which he felt for himself in remaining there. Taking overt steps in self-defence to avert that danger would have drawn the possibilities of bloodshed very near. Al-Ḥusayn did not want to engage in a war at Mecca as this would have desecrated the sanctity of God's House and would also have been against his peaceful nature. He took with himself only the ladies of his house and his children as an unmistakable indication of his pacific intentions.

When al-Ḥurr arrived to intercept Husain's progress towards Kūfa, al-Husayn told him and his army, "I did not think of coming to you till your letters and messengers came to me, telling me that you were without an Imām, and inviting me to you so that you might perhaps become united in righteousness through me.... If you do not like my coming here, I will go back where I came from."

There could have hardly been a more convincing example of tolerance.

When al-Ḥusayn approached Karbalā', al-Ḥurr received a letter from Ibn Ziyād which so hardened al-Ḥurr's attitude that he refused to allow al-Ḥusayn to move any further, and said that he had orders not to permit him to camp at any inhabited site, but in a desolate plain where water should be scarce. Al-Ḥusayn's comrades and supporters suggested that they should fight with al-Ḥurr for a better camping place, as al-Ḥurr's army was then comparatively not so strong. Al-Ḥusayn did not accept the advice, refusing to initiate violence.

At Karbalā' al-Ḥusayn opened negotiations for peace with 'Umar ibn Sa'd, with such transparent evidence of pacifism and tolerance that 'Umar ibn Sa'd was deeply impressed. Al-Ḥusayn even suggested that he might betake himself to remote destinations outside Arabia in order that peace be maintained if he was not forced to accept Yazīd as a legitimate Caliph, or a true representative of Islam. Accordingly 'Umar ibn Sa'd wrote to Ibn Ziyād congratulating him on the happy turn things had taken and telling him that al-Ḥusayn was prepared to make peace and that his terms might be accepted.

Even on the 10th of Muḥarram when Shimr insultingly referred to the fire lighted in the pit behind al-Ḥusayn's tents to protect them from attack from the rear, as one which anticipated fire in the life hereafter, and Muslim ibn 'Awsaja asked al-Husayn's permission to kill Shimr, al-Ḥusayn refused to agree as he was averse to beginning the hostilities.

Even though much had happened which could make one's blood boil when al-Ḥusayn set foot in the battlefield in the morning of the 10th of Muḥarram, he did not show even the slightest bellicose intention or preparation. He did not ride a horse which is used in battles; he rode a camel which is a symbol of peace. He then delivered a speech in which he repeated what he had earlier told al-Ḥurr and 'Umar ibn Sa'd, "If you do not relish my coming here, let me go back where I came from." These powerful proofs of love of peace and toleration compelled al-Ḥurr to desert Yazīd's army.

Sacrifice: Al-Ḥusayn sacrificed himself according to a well thought out plan, so that his turn for sacrificing himself should approach him gradually and he should have suffered the greatest hardships and the largest number of bereavements of his dearest ones, when he offered himself in sacrifice. On the 10th of Muḥarram al-Ḥusayn suffered from the sacrifice of his supporters and the companions of his childhood first of all. He then suffered from the sacrifice of his kith and kin one by one: a son like 'Alī al-Akbar who was the light of his eyes, the strength of his heart, and the prop of his old age, a nephew like al-Qāsim, a faithful brother like 'Abbās, and then an infant child like 'Alī al-Aṣghar, whose neck was transfixed with a brutal arrow. After all his heart had been sacrificed, the stage arrived for him to offer himself in sacrifice. Every part of his

body was given up to laceration, every drop of his blood spilled in sacrifice, and al-Ḥusayn was left with nothing more to sacrifice, the easiest part of his task, sacrificing his own life, remained undone. And by the afternoon this offering had also been made, and al-Ḥusayn's head was severed from his body.

Never again will such a grand and complete sacrifice be offered.

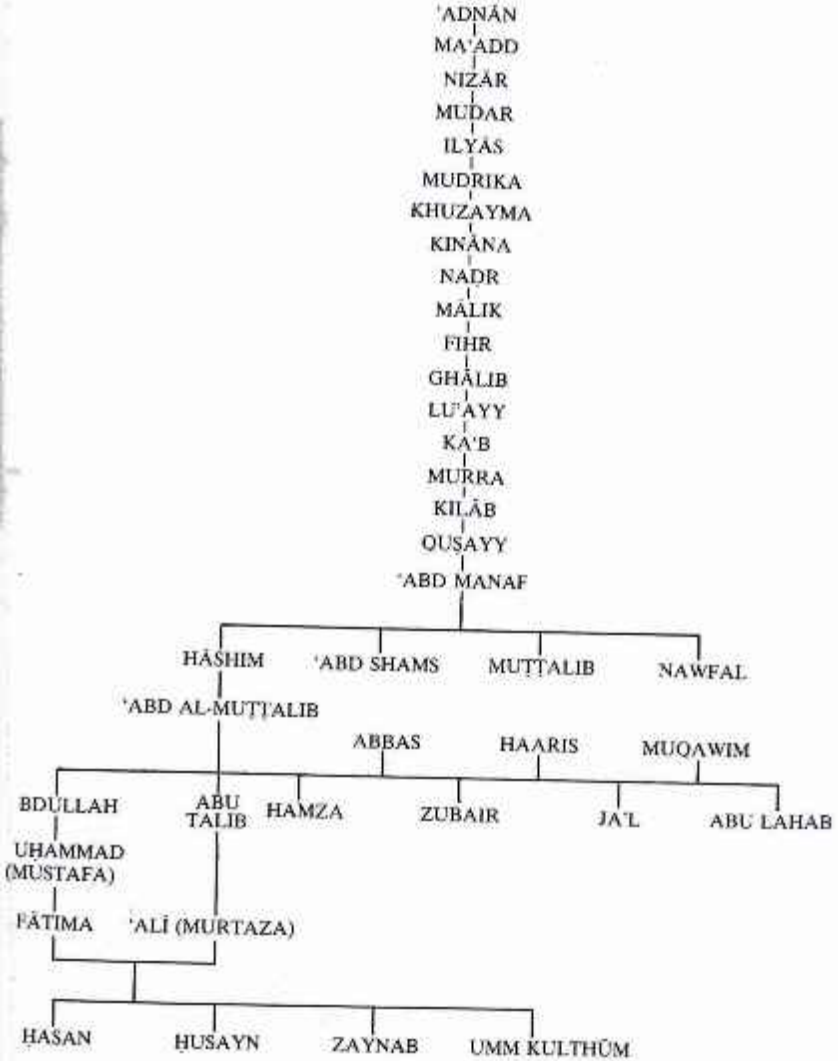
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APPENDIX 'A'

GENEOLOGY OF ADNAN'S DESCENDANTS

(ABRIDGED)



NOTE: In this table the names of only the direct descendants of the Prophet from Hashim have been given.

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