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LONDON, JULY 1984

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

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PREFACE

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

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

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

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Secretary to the Muhammadi Trust.

THE MARTYRDOM OF ḤUSAYN B. ʿALĪ AND THE CONTINUITY OF ETHICAL CONCEPTS AND MORAL CODES

Syed Mohammad Amir Imam
Pakistan

The crucial question that civilized human society has had to face and answer through history is that of the relevance of ethical concepts and moral codes to individual conscience and social conduct.. Now obviously, the primary biological drives are firmly centered, firstly, on the individual self, and next, on the proximate biogenetic group. The rest of the prerequisites of life and biological survival, and the necessary natural biospheric balances, are the result of symbiotic and ecological interdependence of all forms of life. However, civilized human society has always had yet another essential and very necessary dimension, that of rational communication. But that is not the end of the matter, for rational communication carries the quality of creative causality, extending itself into richer and more refined realms of consciousness, namely, that of the awareness of social and moral responsibility. Without this extension of rationality into morality, rational communication would remain intellectually limited and human society would be culturally poor. And why this would be is so obviously because, in addition to rationality, morality, ethics, and conscience are equally, and even more significantly, distinctive characteristics of all that which humanity connotes. When rational consciousness matures furthur through the awareness and assumption of moral and social responsibility, it acquires the additional mental characteristic of conscience. Therefore, finally, the emergence of conscience involves a moral sensitivity of responsiveness resulting from adequately comprehensive knowledge of facts and their interrelationships together with correctness and clarity of cognition. By its very definition. conscience implies intellectual acuity along with intellectual honesty and sincerity. Thus cynicism, no matter how intelligent, and fanaticism, no matter how pious, would be equally repugnant to conscientiousness.

Now since conscientiousness implies interaction and response, conscience would be inconceivable in isolation: it is only in the responsiveness of any individual in environmental and social situations with inanimate, animate, and human participants of this biosphere that an adequate idea of conscientiousness can be formed. In the inconceivably vast context of cosmic space-time continuum, human existence, in purely physical terms, is insignificant. But perhaps as a living, conscious, and, most notably, conscientious being, a human being is an extraordinarily significant phenomenon of nature. The rational capability of human nature affords it an astonishingly wide range of choices and options. At the same time, this raises the question of responsibility which often relates to a moral problem. And morality is relevant mainly in some social context. Now while rationality does not necessarily always tend to make us behave less selfishly or more selflessly, morality does lend to do so invariably. Thus it is that ethical principles and concepts, and moral codes and conscientious conduct, assume a paramount importance in human society, so as to prepare and equip us better for those self-sacrifices that morally responsible and socially answerable behaviour demands of us: *You will not attain piety until you expend of what you love: and whatever thing you expend God knows of it.* (3:92)[1]

Here is a clear statement of where the Qur'ān stands in regard to the controversy over the question of egoism versus altruism. And the same has been the stand of all the scriptures of the great universal religions of the world witnessed by human history. Along with the great scriptures, human history has also witnessed great self-sacrifices, many of which, by any measure, may have truly been the ultimate in a particular historical context. In terms of history and humanity, these selfless persons were the true witnesses of human destiny — the martyrs for a great cause, the cause of truth, justice, and love. It was these great martyrs (*shuhadā'*) who contributed most eminently to the continuity of ethical principles and concepts and moral codes and conscientious conduct in all human affairs and relationships throughout history. The condition of altruism stated in the Qur'ānic

1 A J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (Oxford, 1983). p. 57.

verse quoted above is the initial step and the minimal stipulation for attaining moral virtue; and it is in line with what has been indicated in other great religious scriptures for realising spiritual excellence. Ultimately, such a spiritual quest and such a moral effort could possibly attain enlightenment, which, in the words of Professor Zachner, 'so far as it can be described at all, is to see the ineffable One in the many, the eternal Now in the Flux of Time, unity in diversity (or diversity in unity), a discordant concord and a concordant discord,' and he goes on to add that 'this is the Truth,' and furthermore, 'for the Truth is that All is One and One is All, now. everywhere, and forever.' Zachner concludes by asking what 'personal communion with God' is, and answers in the words of another writer: 'to pass from our normal state of self-consciousness into cosmic consciousness!'[2]

When the egocentric or self-centered view of life and the world expands on such a cosmic scale as to merge the self into the Creator's divine will which is the scheme of creation, this cognitive expansion is accompanied by a commensurate moral elevation from selfishness to selflessness, from egoism to altruism, provided that cognition is genuine. In this context, it is very important to remember that, neither spiritually nor metaphysically, would it do to think of the Creator or God as a person; and, therefore, the divine will and the scheme of creation too cannot be conceived in personal terms but rather as a mystery that the human mind may strive to comprehend by means of contemplation, moral conduct and the experience ensuing therefrom. The idea of divine unity, ubiquitous and all-embracing, pervasive and all-encompassing, and creative and all-sustaining, is the basis of universal justice and cosmic harmony. In such an infinitely vast and awesome conceptual context, egoism would be ridiculously inappropriate and absurd, both morally and intellectually. From these fundamental concepts of divinity, namely unity and justice, elaborated above, the rest of the religious concepts follow necessarily and immediately: the necessity of a divinely inspired spiritual leader and guide; once the divinely inspired guide has passed away, the necessity of the continuity of spiritual leadership and moral guidance; and, lastly,

2 R. C. Zachner, *Concordant Discord* (Oxford, 19 VO), pp. 38-9.

the consequential and final divine judgement of all and every human action and conduct.

The conflict of the respective ethical theories relating to egoism and altruism have been discussed by thinkers down through the ages, from Plato and Aristotle to Moore and Broad, analytically and eruditely.[3] Our present concern, however, is how these two opposite attitudes, egoism and altruism, have generally found expression in the wider social and historical context, in words and deeds and in thought and action, in the past. Therefore, let us begin by noting what contains not only the essence of some of the profound and humane ideals taught by inspired seers and guides of humanity from Gautama Buddha and Jesus Christ up to Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā', but also an elaboration of these teachings. Here, as follows, are two short extracts from a long testament of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, the son-in-law and cousin of the prophet of Islam and the father of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, given to his son, Ḥasan, as paternal advice:

My dear son! In your dealings with others, let your *self* be like the two scales of a balance: desire for others the same as you would desire for yourself, and shun for others what you shun for yourself; and do not oppress others just as you would not like yourself to be oppressed; and do good to others just as you would like others to do good to yourself; and regard as loathsome in yourself that which you find loathsome in others; and let it be acceptable to yourself from others whatever would be acceptable to them from yourself; and say nothing of what you know if what you know is very little; and say not what you would not like to be said to you. And heed my word! Conceit is the contrary of rectitude and an affliction of the mind....

. . . [A]nd swallow your anger for I have never known any draught sweeter than it in aftertaste and more long-lasting in deliciousness; and be meek towards him who is harsh towards you for he will soon become meek towards you: and be magnanimous towards your enemy

3 G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica* (Cambridge, I960), pp. 85-105, 165-162; C. D. Broad, *Broad's Critical Essays in Moral Philosophy* (London. 1971), pp. 262-282.

for that is the more pleasant of the two alternative manners of triumph....[4]

Somewhere between the two extracts quoted above is another set of moral observations that balance the gentleness and mildness of the former with their moral sagacity and firm integrity:

Never give yousclf in bondage to anyone when God has granted you freedom! What good can come from goodness that cannot be procured except through evil or from prosperity that cannot he attained but through misery?[5]

On the basis of such moral ideals as cited through the three foregoing quotations from the testament of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib to his son, Ḥasan, it would be possible to form a clearer idea of the ethical principles and moral traditions received from his spiritual predecessors such as Moses, John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ, through Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā, the prophet of Islam — and consequently extended by him to formulate his socio-political thinking and his policy of government and statecraft. These were, as may he clearly seen from his instructions to his provincial governors, transparantly sincere and moral, and free of any taint or trace of political expediency and strategem. Obviously, his sole objective was the widest possible communication of the moral message, both by word and deed, and irrespective of personal political consequences. His life's purpose was not to hold on to political power at any cost but to put into practice the principles he professed and genuinely held. In the course of a letter to ʿUthmān b. Hunayf al-ʿAnṣārī, his governor in Basra, he pointedly observes:

And had I wished, I could have certainly found the way to get for myself clarified honey, refined wheat, and raw silk, but far be it from me that my desires get the better of me and my greed leads me to prefer for myself the delicacies of food while there may be in the Hijaz or al-Yamāma someone who has never satiated his hunger, or that I

4 *Nahj al-balāgha* (Beirut), III, 45-6, 54.
5 *Ibid.*, p. 511.

retire for the night with a full stomach while around me there are hungry stomachs and thirsty livers. Should I rest satisfied with being addressed as Ruler of the Believers (*amīr al-mu'minīn*) and not suffer with them the adversities of these times?[6]

Continuing furthur along the same line of inquiry, let us now note some of the main points of a covenant, of quite some length and detail, that was given by ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib to his governor-designate of Egypt, Mālik b. al-Ḥarīth al-Ashṭār al-Nakhāʿī, who, however, was destined never to reach Egypt but to die. while on his way, at the hands of those who poisoned him on the instigation of the political opponents of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib:

Then be aware of this. O Mālik: that I am sending you to a land which prior to you has had both just and opressive governments, and the people will scrutinize your affairs in the same manner in which you used to scrutinize the affairs of the governors who preceded you, and they will say about you what you used to say about them who were there before you . . . So let the most desirable treasure for yourself be the treasure of good works . . . and let there be a deep feeling of compassion and love and kindness in your heart towards the governed, and be not to them like a carnivorous predator, waiting to devour them, for they are of two catagorics: either a brother to you in faith, or your equal, corresponding to yourself, in God's creation. . . And if, because of the power that you possess, you ever get the feeling of arrogance or conceit, then just look at the greatness of God's sovereignty and authority over yourself against which nothing can avail you. . . .

Be fair and equitable to God and the people on your own part and on the part of your close relatives and anyone you may be inclined to favour from amongst those you govern, for if you do not do so, you will commit opression; and God will be the adversary, on behalf of the people, of everyone who oppresses others, . . . for God heeds the call for help of those who are persecuted, and is ever watchful against opressors.

6 *Ibid.*, pp. 71-2.

Surely, the most desirable manner of government for you would be the most moderate in terms of rights, the most universal in terms of justice, and the most comprehensive in terms of popular consent; for the anger of the common people annuls the approval of the privileged class, but the anger of the privileged class can be ignored with the support of the common people's approval.[7]

After this, he goes on to mention the number of weaknesses of character and temperament that the members of the privileged class generally have, and which, therefore, make them much less of a social asset than those who are commoners; and on that account he counsels more concern for the latter, and more attention to their affairs. What follows in this long and detailed covenant is based upon this compassionate, just, and egalitarian foundation of both social and moral as well as religious principles and ideals. The full text of the covenant is too long to reproduce here. I have, therefore, confined myself to some representative quotations, given above, from the introductory first tenth of it. Described concisely, it may truly be called one of the earliest and best charters of human rights known to us in history.

Surely, it was this social outlook, based upon ethical principles and concepts and a moral code of conduct, which gave rise to that attitude of reluctance to hold on to political power at any cost demonstrated by his successor and eldest son, Ḥasan b. ʿAlī. Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān's opposition to al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī was obviously a continuation of the former's obdurate opposition to Ḥasan's father, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and also, even more fundamentally, of that of Muʿāwiya's father, Abū Sufyān, to Ḥasan's maternal grandfather. Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā, the holy prophet of Islam. When, after years of long, bitter, and ruthless opposition to Islam, Abū Sufyān had to submit to its steadily growing influence in Arab society, his utter misconception of its spiritual nature and egalitarian message became very evident in a remark that he made to his erstwhile friend and kinsman, who was an uncle of the holy Prophet himself, ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭālib. Watching from a

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 83-86.

hilltop the Muslim followers of the Prophet, the majority of whom were from the underprivileged strata of Arab society, marching *en masse*, but unarmed, as had been agreed between them and their opponents, the privileged Quraysh, towards Mecca for the performance of the first Muslim pilgrimage to the mosque at the Kaʿba, Abū Sufyān remarked to ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭālib with amazement how his nephew's royal authority (*mulk*) had grown, to which ʿAbbās replied by pointing out that it was not 'royal authority' but the communication and propagation of a moral and spiritual message, the apostolic mission entrusted to his nephew, Muḥammad, by divine inspiration.[8]

This misconception of the apostolic mission of Islam by the Quraysh, the privileged group of Arab society to which the holy Prophet himself belonged, but with whose vested interests he resolutely refused to identify himself, and their persistant, and obdurate opposition to it continued down the line from one generation to the next. In the opinion of Ibn Khaldūn, the two main socio-political factors that really mattered in human society in general, and in Arab society in particular, were those of group solidarity or group feeling based on kinship (*ʿaṣabiyya*), and dominion or royal authority (*mulk*); the former constantly and persistantly impelling the group, whether it be tribe, clan, family, to aim to acquire the latter so as to arrogate all glory and supremacy to exclusively to themselves.[9] Significantly, Milton, in his epic poem *Paradise Lost*, ascribes such traits of character to none other than Satan himself:

> … who, not content
> With fair equality. fraternal state.
> Will arrogate dominion undeserved
> Over his bretheren.

Ibn Khaldūn, also, while explaining the desire for dominion and royal authority, uses a similar expression: *al-infirād bi 'l-majd*. Now such expressions in any of the great religions are reserved for the Supreme, Unique Being, or God. For any mortal to aspire to such supremacy over

8 Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrat al-Nabawiyya* (1955), II, 404.
9 Ibn Khaldūn, *al-Muqaddima*, tr. F. Rosenthal I, ch. 3, §23-28.

the rest of his fellow creatures and mortals would not only be absurd but also either insane and therefore excusable, or blasphemous and inexcusable.

I have discussed the problems pertinant to this topic elsewhere under the title *Some Aspects of Ibn Khaldūn's Socio-Political Analysis of History - A Critical Appreciation* at some length, and since it would be a digression from the main theme of the conference to repeat all that I have said in it here. I will limit myself to the following relevant remarks based upon what I concluded there.

Any socio-political exposition and its theory that attaches undue importance to group-centered feeling and solidarity exclusively is bound to be limited in both scope and outlook. And, based upon this, if it goes on to establish in theory the natural, and therefore necessary legitimacy of the arrogation of domination and supremacy by a member of the group that is impelled solely by feeling of kinship, then it would not only be limited in scope and outlook, but also at variance with the morality of all the great scriptures, including the Qur'ān, as well as in conflict with the great moral philosophies relevant to human society and its individuals. And, lastly, such ruthlessly narrow theories of *al-'aṣabiyya* and *al-mulk* tend to become self-contradictory and confusing when they attempt to reconcile their concepts with those of religious morality and social ethics.[10] Thinkers like Ibn Khaldūn, and Machiavelli after him, tend to defend despotism (*al-istibadād*), and, despite their intelligence, become the narrow advocates and philosophers of the establishment and its bureaucratic objectives.

The letter addressed to Ḥasan b. ʿAlī from Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān reveals the self-centered preconceptions that develop under the pressures and compulsions that Ibn Khaldūn calls *al-'aṣabiyya* and *al-mulk*. It is evident how these preconceptions, arising from egocentrism, are often, unjustifiably and ignorantly, projected onto everyone else indiscriminately. The English rendering of the Arabic text of the letter is as follows:

10 S. M. A. Imam, *Some Aspects of Ibn Khaldūn's Socio-Political Analysis of History - A Critical Appreciation* (Karachi, 1978).

This is a letter to Ḥasan b. ʿAlī from Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān. I have made peace with you on the undertaking that after me the authority of government will pass to you, and you have the oath by God and God's covenant and security, and the security of God's Messenger, Muḥammad, may God's blessing and peace be upon him, the most firm pledge and binding contract that God has imposed upon anyone amongst God's creatures, that I shall not desire [or attempt] any treacherous or adverse actions against you, and that I shall give you one million stiver coins per annum from the public treasury, and that the tribute from Passa and Darabjurd will be yours; you may send your appointees there and do whatsoever you may deem fit.[11]

The response of Ḥasan b. ʿAlī to this tempting offer was in the moral tradition of his father, ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, and his grandfather, Muḥammad, and in complete contrast to it. On the blank sheet of paper that Muʿāwiya had sent Ḥasan, and at the bottom of which he had affixed his seal, he had authorized Ḥasan to put down whatever he pleased to do. Al-Ḥasan, while retaining Muʿāwiya's letter, cited above, wrote as follows:

This is what Ḥasan b. ʿAlī has agreed to for making peace with Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān: he has made peace with him on the undertaking that he will surrender to him [Muʿāwiya] the authority of government on the condition that he will act in accordance with the dictates of the Book of God and the tradition of God's prophet and the conduct of the virtuous successors of the prophet, and that it would not be permissible to him that he may take the pledge for and appoint anyone as his successor and that the succession will be in accordance with the decision of the advisorsy council, and that the people, wherever they are, will have complete security in regard to themselves, their belongings and their families, and that he will not desire [or attempt] any treachery against Ḥasan, neither covertly nor overtly, and that he will not intimidate any of Ḥasan's friends.[12]

11 Ṭaḥa Ḥusayn, *ʿAlī wa banūh* (Cairo, 1953), p. 200.
12 *Ibid.*, p. 201.

When the peace agreement was finally drawn up it was along the lines indicated in the response of Ḥasan b. ʿAlī in the letter cited above.[13] After the acceptance and signing of the peace, on Muʿāwiya's insistance, Ḥasan addressed the people who had assembled there on the occaision. After the customary eulogy of God, he said that the shrewdest of all conducts is piety and that the folly of follies is impiety, and that the question of rightful authorty was best left to be judged and settled on the criteria of the conduct of the ruler in accordance with the book of God and the tradition of God's prophet, and that one who acts in an opressive manner is not a genuine successor of the Prophet, but a king who derives benefit from it, although its pleasures come to a sudden end. Then he went on to explain that he had withdrawn from the dispute in order to avoid bloodshed among the people. He ended his address by saying that perhaps it was both a trial and a provision for them for some time.[14]

What followed the signing of this peace agreement was not all that unexpected. The agreement was swiftly folded up and brazenly set aside, and all its conditions and clauses were flouted with impunity and without any qualms of conscience. From the cruel oppression of the people in general to the torture and execution of eminent members of the groups opposed to the autocratic and despotic rule of the Umayyads and their officials, and then even up to the conspiratorial and treacherous act of administering a lethal poison to the Imam Ḥasan, everything was done without fear of God or love for God's creatures, in direct contravention of all that had been solemnly agreed upon in the peace agreement. And once the tyrannical authority of the Umayyad clan, under Muʿāwiya's cheiftanship, had been established with the assistance of ruthless and cruel officials such as Ziyād b. Abīh, the solidarity of kinship, based on the tribal group feeling of the Quraysh, and, within it centrally, of the Umayyad clan and the family of Abū Sufyān, was ready to aim for the royal authority of its cheif. This was finally established by the formal appointment of Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya as his royal successor and by obtaining for him the oath

13 Muḥsin al-Amīn, *ʿAyān al-shīʿa*, p. 44,

14 *Ibid.*, p. 48; Also Ibn al-ʿAsākir al-Shāfiʿī, *Tarjamat al-imām al-Ḥasan min taʾrīkh madīna wa dimashq* (Beirut, 1980), pp. 189-190.

of allegiance from all those whose influence counted amongst the important tribes and clans of Arab society, thus the final nail was hammered into the coffin of the peace agreement, the text of which was already a dead letter in the eyes of all those in whom the Umayyads had successfully revived the pre-Islamic atavistic solidarity of kinship based on group feeling, or what Ibn Khaldūn calls *al-ʿaṣabiyya*, and whose natural tendency, according to him, is the establishment of dominion or royal authority.[15]

Very soon, however, the unwelcome influence of those who had betrayed both the fundamental principles of religion and the moral values of human society by swearing allegiance to the royal succession of Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya became unacceptable, since it became widely known that the allegiance had been given either in return for material benefits or under duress. The stark harshness and heartless cruelties of the oppressive and ruthless Umayyad regieme jolted them out of their apathy and made them recall, in clear contrast, the moral and benign rule of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib. They also remembered that the holy Prophet had condemned and rejected both group feeling and bigotry (*al-taʿaṣub*), as well as the 'natural goal' of the former, namely, autocratic dominion or royal authority, and that ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib had adhered strictly, in both word and deed, to these moral teachings of the Master.[16] This social re-awakening and moral awareness had already taken place during the lifetime of the Imam Ḥasan b. ʿAlī, accompanied by a clearer political perception. However, when the Imam Ḥasan was no longer alive and Muʿāwiya felt free to announce the appointment of his own son Yazīd as heir-apparanl to the so-called Caliphate, the people were simply outraged by this blatant violation of the last remaining condition of the peace agreement. And as if this arrogant and arbitrary flouting of all standards of decency and morality was in itself not enough, Muʿāwiya went on to demand that, along with other eminent persons, Imam Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, the younger brother and spiritual successor of Imam Ḥasan and the holy Prophet's second grandson, should also give his allegiance to Yazīd.[17]

15 Ibn Khaldūn, I, 444; also Ṭaḥa Ḥusayn, pp. 205-259; and Jurjī Zaydān, *ta'rīkh al-Tamaddm al-Islāmī* (Cairo, 1905), pp. 50—101.

16 Ibn Khaldūn, I, ch. 3. §26, pp. 414-15.

17 Ṭaḥa Ḥusayn. pp. 206, 246-48.

Comparing the respective personalities of Muʿāwiya and his son Yazīd, Ṭaḥa Ḥusayn writes that while the former had grown up in the tribal environment of the Quraysh in Mecca during the *jahiliyya* period (i.e. during pre-Islamic times), with its hard and rough conditions that were inevitable in that barren valley, the latter was born and bred in a palace in Damascus, surrounded by luxury and retinues of slaves to hearken to his biddings and comply with his whims and wishes without delay. From his mother he had inherited the roughness of nomadic bedouin ways, and from his father the shrewdness and wile of the Quraysh. as well as their resourcefulness in strategems and their love for riches and power. Consequently, Yazīd could not tolerate any lack of promptness on the part of anyone in rendering him obedience; he regarded this as obligatory on everyone and, therefore, whosoever held back or hesitated in doing so, for him he had no other response but the sword. Ṭaḥa Ḥusayn goes on to say that when Muʿāwiya failed to compel four very eminent men of Medina to give their approval to his proposal for the appointment of his son, Yazīd to succeed him as the Caliph, that is to say as thc successor of the holy Prophet, and to swear allegiance to the appointee, he forced them to hold their peace by threatening to have them killed if they uttered a word against him and his plan for Yazīd's succession. And these four very eminent men were the the Imam Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmār, ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr, and 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr. The last of them did not survive Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān, thus leaving the three who did survive him to face the menace of a despotic monarchy.[18]

It is quite evident that, from Abū Sufyān through Muʿāwiya up to Yazīd, no one amongst the Umayyuds ever appreciated or accepted the moral and spiritual nature of the Islamic message as preached by its holy prophet, Muḥammad. For each and every one of them, it always was and always remained an opportunity and a means of acquiring absolute power in the form of royal autocratic authority and despotic dominion, or what Ibn Khaldūn calls *al-mulk*.[19] Another point worthy of consideration here is that not necessarily everyone was moulded in

18 *Ibid.*, pp. 246-48, 258-9..
19 *Ibid.*, pp. 246-48.

the same manner in which Muʿāwiya was moulded by the hard and rough character of the pre-Islamic period. Zuḥair b. Abī Salma, a well-known poet of the period immediately prior to the advent of Islam, is noted for his poetry of peace, love, and kindness; and the same is true of many others with Christian learnings as well as of those who were known as the *hunafā'*. The pact of amity known as *ḥilf al-fuḍūl* is yet another fine example of the natural inclination of some members of the Quraysh for justice and compassion, even in pre-lslamie times.[20] What may have been true of some or even of many of the members of the tribe of Quraysh was not necessarily true of all of them. What we actually see here is a combination of some of the hereditary family traits of the Umayyads, and their family traditions. And in the case of Yazīd b. Muʿāwiya, these familial trails and traditions, in the midst of an outrageously imbalanced combination of unbounded pelf and unbridled power, assumed a formidably sinister authority.[21]

One docs not have to look far to discover how so much pelf and power came to be concentrated in the hands of an ill-bred and self-centred youth. Not only did Muʿāwiya and the Umayyads rekindle the flames of harsh tribal group feelings, but they also set ablaze fires of racial hostility based on the idea of Arab superiority, both of which had been rejected and condemned by the holy Prophet. The Imam ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib had established his spiritual and moral as well as his temporal authority on the same humane ideals as those of the holy Prophet. And then his spiritual successors, the Imam Ḥasan b. ʿAlī and the Imam Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, following in the footsteps of their father and their grandfather, had held steadfastly to the straight path of these moral and humane traditions that regarded the fundamental principles of divine unity and divine justice as the basis for the universal justification of all creation. Though this was religion with the widest moral perspective, it was not the politics of autocratic authority which was available only by means of harsh group feeling and fierce racial hostility. So Muʿāwiya and his henchmen opted for the latter. Thus it was that, growing out of these harsh feelings and fierce hostilities, many concentric spheres of a

20 Ibn Hishām, p. 133.

21 Ṭaḥa Ḥusayn, pp. 258-59.

socio-political hierarchy formed around the central position held by the ego of the despot or the autocrat, and it was into this central ego that all power and all privilege was concentrated. This is how the moral and socio-political change that Ibn Khaldūn calls the 'transformation of the Caliphate into royal authority' came about.[22]

The nature of this transformation is explained furthur by Ibn Khaldūn as a change in the 'restraining influence' which, as he says, was present in the form of Islamic morality in the self or the conscience of every person in the social milieu of the Holy Prophet's time.[23] With these changes, namely the transformation of the Caliphate into royal authority, the nature of the restraining influence also changed from that of Islamic morality into group feeling and the sword of royal authority. This was an atavistic reversion to the pre-Islamic period, as Ibn Khaldūn himself admits.

However, insofar as the Qur'ān is concerned there is a consistant continuity and constancy of moral nature according to which human beings were created: *So set thy face to the religion, a man of pure faith — God's original upon which he originated mankind. There is no changing God's creation. That is the right religion; but most men know it not.* (30:30)[24] Truth, whether perceived intuitively or inferred rationally and empirically, almost invariably turns out to be beautifully simple and clear, both conceptually and conducively. This is equally true in the sphere of religion and morality as it is in that of literature or science or philosophy. Complication and confusion are most often the results of the conflicts and contradictions that grow out of the odd mixture of cynicism and hypocrisy characteristic of self-centredness. Once the self-restraining influence of the human conscience had been swept aside by the brutal force of group feeling and the sword of royal authority, Islamic morality too was bound to fade into oblivion. Such a

22 Ibn Khaldūn, pp. 434; J. Zaydān, pp. 58-61, 74-78, 82-88, 102-104; Ṭaḥa Ḥusayn, pp. 246-248, 256; ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-Aqqād, *Abqariyyul al-imām* (Cairo, 1947), pp. 60-61, 144-158; Muḥammad Mahdī Shams al-Dīn, *Thawrat al-Ḥusayn* (Beirut), pp. 48-80.

23 Ibn Khaldūn, pp. 426-427. 444.

24 A. J. Arberry, p. 414.

sorry state of social affairs called for the most selfless struggle and the highest self-sacrifice from the moral leaders of humanity present in that milieu. In view of his familial and environmental background, it is not so surprising that the unique distinction of answering this most urgent call should have gone to the Imam Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, the grandson of the holy Prophet. However, though no longer far off, the time had not arrived for him to say what he would say later to ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmār:

O ʿAbd Allāh, it is surely the proof of the baseness of this world in the sight of God that the head of John [the Baptist] should be presented before a harlot of the people of Israel and that my head should be presented before a harlot of the Umayyads![25]

For the time being, the situation, as described accurately by Ṭaḥa Ḥusayn, was still confusing lor the people in general, whose limited perceptive abilities had to be taken into consideration in order to ensure that the message got through to them fully and fairly, and that the group in power did not succeed in confusing the entire issue in the people's minds. Ṭaḥa Ḥusayn states that Ḥusayn posesscd great sagacity and had profound perception of the state of affairs then prevalent. Al-Ḥusayn was aware that the authority to rule was completely in the hands of Muʿāwiya, and that all the lands were fully in his control: and he also knew well how Muʿāwiya appointed provincial governors who dealt with the inhabitants in a mercilessly harsh manner, and terrorized them, so that even when he broke all those solemn pledges on the basis of which allegiance had been given to him, namely, that of adhering to the code of conduct prescribed by the Book of God and the Tradition of the Messenger of God, even then it proved impossible to avail of any opportunity to head off a revolt against him. These pledges were definitely broken by Muʿāwiya repeatedly when he himself ordered the execution of some of the eminant and innocent inhabitants of Kūfa and again when he ordered the oath of allegiance for his son Yazīd, and thus transformed the Caliphate into a hereditary royal authority. Moreover, Muʿāwiya's squandering of the people's wealth on himself and his protegees, and his appointment of despotic

25 ʿAbd al-Rizzāq al-Mūsawī al-Muqarram, *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn* (Beirut, 1979), p. 138.

provincial governors who also squandered the public funds all of these actions annulled the very oath of allegiance that had initially given him the power and authority which he had abused so blatantly.[26]

But the time was fast approaching when even the wiles of Muʿāwiya could not have stemmed the rising tide of the people's anger against the unending outrages that were being committed with impunity by his governors and minions upon all those who dared to show any sign of dissent or resentment. It was around this time that Muʿāwiya himself died, leaving the mess to be sorted out by his ill-bred son, Yazīd, and another equally ill-bred man, Ubayd Allāh, the son of Muʿāwiya's henchman, Ziyād b. Abīh. who had died a few years earlier. What Yazīd lacked of Muʿāwiya's resourcefulness in wiles and strategems, he tried to make up by resorting to brute force, though not entirely so, for he had inherited, after all, along with royal authority, the wealth accumulated by his lather and the means and methods of putting it to political use for exploiting the mercenary mentality that could be found at almost every social level in that milieu. The indulgent manner of his upbringing, of course, made a rather big difference in the way he attempted to coerce or oppress any particular group or the people in general from that of his father.

Against this formidable stale-managed oppression, any revolutionary move had to avoid being misunderstood or misinterpreted by the mercenary jurists, who were under heavy obligation to the so-called caliph and his henchmen. These jurists would have dubbed such a movement as a contravention of Islamic law and tradition, and thus deserving to be crushed brutally. Any revolutionary action had to establish not only its social and moral justification but also its legal validity under Islamic law and tradition. Despite the care that had to be taken in such adverse circumstances, many mercenary jurists of the time either took up an openly hostile stance towards the Imam Ḥusayn's attempts to advocate reforms in the light of the Qur'ān and the Tradition of the holy Prophet, and his opposition to the royal authority of the so-called caliph, or they pretended to be neutral. So

26 Ṭaḥa Ḥusayn, pp. 213-214

much confusion had been created in the minds of men that the issue of Ḥusayn's eventual martyrdom remained a controversial question for centuries to follow. An example of this was the superficially legalistic opinion expressed by the jurist Qāḍī Abū Bakr b. al-ʿArabī al-Malikī, which is devoid of all moral perception, and in which he says that Ḥusayn was killed in accordance with the law of his own grandfather. Ibn Khaldūn, the well-known partisan of all that can be called Umayyad and Arab, disagrees with this judgement. He says that the jurist made a gross error in this opinion, because he overlooked the condition that no insurrection is permitted against a just leader or ruler. The iniquity of Yazīd had become self-evident from the fact that he was responsible for the killing of Ḥusayn. As for Ḥusayn, there was no one who was more just and upright a leader than he in the struggle against the selfish and the self-willed of those times.[27]

Obviously, the Imam Ḥusayn was not a politician in any sense of the word, but was instead a spiritual leader and a moral teacher, and in that capacity no decisions could be made on purely political considerations. It was a situation identical to that of his grandfather when he was opposed by Abū Sufyān, and also that of his father when Muʿāwiya confronted him with all his pre-Islamic egoism. The wheel had come full circle a second time — twice in five to six decades — showing how arduous and difficult the task of social reform and organization on moral principles was.

Moral perception cannot be forced upon anyone, for perception of anything in any form must come from the mind of the person who is to perceive. If this is true of the ordinary or trite experience pertaining to the physical and material world, how much more so is it of the world of ideas and concepts and their interrelationship. In situations that involve a conflict between the self and others, perception often tends to be affected by egoism. Thus the development of moral perception becomes impossible unless the ego or self gets positively involved in its social situation by identifying itself with it. This is often very difficult,

27 Ibn Khaldūn, pp. 435-445; Ṭaḥa Ḥusayn, pp. 61-66; ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-Aqqād, pp. 112-116, 154-155.

for we all develop an egocentric view of the world. The study of science is one way of appreciating our individual insignificance. Wider and deeper knowledge does lend to increase perceptive ability. However, we are neither unacquainted with nor unaware of erudite egotists! Therefore, the question is: how do we go forward from knowledge to morality, from science to conscience? This question has been the central theme of all religions, and also of all moral and social philosophies. But the answers to it and solutions to the problems that relate to it have come not only in words but also in deeds. Although the two are really inseperable. deeds may have been the final proof of all that the w'ords tried to express.

All that had been said by the prophet of Islam was being put to the final test, and it was on the shoulders of Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī that the responsibility for appropriate action lay: the Qur'ān had to speak through his deeds. The Prophet had said of him:

Ḥusayn is of me, and I am of Ḥusayn (*al-Ḥusayn minni wa ana min al-Ḥusayn*).

And the Qur'ān stales that the Prophet never speaks as he wills or fancies personally, but only as he is divinely inspired (53:3 and 4).

The Prophet's statement regarding Husayn must be pondered. Obviously, a grandson is (*via* his parents) a product of his grandparents. But what is the implication of the second part of the Prophet's statement, that he himself was of his grandson, except the hopes and confident expectations of the grandfather that the divinely inspired moral and spiritual message conveyed by him in words through the Qur'ān would be continued, after him, by Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī.

The aforementioned statement also demonstrates the humility of the Prophet, as do many verses of the Qur'ān, in disclaiming any exclusive right to guide humanity to rightousness, as well as his dedication to the continuity of the divinely inspired moral and spiritual message

conveyed through him.[28] From Adam and Noah and Abraham, through Moses and Jesus, and right up to Muḥammad himself, the divinely-inspired moral and spiritual message had continued, and. thus, it had to continue after the prophet of Islam for as long as there were human beings needing guidance. So, in accordance with the hopes and expectations of his grandfather, the Imam Ḥusayn was destined to shoulder this tremendous responsibility of ensuring the continuity of the moral and spiritual message finally entrusted to him.

The transformation that the Muslim society had undergone in consequence of its domination by Muʿāwiya and his clan and mercenary associates tor two decades had eventually rendered it generally indifferent to the human equality, social justice and, compassion preached by the Prophet of Islam. Kingly authority and the hierarchy of arbitrary rights and privileges that necessarily accompany the establishment of such a socio-political system had made it impossible for the ordinary person to take a stand against it. Therefore, since he could not fight it with the hope of defeating it, he either became apathetic or joined the ranks of those who exercised authority and could tempt him with irresistable offers but, finally, meagre rewards. Such is human nature, and so hopeless was the human situation in that society that the hope of reward, no matter how meagre it was, always remained sufficiently effective to ensure submission. Evidently, this is what the poet al-Farazdaq referred to tersely when he informed the Imam Ḥusayn on his way to Iraq that though the hearts of the people were with him, their swords were with the Umayyads.[29] But this did not deter the Imam Ḥusayn from the great objective he had set before himself: the revival of the moral and spiritual values of Islam in that milieu.

The firmness of his determination to attain this objective even if it involved the ultimate self-sacrifice of martyrdom is evident from some of the last discourses he delivered before his death. Addressing the gathering that included the cavalrymen under Ḥurr, he said:

28 2:62, 87, 285; 3:3-4, 33-4. 38-9. 44-9: and many more.
29 ʿAbd al-Rizzāq al-Mūsawī al-Muqarram, p. 174.

O people, the Prophet has said that he who sees a tyrannical potentate transgressing against God and His Prophet and oppressing and wronging the people and remains apathetic and does nothing, neither by word nor by deed, to alter the situation, then it will he just on the part of God to place him where he deservedly belongs.

Your messages and letters reached me in regard to your allegiance to me stating that you will not foresake me, so if you have come to a final decision in this regard then you ought to follow the right path. But if you have broken your pledges ..., and this is not unlike your previous behavior with my father and my brother and my cousin Muslim, [then remember that] you yourselves will be the cause of your misfortunes, and you yourselves will ruin your lot. for whoever breaks a pledge only harms himself, and God is not in need of anyone.[30]

On arriving in Karbalā', he addressed his companions thus. First turning to them, he said 'the people have become the slaves of their worldly interests, while religion is merely a light favour on their tongues: they gather around it only so long as it yields abundant benefits to their livelihoods, but when they arc pul to the test as affliction strikes them, few remain to stand and judge.' Then he delivered a brief sermon:

You see what has befallen us; bow the world has changed, and changed for the worse. Its good has receded and what little is left over is but the last trickle, and the scarcity of livelihood is like a sparse and unwholesome pasture! Do you not see that the truth is not put into practice and that falsehood has no limit. O how the faithful long for union with God! [As for me] I look upon death as but a felicity (of martyrdom) and I regard life amongst oppressors and transgressors as nothing but an agony and a torture.[31]

In a situation such as this, the momentous decisions made by the Imam Ḥusayn were significant in both their moral and historical consequences. Firstly, he refused to accept or to recognize the morality

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 184-185.
31 *Ibid.*, pp. 193-194; also al-Ṭabarī, p. 305.

or the validity of the arbitrary royal authority imposed upon the people by an egotistic autocrat supported by the tribal and clannish group feeling of the Quraysh and their Umayyad leaders simply because it was repugnant to the will and the word of God as expressed in the Qur'ān and to the Prophet's moral and spiritual message of Islam. Second, he departed from Medina, and then from Mecca, in order to avoid their desecration through strife and bloodshed, and to preserve the sanctity of the former as a city of peace, and of the latter as the sanctuary of all living things. Third, he responded positively to the call for leadership from the oppressed people of Iraq against the tyrannical rulers of the day. Fourth, he was averse to making elaborate military preparations so as to let the popular uprising of the oppressed masses retain its popular Islamic character. Fifth, on learning how the imminent popular uprising had been cunningly outmanouevered by Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād and then brutally suppressed, he selflessly offered to depart beyond the limits of the Umayyad Empire. And finally, he was unshakablely resolved to lay down his life rather than to swear the oath of allegiance to an usurper of the right of the people to opt for a ruler who fulfilled all the conditions required by Islam.

The night before the day of his martyrdom and the martyrdom of his companions and relatives, the Imam Ḥusayn absolved every one of them from any obligation to die for him. He even asked them to escort the members of his own family and household away from Karbalā', since, he said, the tyrannical rulers of the day were eager only for his death in revenge for his not giving them the recognition they sought from him in view of his high spiritual status of being the Prophet's grandson and spiritual successor. But not any one of them left his side, and every one of them laid down his life, both for him, and for his great cause.

These were indeed momentous decisions that kept alive the faith in God and in the humane principles of Islam preached by the Prophet. Who can claim to be the greatest witness to this faith, except the Prophet's own grandson, who died as a martyr for its great cause?