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In his last days, Mu'awiya warned Yazid that he should be careful about how he would handle four persons; Imam Husayn (a.s.), Abdullah bin Umar, Abdullah ibn az–Zubair and Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr, who opposed his succession. When Mu'awiya died in Syria, his son Yazid usurped the governorship of Syria and staked his claim as successor of the head of the Islamic State. Yazid appointed his kin and his henchmen as Governors of various provinces. He appointed his cousin al–Waleed bin Utbah bin Abu Sufyan as the Governor of Medina. Al–Waleed's predecessor Marwan, who was banished by the Holy Prophet (S) and the first and the second *Caliphs*, was recalled to act as al–Waleed's advisor.

Yazid's fear of Imam Husayn (a.s.) was so great that he sent a special emissary with a letter to al–Waleed commanding him to get the oath of allegiance from Imam Husayn (a.s.), Abdullah Bin Umar, Abdullah bin Az–Zubair, with a special stress on Imam Husayn (a.s.), and to kill them if they refused.

Al-Waleed sent for the persons named in the letter. His messengers found Imam Husayn (a.s.) and Abdullah Ibn az-Zubair in the mosque. They both replied that they would meet al-Waleed later. Abdullah ibn az-Zubair realized that for al-Waleed to send for them at that hour of night, the reason might be that Mu'awiya who was known to be seriously sick, must have died and that Yazid would have called for their allegiance. Ibn az-Zubair also realized that the occasion provided the chance for him to grab power that he so long cherished.

Instead of going to al-Waleed, ibn az-Zubair collected the members of his clan and his followers and sat with them in the safety of his house. When al-Waleed sent his henchmen who abused ibn az-Zubair and demanded that he should come out and meet al-Waleed immediately or else be killed. The terrified ibn az-Zubair sent his brother Ja'far to plead with al-Waleed to withdraw his men, with a promise that ibn az-Zubair would meet al-Waleed in the morning. Al-Waleed recalled his men believing that ibn az-Zubair would keep his promise. Immediately after al-Waleed's men had left, ibn az-Zubair and his brother Ja'far rushed to Mecca through secret routes under the cover of the night. Next morning, al-Waleed sent for ibn az-Zubair only to find that he had already left Medina under the cover of the night. Al-Waleed sent eighty horsemen to trace az-Zubair and his brother. They searched all the known routes to Mecca but could not find the desert route followed by ibn az-Zubair. 1 Ibn az-Zubair reached Mecca

and sought asylum in the sanctuary of the Kaaba, where he sought to win over followers by pretensions to piety.

From the four persons summoned by al-Waleed, only Imam Husayn (a.s.) met him. Al-Waleed himself showed respect to Imam Husayn (S) and shirked the thought of causing any harm to the Prophet's grandson. At the meeting, al-Waleed read out the first part of the letter demanding Imam Husayn's allegiance, and then he gave the letter to Imam Husayn (a.s.) to read the later part. On seeing that the letter contained the command to kill him, Imam Husayn suggested that al-Waleed should gather the people of Medina in a public meeting and ascertain their opinion whether Imam Husayn (a.s.) should take the oath of allegiance acknowledging Yazid's sovereignty. Al-Waleed agreed to do so, but the cunning Marwan intervened and told al-Waleed either to obtain the oath of allegiance there and then, or to kill Imam Husayn (a.s.) immediately. Imam Husayn (a.s.) became angry at the audacity of Marwan and raised his voice in protest, and the Hashimites, who were waiting outside, immediately rushed in 2 On realizing that the situation has become volatile, Marwan slunk away through a back door and al-Waleed pacified Imam Husayn (a.s.). Later, Marwan told al-Waleed, "You missed the best opportunity to kill Husayn and protect Yazid's Caliphate." The next day, there was a chance encounter between Marwan and Imam Husayn (a.s.). Marwan accosted the Imam and said, "I advice you to swear allegiance to Yazid and reap the benefits." The Imam (a.s.) replied, "It is because of us [the infallible pones] God opened up creation. It is due to us that creatures get their sustenance, and it is due to us that life continues. The likes of me do not pay allegiance to the likes of him (Yazid). 3 You want me to swear allegiance to Yazid who is an infidel and immoral person. No wonder it is you who is supporting Yazid, for it is you, Marwan, whom the Prophet (S) had banished for sedition and mischief." Like his noble father Ali (a.s.), Imam Husayn neither surrendered to the threats nor was he trapped by flattery.

From the beginning until his end, Imam Husayn (a.s.) staunchly opposed the debauch and tyrant Yazid. He preferred to sacrifice himself and his near and dear fellows rather than to surrender before Yazid.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) was informed that under Amr ibn Sa'd ibn al-Aas, Yazid had dispatched a division of mercenaries with specific instructions to kill him wherever he might be found. 4 Under pressure from Yazid, his governor al-Waleed sent his men to Imam Husayn's house in the night when the Imam had gone to visit the Prophet's tomb. On the following night also, al-Waleed's men could not find Imam Husayn (a.s.) in his house, as the Imam (a.s.) had gone to visit the tombs of his mother and brother. Al-Waleed expressed his glee that he was spared the blood of Imam Husayn (a.s.) whom he presumed had already left Medina.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) was faced with two options; he had either to capitulate to the demands of Yazid or to leave Medina to prevent bloodshed. He left Medina in the morning, two days before the new moon of the month of *Sha'ban* in the year sixty of Hijra. Imam Husayn (a.s.) followed the highway from Medina to Mecca, unlike ibn az–Zubair who took flight in the night and reached Mecca through desert routes. The contrast brings out the fact that ibn az–Zubair ran for fear of life, whereas Imam Husayn (S) had no such

fear. Secondly, the clandestine departure through secret routes shows that ibn az–Zubair had political aspirations, whereas Imam Husayn (a.s.) had no such intention. When Yazid learnt that al–Waleed did not carry out his orders and let Imam Husayn (a.s.) leave Medina, he replaced him with the notorious Marwan as the Governor of Medina and Mecca.

On the way to Mecca, Imam Husayn met Abdullah ibn Mutee' who inquired as to where the Imam (a.s.) was going. The Imam (a.s.) replied that for the present he was heading to Mecca. On hearing this, ibn Mutee' said, "I was afraid that you may be heading towards Kufa [on account of the thousands of letters addressed by the Kufians]. Kufa is the place where your father Imam Ali (a.s.) was martyred. The Kufians are the most treacherous and untrustworthy. They deserted your brother Imam Hasan (S) when he was attacked by Mu'awiya's men. Do not go to Kufa but stay in Mecca, for once you are killed we will be annihilated."5

The animosity of Yazid towards Imam Husayn was because of his inherent character and his denial of Islam, a religion ostensibly professed for political gain and just to stay in power. Yazid openly derided the Holy Prophet (S) and Islam. He was a debauch and a drunkard of vile nature. Yazid, by descent or by himself, never possessed any noble qualities. His grandfather was Abu Sufyan who plotted and carried out several plots to kill the Prophet (S). His grandmother was Hind who chewed the martyr Hamza's liver. His mother was Maysoon, a Christian planted by the Christians to avenge the defeat conceded by them when they were confronted by the Prophet (S) at the event of Mubahala. He had no pity or mercy for anyone. He killed people in thousands even before the battle of Karbala. Like his grandfather Abu Sufyan, Yazid also believed that there would be no life other than this and that there would be no heaven or hell and no accountability for one's evil and sinful acts. Nicholson wrote, "The slaughter of Husayn does not complete the tale of Yazid's enormities. Medina, the Prophet's city, having expelled its Umayyad governor, was sacked by the Syrian army, while Mecca itself, where Abdullah bin az–Zubayr had set up as rival Caliph was besieged, and the Kaaba laid in ruins'.6

Allama Sayyid Zeeshan Haider Jawadi writes, "The evil personality and character of Yazid was never in dispute among Muslims, but his faith and the nature of Islam was always in dispute. Above all is the dispute whether Yazid deserves to be cursed or not. However, it is well established and acknowledged by every unprejudiced scholar that Yazid's Islam was never the real Islam and that his character was such that he deserved to be cursed." 7

The following renowned Sunni scholars of merit approve of cursing Yazid:8

- [a] Allama al-Barazanji in his book 'Al-Isha'ah' and Ibn Hajar in as-Sawa'iq record that when Ahmed ibn Hanbal's 9 son asked his father about cursing Yazid, he replied, "How can Yazid not be cursed when God himself has cursed him." He then quoted the Qur'anic verse in which those who create chaos and bloodshed are cursed.
- [b] Ibn Khaldun says that Judge Abu Bakr bin al-Arabi al-Maliki wrote in his book 'Al-Awasim wel

Qawasim' that it would be absolutely wrong to say that Imam Husayn (a.s.) was slain by the sword of his grandfather. Yazid was never an Islamic ruler. The fundamental requisite of Islamic rule is justice and equity and there was never a person more just than Imam Husayn (a.s.).

- [c] At page 254 of Preface to History (Muqaddimat at-Tareekh) is mentioned, 'the fact that the Islamic scholars are united in admitting the irreligiousness of Yazid and they hold that such a person can not be an Islamic ruler and that any action taken against him can not be construed as impermissible.
- [d] The silent endurance by the companions of the Prophet (S) and the next generation (Tabi'een), 10 was not on account of their approval of Yazid's evil character, but because they did not like bloodshed and therefore they did not consider it proper to assist him.
- [e] Ibn Muflih al-Hanbali says that in the eyes of ibn Aqeel and ibnul Jowzi, it is permissible to oppose an unjust ruler, just as Imam Husayn (a.s.) stood up to oppose Yazid's tyranny. Assuming for a moment, if Yazid's rule in its initial stage, is considered as that of a lawful ruler, his rule automatically forfeits its legality and validity after he had killed Imam Husayn (a.s.), desecrated the Kaaba, and disgraced Medina.
- [f] Allama at-Taftazani, the author of 'Sharh al-Aqaiid an-Nasafiyya' writes that Yazid's willingness before and his joyous celebrations after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.) are established beyond doubt. Such a person cannot be attributed to have any faith. On the other hand, he deserves to be cursed and God's curse is upon his accomplices and assistants.
- [g] Ibn Hazm wrote in his book 'Al-Muhalla' that Yazid believed only in a worldly, materialistic life. There is no justification for his deeds. He was an absolute despot and tyrant. The attempts of some scholars to justify his deeds are nothing but unjust excesses.
- [h] Hafiz writes at page 298 of his book 'Rasayil' that the worst and inhuman crime of slaying Imam Husayn (a.s.), capturing his womenfolk, desecrating of Imam Husayn's severed head, looting Medina, and desecrating the Kaaba are sufficient proof of Yazid's stone heartedness, enmity towards the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.), hatred, cunningness, hypocrisy, and lack of faith. Every degenerate tyrant is a cursed one. In fact, those who do not curse the accursed ones deserve, in turn, to be cursed.
- [i] Burhan al-Halabi writes that both Sheikh Muhammad Bakri and his father used to curse Yazid and prayed, "May God throw Yazid in the deepest part of Hell."
- [j] Ath-Thahabi writes in 'Siyer A'laamun Nubala" that Yazid bin Mu'awiya was an inveterate enemy of Imam Ali and the Ahlul Bayt, self-conceited, ill mannered, characterless, drunkard, and debauch. He started his rule with the murder of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his household, and completed it with the incident of al-Harrah in the year 63 AH.
- [k] Ath-Thahabi writes in page 496 of the 8th volume of the book 'Mir'atuz Zamaan' that when asked

about cursing Yazid, Sibt bin al-Jowzi replied that Imam Ahmed (bin Hanbal) considered it appropriate to curse Yazid and we [his followers] also do not approve of him because his deeds were most despicable. If people are content to stop with their dislike, it is all right, but we too would have cursed him.

The above reference establish that scholars and historians of all times, who were just and did not carry any prejudice, declared Yazid to be an unjust ruler, infidel and hypocrite who deserved to be cursed. None of them approved of Yazid's character.

In recent times, some writers attempt to support Yazid on the ground that Yazid was not personally involved in the slaying of Imam Husayn (a.s.) or responsible for the subsequent events that took place. They hold that Ibn Ziyad and Ibn Sa'd were solely responsible for the horrible deeds... he certainly deserves to be cursed."11

It is only a few ignorant and irreligious writers who seek to justify the legitimacy of Yazid's rule and consider that his fight against Imam Husayn (a.s.) in the battle of Karbala was nothing but a struggle for power. Such writers are, in reality, the progeny of Yazid, and therefore, until recently, used to consider Yazid as the Commander of the Faithful [Ameerul Mo'minin]. They have conspired to legitimize Yazid's oppressive and tyrannous rule to downplay Imam Husayn's sacrifice and martyrdom by declaring Imam Husayn (a.s.) to be a militant against the established rule. 12

Imam Husayn (a.s.), as his father Imam Ali (a.s.), never aspired for political leadership, but he expressed his reservations against the sinful and debauch Yazid's taking control of the affairs of the Islamic world. Imam Husayn (a.s.) continued to propagate Islamic sciences as the acknowledged *Imam*. He never collected any army nor did he plan to overthrow Yazid. Yet Yazid was mortally afraid that a day would come when people would be attracted to the Islamic teachings of Imam Husayn (a.s.), and Yazid's own misdeeds would lead to a revolt. He sought Imam Husayn's seal of approval and he demanded that Imam Husayn (a.s.) should openly acknowledge Yazid as the legitimate ruler of the Islamic world. Like his father Imam Ali (a.s.), Imam Husayn (a.s.) refused to do so and he preferred to remain in Medina discharging his duties as the acknowledged *Imam* of the time.

- 1. Nafasul Mahmoom, Urdu Translation by Allama Sayyid Safdar Husayn Najafi, Abbas Book Agency Lucknow, p 95.
- 2. Nafasul Mahmoom, p 94, Life of Imam Husayn [s] [The Saviour] p. 100.
- 3. Nuzhatul Masa'ib, vol. I p. 195 quoting ibn Nama.
- 4. Maqtal al-Husayn by al-Muqarram, 165, quoted in Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p. 51.
- 5. Nafasil Mahmoom, p 109, al-Kamil of Ibnul Athir, 19-4 quoted in Imam Husayn (a.s.) & Tragic Saga of Karbala, p 53.
- 6. A Literary History of Arabs, Adam Publishers [2003] p. 198.
- 7. Nuqooshe Ismat, p. 279.
- 8. Ibid., p. 279 281.
- 9. Note: Ahmed bin Hanbal is the founder of the Hanbalite sect of Sunni Muslims.
- 10. Tabi'een: the next generation, which did not personally meet or hear the Prophet [s] but narrated traditions they heard from the companions of the Prophet (S).
- 11. Nuqooshe Ismat, p. 280-281.
- 12. Note: Those who defend Yazid conveniently forget and forsake the well-known doctrines of conspiracy, accountability

and vicarious liability. When the commander of an army entitled to take credit for victory gained through his men, he is also responsible for the atrocities committed by his deputies.

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