

Chapter 27: Persecution of the Shia

This Chapter is dedicated to those Martyrs whose names are lost in History due to the enormity of their numbers.

NOTE: Part ‘A’ of this chapter deals with the construction of the shrine and the frequent demolition made by the Umayyads and other rulers. Part ‘B’ and ‘C’ deal with the persecution of the Shia. The material of Part ‘A’ is collected primarily from the Urdu translation of a well-researched book in Arabic under the title ‘Tarikh Karbala al-Mu’alla wa Ha’ir al-Husayn’ written by Dr. Abdul Jawad Kalidar of Iraq. The book was translated into Urdu by Muhammad Baqir Naqvi, the editor of *Islah*, Khajwa, Bihar.

The material of Part ‘B’ is collected mainly from a book under the title ‘*Masa’ibush Shia*’ written by Moulana al-Haj Sadat Husayn Sahib, printed at Sarfaraz Qaumi Press, Likhnow, U.P., in six volumes of about 200 pages each, in the year 1966. Its second edition was brought out in three volumes. I have followed both editions of this book.

Part A: Demolition of the Shrines

The Bani Asad had helped Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) in burying the martyrs. Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) foretold, “In this land of Karbala, the shrine of Imam Husayn (a.s.) will become a beacon of perpetual guidance. Centuries will pass but the grace flowing from Husayn’s shrine will continue unabated. The misguided leaders of recanting disbelievers will spare no effort to destroy and obliterate every sign and memory of the shrine, but every one of their malicious attempt will only augment the glory of the shrine.”

History is witness to the fact that no less than eight times, if not seventeen times, the shrine of Imam Husayn (a.s.) was completely destroyed only to come up in a larger and more glorious structure. The Umayyads and the Abbasids spared no effort to prevent people from visiting the shrine. Every such restriction only brought more and more determined pilgrims. We give below a short account of these incidents.

Now, within a few years after Ashura, for the first time the Banu Asad constructed a small structure over the graves and a mosque nearby. The Umayyads however established police chowkidars to prevent people from visiting the tombs. However, the structure remained until the end of the reign of the Umayyads, who were more interested in identifying and annihilating the Shia. The structure drew the Shia like a magnet and thus helped the Umayyads in easily apprehending them (the Shia). Perhaps this was the reason why the structure remained intact, even as the Umayyads desecrated Medina and Mecca and the shrines in those cities.

According to the authors of *Nuzhat Ahlil Haramain* and *A'yaanush Shia*, the first structure remained until the year 193 AH.¹ The Abbasids, who succeeded the Umayyads in the rule, were initially engaged in establishing their control over the newly acquired government. At first, the jealousy and enmity to Imam Ali and his progeny was only secretly nurtured. It was in the period of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur ad-Dawaniqi that the first demolition of the shrine took place. So cruel was al-Mansur that he not only killed the Umayyads but also massacred thousands from the progeny of Ali and Fatima and their followers. No sooner than the shrine was demolished, a new and better structure was put up by the public at great peril.

For the second time, Harun ar-Rashid demolished the structure out of his intense enmity towards Imam Husayn (a.s.). He even ordered the tree that stood as a marker near the tomb to be cut. Harun ar-Rashid died shortly thereafter and immediately another structure was constructed in the year 193 AH. Some authors are of the opinion that al-Ma'mun got the second structure constructed in 193 AH only to pacify the enraged public by pretending to be a well-wisher of the *Ahlul Bayt*.

Sheik at-Toosi also narrates that when Yahya bin al-Mughira was with Jareer bin Abdul Hamid, an Iraqi came and on being questioned he said, "*Harun ar-Rashid destroyed the tomb of al-Husayn and cut the lote-tree which was near the tomb and that was used as a mark leading to the tomb. I have heard a tradition of the Prophet (S) who repeated thrice: 'May Allah's curse be upon the one who cuts the lote-tree.' It is only now that I can understand the significance of the Prophet's saying.*"²

Sheikh at-Toosi in his *Amali* writes that in the year 247 AH, Ubaidullah bin Rabe'ah went to perform the Hajj and on his return, he went to visit the tombs of the martyrs of Karbala. He found that on the orders of the caliph, the graves were demolished and when the earth was sought to be ploughed, the bulls refused to tread the tomb (of Imam Husayn) and veered off to the right or the left of the tomb in spite of being beaten severely. Ubaidullah saying, "*By Allah, if the Umayyads have killed the grandson of the messenger of Allah, then their cousins the Abbasids too have oppressed him. By your life, his tomb has been desecrated even as they (the Abbasids) regret for not having supported in killing al-Husayn, they persecuted him after he was martyred.*"³ A similar report is narrated through Umar ibn Faraj ar-Rakhji.⁴

The third construction, which was a huge structure, remained for about forty years until al-Mutawakkil ascended the throne in 232 AH. Al-Mutawakkil not only demolished the structure but he also confiscated all the properties dedicated to the shrine saying that the graves of the dead did not need anything.⁵

Soon after the demolition, every time a new and larger structure was constructed by the public. In his tenure of fifteen years, al-Mutawakkil demolished the shrine not less than four times; in the years 233, 236, 237, and 247 AH.[6](#)

Al-Muntasir killed his father al-Mutawakkil and reconstructed the shrine. In 247 AH, the shrine was once again constructed. Al-Muntasir not only got the shrine reconstructed on a larger scale, but also he encouraged people to visit it.[7](#)

In the year 263 AH due to a conspiracy of the government, the roof of the shrine caved in and hundreds of visitors were crushed to death.

For ten years, the shrine remained without a roof. In 273 AH, Muhammad bin Zaid bin al-Hasan bin Muhammad bin Ismael, who was known as *Da'iy as-Saghir*, reconstructed the shrines at Karbala and Najaf once again.[8](#)

The shrine in Karbala was provided a dome and the shrine in Najaf was renovated and expanded. The shrines at Mecca and Medina were expanded and fresh constructions were added by Adhdud Dowla Khosrow bin Buwayh Dailamy. Ibnul Athir in his *at-Tarikh al-Kamil* praises the work done by Adhdud Dowla. Ibnul Athir also records that a dacoit called Zaba bin al-Asadi looted the shrine several times. Adhdud Dowla sent a large contingent to apprehend the dacoits, but they escaped arrest.[9](#) During this period, Imran bin Shahin constructed a mosque and walls surrounding a huge courtyard at Karbala that were known as the *Courtyard of Imran*. It is also said that under a vow taken by him, he also constructed a mosque at Kazimain. In the month of Rabi'ul Awwal in 407 AH, there was an accidental fire that destroyed the entire structure.[10](#) Some say that the fire was accidental but a majority is of the opinion that it was started on the secret orders of the caliph al-Qadir Billah who was responsible for several cases of arson and looting.

After the fire, Ibn Sahlan Ramhurmuzi, who was appointed the prime minister, constructed a stone wall all around the shrines in Karbala and Najaf. These walls remained intact for about a century from 424 to 562 AH. Ibnul Athir was contemporary and has reported the incident in detail in his book about the reconstruction of the shrine by Abu Muhammad bin Sahlan.

In 526 AH, al-Mustarshid Billah merely appropriated all the moveable and immovable properties dedicated to the shrines, but he did not meddle with their structures.

In 620 AH, the caliph Nasiruddin's minister Mo'ayyiduddin Muhammad al-Alqami made many beautiful additions to the structure that remained intact for about 360 years.

An Arab, Muhammad bin Falah came to power in 754 AH. He was a student of Muhammad Sheikh Ahmed bin Fahad al-Hilli. He believed that Imam Ali (a.s.) was alive and that his soul has had transmigrated into him. He destroyed the dome of the shrine at Najaf saying that Imam Ali was God and that God would never die. He converted the shrine into the royal kitchen.[11](#)

Muhammad bin Falah's son Ali went one step ahead of his father and claimed to be God incarnate. In 858 AH, he looted the pilgrims to Najaf and Karbala and destroyed the shrines and the houses surrounding them.

The foundations for the present structure of the shrine at Karbala were laid and a beautiful building was raised in 767 AH by Sultan Owais bin Sheikh Hasan al-Jalairi. His children Sultan Husayn and Sultan Ahmed continued the work of expansion and beautification. The Sultan's Bondsman Marjan was appointed governor of Baghdad. He revolted against the caliph, but when the caliph brought a huge army, Marjan's supporters deserted him. Marjan sought asylum in the shrine of Imam Husayn, dedicated all his wealth to the shrine, and vowed that if he was spared by the caliph, he would beautify the shrine. On receiving the Sultan's pardon, Marjan renovated the shrine and constructed a beautiful minaret. Ibn Kathir, the author of *al-Bidaya wan-Nihaya* who was a contemporary and eye witness, has reported the incident in detail at page 913 of vol. 14 of his book about the reconstruction of the shrine by Abu Muhammad bin Sahlan and the beautiful minaret raised by Marjan. [12](#)

On the tenth of Thul Hijjah, 1216 AH, corresponding to the year 1948 AD, the Wahabite army of Arabs entered Karbala and demolished, razed the shrine to the ground, and looted all decorations including the gold inlays and precious stones. This incident is reported in detail in Stephen Hamly's book 'Four Centuries of Iraq's History'.

The minaret constructed by Marjan in 767 AH was demolished in the year 1354 AH. The excuse made was that the minaret was tilting towards one side and that it might, in its fall, damage the main shrine. It is commonly believed that the minaret was demolished only to misappropriate the huge endowments that were made by the Safawid kings.

Shah Abbas Safawi in 914 AH, Sultan Sulaiman Qanuni in 941 AH, Shah Tahmasb in 950 AH, the Qachar kings Sultan Agha Muhammad Khan, Fateh-Ali Shah, and Nasiruddin Shah and finally Mulla Tahir Saifuddin, towards the end of the 1300 AH, made several renovations and additions to the shrine that we see today.

The latest incident of demolition of the shrine of Imam Ali an-Naqi (al-Hadi) and Imam al-Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) took place at Samara in Northern Iraq by bomb blast on February 2, 2006. It bears testimony to the fact that even in these enlightened and civilized times, people get a sadistic pleasure in bombing and destroying the tombs. We can very well imagine the atrocities that would have been committed in the days when men were known to be more barbaric, illiterate and uncivilized.

[1.](#) Tarikh Karbala-e-Mu'alla Published by Islah, Khajwa, Bihar, p. 109.

[2.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom, p. 286.

[3.](#) Ibid., p. 285-286.

[4.](#) Ibid., p. 286.

[5.](#) Tarikh Karbala-e-Mu'alla, p. 111 quoting Nasikhut Tawareekh, vol. 2 p. 37.

[6.](#) Ibid., p. 152-153.

[7.](#) Ibid., p. 115 quoting Nuzhat al-Haramain, vol. 2 p. 17 and A'yan ash-Shia, vol. 4 p. 53.

8. Tarikh Karbala-e-Mu'all,a, p.117-118 quoting Nuzhat al-Haramain, p. 20 and A'yan ash-Shia, vol. 4 p. 306.
9. Tarikh Karbala-e-Mu'alla, vol. 2, p. 173 quoting at-Tarikh al-Kamil, vol. 8 p.226,.
10. At-Tarikh al-Kamil of ibnul Athir, vol. 9 p. 102.
11. Tarikh Karbala-e-Mu'alla, vol. 2, p. 182-183 quoting Aatharush Shia, p. 58-59.
12. Ibid., p. 139.

Part B: Persecution of the Shia by the Umayyads

The fact that the details about the persecution against the Shia was compiled in seven volumes each of over 200 pages, under the title '*Masa'ibush Shia*'¹ goes to show the enormity of the matter. The writer/compiler was Moulana Sadat Husayn Khan Sahib. The book was published by Sarfaraz Press, Luknow in 1347 AH. The book was reprinted in three volumes in May 2001. I have mostly followed the contents of the earlier edition of '*Masa'ibush Shia*'. Instead of detailing each individual persecution that would only add to the volume of this book, for brevity's sake I have given short sketches of the persecution against the Shia during various regimes.

Be it the Umayyads or the Abbasids or any other regime for that matter, it is a historical fact that the Shia of the *Ahlul Bayt* alone were persecuted, tortured, banished, and killed, beginning from the moment of the Prophet's death to the present day. In this enlightened twenty-first century, in Iraq and elsewhere, misguided persons kill hundreds of Shia with remote controlled bombs. The scenes of youngsters slitting the throats or beheading those, whom they consider as their opponents, are a slur on the religion whose founder is known as 'Universal Mercy'. The book '*Masa'ibush Shia*' tells the story of the persecution against the Shia throughout centuries.

The period of persecution of the Shia can conveniently be divided into the following periods

- [a] Immediately after the demise of the Prophet (S) between 11 and 30 AH
- [b] The period after the martyrdom of Imam Ali in the year 35 until 60 AH when Mu'awiya died
- [c] The period between 61 to 132 AH when Abdullah ibn az-Zubair and the Umayyads ruled as the caliphs
- [d] The period between 133 to 334 AH when the Abbasids ruled as the caliphs
- [e] The period when a multitude of caliphs came to rule the Muslim world
- [f] During the Mongolian period and the recent times

Persecution of the Shia by Mu'awiya from 11 to 30 AH

(1) Sa'd bin Ubadah

Sa'd bin Ubadah was a close companion of Imam Ali (a.s.). When the Prophet (a.s.) settled the marriage of his daughter Fatima (S), Sa'd was in charge of arranging the event and he did his job excellently. According to Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Sa'd was an erudite scholar, an excellent swimmer, and noted archer of his time. Sa'd had inherited a few forts which were well-known for generosity and hospitality.

In the Prophet's army, there used to be two standards; Sa'd was the bearer of the Ansar's standard, while Imam Ali (a.s.) was the bearer of the Muhajirin's standard.

Sa'd was a loyal companion of the Prophet (S). He was a well-educated person and often officiated as the Prophet's scribe in writing down the Qur'anic revelations, writing letters, drafting deeds...etc. His tribe was well known for its generosity and hospitality. Sa'd was among the people of Medina who were, by reason of their learning of ancient scriptures, aware that a Prophet would soon appear in the Arabia. When they heard about the Prophet (a.s.) and the religion he preached and the torture which he and his followers were subjected to, Sa'd along with some other learned persons from Medina came to the Prophet (S) and invited him to migrate to Medina. In every skirmish, battle, or other confrontation with the opponents of Islam, Sa'd participated and fought valiantly.

When Umar, Abu Bakr, and Abu Ubaidah ibn al-Jarrah went to the *Saqifa* to stake the claim for the *Caliphate*, Sa'd bin Ubadah challenged them saying that among the tribe of Quraish, if the people of Quraish were to have precedence, Imam Ali (a.s.) was the nominated by the Prophet (S) as his successor and that he was the most fit person to the post. On hearing this, Umar was so infuriated that he shouted, "Kill Sa'd." However, Sa'd's tribesmen rescued him. Sa'd never recognized Abu Bakr or Umar as the *Caliphs*. He never mingled with them nor did he offer prayers behind them at any time. He was steadfast in his refusal to acknowledge Abu Bakr and later Umar as the *Caliph*. Umar asked Khalid bin al-Walid who secretly killed Sa'd bin Ubadah. Though Sa'd was not the first in point of time to be martyred because of his love for Imam Ali (a.s.), he was the first one to openly oppose at the *Saqifa* the men who claimed the *Caliphate*.

Immediately after the death of the Prophet (S), the affair at the *Saqifa* created a rift among Muslims. The Ansar had heard the Prophet (S) nominating Imam Ali (a.s.) as his successor. They were aware of the virtue, caliber, and wisdom of Imam Ali (a.s.) and hence were ready to accept him as the successor to the Prophet (S). However, during the last days of the Prophet (S), the Ansar found that every order of the Prophet (S) was disobeyed and the parchment and pen he requested to write down his will was denied. Umar was at the head of this group (who opposed and disobeyed the Prophet). The Ansar realized that there was a concerted effort to prevent Imam Ali (a.s.) from succeeding the Prophet (S). They determined that if anyone other than Imam Ali (a.s.) was to become the *Caliph*, the Ansar had in

Sa'd bin Ubadah a better claim than the stranger incumbent to the post.

When Umar wanted Khalid bin al-Walid to be penalized for having killed Malik bin Nuwayra, a pious Muslim, and on the same night committing adultery with his widow, for the sake of pleasing the *Caliph* Abu Bakr, Khalid replied, "*I killed Malik bin Nuwayra to please Abu Bakr just as I had killed Sa'd bin Ubadah to please you.*" After this retort, Umar stopped accusing Khalid of murdering Malik bin Nuwayra.[2](#)

(2) Malik bin Nuwayra

Umar, who was well known for his booming voice and ill temper, went around Medina brandishing his unsheathed sword and threatening dire consequences if the caliphate of Abu Bakr was not accepted. In Medina, many companions and learned Muslims preferred to express their disagreement by staying away from open acceptance of Abu Bakr as the *Caliph*. They were immediately branded as friends of Ali and therefore, by implication, enemies of the caliph. Ali himself was made a target, dragged from his house and the house itself was threatened to be set on fire for refusing to acknowledge Abu Bakr as the caliph.

The well known and true companions of the Prophet (S) such as Salman, Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, Huthaifa bin al-Yeman, Malik al-Ashtar, al-Miqdad, Maytham at-Tammar, Muhammad bin Abu Bakr (the son of the caliph), Malik bin Nuwayra, Muhammad bin Abi Huthaifa, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, Sa'sa'a bin Souhan, Qambar, Kumail ibn Ziyad, Sulaym bin Qays, and an endless list of the Prophet's companions and Imam Ali's companions were not only deprived of their pensions but also banished from Medina to flimsy lands.

In remoter parts of the Islamic state, people were only aware that during his last pilgrimage, the Prophet (S) had nominated Imam Ali (a.s.) as his successor and demanded that the Muslim Umma should obey him alone. At any rate, they were not aware of any parallel nomination of anyone else by the Prophet (S). This was all the more evident from the fact that Abu Bakr, Umar, and their group claimed that the Prophet (S) had not nominated any successor and that Abu Bakr was unanimously elected at the Saqifa. This was contrary to what the Muslims had witnessed during the lifetime of the Prophet (S) who had repeatedly, from the first day of Youm ad-Dar till the incident of his demanding 'ink and parchment' to write down his will, nominated Imam Ali (a.s.) as his successor. Malik bin Nuwayra, a respected companion of the Prophet (S), went to Medina and found Abu Bakr sitting on the Prophet's pulpit. Malik asked Abu Bakr who made him sit there when Imam Ali (a.s.) who was nominated by the Prophet (S) was the rightful person to occupy the seat. Abu Bakr replied that he was elected at the Saqifa. Malik returned back refusing to pay allegiance to Abu Bakr. Therefore, when Muslims found that instead of Imam Ali (a.s.) Abu Bakr had become the Caliph, they refused to acknowledge the new incumbent or to submit to his authority. Above all, Malik bin Nuwayra told his tribesmen to keep the Zakat and Khums and to refuse paying them to the agents of Abu Bakr.

Abu Bakr became angry and ordered Khalid bin al-Walid to kill Malik bin Nuwayra for disobeying the

Caliph's authority. When Malik heard this, he said, *"I do not dare disobey the Caliph, but I will not bow down to Abu Bakr who is a usurper of the Caliphate. The rightful Caliph is Ali who was nominated by the Prophet (S)."* After a short fight, Khalid bin al-Walid killed Malik bin Nuwayra and his three hundred men. He confiscated all their properties and arrested their women. On the same night, he committed adultery with Malik's widow who was renowned for her beauty. These illegal acts created a stir among several persons, like Abu Qattara, in Khalid's army. They complained to Abu Bakr. The women prisoners complained that they were unjustly imprisoned to which Abu Bakr replied, *"Your men refused to pay the tax to me."* The women replied, *"If our men refused to pay the tax, you have slain them. Why do you hold us prisoners, where we have not committed any crime?"* Hearing this, Abu Bakr ordered them to be released. When Umar heard about the murder of Malik bin Nuwayra and his companions and the committing of adultery by Khalid, he suggested that Khalid should be executed for killing a pious Muslim, and that Khalid should also be stoned for committing adultery with Malik's widow. Abu Bakr refused saying that he pardoned Khalid for his misinterpretation and that he would pay blood money to Malik's heirs and ask Khalid to forthwith divorce Malik's widow. This decision speaks volumes about the *Caliph's* acumen. Firstly, the *Caliph* is not the authority to pardon sins. Secondly, blood money could be paid only when heirs of the killed person agree to receive it, but if they demand *Qisas* (retaliation), Khalid had to be executed. Thirdly, since Khalid had committed adultery and no marriage was possible between him and Malik's widow, the question of Khalid to divorce her does not arise at all. At any rate, what all transpired was only because of the love that Malik bin Nuwayra had toward Imam Ali (a.s.).³

(3) The Tribes of Kinda and Hadhramaut

Immediately after his ascension to the *Caliphate*, Abu Bakr was faced with opposition from the tribes in the surrounding districts. The Kinda and Hadhramaut tribes asserted, *"As long as the messenger of Allah was alive, we were obliged to him. After the Prophet's demise, we would have obeyed if someone from his progeny [Ahlul Bayt] had ascended the Caliphate. What right has the son of Abu Quhafa (Abu Bakr) over us or over the Caliphate?"*

The *Caliph's* agent Ziyad bin Labid was afraid that soon the entire Arab society would rise against the *Caliph*. He approached the Bani Zohd, a sub tribe of Kinda, and complained about the attitude of the Kinda Tribe. Bani Zohd replied, *"Why do you insist upon demanding obedience to one whom the Prophet (S) has never appointed as his successor?"* Ziyad replied, *"It is true that the Prophet (S) did not command anyone to obey Abu Bakr, but Muslims have appointed him by mutual consent."* The Bani Zohd replied, *"Since, as you claim, they exercised their option, then why did they [the Muslims] not exercise their option in favour of the Ahlul Bayt? We know that the Prophet (S) did not die before nominating his successor. Therefore, keep away from us and do not indulge in creating mischief. We are not obliged to your Caliph nor would we abide by his orders."*

On seeing the belligerent mood of the tribesmen, Ziyad took to his heels. He returned with reinforcement and in the fight that took place in the town of Bureim, 209 Shia under al-Ash'ath bin Qais were martyred.

Ziyad lost the fight and once again sought the safety of the Fort in Bureim. Ziyad sought the help of Muhajir ibn Abi Umayya who collected a large army and went to the aid of Ziyad. Al-Ash'ath also collected a huge army. Ziyad was afraid of the army of al-Ash'ath and he wrote to Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr in turn wrote to al-Ash'ath advising him to surrender. The letter enraged al-Ash'ath and one of his companions struck the hand of the courier. Al-Ash'ath was left with only two thousand men. Hundreds of deserted him and joined Ziyad's army.

However, al-Ash'ath defeated Ziyad's men. Those, who escaped, sought shelter in the Fort at Bureim. Once again, Ziyad wrote to Abu Bakr who called a meeting in which Abu Ayyub al-Ansari said, "*The people of Kinda are valiant warriors. Once all of them join hands, it will be impossible to defeat them. The best course now is to forget collecting taxes. Later, they may themselves regret and submit to you.*" To this, Abu Bakr replied, "*O Abu Ayyub, I have sworn not to let go even a six-month-old lamb and I will fight until the end in the matter of collecting taxes.*"[4](#)

Abu Bakr sent a contingent under Akrima to assist Ziyad. The combined forces of Akrima and Ziyad ibn Labeed surrounded the army of al-Ash'ath and prevented food and water to reach them. Deprived of any strength to fight, al-Ash'ath sought an amnesty from Ziyad. Ziyad imprisoned all the men of al-Ash'ath and one after another, he beheaded them. He sent al-Ash'ath to Abu Bakr.

Al-Ash'ath surrendered before the *Caliph* who immediately bestowed costly gifts upon him (al-Ash'ath) and got him married to his sister Umm Farwa through whom al-Ash'ath got three sons Muhammad, Ismael, and Ishaq and a daughter called Ja'dah.

The treason of al-Ash'ath passed on to his children. His son Muhammad was a soldier of Umar ibn Sa'd and fought against Imam Husayn (a.s.) at Karbala. His two brothers Ismael and Ishaq joined the army of Abdul Melik ibn Marwan. Ja'dah poisoned Imam Hasan (a.s.).

Due to the betrayal by al-Ash'ath, noble men of the tribes of Kinda and Hadhramaut, such as Suraqa bin al-Harith, Abdullah bin Arfajah, Adiy bin Owf, and the tribes of Bani Hajjar, Bani Himyar, Banu Kinda, numbering to about eight thousand were slaughtered merely because they wanted anyone from the Prophet's progeny to be the *Caliph* instead of Abu Bakr whom they considered an incompetent usurper of the *Caliphate*.

Al-Ash'ath and his ilk were similar to Talha and az-Zobair who recanted from the faith and were expelled as *Kharjites*. Thousands of learned scholars and companions of the Prophet (S) and of Imam Ali (a.s.) were killed in the battles of al-Jamal, Siffin, and an-Nahrawan.

(4) Abu Sa'eed Khalid bin Sa'eed bin al-Aas bin Umayya

When Abu Bakr claimed to have been elected as the *Caliph*, a group of twelve well-known companions of the Prophet (S) ; six from the Muhajirin and six from the Ansar, decided to confront Abu Bakr. The six Muhajirin were Khalid bin Sa'eed, Salman al-Farsi (the Persian), Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, al-Miqdad ibn al-

Aswad, Ammar ibn Yasir, and Buraidah al-Aslami. The six men of the Ansar were Abul Hasim ibn Yethan, Sahl and Uthman bin Huneif, Ubay bin Ka'b, Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, and Khuzaima bin Thabith. They decided to sit near the pulpit on a Friday when Abu Bakr would ascend the pulpit to deliver his sermon as the *Caliph*.

When confronted as to how he could become the Caliph when the Prophet (a.s.) did not nominate him and when Imam Ali (a.s.), whom the Prophet (S) had nominated, was present, Abu Bakr was unable to give any reply. He merely said, "*Leave me alone. I have somehow become the Caliph but I am not the best among you.*" After this for three days, Abu Bakr locked himself in his house. On the fourth day led by Umar, Khalid bin al-Walid with one thousand men, Salim, a slave of Huthaifa with one thousand men, Ma'ath bin Jabal with one thousand men went around the streets of Medina with drawn swords.

Heading the contingent, Umar proclaimed, "O companions of Ali, I dare you to repeat what you told the caliph a few days ago and I will have each one of you beheaded." To this, Sa'eed replied, "O son of ad-Dhahhak..., do you mean to threaten me with the power of the sword? Though we are few in number, we are not afraid of your threats. Were we not bound by the orders of the Imam, this very moment we would have put you and your cronies to our swords."

Salman al-Farsi then got up and addressed Umar saying, "I have heard the messenger of Allah saying that one day when my brother (Imam Ali) would be sitting in the mosque along with his companions, he will be harassed by a group of persons who are destined to be the dogs of Hell. They would wish to kill him and his companions. Surely you are the Dogs of Hell." Khalid bin Sa'eed was killed in the year 13 or 14 AH.[5](#)

(5) Ubay bin Ka'b bin Qais al-Khazraji al-Ansari

Ubay was one of the best reciters of the Qur'an. The Prophet (S) used to say that it was a pleasure to hear Ubay reciting the Qur'an. Abul Fida Ismael bin Ali in his book[6](#) gives the names of persons, apart from the Banu Hashim, who refused to pay allegiance to Abu Bakr; az-Zobair bin al-Awwam, Utbah bin Abi Lahab, Khalid bin Sa'eed bin al-Aas, al-Miqdad bin Amr, Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr, Ammar bin Yasir, al-Bara' bin Aazib, and Ubay bin Ka'b bin Qais.

Similarly, in the initial stages, Abu Sufyan and the Umayyads refused to acknowledge Abu Bakr as the Caliph. Ubay was one among the twelve persons who surrounded Abu Bakr on a Friday and questioned him about his eligibility to occupy the seat of Caliphate when Imam Ali (a.s.), the one nominated by the Prophet (S) was present.

During the reign of Umar, there was a great influx of people into Islam, mostly due to the conquests of foreign territories. Umar wanted to expand the Prophet's mosque and he offered to acquire the houses of the Prophet's wives and other relatives.

Umar came to al-Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib, the paternal uncle of the Prophet (S) and said, "Abbas, it

has become necessary to expand the Prophet's mosque in order to accommodate the large population of Muslims in Medina. I have already acquired all the houses except yours, surrounding the Mosque. You may ask for whatever price you want. I will pay the same from the public treasury.”

Al-Abbas refused the offer. Umar said, “I give you three options to choose any one of them that you like; either you take whatever price you want from the public treasury, or you choose any alternative place in and around Medina so that I may get a house constructed for you, or you give your house as donation for the use of Muslims so that your house may be demolished and a larger mosque to be built.”

Al-Abbas refused to accept any of the three options. Then Umar suggested that the matter might be settled by arbitration, and he asked al-Abbas to name anyone as the arbitrator. Al-Abbas nominated Ubay bin Ka'b as the arbitrator.

Al-Abbas and Umar came to Ubay to arbitrate on the dispute. After hearing both sides, Ubay said, “I have heard the Prophet (S) saying that when God asked (Prophet) David to build the 'House of God', David prepared a plan for the construction of Baitul Maqdis (Jerusalem). The square shape of the plan was marred by the house of a person from the Israelites. David offered to buy the house but its owner refused to sell it. David thought that if somehow he could acquire the house, he could make a perfect square shape for the planned building. Then, God revealed to David: 'I only want a house to be constructed so that people may enter it and glorify me. I never like people to glorify me in a place usurped by force. Therefore, you shall not have the honour of building a house for me.' On hearing this, David asked, 'O Lord, will anyone from my progeny build a house for You?' God replied, 'Yes, your progeny will build a house for me'.”

Umar was enraged to hear this. He dragged Ubay by the collar into the Prophet's mosque and asked those assembled there whether anyone had heard from the Prophet (S) what Ubay had related. Abu Dharr, who was there, stated on oath that he had heard a tradition similar to the one narrated by Ubay. Hearing this, Umar let Ubay go with great consternation.⁷

Umar bore grudge against Ubay. One day, Ubay was passing through the market followed by his disciples. Umar took the opportunity to whip Ubay saying that to be surrounded by followers was an act of pomp and pride.⁸ Ubay was tortured on one pretext or the other, often on the ground of 'narrating traditions' that was strictly prohibited by the Caliphs. The real reason for the torture was that Ubay was a devout follower of Imam Ali (a.s.).

(6) Bilal bin Rabah al-Habashi

Bilal was the famous Caller of Azan and a great favorite of the Prophet (S). Bilal was an Abyssinian slave who was purchased and set at liberty by the Prophet's uncle al-Abbas.⁹ He had a slight lisp of the tongue and could not pronounce 'sh' which he pronounced as 's'. Because of this lisp, once Umar stopped Bilal from calling out the Azan. Umar himself called out the Azan. The Prophet (S) came out and

asked, “Why is not the Azan called out today?” Umar said, “I had just called out the Azan.” The Prophet (S) asked why Umar called the Azan instead of Bilal, and Umar said that Bilal did not have the correct diction. The Prophet (S) said that it was Bilal’s heart that was to be seen and not his diction. He called Bilal and asked him to call the public for prayers through the Azan.

Bilal was one of the very first converts to Islam. Being a poor slave, he was subjected to severe torture by the infidels of Mecca. Bilal was one among those who refused to acknowledge Abu Bakr as the Caliph. Umar, referring to a mistaken belief that Bilal was purchased and emancipated by Abu Bakr, told him (Bilal), “Is this how you repay your emancipator?” Bilal replied, “If Abu Bakr had released me from slavery for the love of God then let me be myself, for Abu Bakr has no right over me. If Abu Bakr had retained his lordship over me, then, as a slave, I am prepared to render personal service. But at no cost will I pay allegiance to one whom the messenger of Allah did not nominate as the Caliph.”¹⁰

After the Prophet’s demise, Bilal faced hardships in Medina and he wanted to migrate to Syria. Abu Bakr insisted that he should stay in Medina but he said, “If I was made a free man for the love of God, then none has the right to force me against my wish. But, if I am still your bondsman, then imprison me for disobedience.” Abu Bakr relented and Bilal went to Damascus where he died in the year 20 AH.¹¹

(7) Al-Hurmuzan

Al-Hurmuzan was a prince of Ahwaz. He was an early convert to Islam and had settled down in Medina. He was a pious Muslim and had participated valiantly in several wars with the Prophet (S). He was a noted companion of the Prophet (S) and of Imam Ali (a.s.). He was a great scholar in the Qur’an and Hadith. He was respected by the Muslims for his knowledge, honesty, and piety.

Ubeidullah ibn Umar ibn al-Khattab had once seen Feiroz Abu Lu’lu’, a Persian slave, carrying a double-edged knife that was commonly used in Persia. When Feiroz stabbed and killed Umar with such a weapon, Ubeidullah killed him immediately. Suspecting a Persian conspiracy, Ubeidullah also killed al-Hurmuzan and Jufaynah. When protests were raised that Ubeidullah had killed two innocent Muslims, merely on suspicion, without any cause and without any inquiry, Uthman admitted that the offense had been committed by Ubeidullah, but offered to pay the blood money for al-Hurmuzan from the public treasury. Al-Hurmuzan had no relatives living and so the blood money remained in the public treasury. In this incident, Uthman had no right to accept blood money for murder. It was the exclusive right of the heirs of al-Hurmuzan. Since there were no heirs to accept the blood money, Ubeidullah ibn Umar ought to have been subjected to the normal penal laws, instead of being favoured because that he was the son of the preceding Caliph. The matter of blood money was only a show put up before the public view, since no money was paid to anyone. Al-Hurmuzan was killed only because he was a supporter of the *Ahlul Bayt*.

(8) Abu Dharr Jundab bin Junadah al-Ghifari

He was the fourth or fifth person to embrace Islam. After conversion, he went back to his tribe and preached Islam. He returned to Medina after the Battle of al-Khandaq. He was a constant companion of the Prophet (S), participating in all the battles and skirmishes. The Prophet (S) said that there was none more truthful than Abu Dharr was. ¹² He was a great admirer of Imam Ali (a.s.).

After the Prophet's death when many people deserted Imam Ali, Abu Dharr was among the constant companions and supporters of Imam Ali (a.s.) and was among the twelve people who surrounded and questioned Abu Bakr about his competence to become the Caliph. Abu Dharr was very outspoken and often openly questioned the authority of Abu Bakr while arguing that the Prophet (a.s.) had nominated Imam Ali (a.s.) as his successor. For his opposition, Abu Dharr was harassed. Umar had forbidden Abu Dharr and some others from going beyond the city of Medina, for fear of his relating traditions of the Prophet (S). Uthman banished Abu Dharr to Syria. There, he found the extravagance and un-Islamic conducts of Mu'awiya irritating him. He openly criticized Mu'awiya. Mu'awiya wrote to Uthman complaining about the open criticism of Abu Dharr. Abu Dharr criticized Uthman for showing favouritism to the Umayyads and filling up all the government jobs with men from the Umayyads. Uthman banished Abu Dharr to ar-Rabathah a forsaken place in the desert. Imam Ali, his sons Hasan, and Husayn defied the ban imposed by the Caliph and with other friends, they went along with Abu Dharr until the border of Medina and bade him good-bye. There, alone and without any help, Abu Dharr and his wife lived for some time. When Abu Dharr died in the year 32 AH, his widow was worried how he could be buried. At last, a caravan suddenly appeared headed by Abdullah ibn Mas'ud and several companions of the Prophet (S) who performed the last rites and buried Abu Dharr in ar-Rabathah. According to other traditions, Imam Ali (a.s.) with his two sons was also present and he led the prayers and performed the last rites for Abu Dharr. Throughout his life, Abu Dharr was tortured, mentally and physically, for his affection for the Ahlul Bayt and for narrating traditions openly and boldly despite the prohibition of the Caliphs.

(9) Al-Miqdad bin Amr

In a quarrel with Shimr bin Hajjar al-Kindi, al-Miqdad struck him on the leg with his sword, and he sought asylum with al-Aswad bin Yaghooth az-Zohri in Mecca. Therefore, he came to be known as al-Miqdad bin al-Aswad. Al-Miqdad was one of the earliest converts to Islam. He migrated twice; one to Abyssinia in the early days of Islam, and the second when the Prophet (S) ordered Muslims to migrate to Medina. He participated in all the battles and skirmishes with the Prophet (S). After the demise of the Prophet (S), al-Miqdad was one of the twelve persons who surrounded Abu Bakr and questioned him about his competency to become the Caliph. He was deprived of the state pension and was subjected to financial difficulties. He was subjected to immense mental torture for his love of the Ahlul Bayt. He died in the year 33 AH.

(10) Salman al-Farsi

Nobody knew the exact age of Salman. Some said that he was over a century and a half of old. He had been a disciple under several Christian saints, who told him about the awaited Paraclete. When the Prophet (S) proclaimed Islam, Salman was one of the first to become Muslim. The Prophet (a.s.) treated him as a member of his family (Ahlul Bayt). Ibnul Arabi has discussed this tradition in detail in his book 'al-Futuhāt' and established that Salman was also immaculate and therefore was counted among the Ahlul Bayt. ¹³ According to Allama Noori, Salman was in fact the last of the vicegerents of Jesus (a.s.). ¹⁴ Salman was one of those persons who openly opposed Abu Bakr as the Caliph. The others who joined Salman were Miqdad, Abu Dharr, Buraida al-Aslami, Khalid bin Sa'eed, Ammar bin Yasir from the Muhajirin, and al-Haitham, Uthman bin Hunaif, Sahl bin Hunaif, Khuzaima bin Thabit, Ubay bin Ka'b and Abu Ayyub al-Ansari from the Ansar. For not paying allegiance to Abu Bakr, Salman was so much beaten that his neck became crooked. Salman died in the year 36 AH.

(11) The Martyrs in the Battle of al-Jamal

The cunning Mu'awiya made use of the murder of Uthman into a political weapon to oppose Imam Ali (a.s.). He enlisted the help of Talha and az-Zobair and convinced Aa'isha to join him in the battle of al-Jamal against Imam Ali (a.s.). The circumstances that led to Uthman's murder were as the following: Muslims, particularly of Syria, Egypt, and Iraq were vexed with the tyranny and misrule of Mu'awiya. In Medina, Muslims found that Uthman had filled the entire government with his kin and clansmen who were inefficient, impious, and avaricious. The well known case of al-Walid bin Uqba, who fully drunk led the Morning Prayer and instead of the mandatory two rak'as, he performed four rak'as, and turning to the congregation, he said, "If you like, I would add more." Muslims gave a memorandum to Uthman complaining that he had deviated from the Prophet's Sunna and the precedents set up by his predecessor Caliphs, listing out the following complaints:

- [i] Uthman had gifted the Khums of Africa to his uncle Marwan. Khums was the exclusive right of the Ahlul Bayt and could not be gifted to anyone else.
- [ii] From the Khums gifted by Uthman, Marwan illegally purchased prime properties and constructed several mansions in Thee Khashab.
- [iii] Uthman himself constructed seven huge mansions in Medina, out of which one was given to his wife Na'ila and another to Aa'isha bint Abu Bakr and the rest were given to his daughters.
- [iii] He appointed inefficient and impious men from his kin and clansmen in important government posts.
- [iv] When al-Walid bin Uqba led the prayers while he was drunken, and the matter was brought to his notice, Uthman refused to take action against him.
- [v] He neither appointed nor consulted many prominent companions of the Prophet (S).

[vi] He had forcibly acquired several prime properties in and around Medina.

[vii] He issued grants of cash and property to persons who had not even seen the Prophet (S) nor had they possess any special qualification to deserve the grants.

[viii] He introduced whipping instead of expelling.

[ix] Ammar, who presented the memorandum, was severely beaten by Uthman, Marwan, and their men that he was about to die. The rest of the incidents leading to Uthman's murder have already been set out in an earlier chapter.

[x] At-Tabari reports that around Aa'isha's camel, ten thousand men were killed, a half of the number were companions of Imam Ali (a.s.) and the other half were partisans of Aa'isha. [15](#)

[xi] According to Shahr Ashub, there were twenty thousand men in Imam Ali's army, out of whom eighty were companions who had fought in the battle of Badr, fifteen hundred companions of the Prophet (S), and two hundred and fifty were participants in the Homage of the Tree (Bay'at ash-Shajara) [16.17](#) The total number of martyrs on Imam Ali's side was one thousand and seventy. Notable martyrs among the companions of Imam Ali (a.s.) were Zaid bin Souhan, Hind al-Jamali, Abu Abdullah al-Abdi, Abdullah bin Ruqayya, Thumama, Hind ibn Amr, Ghaniyya bin Haytham, and Makhdooj. [18](#)

It is related through al-Hasan al-Basri that Aa'isha wrote to Zaid bin Souhan asking him to stay at home and not to join Imam Ali's army. Zaid replied, "You are doing what is forbidden for you by leaving your home and entering the battlefield. Curiously, you are forbidding me to do what my religion commands me to do, that is to take arms against traitors." [19](#)

[\(12\) Uthman bin Hunaif al-Ansari](#)

He was a companion of the Prophet (S). He was one among those who had at first accepted Abu Bakr as the Caliph, but later he was convinced that Imam Ali (a.s.) was the designated successor of the Prophet (S). He fought in the battle of al-Jamal as Imam Ali's agent. When he was able to subdue the enemy, compromise was suggested by Aa'isha. Uthman bin Hunaif said that there could be no compromise as long as Aa'isha associated herself with Talha and az-Zobair. The talks were inconclusive and the parties retired for the night. During the night, Talha and az-Zobair killed the guard of the mosque and several companions of Uthman bin Hunaif who was captured and brought before Aa'isha by Labban. She ordered the man to kill Uthman, but an old woman said that it was unjust to kill Uthman bin Hunaif as he was a companion of the Prophet (S). On hearing this, Aa'isha sent for the man and told him that Uthman should be imprisoned instead of being killed. Labban was anxious to kill Uthman bin Hunaif. He said that had he known the purpose of his being recalled, he would not have returned. Mujashe' bin Mas'ud suggested that Uthman bin Hunaif should be severely beaten and his beard, mustache, and eyebrows be plucked. The suggestion was carried out. Seventy of Uthman bin Hunaif's kin fought and were martyred in the battle of al-Jamal.

(13) The Martyrs in the Battle of an-Nahrawan

In the battle of an-Nahrawani, Imam Ali (a.s.) fought against the Kharijites. Only nine men from the Kharijites remained alive and from Imam Ali's army only nine were killed, among whom were Ru'bah al-Bajali, Rifa'a ibn Wa'il, al-Fayyadh ibn Khaleeli al-Azdi, Kaysum ibn Salama, Habib ibn Aasim al-Azdi.

(14) The Martyrs in the Battle of Siffin

Among the notable companions martyred at the battle of Siffin, which was between the army of Mo'awiyai and the army of Imam Ali (a.s.), were Owais al-Qarani, Huthaifa ibn al-Yaman al-Ansari, Abul Haytham, Malik ibn at-Tayyihan al-Ansari, Khuzaima ibn Thabit Thush Shahdatain, Abdullah bin Badeel al-Khuza'iy, Aqeel bin Malik, Abdullah bin Khabbab bin al-Aratt, al-Harith bin Murra, Buraid al-Aslami and his two sons.

(15) Ammar bin Yasir

Ammar was from the first Muslims and was a very close companion to the Prophet (S). The Prophet (S) foretold that Ammar would be killed by the Aggressive Party. This tradition was widely known throughout the Muslim world. After the Prophet (S), Ammar never acknowledged Abu Bakr, Umar or Uthman as Caliphs. Ammar was one among the twelve persons who protested against Abu Bakr on his becoming the Caliph. In fact, he presented the memorandum complaining against the bad rule of Mu'awiya, Marwan, and Uthman himself. Uthman not only whipped Ammar but also wanted to banish him out of Median. When the clan of the Bani Makhzoom collectively opposed the proposal to banish Ammar out of Medina, Uthman relented and withdrew his order.

When Imam Ali (a.s.) was elected as the Caliph by public demand, Ammar joined Imam Ali's army. He fought valiantly in the Battle of al-Jamal.

In the battle of Siffin when Amr bin al-Aas learnt that Ammar was in Imam Ali's army, he remembered the tradition that the Aggressive Party would kill Ammar. Amr bin al-Aas started having doubts about the righteousness of his cause. He sent Thul Kila' al-Himyari to find out if Ammar was among Imam Ali's warriors. Thul Kila' sent for Abu Noah al-Himyari and enquired whether Ammar was on Imam Ali's side. Abu Noah confirmed the fact and asked why the inquiry was being made. Thul Kila' replied that Amr bin al-Aas recollected the tradition that the killers of Ammar would be aggressors and that Ammar would always be with the truth and that Ammar would have a special place in the Paradise and his killers would be in the Hell.

When Ammar was killed by Mu'awiya's men, there was a commotion that great injustice was done in killing Ammar. Mu'awiya, who was famous for his cunning, said, "We did not kill Ammar. Those, who brought Ammar into the battlefield exposing him to the dangers of the battle, are the real killers of Ammar." Hearing this, Imam Ali (a.s.) said, "Does Mu'awiya suggest that the messenger of Allah was

the killer of Hamza?”[20](#)

(16) Hashim bin Utba bin Abi Waqqas az-Zohri

Hashim was the nephew of the famous companion Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas. Hashim embraced Islam on the day of conquest of Mecca. He was a devout follower of Imam Ali (a.s.). Hashim fought valiantly in the Battle of Siffin. During the battle, a Syrian young man started abusing Imam Ali (a.s.). Hashim asked him why he was doing so. The young man replied, “I have been told that the people of Iraq and their leader never perform prayers and that they have killed the Caliph (Uthman).” Hashim said, “Uthman was killed by the companions of the Prophet (S) and our leader Ali had nothing to do with the murder of Uthman. Our leader is the first to accept Islam, the first to pray behind the messenger of Allah. He recites the Qur'an and spends the night in prayer. O Syrian, do not be carried away by the false propaganda of the hypocrites. Save yourself even now.” The Syrian young man was impressed by the speech of Hashim and he left the battlefield. When Hashim was martyred, his son Utba took up his standard and was martyred after a valiant fight. [21](#)

(17) Owais al-Qurani

The Prophet (S) had foretold, “Though Owais may not meet me, he will become a Muslim and will fight with my guardian Ali and will be martyred in (the battle of) Siffin. Anyone who meets Owais is to convey my salutations to him.” When Umar met Owais during the Hajj, he requested him to pray for him. Owais replied, “Everyday I pray for every believer. If you are a true believer you will be benefited by my prayers.”[22](#)

Owais joined Imam Ali's army, fought in the battle of Siffin, and was martyred.

(18) Huthaifa bin al-Yaman's sons Sagwan and Sa'eed

Huthaifa was a well-known companion. The Prophet (a.s.) had informed him of the names of the hypocrites who had plotted to kill him (the Prophet) on his return from the skirmish of Tabuk. Due to the desire of Huthaifa, his two sons fought for Imam Ali (a.s.) and were martyred in Siffin.

(19) Malik bin al-Harith al-Ashtari

Malik was a close companion of Imam Ali (a.s.). He fought in many battles alongside Imam Ali (a.s.). When Mu'awiya started harassing Muhammad bin Abu Bakr who was the governor of Egypt, Imam Ali (a.s.) recalled Malik from Azerbaijan. Mu'awiya learnt about this move and was scared of Malik. He employed a man at a place called al-Qalzam to insert poison to Malik, mixed with honey. On hearing this, Imam Ali (a.s.) said, “Malik was to me as I was to the Prophet (S).”

(20) Kinana bin Bishr

He was a devout follower of Imam Ali (a.s.). When Mu'awiya made a revolt in Egypt, Imam Ali (a.s.) advised Muhammad bin Abu Bakr to seek the assistance of Kinana. When Kinana was martyred in the battle, many people deserted Muhammad bin Abu Bakr.

(21) Muhammad bin Abu Bakr

He was the son of the first Caliph Abu Bakr and the real brother of Aa'isha. He was opposed to the Caliphate of his father. He was a devout follower of Imam Ali (a.s.). In the year 38 AH, Mu'awiya surrounded and killed him while thirsty and his body was burnt.

(22) A'yan bin Dhubay'ah

Imam Ali (a.s.) sent him to help Muhammad bin Abu Bakr in Egypt. However, before he could reach Egypt, he was assassinated on the way by Mu'awiya's men.

(23) Muhammad bin Abi Huthaifa

He was an uncle of Mu'awiya, but he was a devout follower of Imam Ali (a.s.). When Umar bin al-Aas conquered Egypt, he arrested Muhammad and sent him to Mu'awiya. Muhammad was jailed, but soon escaped. He hid himself in a cave in Hawareen, but was soon discovered and slain by Mu'awiya's man Ubeidullah bin Umar bin Dhallam.

(24) Maytham at-Tammar

Maytham was a companion whose martyrdom was foretold by Imam Ali (a.s.). Maytham was shown the tree where his corpse would be hung. He used to water that tree every day. Imam Ali had said that Maytham would be asked to abuse Imam Ali (a.s.) and on his refusal, his tongue would be pulled out and cut by Mu'awiya. When Ubeidullah was appointed as the governor of Kufa, he chased the companions and partisans of Imam Ali (a.s.). He asked each one of them to abuse Imam Ali (a.s.) publicly from on the pulpit. People like Hujr bin Adiy and several others refused to comply and were thrown down from the parapet of the palace and their bodies were dragged in the streets of Kufa. Maytham also refused to comply with Ubeidullah's order saying that his Imam, Ali (a.s.) had already informed him that Ubeidullah would pull out his tongue before crucifying. Ubeidullah said he would disprove Imam Ali's words. He ordered that one hand and one leg of Maytham to be cut and he be thrown in the street. When this was done, Maytham started praising Imam Ali (a.s.) and cursing Mu'awiya, Yazid, and Ubeidullah ibn Ziyad. Unable to stop Maytham, Ubeidullah ordered Maytham's tongue to be pulled out and his body hung in the tree.

Persecution by Mu'awiya between 30–60 AH

Mu'awiya appointed Bisr bin Artat to seek out and kill Imam Ali's partisans. Bisr played havoc in Mecca, Medina, Yemen, and other towns. It is reported that he had killed more than 30,000 Shia.²³ When he could not locate Ubeidullah ibn Abbas, he killed his little children in front of their mother.²⁴

When Abu Sufyan saw that Abu Bakr had been installed as the Caliph, he went to Imam Ali (a.s.) and said, "You have been deprived of your right by those who do not deserve the post of caliph. If only you assent, I will fill Medina with cavalry and soldiers to unseat the usurpers of the seat of caliphate."

Imam Ali (a.s.] was fully aware that Abu Sufyan, who fought the Prophet (S) all his life, was a hypocrite and that all he wanted was dissension and discord in Islam. Imam Ali (a.s.) refused to be dragged into the trap. Rebuked and rebutted by Imam Ali (a.s.), Abu Sufyan planned to join the opponents of Ali.

Umar, who received the news of what transpired between Abu Sufyan and Ali, realized that if left to himself, Abu Sufyan would cause great mischief. Umar thought it best to purchase Abu Sufyan's loyalty rather than to face his mischief. Umar sent for Abu Sufyan and told him that he and Abu Bakr had decided to appoint his (Abu Sufyan) son Yazid as the governor of Syria. Abu Sufyan was immensely pleased. In the year 11 AH, Yazid bin Abu Sufyan became the governor of Syria. Very soon, he died and in his place, the caliph appointed Mu'awiya as the governor of Syria and Iraq. Though, on becoming the second caliph, Umar removed several governors on various charges, Mu'awiya was not disturbed from his post in spite that his misrule was the cause of the uprising and the ultimate assassination of Uthman.²⁵

In his letter to Muhammad bin Abu Bakr, Mu'awiya wrote, "Even during the lifetime of the messenger of Allah, we (the Umayyads) were together with your father in contesting against Ali's right (of leadership). We were certainly aware of his superiority and supremacy over all others. But, when God chose to take away the messenger of Allah from this world, it was your father and his friend Umar who were the foremost in snatching the caliphate from Ali by opposing him at all costs. In this, both of them (Abu Bakr and Umar) were in perfect consonance with each other."²⁶

Mu'awiya's rule of Syria, Egypt, and Palestine actually commenced from the year 11 AH, and lasted for fifty years, when he died in 60 AH. Thus, the areas under his domain were far away from Mecca and Medina, the centers of Islam, and the population there believed only what was taught to them by Mu'awiya's henchmen. The public had no idea who were the relatives of the Prophet (S) or who were his companions. Mu'awiya made the people there believe that he alone was the heir of the Prophet (S), that Ali was a dacoit, and Husayn a reactionary opposed to Islam. People were made to believe that anybody who praised Ali must himself be a dacoit or at least of low morality, and that anybody who praised Husayn in fact sowed the seeds of sedition. Fifty years were more than enough to achieve this goal.

From the year 11 to 35 AH, Mu'awiya apprehended no danger from the ruling caliph. He had Syria, Iraq,

and Egypt under his control. These areas were far away from Medina, the then capital of Islam. Except for the essentials, the public had no idea about the thought and philosophy of Islam. In fact, Mu'awiya wanted the people to be ignorant of Islam so that nobody might point out that Mu'awiya himself was acting against Islam in his daily life. In order to win over the public, he allowed them to lead a life without any reference to the prohibitions and recommendations made in Islam.

The public found that their rulers provided them jobs and food. Beyond that, they had no need or desire to consider any aspect of Islam or its true proponents. As a result, al-Hajjaj bin Yousuf asked people from on the pulpit, "*Who provides you food and jobs?*" People replied, "*The Caliph.*" He then asked, "*Who is better, the Prophet or the Caliph?*"[27](#)

The foundation for the thought that the *Caliph*, in the least, was next only to God was strongly and truly laid by Mu'awiya. Because of this, in the year 96 AH When al-Waleed bin Abdul Melik bin Marwan became the king, he contended that the caliph was superior to past Prophets.

Ibnul Athir records that in 98 AH, al-Waleed bin Abdul Malik asked while giving a sermon in Mecca, "Who is more important for you; the Caliph or Abraham the Prophet? How I wish you realized the superiority of your caliph who provided sweet drinking water for you whereas Abraham the Prophet only provided brackish water (Zamzam). By God, al-Waleed is dearer in the eyes of God than any Prophet."[28](#) Al-Waleed was referring to the well he had dug up in Mecca, which provided sweet water for some time, but later it dried up.

Initially, Mu'awiya was engaged in consolidating his own position by lavishly bribing amenable persons and killing or at least confiscating the properties of those who were even suspected to sympathise with Ali. But, from 11 to 30 AH, we do not find any interference by Mu'awiya with the Caliph. When Uthman was killed, Mu'awiya apprehended a contender and feared that he might lose power, and therefore, he took these steps:[29](#)

[i] He sent his army commander Bisr bin Artat who killed 30,000 Shia and slaughtered two young sons of Abdullah Ibn Abbas in their mother's lap.

[ii] He sent Sufyan bin Ouf whose contingent of six thousand strong men created terror by looting and destructing the houses of the Shia in al-Mada'in.

[iii] He sent Abdullah bin Sa'dah al-Fazari with a contingent to loot and harass the people who sympathized with Imam Ali (a.s.).

[iv] He sent ad-Dhahhak bin Qais with 30000 men to loot, terrorize, and kill Ali's adherents in Waqisa, Thalabiya, and Qatqat.

[v] He sent an-No'man bin Basheer to eliminate Ali's adherents in Ayn at-Tamr.

[vi] He removed the names of the Shia from the citizenship registers.[30](#)

[vi] He stopped the state pensions to any one suspected to be a Shia.

[vii] He ordered that the testimony of anyone suspected to be a Shia should not be admitted in evidence.

In his rule of about half a century, Mu'awiya laid a solid foundation for the extreme hatred toward Imam Ali (a.s.) and anybody even remotely linked or sympathetic to him. In the course of time, the Shia along with their Imams inherited the legacy of blind persecution by their opponents. The Abbasids gained power on the basis of a popular and widespread perception that the Umayyads were usurpers of Power and that the Caliphate rightly belonged to Ali and his offspring. After gaining power, the Abbasids became much crueler out of the unfounded fear that if not persecuted, the Imams would wrest the power from them.

Sa'eed Akbarabadi, a Sunni historian, writes, "Every act forbidden and disapproved by Islam was done to build up and stabilise the government. There is an Arabic proverb that the Umayyads were 'the First Diggers of buried bodies' and the Abbasids were 'the Second Diggers of buried bodies'." Then, the writer's personal preference comes to the fore and he makes his choice by adding, "Perhaps the first group of gravediggers were less cursed."

The writer gives the reason for the downfall of the Umayyads as follows, "The fall of the Umayyads was largely due to their excessiveness, repression, and tyranny and also due to their nomination of successors within the life period of the working caliph. The Abbasids also committed the same blunders and they never cared to change their attitude and conduct."³¹ The writer forgets that the precedent of nominating the successor was set by Abu Bakr when he nominated Umar as his successor, and the example was scrupulously followed by Mu'awiya and his successors. Elsewhere Sa'eed Akbarabadi gives the following reasons for the development of apostatic trends in Islam: "The apostatic trends that developed among Muslims were largely due to the following two factors; the false and morbid system of government founded by the Umayyads, and the patronage and propagation of rational branches of knowledge and dogmatic theology by the Abbasids ³²"

We may recall here what we noted in earlier pages that firstly, the Umayyads were invested with the governorship of Syria and Iraq by the first two caliphs, and that the third caliph only expanded the hold of the Umayyads by filling up every position of power with his relatives or tribesman; secondly, when the first three caliphs prohibited the narration of *Hadith*, they had to perforce open the doors for *Ijtihad*.³³ When the unwanted effects of *Ijtihad* were noticed, the doors of *Ijtihad* were suddenly and unceremoniously closed down, but only after when Islam came to be divided into four sects. The 'unwanted effects' that the writer bemoans are but the fruits of the seeds sown immediately after the death of the Prophet (S).

To be fair to the writer, who describes in detail the atrocities committed by the Abbasids, we quote this passage: "*Besides the Umayyads, people who were suspected of supporting the progeny of Ali were also similarly maltreated.*"³⁴

As non-Muslim governments came to power, there was a slackening in the torture and the killing of the Shia. Among the Indian Rulers, except the two kingdoms of Bijapur and Golconda, all were *Sunnis*. Where the Shia ruled, there was communal harmony, but in places like Luknow, Benaras...etc., with the connivance of the rulers, the Shia were singled out for persecution. With the passage of time, the Shia have slowly forgiven and forgotten the persecution and torture they suffered for centuries.

I remember as a youth that during the 60's in Madras, we dreaded to wear our '*Alfi*' (a black scarf traditionally worn by the Shia during the first ten days of Muharram) while passing a road called the *Jane Jehan Khan Road*. If anyone was found wearing the *Alfi*, he was derided, spat upon, and abused by the inhabitants of that road who were staunch *Sunnis*. We had to perform our Majlises (ritual meetings) quietly within specific localities thickly populated by Shia.

During the procession on the seventh of Muharram, on Triplicane High Road, disturbance was sought to be created by throwing silver and gold coins on the breast-beating processionists. Fortunately, advance information was passed on by some well-wisher and the elders of the community decided that from the junction at Pycrofts Road and Triplicane High Road, to the junction at Chowk (a square Bazaar) and Triplicane High Road, there would not be any breast-beating and that the processionists would only recite "*Nadi Aliyyan Aliyyan Ya Ali*" and that nobody would stoop to pick up anything, even if it be silver or gold coin which might be thrown on the processionists from the surrounding buildings. People who planned the conspiracy are dead, the throwing of the coins has stopped, but processions commemorating Imam Husayn's martyrdom continue until now.

To perpetuate the memories of the great sacrifice at Karbala, the Shia contributed their own blood. Be it Umayyad, Abbasid, or any other, the successive regimes spared no effort to erase the graves and memories of the sacrifice made by Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his companions. The rulers imposed severe penalties by way of taxes for visiting the tombs of the martyrs at Karbala. The Shia never hesitated to pay the huge levies to visit Imam Husayn's shrine at Karbala. Leaving the old and the sick, the Abbasids killed the young Shia, so that the Shia population might dwindle.

Quite often, they ordered the tombs of the martyrs at Karbala to be destroyed and erased completely. Ibnul Athir, in his *al-Kamil*, relates that in the year 236 AH, the Abbasid caliph *al-Mutawakkil* ordered the tomb of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and the surrounding houses to be demolished without leaving any trace.[35](#)

Allama al-Majlisi quotes that Ibn Babwayh narrates through reliable authorities from Abdullah Neishapuri that he had some dealing with Hameed bin Atiyya at-Toosi, and he went to meet him in his house. It was the month of Ramadan, but Atiyya had his food. When questioned why he did not observe the fasting, Atiyya said, "I beheaded sixty young men from the progeny of Ali and Fatima. The last of them was an old man. He cursed me for killing the innocent progeny of Ali and Fatima and that I would certainly be punished in the Hell. What use would prayer and fasting make to me with the murderer of the innocent progeny of Ali and Fatima? It is because of that that I neither pray nor fast."

Mu'awiya appointed the following governors who were notorious for committing cruelty and torture:

[1] al-Mugheera bin Shu'ba [2] Ziyad bin Sumayya (bin Abeeh) [3] Samura bin Jundab [4] Amr bin al-Aas [5] Muslim bin Uqba [6] Ubaidullah bin Ziyad who was the commander in chief of the army that fought against Imam Husayn and [7] Hussayn bin Numair who guarded the banks of the Euphrates and prevented Imam Husayn (a.s.) from getting any water...etc.[36](#)

The following persons were friends of Imam Ali. They were killed when they refused to curse the Imam in Mu'awiya's presence:

[1] Hujr bin Adiy [2] Muhammad bin abi Huthaifa [3] Shaddad bin Aws [4] Sa'sa'a bin Souhan al-Abdi [5] Abdullah bin Hashim bin Utba bin Abi Waqqas [6] Jameel bin Ka'b ath-Tha'labi [7] Jariya bin Qudama at-Tamimi [8] Shareek bin Shaddad al-Hadhrami [9] Saifi bin Faseel ash-Shaibani [10] Qabeesa bin Dhubay'ah al-Absi [11] Kiram bin Habban al-Anzi [12] Muhriz bin Shihab at-Tamimi [13] Abdurrahman bin Hassan al-Anzi [14] Amr bin al-Humq al-Khuza'iy [15] Juwairiya ibn Musshir al-Abdi... etc.[37](#)

Sumara bin Jundab killed eight thousand innocent persons.[38](#)

Ziyad bin Sumayya (bin Abeeh) was a bastard appointed by Mu'awiya as governor of Basra. Ziyad knew every Shia and every one from Imam Ali's progeny in Basra. He killed over a hundred thousand of them.[39](#)

Al-Mughira bin Shu'ba cunningly told Shareek bin al-A'war al-Harithi to collect people in order to fight against the Kharijites. Shareek collected about three thousand Shia from the tribe of Rabi'a. When they gathered outside Basra, al-Mughira surrounded and killed them all.

Ibn Ziyad, as the governor of Basra first and later as the governor of Basra and Kufa, killed hundreds of thousands of Shia from the two cities

Between 61 to 64 AH under Yazid bin Mu'awiya

1. The following persons were sent as ambassadors by Imam Husayn (a.s.) or were his friends who were killed by Yazid's men:

[1] Sulayman bin Zareen [2] Abdullah bin Yaqtur al-Himyari [3] Qais bin Musahhir as-Saidawi [4] Muhammad bin Kathir and his son [5] Muslim ibn Aqeel [6] Hani ibn Urwa al-Muradi [7] Ammar al-Azdi [8] Abdul A'la bin Yazid al-Kalbi

2. The slaughter of over one hundred and fifty noble men at Karbala along with the friends and relatives of Imam Husayn (a.s.) which is the theme of this book.

3. The following were killed after Ashura: [1] Rashid al-Hijri [2] Abdullah bin al-Harith bin Noufal [3]

Maytham at-Tammar [4] Khalid bin Mas'ud [5] Muhammad bin Aktham [6] Kamil [7] Amr bin Abdullah al-Hamadani [8] Sawwar bin al-Mun'im bin al-Habis al-Hamadani Nahmi [9] al-Mowaqe' bin Thumama al-Asadi as-Saidawi [10] Wahab bin Abdullah [40](#)

4. In the incident of al-Harra, the army of Yazid desecrated the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. They wantonly killed hundreds of thousands of Muslims. They raped the women in the two cities. They used the mosque of the Prophet and the Kaaba as stables. They burned the covering of the Kaaba.

The Shia Martyred between 64 & 73 AH under Abdullah ibn az-Zubair's rule

We had noticed earlier that when he saw Abdullah ibn az-Zubair in Mecca, Abdullah ibn Abbas said that he (ibn az-Zubair) was only waiting for his opportunity to become the Caliph. This proved correct. The holy cities of Mecca and Medina, Iraq, Persia, and the rest of the Muslim world, [except Syria, Palestine, and Egypt] were under Ibn az-Zubair until 73 AH when he was killed. Abdullah ibn az-Zubair was a mean-minded who felt pleasure in creating chaos. He hated Imam Ali (a.s.) and his progeny. When Yazid demanded his allegiance, ibn az-Zubair took asylum in the Kaaba. He pretended to be pious while always coveting worldly gain. On the death of Yazid and in the prevailing confusion, Abdullah ibn az-Zubair declared his caliphate and occupied the Arabia and a part of Iraq and Iran. He could not wrest Syria, Palestine, and Egypt where Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad set up Abdul Melik bin Marwan as the caliph.

Ibn az-Zubair subjected the Shia living in Mecca and Medina to immense torture and he exiled them out of the two holy cities. Abul Qasim Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya was the third son of Imam Ali and step-brother of Imam Husayn. Ibn az-Zubair arrested and kept him in a dark dungeon for a long time. Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya had a son called Hasan. Hasan was also subjected to torture in prison only because he was the grandson of Imam Ali.

Abu Ishaq al-Mukhtar bin Abu Ubaida ath-Thaqafi was born in the year of the Prophet's migration to Medina. He was two years senior to Imam Husayn, but he considered Imam Husayn to be his master. He openly proclaimed his love for the progeny of Imam Ali. Mu'awiya had imprisoned him in Kufa long before the battle of Karabala. It was only after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.) when the general public broke into to open the locks of the dungeon that al-Mukhtar could come out. Learning about the cruel manner of the martyrdom which Imam Husayn was subjected to, al-Mukhtar swore that he would catch everyone of the stone-hearted miscreants and kill them. Initially, he joined the forces of Ibn az-Zubair and fought against Hussayn bin Numair. When he learnt that the people of Kufa were like a herd of sheep that had lost their shepherd, he went to Kufa and collected people who wished to seek revenge for Imam Husayn's blood. Among them was Ibrahim bin Malik al-Ashthar. Ultimately, both al-Mukhtar and Ibrahim were killed.[41](#)

It is reported by al-Khawarezmi that the day after al-Mukhtar was killed, seven thousand Shia were

surrounded and mercilessly killed by Mus'ab bin Abdullah ibn az-Zubair. This incident so much influenced Abdullah ibn Umar, the son of the second caliph, that once when Mus'ab met him and introduced himself, Abdullah ibn Umar said, "*Yes, I know that you are Mus'ab who had killed seven thousand Muslims without any guilt. You may live as long as you wish.*"[42](#)

Persecution between 64 to 85 AH, by Marwan and his son Abdul Melik

After the death of Yazid, there was much confusion. Marwan, who was banished by the Prophet (S) and then allowed to come back by the first caliph, now assumed power. His reign was in dispute and even the Sunnis do not recognise him as a caliph. Within a year, he passed away. He had nominated his son Abdul Melik as his successor in the rule. Thus, the long cherished dream of Abu Sufyan was reralised and for nearly a century, the Umayyads tossed around the ball of caliphate among themselves.

Marwan could control only Syria and Palestine at first. After the martyrdom of Muhammad bin Abu Bakr, Egypt also came under his rule. The notorious Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad was his commander in chief, and persons like Umar bin Sa'd, Hussayn bin Numair, Shimr bin Thil Joushan, and other such cruel and tyrannous persons were heading the divisions of the army and cavalry. However, Marwan lived hardly for a year after coming into power.

The rule of Abdul Melik bin Marwan lasted for twenty-one years that were full of oppression and persecution. Any person, who was even suspected to be a sympathiser with the *Ahlul Bayt*, was imprisoned, banished, or killed for no other fault.

Mu'awiya, in his time, imprisoned several noble and innocent men. Sulayman bin Surad al-Khuza'iy, al-Musayyab bin Naqaba al-Fazari, Abdullah bin Sa'd bin Nafi' al-Azdi, Abdullah bin Wal at-Taimi, Rifa'ah bin Shaddad al-Bajali, Abdullah bin Sa'd bin Nufeil, Muttaqi bin Muhrisa, Sa'eed bin Huthaifa, Katheer bin Amr al-Muzani, Sa'eed bin Sa'eed al-Hanafi, Abdullah bin Handhala at-Ta'iy, Abul Huwayrith al-Abdi, and their group of 4500 men known as the Tawwabin (repentants), several of whom were companions of the Prophet (S) and of Imam Ali (a.s.) and were noble men in their tribes, were imprisoned by Mu'awiya on account of their love to Imam Ali.

Therefore, they could not participate in the battle of Karabala. When Yazid died, pandemonium broke out and the public looted the treasury, broke open the lock of the prisons and released all prisoners. Under Sulayman bin Surd al-Khuza'iy, the Tawwabin wanted to seek revenge for Imam Husayn's blood. Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad sent an army of twelve thousand men under the command of Hussayn bin Numair. Ubaidullah himself headed and army of thirty thousand men.

Most of the Tawwabin, numbering over five thousand, were killed by Ibn Ziyad and Hussayn bin Numair's men. A few Tawwabin escaped and went back to their native places.

Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad and Hussayn bin Numair were killed near Mosul by the men of Ibrahim bin Malik al-Ashtar and al-Mukhtar. Abdul Melik bin Marwan appointed al-Hajjaj ibn Yousuf ath-Thaqafi as the governor of Iraq, al-Muhallab bin Abi Sufrah as the governor of Persia, Hisham bin Isma'eel and his son over Egypt, Musa bin Nuseir as the governor of Yemen, al-Hajjaj's brother Muhammad bin Yousuf as the governor of Algeria. All these persons were vicious, cruel, and barbaric murderers.[43](#)

We may gauge the character of al-Hajjaj bin Yousuf from the incident when he climbed the pulpit and asked the congregation, "Who gives you the daily bread; the Caliph or the messenger of Allah?"[44](#)

Al-Hajjaj had the greatest contempt towards the Prophet (S) as well as towards the people of Medina and Mecca in general. He used to boast, "*Had I not been restrained, due to political necessity, by the caliph Abdul Melik bin Marwan, I would have killed the people of Mecca and Medina and put their corpses in sacs of donkey skin, for these people bear a grudge against the caliph and are jealous of his affluence.*"

In the year 72 AH, Abdul Melik sent al-Hajjaj bin Yousuf with an army of two thousand Syrians to subdue Abdullah bin az-Zubair whose son Mus'ab had been already killed. Instead of Medina, al-Hajjaj went to Iraq and sent men from there to Arafa in the Arabia. Abdullah ibn az-Zubair also was collecting and sending men who fought and were defeated by the army of al-Hajjaj. Since Abdullah ibn az-Zubair had established himself in the Kaaba, al-Hajjaj wrote to Abdul Melik seeking permission to enter the Kaaba. Abdul Melik gave permission and sent a contingent of five thousand soldiers headed by Tariq bin Amr to assist al-Hajjaj.[45](#) Abdullah ibn az-Zubair was killed in Mecca in the last days of the year 71 AH.

Al-Hajjaj killed Hamadan a bondsman and caller of Azan of Imam Ali.[46](#) He also slaughtered Qambar another bondsman of Imam Ali,[47](#) and beheaded Kumail ibn Ziyad, Imam Ali's close companion.[48](#) He also killed Umair [or Umar] bin ad-Dhabbi an old man of 90 years.[49](#)

Al-Hajjaj inflicted four hundred whiplashes on Utba bin Sa'd for refusing to curse Imam Ali (a.s.).[50](#)

During his governorship of eleven years under the rule of Abdul Melik bin Marwan and nine years under the rule of al-Waleed bin Abdul Melik, al-Hajjaj killed 1,20,000 Shia in Kufa and Basra for the only reason that they were sympathisers with Imam Ali.[51](#) When al-Hajjaj died thirty thousand men and twenty thousand women, who had been imprisoned by him, were released

Abu Sadiq Sulaym bin Qais al-Hilali was a companion of the Prophet (S), and of five Imams; namely, Imam Ali, Imam Hasan, Imam Husayn, Imam Zainul Aabidin, and Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (peace be on them). When al-Hajjaj became the governor of Iraq, he ordered Sulaym to be arrested. Sulaym hid himself in various countries, and he suffered immensely and died in exile. His book under the title 'Kitab Sulaym Bin Qays' is translated into English. It throws new light on the incidents that occurred in the year 11 AH, and thereafter.

Sa'eed bin al-Musayyab was a well-known successor of the Prophet's companion (Tabi'een) and a

companion of Imam Ali. Abdul Melik bin Marwan wanted to get married to Sa'eed's beautiful daughter, but Sa'eed married her to a poor young man. In his anger, Abdul Melik ordered Sa'eed to be whipped thirty times for refusing to accept him as the caliph. The old man died in the year 94 AH.⁵²

Sa'eed ibn Jubeir was a companion of Imam Ali (a.s.). He was caught by al-Hajjaj and slaughtered in the year 94 AH. Sa'eed cursed al-Hajjaj, and within a few months, al-Hajjaj died.

Al-Waleed bin Abdul Melik poisoned Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.) on 25th Muharram, 95 AH.

Sulayman bin Abdul Melik succeeded al-Waleed in the rule. He released three hundred thousand prisoners (men and women) who had been jailed by al-Hajjaj.⁵³ The release was not due to any mercy or pity, but because it cost the exchequer too much. Sulayman poisoned Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Abi Talib.

Hisham bin Abdul Melik succeeded his brother Sulayman in the rule and died in 125 AH. He poisoned Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) and Abul Hasan Zaid bin Ali. He demolished the house and cut off the tongue of al-Kumait al-Asadi, a poet who wrote in favour of the *Ahlul Bayt*.

Haleef al-Qur'an Abul Husayn Zaid bin Ali Bin al-Husayn bin Ali bin Abi Talib was killed along with his three hundred and thirteen followers by an army of Yousuf bin Umar by the orders of Hisham bin Abdul Melik. He then hung the corpse of Zaid on the main entrance to Kufa. The corpse remained hung for five years. A pleasant smell emanated from the corpse. This happened in the year 121 AH. In the same way, Muhammad bin Ali al-Kufi was slaughtered the next year.

When al-Waleed bin Yazid bin Abdul Melik became the king, he sought to arrest Yahya bin Zaid, who resisted against ten thousand warriors just with the help of seventy followers. Zaid and his followers were martyred. Zaid's head was severed and sent to al-Waleed bin Yazid, and his body was hung on the gateway of Jurjan for one year. Khushkhash al-Azdi, who escaped death in the battle, was taken to Nasiruddin Sayyar. Al-Azdi's hands and feet were first severed, and then he was martyred.

¹. Calamities of the Shia.

². Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 80.

³. For a detailed study see Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 54 – 82 [2001 Edition] quoting several sources.

⁴. Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 92 [2001 Edition].

⁵. Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 109– 115 [2001 Edition].

⁶. Ibid., p. 127– 128 [2001 Edition], quoting al-Mukhtasar fi Akhbaril Bashar.

⁷. Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 129– 132 [2001 Edition].

⁸. Ibid., p. 133.

⁹. Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁰. Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 138 [2001 Edition].

¹¹. Ibid., p. 139.

¹². Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 145 [2001 Edition], quoting al-Isabah, vol. 4 p. 94.

¹³. Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 180 [2001 Edition].

¹⁴. Ibid., p. 142.

- [15.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 202–203 [2001 Edition] quoting Tarikh of at–Tabari, vol. 5 p. 222.
- [16.](#) The homage that had taken place under the tree.
- [17.](#) Ibid., p. 203 quoting Manqib of Shahr Ashub.
- [18.](#) Ibid., p. 204 quoting at–Tabari, vol. 5 p. 224.
- [19.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 205–206 [2001 Edition] quoting Sharh Nahjol Balaghah of Ibn Abil Hadid, vol. 2, p.81.
- [20.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 222 [2001 Edition].
- [21.](#) Ibid., p. 225–226.
- [22.](#) Ibid., p. 235.
- [23.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 247 [2001 Edition] quoting Sharh Nahjol Balagha of Ibn Abil Hadid, vol. 1 p. 121.
- [24.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 1 p. 245 [2001 Edition] quoting al–Isti'ab and al–Isaba.
- [25.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 2 p. 13, First Edition, Publisher Idara–e–Nasirul Uloom, Luknow, UP.
- [26.](#) Ibid., p. 3–4 quoting Ibn Abil Hadid's Sharh Nahjul Balagha, vol. 1 p. 284.
- [27.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 4 p. 54 quoting al–Mas'udi's Murooj ath–thahab, vol. 2, p. 164.
- [28.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 4 p. 174–175.
- [29.](#) Ibid., vol. 2 p. 14.
- [30.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 2 p. 120.
- [31.](#) The Rise and Fall of Muslims, p. 82, Adam Publishers [2005].
- [32.](#) Ibid, p. 94.
- [33.](#) To form one's own judgment on questions concerning the Sharia.
- [34.](#) The Rise and Fall of Muslims, p. 80.
- [35.](#) Nafasul Mahmoom,] p. 280, Pub Ja'fari Propagation Center, Mumbai [2006].
- [36.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 2 p. 144 quoting an–Nasa'ihul Kafia, p.64.
- [37.](#) Ibid., p. 155–161.
- [38.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 2 p. 166 quoting an–Nasa'ihul Kafia, p. 52.
- [39.](#) Ibid., p. 169 quoting Sharh Nahjul Balagha.
- [40.](#) For details see vol. 3 of Masa'ibush Shia [1966 Edition].
- [41.](#) For a detailed account, see Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 3 p. 215–227 [1966].
- [42.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 3 p. 226, quoting at–Tabari's Tarikh, vol. 8 p. 159.
- [43.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 4 p.50 quoting Allama Kamaluddin ad–Dimyari's Hayatul Haiwan, vol. 1p. 55.
- [44.](#) Ibid., p.54.
- [45.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 4 p.59 quoting at–Tabari's Tarikhul Umam wal Muluk, vol. 1 p. 175, 360 Al–Bidaya, and al–Balathuri's Ansabul Ashraf.
- [46.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 4 p.150 quoting Manaqib of ibn Shahr Ashub, vol. 3 p. 162.
- [47.](#) Ibid., p.157, quoting Biharul Anwar, vol. 9 p. 714.
- [48.](#) Ibid., p.161 quoting al–Bidaya wal Nihaya, vol. 9 p. 47.
- [49.](#) Ibid., p.164.
- [50.](#) Ibid., p.186.
- [51.](#) Ibid., p.93 quoting Muruj ath–Thahab of al–Mas'udi, vol. 3 p.175 and Mukhtasar Tarikh of Ibn Asakir, vol. 4 p.70.
- [52.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 4 p.181.
- [53.](#) Ibid., p.190 quoting Manaqib of ibn Shahr Ashub, vol. 2 p. 107, Hayatul Haiwan vol. 1 p. 55.

Part C: Persecution of the Shia by the Abbasid

kings

The Abbasids did not fall in the category of the progeny of the Prophet (S), the Ahlul Bayt. Al-Abbas was a paternal uncle of the Prophet (S). The children of Ali and Fatima alone were called Shareef or Sayyid, a term which came to be used more commonly later to denote the progeny of the Prophet (S). A Sunni writer of repute states, “The offspring of Ali are known as the ‘Ahlul Bayt’, ‘Aal Muhammad’, ‘the Progeny of the Prophet’, ‘the Children of the Messenger’, ‘Aal Taha’ and ‘Aal Yasin’. They are also known by the title of ‘Sayyid’ or ‘Shareef’.”¹

Moulana Ali Naqi Naqvi draws a fallacious assumption that since Abdul Muttalib was the leader (Sayyid) of the Arabs, his children also came to be called ‘Sayyids’. It is a historical fact that none from the offspring of Abdul Muttalib’s other children, except those born to Ali, ever were called Sayyid.

Yet, the Abbasids assumed a garb of the Khilafah indirectly from Abu Hashim bin Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya, the grand son of Imam Ali (a.s.). In order to pretend a proximity to Imam Ali (a.s.), the Abbasids created a legend saying that Abu Hashim al-Alawi appointed Muhammad bin Ali bin Abdullah bin Abbas as his successor (Khalifa) at the place called Hamiya. The Abbasids claimed that Abu Hashim was the Khalifa of Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya, who in turn got to the Khilafah from Imam Ali (a.s.). The Abbasids also claimed that Abu Hashim had a great following of the Shia of Khurasan. Based on the above assumption, Ibn Khaldun, Ibnul Athir, Abul Faraj al-Isfahani, and some other writers state that the Abbasids invited people towards the ‘contentment of Aal Muhammad’. The Abbasids claimed that before he died, Muhammad bin Ali bin Abdullah bin Abbas appointed his son Ibrahim, and when Ibrahim was arrested by Marwan al-Himar, he appointed his younger brother Abul Abbas Abdullah as-Saffah as his successor.

The Abbasids also contended that Abu Hashim sent twelve persons as his deputies to espouse his cause into the various districts of Iran. This contention is not supported by any historical record that would show that Abu Hashim bin Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya went anywhere near Khurasan or that he sent his emissaries. His father Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya himself was under the Imamate of the Fourth Imam Ali Ibn Husayn Zainul Aabidin (a.s.). Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyya predeceased Imam Zainul Aabidin (a.s.). Abu Muslim, who was a native of Khurasan, was appointed as one of the emissaries by Ibrahim. Abu Muslim succeeded in gathering huge support for the cause of ‘the contentment of Aal Muhammad’ since the people of Khurasan loved the Ahlul Bayt. The cruelty and oppression of the Umayyads had vexed the public and a revolt was already brewing. The cause of ‘the contentment of Aal Muhammad’ was heartily welcomed.

Though the Abbasids touted the cause of this conception, they cleverly did not disclose the name of the person, who was supposed to represent the Aal Muhammad, for the simple reason that if they had named themselves, it would have been contested since, as detailed above, the Abbasids did not fall in

the category of Aal Muhammad. Therefore, they claimed that they represented the children of Imam Ali (a.s.).

[1] Abul Abbas as-Saffah (133–137 AH)

Abul Abbas as-Saffah became the first Abbasid Caliph in 133 AH, who controlled Asia, Egypt and West Africa. The truth is that having gained power in the name of *Aal Muhammad*, the Abbasids turned to be their tormentors.

In order to establish his reign, Abul Abbas indiscriminately killed the Shia and the Sunni. His brother Yahya, who was sent to quell the rebellion in Mosul, earned the title of ‘Shedder of Blood’. The Caliph’s title ‘as-Saffah’ in itself means ‘butcher’. K. Ali writes, “The name as-Saffah (butcher), by which the caliph was known, is well chosen, for as such he is distinguished beyond all others in a dynasty that had small respect for human life. He intensified his cruelty and guilt by treachery in the face of solemn oaths and also by ingratitude, for amongst his victims there were not a few who had spent their lives in helping him to the throne.”²

The Abbasids were always suspicious that they might be dethroned, particularly by the Imams of the Shia. They also realized that unless held on a tight leash the public might see through their game and demand that an Alawid be invested with the Caliphate. For these reasons, they perpetrated untold hardships against anyone suspected to be a sympathiser with the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). K. Ali, a Sunni present-day historian, wrote, “The murder of Abu Muslim and Abdullah who helped him greatly to raise the Abbasids to power and prestige, and his treatment toward the descendants of Ali, the fourth Caliph, are the darkest records in the Abbasid history.”³ It was actually as-Saffah’s younger brother, al-Mansur who was responsible for the murder of Abu Salama and Abu Muslim. The only reason behind the murder was that people such as Abu Salama Hafs bin Sulaiman in Kufa and Abu Muslim in Khurasan, were supporters of the Ahlul Bayt. Most of them were also greatly disappointed by the character of as-Saffah.

[2] Abu Ja’far al-Mansur ad-Dawaniqi (137–159 A H)

As-Saffah, at his dying moments, nominated his younger brother Abu Ja’far Abdullah, who on becoming the caliph in 137 AH, assumed the title ‘al-Mansur’. Among all the Muslim monarchs, al-Mansur was the first to keep near him an executioner holding an unsheathed sword, ever ready to behead anyone instantly.

About al-Mansur’s cruel nature, Allama Abdur Rabbah reports, “When al-Mansur sat in his court, the executioners will bring row upon row of people and behead them so much so that the blood used to flow in the court and splatter on to al-Mansur’s cloak. Al-Mansur then ordered his chaplain to preach to him. When the chaplain preached, al-Mansur used to sit with his head bowed down as if he were ashamed, but in no time another group of persons would be brought and beheaded as before.”⁴ People were brought on the ground that they were Alawid or on a mere suspicion that they sympathised with the Ahlul

Bayt.

Al-Mansur ordered that the progeny of Imam Hasan (a.s.) should be gathered in one place. He got them chained and threw them into a dark cell. As they could not make out day from night, and the times for prayers, the prisoners divided the Qur'an into five parts in order to approximate the time of prayer and after finishing each part they offered prayers. There was no sanitation due to which they fell sick. When one died, the corpse was left to rot. Soon all of them died.⁵

Frequently, the progeny of Ali and Fatima and their sympathisers were gathered and al-Mansur ordered to be flogged so severely that the victims soon died.

Al-Mansur was the first person to make the victim stand and a masonry pillar raised all around him. Thus when the pillar was raised around him, Muhammad bin Ibrahim bin al-Hasan, was alive.⁶

One day, al-Mansur said, "By God, I do not find anyone as obedient as al-Hajjaj was to the progeny of Marwan." Once, al-Musayyab got up and said, "My master, al-Hajjaj is nothing compared to us, for God has elevated our Prophet (S) to the highest position among His creation, and yet when you order us, we unhesitatingly carry out your orders to kill the Prophet's progeny. Tell us; are we not more obedient to you than al-Hajjaj was to the progeny of Marwan?"⁷

Al-Mansur arrested Ibrahim bin al-Hasan bin al-Hasan bin Ali ibn Abi Talib along with Abdullah bin al-Hasan, Abu Bakr bin al-Hasan, and his brothers Abbas, Abdullah, Hasan, and Ja'far, and Hamza bin Ishaq bin Ali bin Abdullah bin Ja'far. They were kept in confinement in Medina for three years. Thereafter, they were shifted to a dark dungeon in az-Zabadah where they all died one after another.⁸

Allama Muhammad Jawad wrote, "According to al-Mansur's own admission, he had killed more than a thousand persons who were from the progeny of Ali and Fatima (a.s.). He killed innumerable Shia and invented new and outrageous methods of torture and ultimate death."⁹

Though several persons wrote to Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) asking him to accept the leadership of the Muslims, he refused. He was content to preach Islam at Medina. It is said that he had as many as six thousand students studying various sciences at his hand. Despite his noninterference with politics, Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) was always looked upon with suspicion by al-Mansur.

Al-Mansur often used to send for the Imam with the intention of killing him, but he always lost his nerve at the last moment. At-Tabari records in his *Tarikhul Umam wal Muluk* that the Imam demanded that al-Mansur should return the properties confiscated from him (the Imam).

Al-Mansur ordered the Imam to be poisoned. The order was carried out. There was a cenotaph on the Imam's tomb but that was demolished in 1344 AH, by Abdul Aziz bin Sa'ud of Saudi Arabia.

In his last moments, al-Mansur called his wife and son al-Mahdi and entrusted a key saying that it was for the house that holds the most precious of all his possessions. He instructed that the house should be

opened only after his death and that none except his wife and son al-Mahdi should enter inside. When al-Mansur died, his wife and son opened the house and were shocked to see rows upon rows of bodies of young, old people, and children with tags in their ears showing the branch of the Family of Fatima and Ali (a.s.) to which they belonged.¹⁰ Such was the cruelty of al-Mansur.

[3] Muhammad al-Mahdi (157–169 A H)

Al-Mahdi was as cruel as his father al-Mansur. He bore an unabated hatred toward the Shia and Sayyids. When he found that his father had hundreds of tagged bodies of the progeny of Ali and Fatima (a.s.) stored in a house, as we saw above, he ordered all the bodies to be buried in a common ditch and a shop to be erected upon the ditch. He spared no effort to trace Ali and Fatima's progeny and to incarcerate them until their death or to have them beheaded. Any person least suspected of harbouring good will towards the Ahlul Bayt was unceremoniously killed without trial. So ferocious was al-Mahdi that people concealed their identity for fear of being persecuted for being the progeny of Ali and Fatima (a.s.). The Shia concealed their faith and preferred to be branded as zindiq (atheists) rather than to be known as Shia.

[4] Abu Muhammad Musa al-Hadi (169–170 A H)

Though he ruled for a short period of one year, he became as notorious as his father was for his cruelty and persecution toward the *Sayyids* and the Shia. He imposed restrictions on the progeny of Ali and Fatima (a.s.) who lived in Medina, and made them stand surety for each other. He made it obligatory on them to report every morning to the local authority. Often, they were made to wait for long hours just to insult them. The insults led to altercations. Being unable to bear the insults and harassment, al-Husayn bin Ali bin al-Hasan bin al-Hasan bin al-Hasan bin Ali ibn Abi Talib called for the progeny of Imam Ali (a.s.) and the following persons gathered around him; Yahya, Sulaiman, and Idris the sons of Abdullah bin al-Hasan, Abdullah bin al-Hasan al-Aftas, Ibrahim bin Isma'eel, Umar bin al-Hasan, Abdullah bin Isma'eel, and Abdullah bin Ja'far. These ten persons were proceeding on their pilgrimage. They were joined by thirty-six persons who were the progeny of Ali (a.s.) and a few bondsmen. They went to the governor's house early in the morning. On seeing them, the governor ran away. However, they were soon surrounded by the army of al-Hadi the Abbasid king and were massacred. The bodies remained lying on the ground for three days.¹¹ Six persons were taken prisoners and were brought before al-Hadi who beheaded them.

[5] Haroon ar-Rashid (170–193 A H)

Haroon ar-Rashid was the son of al-Mahdi and the brother of al-Hadi. In his long reign of 23 years, he perpetrated great crimes of murdering the progeny of Ali and Fatima and their supporters. He either killed or imprisoned them to death. The following are a few names of those who were killed or jailed to death by Haroon ar-Rashid, in addition to the unnamed sixty ones from the Progeny of Ali and Fatima

(a.s.) in Toos. Here are the names:

Ibrahim bin Isma'eel, Ali bin al-Hasan bin Ibrahim, Ali bin Hashim bin Buraid, Ma'qil bin Ibrahim, Abdu Rabbih ibn Alqama, Idris bin Abdullah, Hasanain bin Abdullah bin Isma'eel, Abbas bin Muhammad bin Abdullah, Abu Muhammad Hisham bin al-Hakam, Ali ibn Salih at-Taliqani, Ishaq bin al-Hasan bin Zaid...etc.

Haroon ar-Rashid was the first to order to demolish and remove Imam Husayn's tomb. Before him, neither the Umayyads nor the Abbasids, though desired, dared to destroy the tomb of Imam Husayn (a.s.). However, they imposed severe restrictions on visiting the tomb. [12](#)

Imam Musa al-Kadhim (a.s.) was living in Medina. When Haroon visited the holy city, he went to the Prophet's tomb and in order to show his proximity to the Prophet (S), he saluted the tomb saying '*Peace be upon my cousin*'. Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.), who was present at that time, put down Haroon ar-Rashid by saluting the Prophet's tomb saying: '*Peace be upon my (grand) father*.' Thus, the Imam proved that if proximity in relationship was what would count, Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) was closer to the Prophet (S) than Haroon was.

Due to the above incident, Haroon felt so insecure that on several occasions, he made Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) travel from Medina to Baghdad to kill him, but, whenever he met the Imam, he was scared to take any precipitate action. Instead, on several occasions, Haroon imprisoned Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) for long periods. Seeing the piety of Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.), who was in prison for over a year, the jailor, at Basra, Eesa bin Ja'far bin Mansur wrote to Haroon ar-Rashid asking him to transfer the Imam to some other jail; otherwise he would himself release.

Haroon sent Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) from Basra to Baghdad and kept him imprisoned under al-Fadhl bin ar-Rabee'. Soon, al-Fadhl found that Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) was innocent and that he was being unjustly persecuted. Haroon learnt that Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) was living a relatively comfortable life. He sent his confident Masrur to spy upon al-Fadhl. Haroon gave two letters, one addressed to Abbas bin Muhammad and another one addressed to Sindi bin Hashak asking him to follow the instruction of Abbas bin Muhammad. Accordingly, Abbas inflicted one hundred whips on al-Fadhl bin ar-Rabee' and handed over Imam al-Kadhim to the custody of Sindi bin Hashak. Sindi bin Hashak asked Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) to lie on the floor and he made some Christian wrestlers to sit on, due to which the Imam died. According to Ardabili, Sindi bin Hashak inserted poison and martyred Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) [13](#)

Haroon's jealousy of the infallible Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.) was so intense that he closed down the university run by Imam as-Sadiq (a.s.) at Medina. He frequently ordered Imam as-Sadiq to leave Medina and travel to Baghdad just to disturb the Imam's teaching of his students who were said to be more than four thousand ones. Very cleverly, Haroon ar-Rashid used the pretext of encouraging sciences and he invited different persons for debates. His son al-Ma'mun followed the same policy of diverting people from seeking knowledge from the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.).

[6] Abdullah al-Ma'mun (198– 218 AH)

Al-Ma'mun was the son of Haroon Rashid. He was highly educated and was cunning. He was an expert politician. He killed his brother al-Amin, who was the caliph, after a prolonged battle of four years. Al-Ma'mun was a son of a bondwoman whereas al-Amin was of pure Abbasid descent. This created a rift between the Abbasids who were about eighty thousand people, and this constituted the biggest threat to al-Ma'mun. Like his predecessors, al-Ma'mun was also scared of the Alawids. Being a clever politician, he first forced Imam Ali ibn Musa ar-Ridha (a.s.) to marry his daughter and offered to nominate as his heir apparent. By this stratagem, al-Ma'mun had planned to subdue the Abbasids with the threat that if they rose in revolt against him, he would hand over the caliphate to the Alawids. For this purpose, he gave the title of 'ar-Ridha' based on the original Abbasid slogan of 'ar-ridha min Aal Muhammad; (seeking) the contentment of the progeny of Muhammad'.

Such a prospect was horrifying to the Abbasids. Al-Ma'mun was also confident that once the pomp and glory of the earthly kingdom surrounded him, Imam ar-Ridha (a.s.) also would fall into the trap of all the attendant vices, just like the judge of judges Yahya bin Aktham had fallen. It is said that al-Ma'mun was initially not given to any vices, but when he got rid of his brother al-Amin, he felt safer and in course of time fell into all sorts of vices that he indulged in that along with his ministers, counselors, and religious heads. [14](#)

However, Imam ar-Ridha (a.s.) saw through the game of al-Ma'mun and consistently he refused to have anything to do with rulership. Under threat, Imam ar-Ridha was forced to accompany al-Ma'mun and sit next to him. Imam ar-Ridha explained that his position was similar to his grandfather Imam Ali's when he was nominated and forced to participate in the Shura [15](#) or to the Prophet Yousuf (a.s.) who became the minister of the king of Egypt. [16](#) However, the Imam refused and never participated in the state affairs. Al-Ma'mun asked Abdullah bin Basheer to grow his fingernails. When they had grown to a considerable extent, he gave something that appeared to be tamarind, and asked Abdullah to squeeze it. According to a popular tradition, it was through grapes filled with poison that the Imam was made to consume and die.

There is an unending list of people who were martyred under al-Ma'mun's orders. The well-known among them are:

Al-Hasan al-Harsh, al-Hasan bin Zaid, al-Hasan bin al-Husayn bin Zaid, al-Hasan bin Ishaq, Ali bin Abdullah, Abu Sara bin Mansur, Muhammad bin al-Husayn bin al-Hasan, Muhammad bin Zaid bin Ali, Muhammad bin Ja'far, Abdullah bin Ja'far, Muhammad bin Abdullah bin al-Hasan,... etc., in addition to thousands of their supporters.

[7] Al-Mu'tasim Billah (218-227 A H)

He was the son of al-Ma'mun and was nominated to the caliphate by his father. He inherited from his ancestors the hatred for the Prophet's progeny. He imprisoned thousands of Shia and of the Prophet's progeny who died in prison or were killed on the orders of him.

Al-Mu'tasim married his daughter Ummul Fadhl, apparently out of respect and love, to Imam Muhammad al-Jawad (a.s.), but in fact to keep a close watch on the activities of the Imam and to have an executioner ready to eliminate the Imam by poison. Thus, Imam al-Jawad (a.s.) was martyred by poison inserted to him by Ummul Fadhl at the behest of al-Mu'tasim

[8] Al-Mutawakkil `Alallah (232-247AH)

Al-Mutawakkil was the cruelest of all the Abbasid kings. He bore great ill will towards the progeny of Imam Ali and Fatima (a.s.) and their Shia. He used to abuse and tell lies against Imam Ali (a.s.) in the open court. His clown Ibadah, who was a eunuch, pretended to imitate Imam Ali (a.s.). When al-Mutawakkil's son al-Muntasir Billah saw this, he chided his father saying that Imam Ali (a.s.) was the nephew of their grandfather Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib and allowing a clown to imitate him was the worst thing. Al-Mutawakkil was given to heavy drinking and was always surrounded by female dancers.

Al-Mutawakkil had abdicated his authority to the Turkish slaves who were whimsically running the administration of the state. Al-Mantahir Billah, with some disgruntled persons, killed his father al-Mutawakkil in 247 AH, when he heard him abusing Imam Ali and Fatima az-Zahra' (a.s.).¹⁷

Al-Mutawakkil not only bore ill will, but he also hated the popularity of Imam Husayn's tomb at Karbala to which millions flocked as pilgrims. Al-Mutawakkil wanted to erase the tomb completely. He destroyed the tomb seventeen times during his rule of fifteen years, but there is a record of four times; in the years 233, 236, 237 and 247 AH.¹⁸ Every time the tomb was erased a new and more magnificent structure was put up by the Shia.¹⁹ By al-Mutawakkil's orders, anyone attempting to visit the tomb of Imam Husayn (a.s.) was arrested and sent to the governor of Kufa who either killed or punished him severely. Every time the tomb of Imam Husayn (a.s.) was demolished, the surrounding houses and shops of the Shia were demolished too. On four occasions, the entire town of Karbala was demolished.

Umar bin Faraj, the governor of Medina and Mecca, looted the properties of the progeny of Ali and Fatima (a.s.) and harassed the Shia in all possible manners. Similarly, the governors of Egypt and Kufa used to arrest the Shia on false allegations and they punished them unjustly.

The names of the despotic governors are as follows:[1] Ibrahim ad-Daizaj who demolished Imam Husayn's tomb in 233 and 236AH, [2] Umar bin Faraj who demolished the tomb in 237 AH, [3] Harun al-Mu'ammari who demolished the tomb in 437 AH, [4] Ja'far bin Muhammad bin Ammar.

From the progeny of Imam Ali and Fatima (a.s.) al-Mutawakkil killed the following well-known and learned persons: *al-Qasim bin Abdullah, Ya'qub bin Ishaq, Ahmed bin Isa, and Abdullah bin Musa.*

- [1.](#) Manaqib of ibn Shahr Ashub, vol. 2 p. 134 quoted in Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 5 p. 29.
- [2.](#) A Study of Islamic History by K. Ali. P. 229.
- [3.](#) Ibid., P. 234.
- [4.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 5 p. 93 quoting al-Iqd al-Farid, vol. 1 p. 41.
- [5.](#) Ibid., p. 101-102 quoting Muruj ath-Thahab.
- [6.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 5 p. 103, quoting at-Tabari's Tarikh.
- [7.](#) Ibid., p. 104 quoting al-Mas'udi's Muruj ath-Thahab. vol. 2 p. 171.
- [8.](#) Ibid., p. 114-115 & 119 quoting Maqatil at-Talibiyin.
- [9.](#) Ibid., p. 146 quoting ash-Shia wal Hakimun.
- [10.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 5 p. 125-127 quoting at-Tabari's Tarikhul Umam wal Muluk.
- [11.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 5 p. 187-199 quoting al-Mas'udi's Muruj ath-Thahab, vol. 3, p. 336.
- [12.](#) Ibid., vol. 6 p. 46 quoting from 'History & Geography of Karbala.
- [13.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 6 p. 69-71.
- [14.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 6 p. 79 quoting Shibli Noman's 'Al-Ma'mun'.
- [15.](#) Ibid., p. 127.
- [16.](#) Ibid., p. 128.
- [17.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 6 p. 164-171 quoting at-Tarikh al-Kamil, vol. 7 p. 20, Muruju ath-Thahab, vol. 2, ash-Shia wal Hakimun, p. 169...etc.
- [18.](#) Masa'ibush Shia, vol. 6 p. 186-199.
- [19.](#) Ibid., p. 186.

Part D: Persecution of the Shia during the Period when a Multitude of Caliphs came to Rule the Muslim World

The animosity towards the Prophet's progeny borne by the Umayyads is understandable for several reasons. Firstly, Islam put a hold on the unbridled life enjoyed by the Arabs in the pre-Islamic days. Thus, we find that immediately after the death of the Prophet (S), Abu Sufyan managed to get his son Yazid first and then Mu'awiya appointed as governor of Syria where they lost no time in reintroducing the use of alcohol, gambling, and bondwomen, as was the custom in the pre-Islamic days. Whatever they did was out of their old barbaric spirit asserting itself rather than following the restraints imposed by Islam. While in public, they pretended to follow Islamic tenets, in private they did everything that Islam had forbidden. The *Ahlul Bayt (a.s.)* were the stumbling block in their wayward life of pagan aristocracy.

Secondly, Islam forbade idol worship and polytheism that was so dear to the ancient Arabs. Mu'awiya and his succeeding Umayyads were more interested in the old Arab culture and poetry than in the

traditions of the Prophet (S). For this purpose, they engaged writers at great expense to the state.

Thirdly, in the battles that ensued, many ancestors and near relatives of the Umayyads were killed. That is why we find the severed head of Imam Husayn (a.s.) kept in front of Yazid who gloated saying, "*How I am sure that the spirits of my ancestors slain in (the battles of) Badr, al-Khandaq, and Hunain must be happy to see the severed head of the son of Ali ibn Abi Talib lying at my feet!*"

Fourthly, the Umayyads always considered the Islamic movement not as a spiritual movement but as a political one leading to an empire. Therefore, when Abu Sufyan saw the huge gathering of devout Muslims, all that he could visualize was a great army powerful enough to create an empire.

Fifthly, neither Abu Sufyan nor his sons ever really embraced Islam. They were impelled more by hypocrisy and a ruse to save their skin and to grab whatever they could by joining their powerful enemy.

There might be several more reasons for the Umayyads to bear malice towards the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.), but for the Abbasids, who came to power on the slogan that the *caliphate* was the inherent right of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.), animosity could spring only from a desire to cling to the power that so fortuitously fell in their lap. But a more important reason was the suspicion of an imagined threat from the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.).

However, the surprising thing is that the Ottomans, Ghaznawids, Mongols, and other Muslim rulers all over the globe, such as Saddam in recent days, bore animosity towards the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) in general and the Shia in particular that can not be normally explained.

The root cause is to be found in the following facts:

Immediately after the Prophet's demise, several legends were invented to create a divide between the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) on the one hand and the rest of Muslims on the other. Firstly, a tradition was put forward as an argument against the claim of the *Ahlul Bayt* (a.s.) that the Prophet (S) had said, "*We the prophets neither inherit nor bequeath.*" The tradition appeared to be so noble in content that it was accepted by many without inquiring whether the Prophet (S) had really said so or not. Obviously, the said tradition is contrary to the Qur'an which speaks about Prophets inheriting one from the other and Prophets praying for a successor to carry on the Divine Mission. Hence, the tradition is an obvious invention. In fact, none from the large number of the Prophet's companions, except two persons, testified to hearing the said tradition from the Prophet (S).

Another legend was that the Prophet (S) did not wish to place the spiritual as well as the temporal leadership in one place. Even this tradition had no corroborators. No reason was given as to when and why the Prophet (S) said so, particularly when he himself held both the offices. This tradition is also contrary to the Qur'an that speaks of the kingdoms bestowed upon the Prophets David, Solomon...etc.

Regarding the invention of such legendary traditions, Nicholson wrote, "During the first century of Islam, the forging of Traditions became a recognized political and religious weapon, of which all parties availed

themselves. Even men of the strictest piety practised this species of fraud, and maintained that the end justified the means.”¹

The effect of the legends was that the infallible Imams became the acknowledged spiritual leaders while the *Caliph* assumed the temporal rulership. The only object of these legends was to separate the spiritual leadership (*wilaya*) from the temporal rulership (*mulk*), and to keep the temporal leadership out of the reach of the *Ahlul Bayt*. It is this later motive that was responsible for the creation of further fast legends such as that Ali and his Shia never offered prayers and that the Shia were heretics. The false propaganda that Ali and his Shia were heretics deserving to be cursed after every prayer, was first started by Mu’awiya in the year 12 AH, and spread by him throughout the Muslim world that he later came to preside over. As a result of Mu’awiya’s orders, Imam Ali (a.s.) and his Shia were cursed from on seventy thousand pulpits everyday, and false stories about them were spread throughout the Muslim world for over half a century. This put unshakable roots in the minds of common Muslims, so much so that even in these enlightened days they persist in several Muslim countries.

Sheikh Shamsuddin Abu Abdullah bin Makki bin Hamid al-Aamuli al-Juzaini known as ‘the First Martyr’ was a great scholar of his time. He had written several books. The accusation against him was that he was a Shia and therefore deserved to be killed. First, he was imprisoned for one year and then he was asked to tender an apology that he refused because it would then amount to admission of guilt. He was martyred at the instance of Judge Burhanuddin al-Maliki and Judge Abbaad ibn Jama’a ash-Shafi’iy on Jumada II, 786 AH in Damascus. On the persistence of Judge Abbaad ibn Jama’a, he was beheaded and his body was hung from gallows and later was burnt.

The ‘Second Martyr’ is Sheikh Zainuddin bin Ali bin Ahmed bin Muhammad bin Jamal bin Taqiyyuddin bin Salih. He was martyred on the allegation that he was Shia and so he deserved to be killed. When he came to know that he was likely to be arrested, he left on pilgrimage. When the Judge came to know this, he wrote to the king of Rome that a person who was not from the four sects of Sunnis and who was a *Kharijite* had taken refuge in his (the king) domain, and that he should be arrested forthwith. The king sent an emissary to find out if what the judge had written was true, and at any rate to apprehend the man and bring him alive. The emissary found Sheikh Zainuddin bin Ali in Mecca. The Sheikh asked to be his guest until he would complete the pilgrimage. They both left for Rome. On the way, they met another person. On being told that the Sheikh was a Shia Scholar, the stranger told the emissary, “*Do you not apprehend that this Sheikh may complain to the king that you have ill-treated him and that on such complaint the king may punish you?*” The emissary believed that such could be the case. He beheaded the Sheikh near a canal. He carried the head and left the body. During the night, the residents of the village saw radiant beings visiting the spot where the Sheikh’s headless body was lying. The next day, they buried the Sheikh’s body and built a building with a dome over it. This happened in the year 966 AH. When the king was enraged to see that his emissary had killed the Sheikh and brought his head instead of following his orders, the emissary was hanged.²

¹. A Literary History of the Arabs, p. 145 [2003].

Part E: Persecution under the Mongols and Recent Times

Persecution by the Mongols

During Akbar's rule, Judge Noorullah ash-Shushtari, known as (the Third Martyr) and popularly called 'Qadhi (judge) Sahib', migrated from Iran to India. He was a great scholar in all the five schools of Jurisprudence (*fiqh*) ; the Hanafite, Shafiite, Malikiite, Hanblite, and Shiism. His knowledge was appreciated by Akbar who appointed him as the chief judge of Lahore. Ash-Shushtari accepted the appointment with a precondition that he would administer justice according to any of the five schools of Jurisprudence. His knowledge of the Islamic sects had convinced him that there was always a parallel in one of the four Sunni schools of Jurisprudence. Accordingly, he gave judgment according to that school of Sunni Jurisprudence that was in agreement with the Shiite thought. Complaints started pouring that ash-Shushtari was administering judgment according to the Shiite Jurisprudence. Ash-Shushtari showed that in fact he gave Judgment according to one of the four Sunni schools, which incidentally was in agreement with the Shia Law. Akbar realized the wisdom of ash-Shushtari and refused to entertain any complaint against him. [1](#)

When Akbar died, his son Jahangir killed Ali Quli Khan and took his widow, famous Noor Jehan as his wife. We may recall the incident of Khalid bin al-Waleed with Malik bin Nuwayra where Khalid killed Malik and committed adultery with his wife. By his nature, like Khalid bin al-Waleed, Jahangir was also a tyrant.

One of the Sunni scholars Makhdumul Mulk Abdullah al-Ansari became all-powerful in Jahangir's court. He was an extremist. He issued a *Fatwa* that it was not only impermissible but had become sin to perform the *Hajj* in the circumstances then prevailing. When asked to explain he said, "*In these days, if pilgrims travel by land, they will have to pass through the land of the Rafidhite (Twelver Shia)] which is sin. On the other hand, if the pilgrim takes a ship, all ships belong to the Europeans where they will find the portraits of Jesus and Mary which amounts to idolatry that is sin.*" [2](#) Makhdumul Mulk equated the Shia to idolaters and thereby indirectly declared them as disbelievers.

Makhdumul Mulk could not find fault with the judgments rendered by Noorullah ash-Shushtari. He therefore planted a spy who pretended to be a Shia. He gained the confidence of ash-Shushtari and got access to two books on Shiism, namely, '*Ihqaqul Haq*' and '*Majalisul Mo'minin*'. The spy pretended to be deeply interested in the books and, after taking ash-Shushtari's permission to read them, he took them

to his house. He passed on copies of the books which became powerful weapons in the hands of those who were inimical to ash-Shushtari. They took the books to Jahangir as a proof that ash-Shushtari was Shia who deserved to be executed. Jahangir agreed to their demand and ash-Shushtari was flogged with barbed whips that virtually stripped his skin. This was in the year 1019 AH. Ash-Shushtari's dead body was left lying on the open ground for several days.³

An Iranian nobleman, who was holding a high post in Gwalior, dreamt that Lady Fatima (a.s.) was asking him to bury the body of the martyr ash-Shushtari. The Iranian took permission from Jahangir and buried the body near the Civil Court, a few yards away from *Changi Chowki*. In the year 1188, Muhammad Mansur Musavi Nishapuri constructed a shrine over the tomb. In the year 1290, a compound wall was constructed enclosing the huge area of endowed land by Sayyid Ali Naqi, Deputy Collector. In the year 1309, Tahsildars Kifayat Husayn and Khan Bahadur Sayyid Abul Hasan and Sayyid Nazim, an advocate, fixed iron doors, and with donations collected by the public. Nazim Husayn also started the *Majlis* which has continued until now. In 1332 AH, a committee was formed that supervised the construction of four buildings to accommodate men and one building to accommodate women. They were constructed under the direction of the Secretary Nawab Muhammad Sajjad Ali of *Sheesjh Mahal*.⁴

Adil Shahi and Qutub Shahi the kings of Deccan were Shia. Aurangzeb persecuted and killed several of them. My father told me that my ancestors, who were Shia living in Bijapore, were hunted down and killed. The younger members of the family were made to stand and walls raised around them, that if old structures were to be pulled down now, skeletons would be found in the walls. Because of the persecution, my grandparents left Bijapore and settled in Vellore of North Arcot District of the erstwhile Madras State. They were pious people and until now, their graves in Qasba near the Fort at Vellore are revered both by Hindus and Muslims alike. However, in the process, they were forced to conceal their faith, offer prayers only privately in closed rooms, and shut themselves up during the first ten days of Muharram. In course of time, Vellore and some surrounding villages acquired their own Shia population. Madras being a cosmopolitan city, soon attracted the Shia who settled in pockets in areas such as Thousand Lights on Mount Road, Triplicane, Royapettah, Perambur, Pudupet...etc., and spread to several outskirts of Chennai. Madras gave birth to several Shia scholars such as Moulvi Hasan Raza from Pudupet, Moulvi Nabiul Ahmed Khan, Moulvi Ghulam Muhammad Mehdi Khan, his son Ghulam Muhammad Taqi Khan, and S.V. Mir Ahmed Ali from Thousand Lights; and lastly, my mentor and teacher Mirza Ghulam Abbas Ali Sahib from Royapettah. There were such great businessmen like the Khaleelis. It is said that the Khaleelis acquired so many properties on Mount Road that the British Government issued a notification, prohibiting sale of any property to the Khaleelis.

Bangalore, Mysore and its suburbs also have a sizeable population of Shia. Andhra Pradesh Hyderabad has the largest Shia population. Vizag, Masuliptam, Nagaram and Nellore also have sizeable Shia populations.

Hyderabad has its own legends. The Nizam was prevailed upon to issue an order prohibiting breast-

beating and to the Chant of 'Husayn', 'Husayn' in the famous Ashura procession of Bi Bi ka Alam. The Sunnis had argued that breast-beating is barbaric and should be banned in these enlightened days. When the Shia came to know about the ordinance, they approached the Nizam who had a soft corner for the Shia. He gave them counsel and said, 'you go ahead with the procession on the lines I have given you.' When the procession started, the Shia started chanting 'Ibne Zehra wa wayla' while striking their heads. The Sunnis rushed to complain to the Nizam. The Nizam replied, *"At your instance, I have banned breast beating. What can I do if they strike their head? I have also banned the use of the words "Husayn" as desired by you. It will not be an offence if the Shia use the word "Ibne Zehra" though that word also refers to Husayn. They have not violated my order. "*

In the late seventies through the eighties, there was a rash of politically manipulated communal violence in the city of Hyderabad which was frequently subjected to imposition of curfew. Once, the curfew fell on the day of Ashura. Prominent Shia met and decided that, come what may, they would take out, as usual, the procession of Bi Bi ka Alam and perform all the usual rituals of *Matam*. They went to speak to the Police Commissioner Mr. Pavithran and to convey the resolution of the Shia to hold the procession as usual despite the curfew. Mr. Pavithran was a very sensible person and he had observed that the Shia localities had the lowest crime rate and that never did any untoward incident occur during the Ashura procession. He therefore allowed the Ashura procession of the Bi Bi ka Alam to be taken out as usual. The Sunnis and some extremist Hindus objected saying that in the procession, Shia youth would come out openly with their swords and knives and would likely use the occasion to use the weapons against their opponents. They asked, 'Would Mr. Pavithran permit them to come out openly with their swords and knives?' They argued that the Shia should at least be banned from doing '*Matam*' with swords and knives. Mr. Pavithran replied, *"If you want to put your swords and knives to the same purpose of beating yourselves, as the Shia do, then, to that extent I have no objection if you too carry weapons to beat yourselves."*

One of the great miracles of Imam Husayn (a.s.) to the present day is that the wounds of those who beat themselves with chains, knives, and swords never become septic and none is known to have died in the long history of the Ashura processions anywhere in the world. I had personally witnessed a team of Germans taking video of the Shia, young and old, beating themselves with chains, Knives, and swords in the Ashura procession at Diwan Devdi, Hyderabad. One of the team members told me that they were puzzled by the fact that the chain, knife, or sword used by one individual was used by another without cleaning it. Looked at scientifically, this should lead to gangrene because the blood group of one individual using the knife or sword may be 'A' and the next person using the same sword may belong to a different blood group. The gentleman told me that when they collected samples of blood from various individuals and found that all the blood samples had turned to 'O' group, and later when the blood of the same individuals was tested later, they belonged to various blood groups. None of the participants ever needed or took ATS injection.

In order to obliterate this living miracle, a very attractive proposal was mooted that instead of letting the

blood flow on the roads on the Day of Ashura, the Shia should donate their blood that could be used to save lives. Many Shia were impressed by the novelty and apparent nobility of the cause. Soon, it was realized that the motive behind the suggestion was to dilute the effect that the procession made on the onlookers and to erase the miraculous nature of Matam during Ashura. Our ancestors sacrificed their properties and lives to keep the memory of Karbala fresh in the minds of generations to come. Unfortunately, even among the Shia, there has arisen a minority that holds prayer to be superior to Majlis. There is no comparison between the two; if prayer is like the Book of God, Majlis is the remembrance of the Prophet's progeny (a.s.).

Remember that the Prophet (S) had said, "I am leaving among you two precious things entwined and knit together like a strong rope; the Book of God and my Progeny. They will never separate from each other until they will come to me at the Pond in the Paradise. If you cling fast to them, you will never go astray at all." An unnecessary controversy is raised to separate the Book of God from the Progeny of the Prophet (S) in an attempt to glorify one over the other. Glorifying one means demeaning the other and that could only be the work of Satan. The atrocities against the Shia were so severe that they preferred to remain in anonymity. It is only recently that the world has started to take notice of the Shia. It is for the Shia to put forth their religious beliefs through their writings and to establish their exclusiveness through their conduct. We should try to weed out some undesirable elements that are a blot on the name and character of the Shia, by educating our masses.

[1.](#) Ibid., p. 23-24

[2.](#) Shahide Salis, P. 22.

[3.](#) Ibid., P. 24.

[4.](#) Shahide Salis, P. 25-26.

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