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Chapter 4: Beams of Sunset

The Decline

At the time al-Shahid found himself at the climax of glory, he also became face to face with a far-away abyss, as he sensed the presence of suspected moves on the part of the authorities, who imposed a severe surveillance upon him, controlling even his breaths with secret reports being started to be continuously sent to the centre of caliphate, warning against his danger and threat.

In such a conspiracy-harboured sphere, al-Shahid decided to return to his birthplace at that dove-like small village, in 955 H.

Since that date onwards, began the reversed counting for his life. About that epoch Ibn al-Awadi reported by saying: "This date marked the end of times security and safety against misfortunes of life." At that time al-Shahid sought refuge to the house of his sincere disciple in Jizzin,¹ far from sight of people. It is noteworthy that al-Shahid, during that critical period in his life, has never left compilation, investigation and research. The works he produced during that period represented the setting beams in his active and productive life.

The Bloody End

Unfortunately, history has not recorded the details of his unforgettable martyrdom, but a bit of pondering upon some indications and events may shed light on the threads of a machinated conspiracy aimed at exterminating that unparalleled personality. This is true when taking into consideration the political situation prevalent at that time, with the thought basis upon which the Ottoman State relied, and its adopting one of the Islamic schools of thought solely for achieving political goals.²

Intending to fathom the issue roots and background of the events that led altogether to al-Shahid's decease, we should go back to a highly indicative incident, on the eve of his travel to Turkey for meeting some of those in authority in the metropolis of caliphate. It was common then that whoever intending to

apply for anything, had to produce a certificate from his town judge attesting his application. The judge at that time was Ma`ruf al-Shami in the town of Sida, for whom al-Shahid delegated his disciple Ibn al-`Awdi for apprising him of al-Shahid's intention to visit the capital. Thereat the judge offered Ibn al-`Awdi his service to write an introduction note for al-Shahid, but he was confronted with al-Shahid's refusal, preferring his self-confidence based on his scholarly ability and qualification.³

The judge felt as being insulted and injured due to al-Shahid's transcending his post as a chain within an administrative system governing the country, considering al-Shahid's stand as a blatant challenge against him. Thereat he began to feel the danger threatening him because of the presence of such a personage having that extreme selfconfidence, and thinking in that manner. The situation was even exacerbated when al-Shahid returned triumphantly from the capital, without showing any adulation or flattery to any government official, seeking trust and power from his thought capabilities and scholarly character.

Therefore the judge made up his mind to exterminate and do away with al-Shahid, who, seemingly, realized the tensioned spheres, disclosing this fact to his disciples and followers.

After that, the series of events continued, to exacerbate the situation, and intensify the conflict, and the only episode indicating the outset of the end is the following: Two litigants have filed a case to al-Shahid, in which the sentence was issued in behalf of one of them according to a warrant revealed by Allah. This fact has, of course, caused displeasure inside the heart of the condemned one, and that man⁴ might have quietly realized the contradiction of the sentence with the thought discipline organizing and administering the State affairs. So he seized the opportunity, rushing to the Judge Ma`ruf al-Shami, who immediately issued his orders to summon al-Shahid to have him interrogated.

Sensing the danger of the critical situation, al-Shahid decided to be away of sights, till the circumstances become ordinary and security prevails.

But Ma`ruf al-Shami, the judge of Sida, never missed such an opportunity, and he urgently sent a telegram to the caliphate capital, saying: "That a heretic man is found in the land of Sham, who has renegaded against the four schools of thought."⁵

This telegram was sufficient to excite the fears of the metropolis of caliphate. Thus, the conditions became so risky and critical, after al-Sultan Sulayman al-Qanuni himself paid special attention to the case. In the meantime, the monarch delegated a special envoy to summon al-Shahid, who got to be aware of the inevitable danger, secretly departing the country with the pilgrims caravan. Then the special envoy arrived in the country for meeting al-Shahid and notifying him the monarch's decision. Being aware of his departure, he followed up al-Shahid's trace, till catching him while being on his way toward the holy Makkah.

Thereat, al-Shahid came to know that no choice was left before him but to go back to the capital, after having knowledge of the wish of al-Sultan Sulayman al-Qanuni, in arranging a thought meeting with Qastantine '*ulama*' and *fuqaha*.⁶

Meanwhile, al-Shahid suggested to the envoy to perform the rites of *Hajj* before going to the capital, the fact upon which both agreed.

Then the two men took the direction of the caliphate capital, with al-Shahid's full surrender to Allah's will. On his way, he might have remembered that vision he dreamt of in the past, and the time he was sitting beside al-Shahid al-'Awwal Muhammad ibn Makki, who was murdered in almost similar circumstances.

En route to the capital, al-Shahid went along the same road he followed previously, with the same unusual feeling, that filled him with doubt when approaching the Mediterranean shores, starting to recur to his mind.

Herein a meeting was held that raised a big question mark, when they were encountered with some man asking them to stop, whereat a conversation was held between him and the Sultan's envoy about al-Shahid's character.

After that, the man embarked on urging the envoy to slay al-Shahid on the spot, and get rid of him.⁷

This episode cannot be accepted as it is, as the event implies that there was verily an engineered plot, hatched in darkness, particularly that the facts would convict the second strong man in power, being the Prime Minister (Rustam Pasha), who received secret reports indicating that al-Shaykh Zayn al-Din was actively striving to propagating Shi'ism (*tashayyu'*). So he gave his orders to arrest al-Shahid, and take him guarded to Istanbul. The factor that called for hastening in doing away with al-Shahid so tragically, may be sought in the fact that Rustam Pasha was so afraid of al-Sultan Sulayman al-Qanuni's being influenced by al-Shahid's ideas, and he might have felt this fact through al-Sultan's desire to arrange for a thought debate between al-Shahid and the capital scholars.⁸

Although the reports differed greatly about the reasons entailing the murder of al-Shaykh Zayn al-Din, but all of them "undoubtedly" ascertain that the Ottoman capital was viewing al-Shahid as a danger threatening its very existence, and endangering its security, especially that the Ottoman Emperors were fearing their neighbour on the east.

In this way, al-Shahid became a victim of a dirty conspiracy, without any regard for the most essential rights, being freedom of opinion. The way he was slain should be considered a despoil against every Muslim's freedom and a blatant violation to the sanctity of Islam.

With steady steps, al-Shahid was moving toward his bloody end, contemplating the furious sea waves, in the moment of the last departure. The man, who passed the fifty, realized then that his sun too was falling down toward setting, and the hour of departure was approaching. The eyes watching him were glaring with grudge, awaiting that dreadful moment, and the sea had nothing to give but its angry waves. Meanwhile, al-Shahid advanced toward his fate with confident steps, praying the martyrdom two *rak'ahs* ... making ablution with blood ... and hovering round about the heavens, leaving behind him a severed head and a body overwhelmed with waves.

Thereafter, his killer set out, carrying the slaughtered head, toward the monarch, Sulayman al-Qanuni, who strongly deplored the crime, giving his orders to execute the killer.⁹ His executioners wanted for his sun to set forever, whereas it came out to shine again so soon.

- ^{1.} It is one of the South Lebanon villages, and the birthplace of al-Shahid al-'Awwal (Muhammad ibn Makki). (Translator)
- ^{2.} The `Uthmani policy adopts the Yanafi school, due to Abu Yanifah's well-known opinion regarding the issue of caliphate. (Translator)
- ^{3.} It was common at that era, that whoever presenting an application to the capital, he had to bring with him gifts to submit to the men of influence there, and this might have been the reason why al-Shahid refused the judge's introduction note.
- ^{4.} The event as a whole might be fabricated with the aim of jeopardizing al-Shahid, and putting him in trouble.
- ^{5.} Shuhada' al-fa'lilah, p. 135, taken from the book Amal al-'amil.
- ^{6.} Al-Sultan (Sulayman) sent someone for al-Shaykh, saying to him: Bring him alive so that I arrange for a meeting between him and my country 'ulama' to hold a debate. (Shuhada' alfa'dhilah, p. 136).
- ^{7.} When he completed performing the acts of hajj, he travelled with him to the Land of Romans (Turkey). On reaching it he met a man who inquired him about al-Shaykh, and he replied: He is a man among the Imamiyyah Shiah 'ulama', I want to send him to the Sultan. The man then asked him: Aren't you afraid that he informs the Sultan that you have failed short of serving him, and annoyed him, being thus the means for causing your death, due to his having supporters who are ready to help and back him. So the preponderant opinion in this case that you kill him and take his head to the Sultan. (Shuhada' al-fa'lilah, p. 136, as reported from Amal al-'amil)
- ^{8.} Yasan Bey Romlu is reported to have said in his book Ahsan al-tawarikh:

"In 965 H., in the middle of the sovereignty of the King Āahmasb al-Safawi, the possessor of the rational and transmitted (ma`qul and manqul), the holder of both furu` (branches) and u'lul (principles), al-Shaykh Zayn al-Din al-`Amili. The reason that led to his martyrdom was that: A group of the Sunnis have told Rustam Pasha, the great Vizier of al-Sultan Sulayman, the King of Romans, that al-Shaykh Zayn al-Din was claiming ijtiḥad and many of Shi'ah 'ulama' were frequenting to him, reading to him the Imamiyyah books, with the aim of propagating Shi'ism everywhere. Thereat the Vizier Rustam Pasha sent for al-Shaykh Zayn al-Din, who was then at Makkah. Then they took him to Istanbul, slaying him therein, without consulting or informing al-Sultan." (A`yan al-Shi`ah), Vol. SSSIII, p. 292).

^{9.} That is the one who killed al-Shahid in a place on the sea coast, with the presence of a number of Turkomans who sighted, at that night, some lights descending from the sky and ascending up, so they buried him in that very spot building a dome over him.

Then the murderer took his head to al-Sultan, who disapproved his act, saying to him: I commanded you to bring him alive, while you killed him. Thereat al-Sayyid `Abd al-Rahim al-`Abbasi (a man of honour, who authored the book Ma`ahid al-tan'li' fi Sharh Abyat al-Talkhi'l), has instigated and convinced the Sultan to execute the man, the act which he did. (Ibid.)

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