

Introduction

The evil seeds which lead to the tragedy of Karbala' were planted years before by Muawiya's cunning, who ruled over Muslims for twenty years.

Muawiya was an evil ruler. He was the son of Abu Sufyan and Hinda who, both, were the arch enemies of the Holy Prophet. Muawiya and his father became Muslims when they were left no alternative but to accept Islam.

When Hazrat 'Ali became Khalifa, he dismissed Muawiya and other Governors for corruption and anti-Islamic behaviour.

Soon after the death of Hazrat 'Ali, Muawiya, using methods of bribery and treachery, succeeded in becoming the Khalifa.

Muawiya was not interested in Islam. He only used Islam for his power and glory. He broke the laws of Islam. When any saying of the Holy Prophet did not suit him, he ordered it to be struck off all records. He made up ahadith to favour him and his policies.

Muawiya hated Hazrat 'Ali and his family. Under his Rule, Sh'ias were put to death or thrown into prisons just because they were followers of Hazrat 'Ali and his family. Muawiya died in 60 A.H.

Before his death, he appointed Yazid, his son, as the next Khalifa. Yazid was even worse than his father. He was an evil ruler and openly mocked Islam. He was often drunk and sang songs which made jokes of Salaat, the Holy Prophet and his family.

The difference between Yazid and his father Muawiya, was that Muawiya used Islam for his personal glory while Yazid was determined to destroy Islam.

As soon as Yazid became Khalifa, he wrote to his Governor in Medina to ask Imam Husayn to do the impossible. He was asking the Imam to accept him as the Khalifa of Islam.

Imam Husayn could not even consider accepting such an evil man, Yazid, who openly broke the laws of

Islam and was determined to destroy Islam, as the Khalifa.

It was not a matter of pride or Husayn's right to Khilafat. Accepting Yazid as a Khalifa would mean Imam approved of his way of life and this would have meant a definite end to Islam.

How can a grandson of the Holy Prophet, son of 'Ali and Fatimah, allow that to happen?

It was Imam's duty to defend and save Islam. He refused to accept Yazid as a Khalifa of Islam. Yazid was full of anger and planned to have the Imam killed in Medina.

By staying in Medina, Imam would have the advantage of having all his own relatives as well as the people of Medina fighting on his side.

After consultations with his family and companions, he decided to leave Medina and move to the Holy City of Mecca.

Why did he leave Medina when he had 'home advantage'?

This is because he did not want to put his friends in Medina in the danger of being killed. Secondly, although Yazid may be defeated, history would look upon the battle in Medina between Yazid and Husayn as a battle for Khilafat. Even if Yazid were to be killed, the injustice, oppression and un-Islamic way of life which Muawiya and Yazid promoted would not die.

Imam Husayn's promise and mission was to destroy the way of life that these two evil men had started, to destroy Islam. By staying in Medina and fighting with Yazid he would have not achieved this. This is why he decided to leave Medina.

On 28th Rajab 60 A.H., Imam Husayn's caravan left Medina with his family, his sisters, Bibi Zainab and Bibi Kulthoom, his brother 'Abbas, a few other relatives and a number of faithful companions.

On 4th Shabaan, Husayn's caravan reached Mecca. Imam had not yet made up his mind on where to go from here. For the time being he decided to stay in Mecca at least until the month of Dhul-Hajj and to perform the duty of Hajj.

To keep the sanctity and grace of the Holy Ka'aba, the bloodshed of any human life had been prohibited by the Holy Prophet. But did Yazid care about the Holy Prophet's sayings?

While in Mecca, Imam Husayn received many letters and messages from the people of Kufa persuading him to go to Kufa.

Imam decided to send Hazrat Muslim Ibn Aqeel, his cousin, to Kufa to study the situation there and report to Imam.

As Hazrat Muslim was preparing for the journey, Imam Husayn went to him and said:

“Muslim, the whole world knows that you are one of the bravest warriors. It is just possible that seeing you in Kufa, some people may think that our intention is to fight Yazid. Take your two sons, Mohamed and Ibrahim with you. When they see you with your young children, they will know that our intentions are peaceful”.

Hazrat Muslim and his two young sons left Mecca. They arrived in Kufa towards the end of Dhul-Qaad. They were received well by the people of Kufa. Thousands of people appeared before Hazrat Muslim.

They pledged their allegiance to Imam Husayn as their Imam. They wanted him to teach them the contents of the Holy Qur'an and true sayings and traditions of the Holy Prophet.

People of Kufa had long suffered under Muawiya and they feared even greater suffering under Yazid. They knew that the greed for power and glory of these two men was slowly destroying the true Islam.

Hazrat Muslim reported back to Imam Husayn that most of the people in Kufa wanted him as their Imam to guide them and also advised him to come to Kufa.

Yazid had spies in Kufa. He heard from them, about invitation to Imam Husayn and the arrival of Hazrat Muslim in Kufa.

Being an evil man, Yazid was full of anger, and he replaced the Governor of Kufa with one of his own men – Ibn Ziyad. Ibn Ziyad was told to arrest Muslim and kill him and do all that was necessary to suppress the Shi'as in Kufa.

Ibn Ziyad was a cruel and unjust man. As soon as he arrived in Kufa, he threatened the people of Kufa with death punishment if they were found to engage in any activity against Yazid. He ordered them to surrender Hazrat Muslim to him.

On 8th Dhul-Hajj, soldiers of Ibn Ziyad arrested Hazrat Muslim.

He was chained and dragged to the Court of Ibn Ziyad. He then ordered Hazrat Muslim to be taken to the roof of the palace to be killed, and his body thrown to the ground.

Hazrat Muslim was dragged up the steps. He was killed and his body was thrown to the ground.

Hazrat Muslim's head was cut off and hung on the City gate to remind and scare the people of Kufa.

Hazrat Muslim's two sons, Muhammad and Ibrahim, were also arrested and killed mercilessly.

In the meantime, Imam Husayn and his companions in Mecca were preparing to perform the duty of Hajj when his friends in Mecca informed him that Yazid's men were planning to have him and his followers murdered during the Hajj.

Imam Husayn did not wish the House of Allah to be turned into a battlefield. Therefore, he decided to

leave Mecca without performing Hajj.

On 8th Dhul-Hajj, the very day on which Hazrat Muslim was murdered in Kufa, Imam Husayn's caravan left Mecca. Imam Husayn did not know of Hazrat Muslim's death.

The journey was made on camels and horses. The weather was extremely hot at that time of year. The Imam, his children, ladies and friends suffered great hardship during the journey.

During the journey, Imam learned of the death of Hazrat Muslim and the cruel way in which he had been killed.

When Yazid came to know that Imam Husayn was heading towards Kufa, he immediately sent Hurr, at the time one of his army commanders to stop the Imam from joining his followers in Kufa.

Hurr, with 1,000 horsemen, met Imam Husayn and his companions at a place a few miles outside Kufa. Hurr and his men forced the Imam to take the road to Karbala' which was situated on the banks of the River Euphrates (River Furaat).

Imam Husayn could have fought Hurr and his soldiers and forced his way into Kufa, but it was not Imam Husayn's intention to start any battle.

On 2nd Muharram, 61 A.H., the Imam, his family and his faithful companions arrived in Karbala'. Yazid's armies had already arrived in the area long before the Imam's arrival. It was a huge army consisting of thousands of soldiers.

By the 7th of Muharram, Yazid's army had increased further in number. Now there were 20,000 of Yazid's soldiers surrounding Imam Husayn's 72 men from all comers. They were scattered over miles on the sands of the river bank.

On the 7th of Muharram, Yazid's soldiers were told to guard the bank of the River Euphrates so that Imam Husayn, his family and companions could not take any water.

Heat was intense in the desert and hot winds blew all day. Imam's family and friends suffered without water and food for three days.

On the 10th of Muharram, 61 A.H., the battle took place. One-by-one all the Imam's men were martyred except our 4th Imam 'Ali Zainul Abideen who was very ill at that time and could not take part in the battle.

After the battle was over, Yazid's soldiers set fire to the Imam's tents and looted the camp. They even took the veils away from the Holy ladies. They beat the children and took away all their belongings. They snatched and pulled away Bibi Sakina's earrings and let her little ears bleed for a long, long time.

The Shi'as hold a majlis every day for the twelve days of Muharram. We remember, cry and do matam

for the brave martyrs of Karbala’.

The story of a brave martyr of Karbala’ is recited on each day of the twelve days.

Thanks to Imam Husayn, his family and his faithful friends. Their great sacrifice in Karbala’, saved Islam, our great religion.

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