

The Formal Announcement of Peace

After a long struggle, the understanding between Imam Hasan (as) and Muawiya had been reached on various issues. The Imam (as) had, after the acceptance of the conditions demanded by him, agreed to hand over power to Muawiya for a specified period.

During this period, high powered delegations had been exchanged and signatures from the leaders on both sides on the terms of the agreement had been obtained. Particularly, from the Amir of Syria, a number of firm commitments had been taken, and he had vouched, affirming Almighty God as witness, that he would fully abide by the terms and conditions of the Peace Treaty. Although all the formalities of the treaty had been completed, yet the formal announcement of the treaty was awaited.

After the treaty, Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) instructed Qais bin Sa'd, through a letter, that he should return to Kufa and he himself decided to go back to Kufa along with the rest of the army at Madain. According to the historians, Qais addressed his army after receiving the Imam (as)'s letter.

After analyzing the existing situation, he told the soldiers that they had to decide whether they wanted to continue the fight without the Imam (as) or they would accept the allegiance of a misguided person. Just after his speech, all the soldiers in one voice agreed to a ceasefire, after which he had no hesitation in leaving the northern parts of Iraq, where he had laid a siege against the Syrian army.¹

If this is correct, then it is not difficult to conclude that Qais was personally strictly against giving allegiance to Muawiya. He considered war as the only solution of the problem. However, it seems that he could not fully appreciate the very poor conditions in Iraq and the prevailing dangerous situation, and was carried away by emotions.

Despite his intelligence, bravery, military skills and honesty, he had an element of disagreement with the Central command. Perhaps that was the reason why he was not given the exclusive command of the vanguard unit, which was given to a three member consultative council, under which Ubaidullah bin Abbas was the senior one and Qais was assigned the number two position.

The armies of Syria and Iraq had gathered in strength at Nakhaila, a suburb of Kufa city. After attaining

an armed upper hand, it was very likely that the Amir of Syria would put pressure on the grandson of the Holy Prophet (saws) to give up the caliphate and to accept him as the religious caliph, just like Hazrat Abu Bakr had nominated Hazrat Umar for caliphate.

This was the only way in which his government and its acts would attain legal and constitutional status. The Amir of Syria did not stop there but demanded that Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) should seek forgiveness from Muawiyah for waging war against Syria. He spread rumour among the political circles in Kufa that Imam Hasan (as) had handed over the caliphate to Muawiyah and was himself retiring. [2](#)

The residents of Kufa were already depressed from defeat and they were likely to be adversely affected by such rumours. Although they did not accept these rumours as true, yet they were gripped with anxiety and doubt. However, they had very closely seen the attractive personality of the grandson of the Holy Prophet (saws), his refined manners, his impeccable character, knowledge, piety and political farsightedness.

Apart from these, his valuable services to the cause of Islam were very well known and appreciated by all. Perhaps due to these qualities of the Imam (as) they had earlier chosen him collectively as their caliph despite so many disagreements in Kufa.

Under a difficult situation, they were anxiously waiting for the grandson of the Holy Prophet (saws) to appear personally and to address them publicly to explain his version of the peace, to remove the doubts created in their minds. They did not have to wait long and the Imam (as), after duly praising Almighty God, addressed them from the pulpit thus:

"O men! Doubtless Almighty God guided you through the first of us (the Holy Prophet (saw)) and through the last of us, (i.e. Imam Hasan (as) himself), He has saved you from mass killings. Undoubtedly, the power is for a temporary period and such worldly ranks keep changing. The Merciful God has commanded His prophet that He is not sure whether he would take it as a trial or a source of pleasure for a short while." [3](#)

"O men! for sure a pious person is very intelligent and the transgressor and sinful person is quite foolish. You may go anywhere in the East or West, yet you will find no one except me and my brother Husayn whose grandfather is the Holy Prophet (saws). You are well aware that the Merciful God guided you to the righteous path through our grandfather Hazrat Muhammad (saws) and saved you from going astray by showing you the way of light from darkness and ignorance.

Moreover, He gave you respect from disgrace and increased your small numbers into a large one. Undoubtedly, Muawiyah has tried hard to snatch my right from me. In such a situation, I have kept the welfare of Muslim Ummah in view. (On the other side), you had paid allegiance to me, vowing that you will make peace with whom I make peace and you will wage war against whom I wage war. Now, I have made peace with Muawiyah. My action is for your benefit and it would safeguard you." [4](#)

To explain the stand taken by Imam Hasan (as) about peace, his sermon is very significant and that is why the historians and biographers have repeatedly quoted it, and there is a chain of narrators which leaves no doubt about its authenticity. Though there are so many points in this important sermon which need attention and elaboration, yet it seems appropriate to draw attention to some of the conjectures by a few historians in this regard.

In the history by Tabari and some others, it is mentioned that this sermon was delivered at the instance of 'Umru bin 'Aas. This way 'Umru bin 'Aas wanted to convey to the people that Imam Hasan (as) was unable to give an appropriate talk to the people on the issue. However, after the Imam (as)'s sermon, he felt ashamed. [5](#)

A group of researchers accepts this guess as correct and S.H.M. Jafri is one of them. But Dr. Taha Husayn totally disagreeing writes:

"Hasan (as) had delivered sermons to the people on a number of occasions during the life time of his illustrious father as well as after him. Stammering or any other weakness was not noticed in any of his sermons earlier. Earlier as well as later, the Imam (as) was regarded as a member of the illustrious family, anyone of whose members was never known to hesitate or falter in conversation or address.

Rather this highly revered family was known for its unmatched qualities of eloquence, command over the language and ability to clearly distinguish between the truth and falsehood. No one could match them in this field. So, Imam Hasan (as) addressed the people and nothing better could be said than what he said and no better expression of truthful ideas could be expressed than what he did." [6](#)

Apart from Dr. Taha Husayn, the analysis by Dr. Abdul Aziz Salim in this respect is also very interesting. He writes:

"In both conditions, (whether Hasan (as) himself initiated peace or he considered the war against the Syrians as unhelpful), the decision by Hasan (as) reflects deep reflection and realistic assessment of the given state of affairs. Hasan (as) has compared his action with those of his grandfather because he saved the Arabs from bloodshed while his illustrious grandfather had provided them guidance towards truth from misguidance and infidelity." [7](#)

There is no doubt that every word of this historical sermon of Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) has very deep meaning and significance. We consider it appropriate to refer to a few points for reflection by the readers:

(1) Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) reminded the people that under no circumstances they should ignore the quality of chastity and purity of thought and action of the household of the Holy Prophet (saws) and the great services that they had rendered. The people had been suffering from polytheism and infidelity and had gone astray when the Merciful God showed them the light of truth through the first of the household (the Holy Prophet (saws)).

Likewise, now the lives of the people were in danger and it was quite likely that there would have been mass killings without any aim or purpose and the bloodshed would have been in vain. But Almighty God in His grace saved them through another member of the household of the Holy Prophet (saws), i.e. Imam Hasan (as). This style of eloquence, which is reflected in the speeches of Imam Hasan (as), is unique.

(2) Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) knew that earlier the people had considered Muawiya more clever and cunning than Hazrat 'Ali (as) and likewise they thought that Muawiya was more clever than Imam Hasan (as). The people had thus become convinced that the persons, who acquired wealth and power, whether by hook or crook, were intelligent, while those who acted within the bounds commanded by Almighty God were simple and ignorant.

Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) negated this approach by the people and indicated that wise and intelligent persons were only those who were virtuous and pious bondsmen of Almighty God. It is so because the pious ones do not get involved in sin and disobedience of God for the pleasure of a few days. Thus, they do not get the displeasure of the Creator of the universe who has complete authority over their lives and death.

Therefore, they live with respect in this world and would get ever lasting reward in the hereafter. On the other hand, those who oppress the people, misuse the funds of Baitul Maal, collect wealth through embezzlement or bribery or acquire worldly power by such means, are not clever but really foolish.

They have earned everlasting punishment in exchange for a few days' pleasure and have deprived themselves of the blessings of the Creator of the universe, thus causing great loss to them. If they possessed true intelligence and knowledge, they would not commit such foolishness.

(3) Imam Hasan (as), reflecting the bravery and courage, which he had inherited from his household, made a public declaration that caliphate had been his right and the efforts of the Amir of Syria to snatch it from him amounted to depriving him of his right. However, for the welfare of the Muslim Ummah and to protect the life of Muslims, he had temporarily given up the effort to achieve this right through armed struggle.

This decision of Imam Hasan (as) reflected the Alawi politics. His illustrious father had also postponed his struggle for caliphate to an appropriate time in the interest of the glory of Islam and for the sake of the unity of Muslims. Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) made it clear that the welfare of Muslims was upper most in his mind rather than personal considerations.

On reflecting the words of Imam Al-Mujtaba (as), it would be clear that he did not say that he had handed over the caliphate to Muawiya after his political maneuvering, nor that they should give allegiance to Muawiya, which impression has wrongly been created in some histories. Rather he had stated that he had postponed for some time the steps to recover his right and that he had given the right to rule to Muawiya till his lifetime only.

This point is clear in the initial lines of his sermon where he has stated that the struggle for power continues almost all the time. Therefore, the allegiance to him, which the people had paid at the time of his caliphate, was not affected by the peace treaty.

The people were reminded that under the allegiance they had pledged that they would wage war against whom he waged war and would be bound by peace with whom he made peace. This clearly shows that he had not absolved them of their allegiance to him. Rather he asked his followers not to wage war against Muawiya for a limited period.

If some among the Muslim intelligentsia still insist that Muawiya had become a caliph, then they would have to decide whether caliphate is a religious status or a chair for kingdom or rule which can be had by anyone with the force of power.

After analysing the state of affairs in Iraq from 40 A.H. till the time of peace treaty, it appears that though Muawiya had acquired the power to rule, yet he could not acquire any legal justification for his government which his predecessor caliphs had. The stand of Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) on caliphate and monarchy became very clear when Muawiya retorted during the sermon: "O Hasan! You wanted to become a caliph, but could not become one."

The guardian of caliphate gave such a comprehensive but brief reply to Muawiya which reflected a distinct difference between caliphate and monarchy and this distinction is likely to remain till this world lasts. If the Imam (as) had not shown the courage on that occasion, the Muslims would not have been able to distinguish between caliphate and monarchy till doomsday. No knowledgeable person can deny that a better definition of caliphate had not been given till that time in the whole Muslim world.

The Imam (as) said: "caliph is one who abides by the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (saws) and makes obedience to Allah his way of life. But one, who forms oppression as the basis of his government, suspends the rule of God and chooses the pleasures of this world as be all and end all, then he is not a caliph but a monarch.

He has acquired a kingdom. He would benefit from it for a short while but later he would be the loser. So its pleasures will be lost but the harm will be lasting. It will be, as Almighty God has said: 'I am not sure whether it is a test for you or you have been given a short respite in this world'." [8](#)

This sermon had a deep effect on the people. The religious groups, being affected by Imam Al-Mujtaba (as), refused to call Muawiya a caliph. Instead they called him a "monarch" or king, although they knew that Muawiya did not like it. In this regard, history records the reaction of S'ad bin Abi Waqas, Abu Huraira and other venerable Companions of the Holy Prophet (saws).

The rulers after Amir Muawiya were neither considered the rightful religious caliphs ('Khalifa-e-Rashid') nor were they elected through a consultative council (*shura*), allegiance or other forms of election in practice at the time. Rather those who wielded power used to occupy the chair of monarchy, i.e. might

was right. The fact is that historians learnt to distinguish between caliphate and monarchy from Imam Hasan (as). [9](#)

Only through making this rise and fall in Islamic history as the base, could Maulana Maududi explain in detail the distinction between caliphate and monarchy. His services in this regard are highly commendable. However, it is surprising that he ignored a great person like Imam Hasan (as), who, fearlessly and through his great courage had drawn the line between caliphate and monarchy, and through whom an intellectual like him was able to perform the said service!

Apart from the public, Muawiya was also affected by the sermons of Imam Hasan (as). He expressed his strong reaction to the sermon, which has been recorded by the biographers.

The historians Abul Faraj Isphahani, Ibn. Abi al Hadid M'otazilli and others quote Aboo Ishaque with reference to Sh'obi that on that day they heard Muawiya as saying: "Remember whatever treaty I had made with Hasan bin 'Ali (as), is trampled under my feet. I will never fulfill it." [10](#)

According to the analysis by researchers, while attacking Iraq, the main aim of Muawiya was not just to occupy it but to defeat the Iraqi army and to force Imam Hasan (as) to surrender in his favour. [11](#)

Now that he had not succeeded in his real aim, he was carried away by his passion and uttered the words that were in his heart. He further said:

"By God, I did not wage war against you so that you may say your prayers, keep fast, perform Hajj or give 'zakah'. All this you were already performing. My only aim in waging war against you was that I may rule over you. Almighty God in His grace has given me that opportunity which you do not like." [12](#)

The historians and biographers write that through these words Muawiya made his real aim clear, which was vague till then. He exposed himself by mentioning the real aim of his waging the war. Till then, he had been making the people believe that he was fighting to take revenge for the death of Uthman. During the Jamal and Siffin wars he had been successful in his earlier camouflage.

Though Hazrat 'Ali (as) had replied to the slander through logic and supportive arguments but many simple persons had been carried away under the false slogan of revenge. However, Kufa was witness today that Imam Hasan (as), through his wise policy, planning and great patience, exposed Muawiya's true aim.

As far as the question of one party declining to abide by the peace treaty at the time of the formal announcement of the same, is concerned, it was a clear breach of the firm commitment, which was a bad omen for the residents of Kufa.

They were already afraid of Muawiya. Now they realized that Muawiya had no respect for any Islamic moral standard. However, as far as the question of breaching the terms of the treaty is concerned, it was premature to say that Muawiya had that power, as only the conditions in future would determine the

same.

Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) did not stay for long in Kufa after the formal announcement of the peace treaty. Even some of his devotees objected to peace and he was even called the one who caused 'disgrace to the believers'. Yet, can it be concluded that his peace agreement was a political defeat?

Intelligent persons should keep in view the fact that in every movement there are emotional and non serious persons who are unable to visualize the future due to their limited knowledge and short sighted view. Is it not a fact that such objections had been raised against the Holy Prophet (saws) himself when he was busy in negotiations with the Quraish at Hudaibiya?

The Muslims were quite unhappy about not being able to perform Hajj, and about the peace agreement made by the Holy Prophet (saw). That is why the Companions of the Holy Prophet (saws) were somewhat reluctant in carrying out some of his commands.

Some had even started doubting the very prophethood of the Holy Prophet (saws). History proves that though some Muslims had considered the Peace Treaty at Hudaibiya as a defeat, yet Almighty God declared it as a great victory ('fathe mobin'). [13](#)

Later they realized that often what cannot be achieved through war, can be had through peace and understanding. Before Hudaibiya, till 7 A.H., the total number of Muslims was two thousand while within one year they had reached the figure of ten thousand.

While the grandfather of Imam Hasan (as) had spread his message to the tribes in the Arabian peninsula through words and deed by making peace at Hudaibiya, and had rendered the propaganda by Quraish ineffective, Imam Hasan (as) had, through his statesmanlike policies, saved his supporters, the Muslims in general, and the pious Companions, from bloodshed.

He made the politics and propaganda of Muawiya totally unsuccessful and deprived him of the chance to become a rightful religious caliph. Moreover, he managed to make Muawiya confess that revenge for the blood of Uthman was just an excuse for acquiring power, which had caused the bloodshed of thousands of Muslims.

After the transfer of power, people got a chance to have a close look at Muawiya and the persons near him. We are sure if people understand the philosophy behind the peace at Hudaibiya, they would also learn the philosophy behind the peace of Imam Hasan (as). If Imam Al-Mujtaba (as) had not made this decision at the right time, the blood of thousands of Muslims would have been shed without any gain from the same.

Amir Muawiya would have assumed the title of 'rightly guided caliph' and after that, all his steps and acts would have been considered as legal and according to Islamic law. He could have easily gained the favour of general public by declaring Imam Hasan (as) and his party as war hungry and himself as the

seeker of peace. After that, his policy of changing the Islamic caliphate into the kingdom of Qaiser and Kisra would have been successful without any resistance.

We regret to say that among Muslims, whether Sunnis or Shi'a, intellectuals or ulama, the great achievement of the grandson of the Holy Prophet (saws) has not been fully appreciated. Though these circles regularly observe the sad incident of Karbala each year and remember the great sacrifice of Imam Husayn (as)

Yet they forget that had there been no peace treaty by Imam Hasan (as), Imam Husayn (as) would not have been able to accomplish what he did at Karbala. By inculcating a new spirit in the Islamic movement, Imam Hasan (as) had set the stage for Karbala. This way he is the first architect of Karbala. We will discuss this point in greater detail in the next chapter.

Imam Hasan (as) was returning to Madina, the city of his grandfather, along with the members of his household and brother Imam Husayn (as). A large number of his devotees and Shi'as had assembled to say goodbye to him. They were wailing and requesting their Imam or caliph to stay at Kufa.

They were assuring him that this time the whole of Kufa would be with him and they would not show any weakness towards him. But the Imam (as) turned down their request and asked them to abide by the peace treaty.

Reminding them of his piety and nobility, he instructed them to follow his commands as a religious duty and to consider following him obligatory. After a few more instructions, he continued his journey to Madina.

This was a very sad hour for the people of Kufa when the grandson of the Holy Prophet (saws) was departing from them, as they were realising that due to their own mistakes they could not defend his caliphate and they themselves were responsible for the defeat. While the Imam (as) had just reached Qadisiah, he got a message from Muawiya requesting him to fight against a group of 'Kharjis'. In reply the Imam wrote:

"If I wanted to fight any Muslim, I would prefer to wage war against you. For sure, in the interest of reforming the Muslim Ummah and to protect their life, I have given it up."¹⁴

This reply of the Imam (as) shows that he had not just rejected the caliphate of Muawiya verbally, but in practice as well he would not follow him. He was not hesitant in saying that he had made the decision in favour of peace only for the welfare of the Muslims. Otherwise, in his view, the war would have been fought against Muawiya rather than against the 'Khawarij'. The Imam (as) had inherited this brave and courageous stand against his rival from his illustrious family.

¹. Tabari – 'Tarikh al Tabari', (al Ummum wal Mulk), Beirut, Darul Kutub al Ilmiah 1988, vol 3, p. 166; Ibn. Athir – 'Al Kamil fi al Tarikh, Beirut Dar Ahya al Turas al Arabi, 1989, vol. 2, p.447; Ibn. Atham – 'Al Futuh, Hyderabad: Daira al Maa'rif al Uthmania, 1971, vol. 4, p.160; Dinawari – 'Al Akhbar al Tiwal, Cairo, Dar Ahya al Kutub, 1960, p.218.

- [2.](#) Ibn. Atham – 'Al Futuh', p. 163; Baladhuri – 'Ansab al Ashraf', Beirut, Darul Ta'aruf 1977, vol. 3, p.43; Husayn Dayar Bakri – 'Tarikh al-Khamis', Beirut, Muassasah Shabaan, vol. 2 p.391.
- [3.](#) Masudi – 'Muruj ad Dhahab', Beirut, Darul Fikr, 1989, vol. 3, p.9; Ibn. Kathir – 'Al bidayah wal Nihayah, Beirut, Maktaba al M'arif, 1974, vol.8, p. 17; Husayn Dayar Bakri – 'Tarikh al-Khamis', Beirut, Muassasah Shabaan, vol. 2 p.391; Ibn. Khaldun – 'Tarikh-e-Ibn. Khaldun', Beirut, Muassasah al'Alami, 1971, vol. 2, p. 187; Ibn. Athir – 'Al Kamil fit Tarikh', vol. 2, p.447; Tabari – 'Tarikh al Tabari'. vol. 3, p167; Yaqubi – 'Tarikh al-Yaqubi', Beirut, Dar Sadir, vol.2, p.215; Husayn Muhammad Jafri – 'The Origins and Early Development of Shia Islam', Qum, Ansarian Publications pp.154; Ibn. Atham – 'Al Futuh', p. 163; Ibn. Sabbagh Maliki– 'al Fusul al Muhimmah', Najaf, Maktaba Darul Kutub, p. 145; Ibn. Qutaiba Dinawari – 'Al Imama wal Siyasa', Qum, Intisharat al Razi, 1413 A.H. vol. 1, p.85; Hakim Naishapuri – 'Al Mustadrak' Beirut, Darul M'arifa, (the book 'Marifat-us-Sahaba'), vol.3, p. 175; Abdul Qadir Badran, 'Tahzib Tarikhe Damishq', Beirut, Darul Ahya al Turas al Arabi, 1987, vol 4, p.226–227; Muhib al Tabari – Dhakair al Uqba, Cairo, Maktaba al Qudsi, 1356 A.H., p. 140; Ibn. Khallakan – 'Wafayat al 'ayan', Qum, Manshurat al Razi, 1984, vol. 2, p.66; Ibn. 'Asakir – 'Tarikh-e-Ibn. 'Asakir' (Tarikh-e-Madinate Dam ishq), Mohammd Baqar's research; Al Mahmudi – 'Tarjuma al Imam al Hasan', Beirut, Muassasah Mahmudi, 1980, pp. 187–87; Baladhuri – Al-Ansab al Ashraf, Beirut, Darul Taaruf, vol. 3 p.43; Hasan Kamil al Maltavi – 'Al-Imam al Hasan bin 'Ali', Cairo, Egypt, Ministry of Endowment, 1994, p. 130.
- [4.](#) Same as reference 146
- [5.](#) Tarikh al-Tabari, vol. 3, p. 167; Ibn. Athir – 'Al Kamil Fit Tarikh', vol.2, p.447.
- [6.](#) Taha Husayn – 'Islamiyat, Al Fitnah al Kubra 'Ali-o-Nubuawah', (Islamiyat), Beirut, Dar ul Ilm, 1991, p. 981.
- [7.](#) Abdul Aziz Salim – 'Tarikh al Daulat al Arabia, Iskandaria: Muassasah Shabab al Jame'ah, 1993, vol.2, p.337.
- [8.](#) . Muhib al Tabari – 'Dhakair al 'Uqba', p. 140; Abul Faraj – 'Maqatil al Talibin', Najaf, Maktaba al Haidariya, vol.1, p.47; Muhammad al Baihaqi – 'Al Muhasin wal Masavi, Egypt, Muhammad Amin al Khanji, 1906, p.63; Ibn. Abi al Hadid, 'Sharh al-Nahjul Balaghah', Cairo, Dar Ahya al Kutub, 1963, vol. 16, p.49; Hasan Kamil al Maltavi – 'Al Imam al Hasan bin 'Ali', p. 122; Husayn Muhammad Jafri – 'The Origins and Early Development of Shia Islam', Qum, Ansarian Publications pp. 151–152.
- [9.](#) Syed Mohd. Wakil – 'Al Umayyun bain al Sharq wal Gharb', Beirut, Dar al Shamiah, 1995, vol. 1 p.25; Husayn Muhammad Jafri – 'The Origins and Early Development of Shia Islam', Qum, Ansarian Publications, p. 154.
- [10.](#) Abul Faraj – 'Maqatil al Talibin; Ibn. Abi al Hadid – 'Sharh al-Nahjul Balaghah'.
- [11.](#) Husayn Muhammad Jafri – 'The Origins and Early Development of Shia Islam', Qum, Ansarian Publications p. 134.
- [12.](#) . Ibid.
- [13.](#) Refers to the books on 'Life of the Holy Prophet (saws)'.
[14.](#) Ibn. Athir – 'Al Kamil' vol.2, p.449.

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