

[Home](#) > [The Voice of Human Justice \(Sautu'l 'Adalati'l Insaniyah\)](#) > [Husayn and Yazid](#) > Who was Yazid?

Husayn and Yazid

All those events which Husayn had to go through prove that from the point of view of morality he occupied the highest place of glory and all the events through which Yazid passed are an evidence of the fact that he was at the lowest ebb of ignominy. The tragedy of Karbala is a sufficient proof for it. This event speaks volumes for his stark wickedness.

Yazid was a drunkard. He used to wear silken clothes and played on a tambourine.

Husayn son of Ali and Yazid son of Mu`awiya were the persons who came in the world as perfect specimens of the qualities of the two families viz. the Hashimites and Umayyads. Husayn was a perfect Hashim of his time as Yazid was Abd al-Shams. If the special qualities of a man can be the true picture of the environments in which he is brought up there is no doubt about the fact that Husayn and Yazid were the true models of their families. Husayn represented the Hashimites and Yazid the Umayyads. The only difference was that Husayn was the best specimen of the Hashimite virtues and excellences whereas Yazid was devoid of even the good qualities which were possessed by Bani Umayyah.

Husayn was the son of the Prophet's daughter Fatima and Ali son of Abu Talib. When he was born the Prophet took him in his lap and pronounced `Azan' in his ears so as to infuse his own spirit into the spirit of his grandson, make him a part and parcel of his own being, and to impress upon him that he was born to perform a special mission, and that purpose of life had been fixed for him.

On the seventh day of his birth the Prophet said with great happiness: "I have named this son of mine Husayn".

The child grew up day after day in such a condition that he had in him the soul of his grandfather, the beatings of the heart of his father, and a deep impression of prophethood on his mind. All the virtues and excellences of his forefathers had combined in his person and as he continued to grow up these virtues and qualities of his also continued to become more apparent. Transmission of the qualities of forefathers to their children is a law of nature about which there cannot be any doubt whatsoever. Just as the children inherit the colours, facial appearances, material qualities etc. from their ancestors they also

inherit their characteristic virtues.

Husayn remained under the supervision of his grand- father till the age of seven years. After the Prophet's demise his companions continued to imitate him in the matter of love for Husayn. A special reason for their displaying love for him was that his features very much resembled those of the Prophet. This is borne out by the statements of those persons who had seen the Prophet as well as Husayn.

The great names of the ancestors and their achievements have a great deal to do with the development of their children and the making of their future bright. When the child hears about the achievements of his ancestors from his very early age a picture of theirs is drawn on his brain, and consequently he acquires the qualities of his ancestors. A child naturally inherits the qualities of his forefathers, but his living with them at the same place casts a great influence on them.

Besides the Prophet, Husayn also saw his revered father. He saw his perseverance, steadfastness, justice, sympathy, help for the oppressed and anger for the oppressors as well as good treatment and kindness shown to the enemies. He accompanied his father in the Battles of Camel, Siffin and Nahrawan, and saw his astonishing bravery, and learnt from him the ways of fighting for the sake of goodness, and also knew from him how to sacrifice one's life to protect the oppressed and helpless from tyranny.

Husayn's revered mother was a very tender-hearted and kind lady. On account of this very tender-heartedness she was always grieved to see the hardships to which her father, the Prophet, and his companions were subjected by the Quraysh. She was extremely sad on the day of the Battle of Uhud when many Muslims were killed at the hands of the polytheist Quraysh and their dead bodies were cut to pieces. It was a very depressing scene for her to see her father weeping for his uncle Hamzah.

It is said that after the death of the Prophet, Anas bin Malik went one day to see lady Fatima and requested her to control her grief in the interest of her own health. She said only this reply: "O Anas! How did you tolerate to entrust the pure body of the Prophet to the grave?" Then she burst into tears, and Anas too began to weep. He came back with a heart which was shattered by the grief of Fatima.

Husayn used to see his grief-stricken younger sister Zainab and felt extremely sad for her.

Husayn looked at his mother and sister and then imagined the sufferings and hardships which time had in store for himself, his sister and their descendants. He felt that very soon he and his sister would have to shed tears on the death of their mother and then to mourn the martyrdom of their father, and their descendants would have to face great hardships.

A few days later Husayn heard his mother making the following recommendations to his sister Zainab: "Do not leave Hasan and Husayn. Take complete care of them. After me perform the duties of their mother".

His mother breathed her last after three months of the death of her father. Husayn was standing by her side and saying goodbye to her. At times he glanced at his sister who was stunned with grief. Then he looked at his father and brother who were crying bitterly on the passing away of lady Fatima.

Husayn spent his childhood in such an atmosphere of sorrow and grief. When he grew up he saw the people contending with, and blocking the way of his revered father at every step. The attitude of the mother of the faithful Ayesha and her supporters made him all the more sad. He also saw the treachery committed by Mu`awiya, Amr bin Aas, and their henchmen with his father. This increased his grief all the more and he felt that unless evil was suppressed with that bravery and force with which his father endeavoured to suppress it, life would be meaningless.

The most grievous day was that on which the hand of a criminal and a sinner wounded the forehead of his illustrious father when he was offering his prayers in the Masjid Kufa. Imam Ali could not survive this injury and breathed his last after two days. Thus the impediment in the path of the oppressors and tyrants to establish their authority was removed.

After some time his brother Hasan met martyrdom due to poisoning. And his grief and wonder knew no bounds when he saw that Bani Umayyah and their supporters were shooting arrows on the funeral bier of his brother. He also came to know that Mu`awiya had ordered that Husayn's father and brother should be abused from the pulpits. In fact he heard Mu`awiya doing so himself. In short new causes for his grief continued to appear. These were the very causes which culminated in the tragedy of Karbala—the place where the most heinous crime was committed with the co-operation of mean soldiers of Yazid and his wicked officers. They committed atrocities on Husayn and a small group of his companions and members of his family which one shudders to imagine.

This was how Husayn was reared from the point of view of inheritance and training and these were the causes of his grief which he had to experience from the very time of his birth. As he had observed the sufferings of his grandfather, father and mother, grief and sorrow were ingrained in his nature.

It was on account of the qualities inherited and acquired by Husayn that he used to say: Forbearance is a ladder, fidelity is manliness, pride is folly and weakness and association with the wicked is something which makes one doubt and waver.

Try to acquire that thing which you deserve. It is humiliation and abasement to live with the oppressors. Truth is dignity and falsehood is helplessness.

Who was Yazid?

Yazid was a man who had inherited all the bad qualities of the Umayyad Family. His disposition, beliefs, way of thinking and the manner of looking at various matters were exactly the same as those of Bani Umayyah in general. Besides the evils inherited by him from his ancestors he had other mischievous

tendencies and satanic qualities as well. He did not possess the apparent qualities of his father which are considered to be his (i.e. Mu`awiya's) merits although they were only tools to strengthen his rule. In fact it may be said that whereas all the bad qualities of his family had combined in him he did not at all possess any good quality.

There has been no other reveller amongst Bani Umayyah like Yazid and it was on account of his being wildly festive that he lost his life. It is said that one day, while mounted on a horse, he was trying to outpace a monkey. During this competition, however, he fell down from the horse and died. His contemporaries have drawn a very precise and concise picture of his in these words: "He was a drunkard. He used to wear silken clothes and played on a tambourine".

If Husayn proved to be a model of virtue and good morals, Yazid proved to be the worst specimen of his ancestral vices. If Husayn was sympathetic towards others as magnanimous persons usually are, Yazid had no human sentiments and was absolutely shameless.

Yazid had been brought up in a family which considered Islam to be a political movement. According to Bani Umayyah the prophethood of the Prophet was only a pretext to acquire power and authority and Islam meant transfer of power from the hands of Bani Umayyah to the hands of Bani Hashim. Yazid considered his countrymen to be only an army whose duty it was to remain faithful to the ruler. In his eyes the object of the existence of his countrymen was that they should pay land revenue and taxes and increase the wealth of the treasury which was to be spent according to the sweet will of the ruler.

As Yazid was born and brought up in such a family it was necessary that he, too, should adopt the ways which were adopted by his forefathers and other members of his family during the age of ignorance and after the advent of Islam. Furthermore, he was brought up in the house of a father who spent large sums of money of the public treasury at his pleasure. When wealth and ignorance are combined the result can be nothing else except profligacy and debauchery.

It was for this reason that like every ignorant person who possesses wealth Yazid was a drunkard and was fond of a life of pleasure and played with dogs. As soon as he ascended the throne he began spending money lavishly to lead a life of debauchery and sensual pleasure. He gave enormous sums to his associates, slaves, slave-girls, singers etc. He had a large number of dogs who slept by his side and were made to wear ornaments of gold and silver and silken dresses, while the poor people, from whom taxes were realized under coercion, starved and suffered hardships. He ruled for three and a half years only but during this short period he combined in him all the disgrace, absurdity and impudence which were the result of Umayyad politics.

Besides the above-mentioned revelry and debauchery which Yazid inherited from his ancestors he also committed other most heinous crimes. During the first year of his reign he murdered Imam Husayn and his companions and made the people of his family captives. During the second year he plundered Madina without caring in the least for its sanctity. He permitted his soldiers to do whatever they liked with

the people of the city for a period of three days. Consequently eleven thousand persons including seven hundred companions of the Prophet from amongst the Muhajirs and Ansar were killed and the modesty of more than one thousand virgins was outraged.

It was the natural disposition of Imam Husayn that he should fight against injustice and oppression following the example set by his grandfather and father. He used to say: "It is humiliation and disgrace to live with the oppressors". On the contrary Yazid always bestowed honours on cruel and wicked persons and gave them large presents for committing heinous crimes. He also asked others to respect and honour such persons. For example, one day when he was engaged in feasting and drinking along with his friends and Ubaidullah Ibn Zaid, the chief actor of the tragedy of Karbala, was sitting on his right hand side he addressed the cup-bearer as under:

"Give me such a wine that it should make my heart cool. Then give the same wine to Ibn Ziad who is my confidant and trustee and the source of my acquiring war booty and winning the battles".

(This incident took place only a few days after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn).

The honouring of Ibn Ziad by Yazid resembles the honouring of the greatest tyrant and criminal, Hajjaj.

In short if during the time of Mu`awiya 'divine army' consisted of poisoned honey the 'divine army' during the days of Yazid was only poison without the admixture of honey. During the reign of Yazid the Umayyad party-spirit of the days of ignorance was fully revived. None of the events of history can produce a man more ignorable than Yazid – the same Yazid who was the author of the tragedy of Karbala. And similarly none of the events of history can produce a person who should possess as lofty a character as Husayn – the same Husayn who was the martyr of Karbala.

The pages relating to Yazid are absolutely black whereas those relating to Husayn are replete with dignity and honour. On the one side there were the trade and chiefship of Umayyah and his slaves and executioners; and on the other side there were the lofty character and bravery of the Family of Abu Talib and their free and zealous persons and martyrs in the path of truth and justice.

Logic and reasoning are not so successful to prove a reality as are the events which are related to it. As events contain conclusive arguments within themselves there is no doubt about the fact that all those events which Husayn had to go through prove that from the point of view of moral character he occupied the loftiest rank; all the events through which Yazid passed are an evidence of the fact that he was at the lowest layer of degradation. The tragedy of Karbala is a sufficient proof for this fact. This event speaks volumes for, and shall always be pointing to the most noble character of Husayn, and the wickedness of the vilest of the vile Yazid.

Before the tragedy of Karbala there occurred another event, in which there was on one side Husayn the model of sincerity and human sympathy, and on the other there was Yazid who was an embodiment of debauchery and licentiousness. This event, besides bringing to light the respective characters of Husayn and Yazid, also reminds one of the pact made by Bani Hashim, which was called '*Hilfal-Fuzul*'. This

pact was made by them with the co-operation of some Arab tribes. One of its items purported to say that the signatories of the pact would support the oppressed, and realize their rights from the oppressors, and would restrain the powerful persons from doing injustice to the weak and helpless. The ancestors of Yazid had opposed this pact and those of Husayn had lent it whole-hearted support.

Of course, one character of this event is Husayn and the other is Yazid. Yazid son of Mu`awiya came to know about the beauty of Urainab daughter of Ishaq who was the wife of the Qurayshite Abdullah bin Salam. Urainab was the most beautiful and accomplished woman of her time and possessed enormous wealth. Yazid fell in love with her without having seen her. He lost all patience and mentioned the matter to Mu`awiya's favourite slave named Rafiq. The slave informed Mu`awiya about this love and told him that his son was very keen to marry Urainab.

Mu`awiya called Yazid and enquired from him about the matter. Yazid admitted that whatever Mu`awiya had been told was correct. Mu`awiya said: "Be calm and patient. Something will be done in this behalf". Yazid said: It is no use consoling me now because the matter is already finished. She has already been married. Mu`awiya said: My dear son! Keep the secret to yourself, because if it is divulged it will do you no good. God completes what He ordains and what has already happened cannot be helped.

Mu`awiya began thinking of solving the problem and meeting the wish of Yazid to marry Urainab. Abdullah son of Salam, the husband of Urainab was at that time the Governor of Iraq. Mu`awiya wrote a letter to him saying: "I have an urgent business with you. Please come and see me as early as possible. The matter is beneficial to you"

On receiving Mu`awiya's letter Abdullah proceeded to Syria at once and met Mu`awiya. The latter received him with great honour and respect. At that time Abu Darda and Abu Huraira, two companions of the Prophet were also available in Damascus. Mu`awiya called for them and said to them: "Such and such daughter of mine is now of age and I am anxious to give away her hand in marriage. I think Abdullah son of Salam is a good man and I wish that she may marry him".

Both of them praised Mu`awiya for his intelligence and devoutness and said that whatever he had thought of was absolutely proper.

Mu`awiya said to them: "Both of you should meet Abdullah and mention the matter to him and find out his opinion about it. Although I have authorised my daughter to marry a man of her choice, but I am sure that she will like Abdullah bin Salam and will not refuse to marry him"

Abu Darda and Abu Huraira went to see Abdullah. In the meantime Mu`awiya went into his palace and said to his daughter: "Dear daughter! Just hear what I have to say. When Abu Darda and Abu Huraira come to you and tell you that I want to get you married to Abdullah bin Salam, you should say: "Of course, Abdullah is a good man and a near relative and of equal status with us. However, he has already married Urainab daughter of Ishaq and I am afraid that if I marry him I may also become jealous of her like all other women. If, in that event, I say something unbecoming about Abdullah I am afraid that

I may invite the wrath of God by doing so. However, if Abdullah divorces Urainab I am agreeable to marry him”.

When Abu Darda and Abu Huraira conveyed the message of Mu`awiya to Abdullah bin Salam he was overjoyed and told them to inform Mu`awiya that the proposal was acceptable to him. When they informed Mu`awiya of the developments he said to them: “As I have already told you I would like this marriage. However, I have authorised my daughter to marry a man of her own choice. You should, therefore, go to her and ask her whether she is ready to marry Abdullah bin Salam”.

When they approached the girl she gave them the same reply which Mu`awiya had taught her to give. They then conveyed her reply to Abdullah.

When Abdullah son of Salam came to know that it was not possible to marry Mu`awiya's daughter unless he divorced his wife he was overpowered by avarice and divorced Urainab. He said to Abu Darda and Abu Huraira: “Bear witness to the fact that I have divorced Urainab. You should inform Mu`awiya about this and also convey my proposal to him”.

When they came to Mu`awiya and told him what had happened he said: “Oh! What has Abdullah done? Why has he divorced his wife? He should not have been so hasty. Had he waited for a few days I might have arranged his marriage with my daughter without allowing things to come to such a pass. Anyhow, you should go now and ask my daughter whether she is agreeable to this marriage”.

Abu Darda and Abu Huraira approached Mu`awiya's daughter once again and told her that Abdullah had divorced his wife. They also stated that Abdullah was a very noble-minded and competent person and enquired from her whether she was prepared to marry him.

Mu`awiya's daughter replied: “Abdullah no doubt enjoys a high position amongst the Quraysh. However, as you are aware marriage is not something trivial so that one may agree to it without seriously pondering over the matter. It is a contract for one's whole life. You gentlemen may, therefore go now. I shall think over the matter and give you a reply later”.

Both of them blessed her and departed. They then went to Abdullah bin Salam and informed him about what the girl had said. Abdullah said: “All right. Let us wait. If it is not settled today, it will be settled tomorrow”.

It was the talk of the town that Abdullah bin Salam had divorced his wife and had proposed to Mu`awiya's daughter. As all were aware of the cunning of Mu`awiya and the loose character of Yazid they blamed and censured Abdullah for having divorced his wife without first winning the consent of Mu`awiya's daughter.

After a few days Abdullah sent Abu Darda and Abu Huraira again to the daughter of Mu`awiya. They advised her to give a final reply whereupon she said: “I am sure God has decided well for me, because

He does not forsake one who relies upon Him. I have pondered over the matter and have come to the conclusion that my marrying Abdullah bin Salam will not be a successful one. I have also consulted my well-wishers in the matter. Some of them have approved the marriage but others have opposed it”.

When Abdullah came to know about the reply which had been given by Mu`awiya's daughter he became sure that he had been duped. This grieved him very much. The news spread was the talk of the town. The people blamed Mu`awiya for having defrauded Abdullah and making him divorce his wife so that she might later marry Yazid.

Mu`awiya was successful at the first stage of his scheme to fulfil the desire of his son but eventually the divine will frustrated his program. His plan failed owing to the interference by Husayn who had grown up on the pattern of life of his illustrious father. Helping the oppressed had become his second nature.

When the waiting period (Idda) of Urainab expired Mu`awiya sent Abu Darda to her to convey to her proposal for marriage on behalf of Yazid. Abu Darda left Damascus and reached Kufa. It so happened that Husayn son of Ali was also in Kufa at that time. Abu Darda considered it proper to pay his respects to the son of the Prophet in the first instance. He, therefore, presented himself before the Imam. Imam Husayn enquired from him the reason for his visiting Kufa.

Abu Darda informed him that he had been sent by Mu`awiya to propose to Urainab daughter of Ishaq on behalf of his son Yazid. He then related to the Imam in detail the events which had already taken place. Imam Husayn said: “I also thought that Urainab would marry some other person and intended to propose to her after her “Idda” ended. Now that you have arrived here it will be better if you convey my proposal to her. She may choose whomsoever she likes. However, I am prepared to give her dower equal to that which Yazid has promised her”

Abu Darda promised to convey the Imam's message to Urainab. Then he took leave of Imam Husayn and reached her house. He said to her: “Madam! It was destined that Abdullah son of Salam should divorce you. You are not going to be a loser on this account. Yazid son of Mu`awiya and Husayn son of Ali wish to marry you. Both of them have conveyed their proposals to you through me. You may choose whomever you like”.

Urainab kept quiet for some time and then said: “If some other person had brought these two proposals to me I would have called you for consultation and would have acted according to your suggestion. Now that you yourself have brought these proposals I leave the final decision to you”.

Abu Darda replied: “It was my duty to convey the proposals to you, but you are yourself the best judge in the matter”. Urainab said: “No; that is not so. I am your niece and cannot act in this matter without your advice”.

When Abu Darda saw that she was bent upon obtaining his opinion he said: “I feel that the son of the Prophet is a better choice”. Urainab said: “I agree with you. Also I like him”.

Imam Husayn then married Urainab and paid her the stipulated amount of dower.

When Mu`awiya came to know what had happened he was very angry and abused Abu Darda. Then he said to himself: "Abu Darda has not been at fault. It was my own mistake. If a person entrusts such a difficult task to a simpleton he must fail".

At the time of his departure for Damascus Abdullah bin Salam had entrusted a large sum of money to Urainab. Later when he divorced her and Mu`awiya's daughter also refused to marry him it became known to the people that Abdullah had been deceived by Mu`awiya and made to divorce his wife. This was a matter of disgrace for Mu`awiya and he held Abdullah responsible for it. He, therefore, dismissed him from service and stopped his stipend. Abdullah became penniless. He, therefore, returned to Iraq with the hope that he might get back from Urainab the money which he had left with her. He was, however, afraid that she might decline to return the money on account of his misbehaviour and for his divorcing her without a just cause.

After his return to Iraq he met Imam Husayn and said: "As you must be aware I was duped and made to divorce Urainab. While leaving for Damascus I left some money with her as a trust".

Then he praised Urainab much and said: "I shall be grateful if you speak to her and ask her to return that money to me. It is possible that with that amount in hand I may be saved from indigence".

Imam Husayn went to Urainab and said: "Abdullah bin Salam came to see me. He praised you very much for your honesty which pleased me much. He also told me that he entrusted some money to you at the time of his departure for Damascus. It will be only proper that you should return that money to him because I think that what he has stated is correct".

Urainab replied: "It is true that he left some bags with me, but I don't know what they contain. They are still lying sealed, as they were. I shall bring them to you and you may return the same to him".

Imam Husayn praised Urainab on hearing this and said: "Will it not be better if I call him here so that you may return the bags to him yourself?".

Then he met Abdullah bin Salam and said to him:

I have conveyed your message to Urainab. She admits your having left some bags with her; they are still lying sealed, as they were. It will be better if you come to Urainab and take back the bags from her".

Abdullah felt very much ashamed and said: "I would request you to make arrangements for the return of money to me". (i.e. I feel ashamed to face Urainab). Imam Husayn replied: "No. That cannot be. You should take back the money from her in the same manner in which you gave it to her".

He, therefore, brought Abdullah to his house and then said to Urainab: "Abdullah son of Salam has come and demands the things which he entrusted to you. Return the same to him in the same manner in which you took them from him".

Urainab brought the bags and placing them outside the curtain said to him: "Here it is what you entrusted to me". Abdullah thanked Urainab and praised her for her honesty. Imam Husayn then left the place leaving them alone. Abdullah broke the seal of the bag, took out some dinars from it and presented them to her requesting her to accept the same from him. Thereupon tears trickled from their eyes and they began to cry loudly. Imam Husayn heard the sound of their crying. He then re-entered the room and said with great kindness: "Just hear me. I call God to witness that I have divorced Urainab just now. I call God to witness that I did not marry her for the sake of her beauty or wealth. What I had desired was that it might become lawful for her to re-marry her first husband.

Thus Urainab became the wife of Abdullah bin Salam once again and Mu`awiya's scheme failed. After re-marrying Urainab Abdullah said to her: "You should return the amount of dower which Imam gave you".

She brought the money and gave it to Abdullah to give it to the Imam. However, Imam Husayn declined to accept the money and said: "The spiritual reward which I shall get in the Hereafter for this good deed is much better than worldly wealth".

The Hashimite Ali son of Abu Talib said: "I swear by God that I have not accumulated a treasure from your world like others and have not collected wealth and property. I have not used any dress other than this worn out cloak. If I had desired I could have eaten honey and wheat and could also wear silken dress. However, it is impossible that passions may overpower me and greed may make me eat dainty food. It is possible that there may be a person in the Hijaz and Yamama who may not hope for even one morsel of food and may not have eaten his fill throughout his life. Should I satiate myself with food and sleep a sound sleep when there may be around me many persons who may be starving? Should I be the Commander of the Faithful only in name and should not share the difficulties and sorrows of the people?

He wrote to the Governor of Ahwaz: "I swear by God that if I come to know that you have misappropriated anything big or small which belongs to the Muslims I shall award you such a severe punishment as will make you indigent, burdened and disgraced".

On the contrary Mu`awiya son of Abu Sufyan used to say: "The earth belongs to God and I am His caliph. I may take whatever I like out of the property of God and am also entitled to what I leave".

Mu`awiya, Yazid, Marwan son of Hakam and other Umayyad rulers spent public money on their supporters and friends in order to strengthen their government and perpetuate their authority. They cut off the heads of the people. They had an army of honey mixed with poison and also of poison without honey. Both the parties i.e. Ali and his descendants as well as Mu`awiya, Yazid and other Bani Umayyah had their respective supporters.

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