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Husayn takes charge of the Imam

Before breathing his last, Hasan handed the charge of the Imam to his brother Husayn. Husayn was now the Third Imam, the Vicegerent of God on earth, in the place of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

The world was now without the Apostle of God. Fatimah the Holy Lady of Light had been martyred. Ali and Hasan had also left the world. Husayn was left alone in an atmosphere totally hostile, for Mu'awiyah had successfully purchased the public support to execute his plan of placing Yazid on the throne of the Caliphate, to perpetuate the rule of the Muslim Empire in his family and thus to start the Umayyid dynasty of the Caliphs. All possible efforts to bring the people and keep them under the complete control of the throne were employed. Corruption and godlessness ruled the destiny of the people.

As Ali had done during the reigns of the first three Caliphs and Hasan after Mu'awiyah's usurping the paramount power, Husayn also following the footsteps of his father and brother, had retired into seclusion in Madina. Husayn's main concern was supplication to the Lord and acting as the heavenly torch of the Divine Light of guidance towards God and godliness.

Husayn was now the godly commissioned guardian of the Holy Qur'an, its teachings and its correct practice. He was the Vicegerent of the Lord holding the Kingdom of God on earth. It is surely ridiculous even to imagine Husayn's ever thinking of, or aspiring for, any temporal power or authority, when he already held the *Imamat* divinely assigned to the House of the Holy Prophet and as such was God's Deputy on earth. He had nothing to do with the politics of the state or the political affairs of the people.

Husayn had already been informed of every detail of the divine assignment to him and he knew every step of the march of his life up to its end. The Holy Prophet had already informed Husayn of all that was in store for him to meet, and when and where each event will take place. It was only with the knowledge of the lot to befall Husayn, his father Ali had desired to have a son like 'Abbas. It was only in view of the great task of re-establishing Islam by Husayn with the great sacrifice, i.e., the '*Zibhe Azeem*', the Holy Prophet had said: '*Husayn is of me and I am of Husayn.*' Now Husayn was acting like Jesus, resigned to the will of the Lord and waiting for the hour to fulfil his covenant with the Lord to save His religion Islam

and to secure His Final Word to man, the Holy Qur'an, for ever.

Husayn passed a quiet life of supplication, discharging the duties of the Imam in the place of his Grandfather the Holy Prophet.

The Ruling Power and the Ahlul Bayt

There is one thing about the holy members of the House of the Holy Prophet which needs mention here, that no ruling power or any monarchical pomp, power or glory could ever create the least impression on the godly minds of these holy ones. No threat or terror could ever create the least awe in them to subjugate their godly inclinations and their attitude to this life. Neither Ali could be subjected by the first three Caliphs nor as Hasan in the least impressed by the awe-striking threats or the pomp, power and the monarchical glory of Mu'awiyah.

Husayn, in this regard was bolder still, for whenever Mu'awiyah's atrocities affected the human rights or the interest of the safety and the security of life and the integrity of the people, Husayn never in the least hesitated in reprimanding Mu'awiyah. Whenever Husayn heard of any godly soul particularly of the devotees of the House of the Holy Prophet suffering any unprovoked aggression, he was moved to tears for the helpless souls, and when Hajr bin Adi al-Kandi was mercilessly killed, Husayn did not spare admonishing and condemning Mu'awiyah through open, written communications from him, warning him against the wrath, of God.

A Wonderful Act of Pure Godliness

Mu'awiyah governor of Iraq, Abdullah's wife Zainab was a pious lady of noted beauty. The exaggerated accounts of the beauty of the good lady had reached even Damascus. Yazid the son of Mu'awiyah heard it and at once his voluptuous mind naturalised in licentiousness determined to somehow own the wife of Abdullah for his own. All possible ways and means of deceit and temptations to induce Abdullah to divorce his wife went in vain Mu'awiyah to please his son thought of a very crafty device. Abdullah was at once summoned to the capital.

When Abdullah came to Damascus, he was received with unusual and extraordinary honours and regards and was housed in a palatial abode luxuriously furnished particularly for him. On the third day of his arrival Abdullah was offered to wed Mu'awiyah's daughter, to which Abdullah resented but the offer was also with the threat of losing his position as well as his life against any refusal. Poor Abdullah was forced to accept the offer. The next day of his acceptance, Abdullah was asked to divorce Zainab, saying that the daughter of the Ruler, a princess could not have any rival to her bed. Abdullah was forced to write a letter of divorce to Zainab. When Abdullah had executed the divorce, the very next day after it; he was not given an interview with Mu'awiyah, saying that the offer to wed his daughter was only an offer and had been withdrawn.

The letter of divorce was sent to Zainab through a special messenger with Yazid's offer to wed her, Zainab was then at Madina when Abu Darda the messenger from Mu'awiyah arrived there.

God is always there to protect the interest of the righteous ones when they are unjustly aggressed by any tyrant. Abu Darda before going to Zainab, went first to pay his regard to Husayn the Holy Imam and intimated to him the object of his visit to Madina. Husayn hearing the painful story, told Abu Darda to convey his own (Husayn's) offer to Zainab along with that of Yazid's. Zainab receiving the letter of her divorce began to sob. When the offers of Yazid and Husayn were conveyed to her she readily preferred the Holy Imam, and got herself wedded to him.

When the disappointing story was conveyed to Mu'awiyah and Yazid, it enraged both the father and the son. Abdullah was dismissed from the governorship and all his property in Iraq and elsewhere was confiscated and he was rendered a destitute. Poor Abdullah having lost his wife, his post, and all his properties, did not know what to do, and at last he walked all the way from Iraq to Madina to recover from Zainab the money he had left with her. Reaching Madina he went to the residence of the Holy Imam. Now Zainab could talk to Abdullah only from behind the screen; neither could he see her nor could she look at him. Both stood quietly shedding tears, when Husayn suddenly appeared and removed the screen from between them saying:

“Abdullah! God is my witness, not a glance of mine has fallen on thy wife. Zainab is still thy wife as was she before, for the divorce under compulsion was no divorce and my wedding her was no wedding. I wedded her just to protect her and restore her unto thee. Take her with thee and go happy.”

Both, Abdullah and Zainab were stunned with tears of joy in their eyes and returned home praising the Holy Imam and cursing those who had wickedly devised to separate them.

The Situation That Demanded another 'Muhammad' To Rescue the Correct Faith

It was the Seventh Century A.D., Europe was still a wilderness. Rome and Greece were still pagan, the christian creed emanated from the welding of the monastic christianity with the pagan cult of Rome, effected by King Constantine of Rome, after about 300 years after the departure of Jesus was still ignorant of the elementary knowledge about the world. Its knowledge even about the earth was childish for even centuries later it had yet to pelt stones on Columbus when he told them that the earth was round. This was the state of Europe when Islam had already preached the truth about the Universe as a whole; the truth which even to this day is the highest and the modern scientists with all their claims of wonderful advancement and amazing discoveries have yet to arrive at the Islamic disclosures already made through the Holy Qur'an.

America was yet to be discovered and it was the part of the earth unknown to man.

Africa was called the Dark Continent. Man there had yet to learn the necessity to cover its body and was a nude.

India was a country with petty princes ruling small states drowned in idolatry and rituals extending to human sacrifice.

China was led by the impracticable and emotional creed of Buddhism; of the total renunciation of the earthly life which even the people claiming to be Buddhist by creed, could not as a whole practise.

The only hope lay in the most practicable and the most reasonable Faith, Islam and its practice, but, with the alienation of the Ahlul Bayt from the paramount authority over the affairs of the people, started the corruption in the faith and with the Umayyids on the throne, began the ever progressive adulteration of the Faith and the unwanted innovations in its practice.

The only hope of the world getting on the right track was in Islam, but with Yazid on the throne declaring disbelief in the bonafide of the apostleship of the Holy Prophet and the Holy Qur'an being the revealed Word of God, all hopes of the redemption of humanity from the abyss of material degradation and the lack of the truth about the real Creator of the Universe and the position and the commitment of man in it, were at stake.

In short, the same atmosphere of darkness was once again, impending to shroud the world which prevailed half a century ago and which had demanded the advent of the Holy Prophet. But no apostle was yet to come, for the final code of the necessary knowledge and discipline for man on earth had been given in the Holy Qur'an. However, the situation demanded one Like Muhammad to brave the forces of falsehood and re-establish the Truth once again so that never may it again be shaken or disturbed.

When no apostle was to come, the only one to play the role of an apostle was Husayn, the Imam of the age, who was in the place of the Apostle, the Vicegerent of God on earth. Only in view of the unique position of his grandson Husayn, and the duty identical with his own, which Husayn was destined to discharge, that the Holy Prophet had said:

"Husayn is of me and I am of Husayn."

It is for this occasion of the imperative demand for the rescue of the True Faith that the All-Knowing Lord had reserved the '*Zibhe Azeem*.'

Letters inviting Husayn to handle the situation began to pour in from all parts of the country, particularly from Kufa, imploring Husayn to proceed to guide the people. There were promises from the people, saying that strong armies were waiting to act under his command. But the invitations contained the taint of political aim and territorial ambition and Husayn was not for it at all. He knew the Hour was getting nigh and waited for a call pure and plain exclusively for God and godliness.

Husayn was fully conscious of the heavenly object of his very advent in the world being nothing but to

meet this situation and to rescue Islam, God's revealed faith, to elevate mankind to the glorious heights of the heavenly bliss. Husayn knew the godly task of the divine assignment to him. He lived all these days in waiting for the hour to act as per his commitment to the Lord. He also knew when to respond to the call from the people.

If Husayn had any desire to gain any temporal power, the hundreds, rather thousands, of the letters with the strongest promises and assurances from the people to march under his command, were more than sufficient to stimulate an ambitious mind. Like his father he hated the world as a rotten bone of a leper's corpse in the mouth of a dog.

If Husayn had taken any initiative to act of his own accord at the invitations from the people, with the assurance of the armies ready to act under his command, the sincerity or the purity of his purpose would have been marred by his intention of getting misunderstood by the world and doubted by the general public attributing to it selfishness and ambition to gain the political power for himself. He waited for a call from the situation purely in the name of God for the godly cause of saving the faith one day which he knew, was sure to come from the people.

Husayn prophesies His Son's Martyrdom

Husayn's second son of Ali (who after the tragedy of Karbala became known as Ali al-Akbar) resembled the Holy Prophet Muhammad so much in all his physical features that people from distant places, desirous of having again a view of the departed Apostle of God, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, visited Madina to have a look at Ali e-Akbar. It is reported that once a party of such visitors had come to Madina from Egypt and having seen Ali al-Akbar were amazed at the wonderful beauty of the young Ali and his remarkable resemblance to the Holy Prophet. Husayn, the Holy Imam asked them as to how much they would like to have a son like his Ali, they submitted: *“O’ son of the Holy Prophet, we as the humble beings and sinners to have such a great blessing from God?”*

Husayn asked as to how much they would value it if they were blessed by God with such a handsome son.

They submitted: *“O’ son of the Holy Prophet, if we get such a gift from God, we will not allow the child to walk on the ground. We would prefer a lance piercing our eyes instead of any thorn pricking his foot.”*

Husayn said:

“Know ye all that when this very same handsome son of mine will be in the prime of his youth in the eighteenth year of his age, I will offer him in the way of the Lord at Karbala, myself witnessing his beautiful breast pierced with a lance.”

The people could not control shedding tears.

The Call from the Governor

In 60 A.H., it was night when the news of the death of Mu'awiyah was conveyed to Valid the Governor of Madina on behalf of Yazid the son of Mu'awiyah who had succeeded as the Caliph at Damascus. Besides the intimation about the death of Mu'awiyah, the letter contained orders to Valid to demand Baith, i.e., allegiance particularly from Husayn and if Husayn refuses to pay it, to cut off his head and send it to Yazid, at Damascus. On receipt of the letter from Yazid, Valid immediately called his servant and sent word inviting Husayn, the Holy Imam, to visit him. It was night and Husayn was in the Mosque when Valid's servant came to him with the message inviting Husayn to the Government House. The moment Husayn heard of the call from the Governor, he suddenly exclaimed that Mu'awiyah had died.

In reply to the call Husayn sent word to the Governor Valid saying, it was too late and he was in the Mosque and he will visit him the next morning.

Husayn returned home with the news to his family about the Invitation he had from the Governor. The first to get worried were his sisters Zainab and Umm Kulthoom. Zainab extremely worried immediately asked Husayn: –

“What has the Governor to do with us, Brother?”

Husayn replied:

“The will of the Lord is being done sister dear! But worry not now, for the day of worry for thee is yet to come!”

The next day when Husayn prepared to go to the Governor, the Hashimites youth and particularly 'Abbas, submitted to the Holy Imam saying:

“Master! We will accompany thee fully prepared with our swords to meet any deceitful eventuality; never will we allow thee to go alone to the crafty servants of the crafty ruler.”

Husayn said:

“Brethren! I fully appreciate your offer but the Governor has invited only me and it behoves not me to take others with me uninvited.”

The most worried sister of Husayn, Zainab implored saying:

“Brother dear! I will not allow thee to go alone, take these men with thee. I will send my sons though young to accompany thee. Take 'Abbas with thee Brother.”

Husayn at last agreed but reaching the entrance of the Governor's house, he told the Hashimites to stay at the door watchful and if they hear Husayn talking unusually aloud they may get in to him.

As Husayn entered the court, it was customary in those days that when a dignitary visited another dignitary, a slave of his visitor always accompanied him. After entering the court, Husayn remembered that he had not brought any one with him, turned round and found 'Abbas standing behind him with folded hands, like a slave. Husayn said, 'Abbas! I had told thee to be out. 'Abbas immediately replied: 'Master! Leave thou, thy shoes, 'Abbas will take them and depart and return when thou needest them. Valid stood erect in regard for the Holy Imam and with all respect and regard offered him the seat besides him and read out the letter he had received from Yazid and when he had reached the matter asking him to send the severed head of Husayn, if Husayn refuses to pay allegiance, Valid gave the letter to Husayn to himself read the passage. Husayn read it and smiled and said:

“O’ Valid invite the Muslims of Madina tomorrow and ask them if they say that I should pay allegiance to Yazid, let us then decide.”

Valid readily accepted the Holy Imam's reply but Marwan the old enemy of Islam who was expelled by the Holy Prophet out of Madina, seated there, addressing Valid said:

“Let not Husayn go out of thy grip now, lest the fox is out of the four walls of thy court thou wilt not approach the dust behind it. Cut off his head now and here let not this unique opportunity goes for thou wilt never get it again.”

When Marwan uttered the above insulting words Husayn stood up to depart from the Governor and hearing the insulting words of Marwan, Husayn the son of Ali the Lion of God put his hand on his sword and exclaimed aloud:

“O’ enemy of God! Thou or this man (Valid) to touch my head?”

Marwan immediately got up and ran away and the Hashimite youths who stood restless and anxious, hearing the voice of the Holy Imam, rushed into the court with drawn swords and the first of them all was 'Abbas. Husayn immediately commanded restraint and had not Husayn controlled the situation, the matter would have been settled then and there, which knew no bounds, and brought all of the Hashimites back home.

Husayn decides to leave Madina

Husayn decided to leave Madina. Learning about the decision of the Holy Imam, people in groups approached him asking the reason for his decision to leave the holy city. Husayn said that his refusal to pay 'Bait' to Yazid, will certainly be defied and Yazid will not spare shedding blood for it, and he did not like the holy city of his Grandfather, the Holy Prophet, to become the battlefield and the poor people of the city to suffer the wholesale massacre the tyrant's forces will enact. Poor people, old and young, men and women, and even young children will perish and the city will be ruined. Secondly, if Husayn remained there, later people would say, why did not Husayn leave the place when he knew the enemy

would not leave him unchased? Hence he had decided to go to Mecca and after the pilgrimage to decide what to do.

Husayn visited the shrine of his Grandfather and leaning on it said:

“O’ Grandfather dear! Seest thou my fate after thee at the hands of the people who profess to follow thee. I leave thy city and thy grave, not of my own accord but forced by the circumstances. Pardon thou thy grandson for going away from thee.”

While saying this drowse dawned on Husayn and Husayn saw in a vision his Grandfather standing out from his grave and telling him:

“Husayn my dear! Hasten thou toward Iraq; the Lord willeth to see thee martyred and thy Grandfather is with thee.”

Husayn arose from the holy grave and then visited his Mother's grave and took leave of it and then visited his Brother Hasan's grave and taking leave of it, returned home and started preparations for the journey. From every house in Madina, particularly of the Hashimites, was heard the laments of the people for losing the Holy Imam from the city. Ladies in groups visited Zainab and in surprise asked her the reason for the decision of the Holy Imam to leave the place. Zainab could only say that it is God's will that her Brother Husayn, the Holy Imam, was allowing to be done and none had any voice in it.

The youth of the city came to meet the children of Husayn with tears in their eyes and asking when they would return, to which the young souls said: *If God wills it. None could say when.*

Husayn's sister Umm Kulthoom being a widow resided with Husayn and Zainab who had been married to Abdullah bin Jaffar, rushed to her husband and implored for permission to accompany Husayn, saying that she would not live without Husayn in the city. Abdullah granted the request and Zainab returned and prepared to leave with Husayn.

Fatimah Sughra, a daughter of Husayn was sick with high fever and Husayn the Guardian of the Word of God, could not act against it and thus had decided to leave the young daughter at home with his grandmother Umm Salema the faithful wife of the Holy Prophet who alone remained attached to the House of the Holy Prophet. The young soul Fatimah Sughra, anxious to accompany her parents and not be left alone in the deserted house, was restlessly imploring her father the Holy Imam who was unable to take her against the Word of God. The poor daughter of Husayn in her sickness was requesting every member of the family to recommend her case to her father and none could go against the decision of God. The whole house was shedding tears for this young, sick and miserable soul.

The implorations from the citizens to Husayn to reconsider his decision to leave Madina did not cease till the last moment. Muhammad al-Hanafia one of the sons of Ali came to Husayn and advised him in the same way as others had done to which Husayn said that he had to go in the fulfilment of the Divine Will

disclosed to him by his Grandfather the Holy Prophet. Then Muhammad asked why he was taking the women and children with him, to which Husayn said the Lord has destined that they should suffer captivity. Zainab who heard this discourse cried to Muhammad saying *“Why dost thou O’ Muhammad! Endeavour to cause separation between me and my brother?”* Hearing Zainab, Muhammad kept quiet.

Lady Ummul Baneen whom Ali had married with a definite desire to have of her a son like ‘Abbas, called her four sons and said:

“Go ye, all of you in the service of the son of Fatimah. Beware! If anything untoward happeneth to Husayn or to any of his children, ye shall not return unto me alive! Let me have the face to show to Fatimah on the Day of Judgment.”

Then the lady called ‘Abbas and said:

“Be thou close to Husayn wherever he is and see that nothing untoward happens to him or to any of his children. It is for this day thy father desired thy advent into this world, and see the object of thy father is realised to his satisfaction. Beware! Abbas! The world has turned inimical to Husayn. Shed thou thy life–blood but let not Husayn or his family and children be inconvenienced in the least. Go, God be with Thee!”

‘Abbas and his brothers kissed the feet of their mother and ‘Abbas said:

“Mother dear! I assure thee in the name of God, that until ‘Abbas is alive, nothing shall happen to my Master Husayn or any of his dear ones.”

The Holy Imam's Determination

People of Madina were fully aware of the dreadful consequences that would follow the blunt refusal of the Holy Imam to pay ‘Baith’ to Yazid. They went to the Holy Imam in large numbers to know his final decision. Husayn replied to them:

“Do you imagine for a moment that Husayn, fearing death and destruction at the hands of the tyrant would ever allow to be undone all that his Holy Grandfather, the Last Apostle of God, had done after facing untold dangers and undergoing innumerable difficulties?”

“Do you think that Husayn would allow all the sacrifices offered and the bitterest experiences suffered and the heart rending tortures borne by his Father, Mother and Brother to go in vain?”

“Do you imagine Husayn would ever allow the Faith revealed by God for humanity as a whole, to perish and to vanish away for ever, when it has been established by the shedding of the sacred blood of his father in the Mosque of Kufa?”

“Nay! Never! God willing, you all shall see that Husayn, wading through his own blood, directs the Ark of

Islam out of the stormy seas, safe to the haven of everlasting safety.”

At last dawned the historic day of Husayn's leaving Madina. All the ladies mounted the fully veiled litters on the backs of the camels and when the turn of Zainab came to mount, Ali-.e-Akbar held the screen and ‘Abbas lowered his knee for Zainab to place her foot on it and Husayn held her hand to help her, and the daughter of Fatimah mounted the camel. At last Husayn bade goodbye to even one of the huge crowd of citizens that had assembled, and turning towards the graves of his Grandfather, Mother and Brother, Husayn gave his last salutation. The caravan began to move with the people of the city crying aloud behind it with their lamentations saying:

“Today died the Holy Prophet. Today died the Holy Lady Fatimah and today died Hasan.”

Fatimah Sughra in the high fever and in her disappointment had swooned and availing of the unconscious state of his daughter, Husayn had asked the people of the house to make haste and start. When the caravan had left, Fatimah returned to consciousness and seeing the whole house empty, asked Umm Salema about the inmates to which she was told that they had all gone. Fatimah got up and with the help of a stick in her hand, began to walk behind the caravan crying out:

“Baba ! Baba ! Baba! i.e., Father ! Father ! father!”

The caravan had gone sufficient away but God alone knows how Husayn could hear the feeble voice of the crying of his ailing daughter coming at a considerable distance behind the caravan, inspite of the loud noises of the moving caravan. Husayn called aloud to ‘Abbas telling him:

“Stop Abbas! Stop! Fatimah is coming behind.”

The caravan stopped and Fatimah somehow reached the caravan and began to implore saying:

“Father dear! If there be no space for me with my mother and sisters, I will sit with the servant maid Fizza and will not worry any one with my sickness.”

Husayn came down from his horse and tried to console her, explaining his inability owing to her sickness under which the Word of God does not allow him to take her on the journey.

This is an occasion for parents among the readers to imagine the state of mind of Fatimah's mother and her other relatives. At last Fatimah made a request to her father whom he could not resist granting:

“Father! If I have to be left behind, leave with me baby brother Ali al- Asghar. I will spend my time with him and will see he is duly looked after by a Hashimite nurse.”

Husayn said:

“Yes, beckon thy brother Ali, if he cometh, take him away with thee.”

Fatimah went near the camel on which was her mother with her baby brother Ali al-Asghar. The moment

she beckoned, the baby rushed into her lap.

How could the caravan move now, with the mother leaving away the suckling baby away from her. The mother tried her best to get the baby back from Fatimah, and along with the mother all other relatives tried, and even Husayn tried his best to see that the baby returns from Fatimah but every one failed and even time the baby looked at the face of the one who beckoned it and smiled and turned around and put both its hands round Fatimah's neck, the caravan had stopped. At last Husayn getting near the baby's ears, moved his lips saying something in the ears of the innocent and the baby which did not respond to any one before and even to its mother, now hearing the words uttered into its ears by the Holy Imam, at once left Fatimah and got into the lap of the Holy Imam Fatimah stood disappointed and at last the caravan moved away.

After the Massacre of Karbala, some one asked Ali ibnul Husayn as to what was it that Husayn said into the ears of the baby which did not respond to anybody's beckoning and even to Husayn when he did it before, at once came away into Husayn's lap. In reply Syyed al-Sajjad Ali-ibnul-Husayn sighed aloud saying:

Ah! Ah! What a heart rending event, O' man! Thou reminded me of!

"My Father only told in the ears of my baby brother Ali. Son I need thee also at Karbala for thy name also is there in the list of the martyrs and without thee, my darling, my sacrifice will be incomplete! Hearing this my baby brother at once responded to the call and returned from my sister Fatimah's lap."

The Situation Worsens and the Atmosphere Gets Totally Darkened

The people found infidelity and godlessness spreading all around them, and its intensity being ever on the increase and getting more and more aggressive. There was no security for the faith and the faithful. Religion getting horribly adulterated with counterfeit traditions coined in favour of the grossly anti-religious elements. The practice of the faith laid down by the Holy Prophet strictly on the Qur'anic lines, was recasted into the wrong moulds of infidelity. The situation had become openly hostile to the House of the Holy Prophet, the love or faithfulness to the members of which was under the command of the Lord, decreed incumbent on ever Muslim with a definite ordinance of the Holy Qur'an on it had become a mercilessly punishable crime:

"Say thou (O' Our Apostle Muhammad!) I ask ye naught in return for it (the apostleship) save the love for my relatives." (42:23)

Those who professed faithfulness to the House of the Holy Prophet identifying themselves as the Shias of Ali were persecuted, plundered, mercilessly crucified and brutally murdered and their properties were confiscated. People faithful to the Holy House had either to be killed or to go underground under the

cover of '*Taqiah*' (hiding the faith); they were even then chased, spied and hunted and when found out, were condemned to death.

The situation actually needed a Muhammad to brave the devilish forces and deliver the people from the clutches of the satanic sway over the people and the cruel authority of the crown as was sent Moses to deliver the Israelites from the clutches of Pharaoh. But the prayer of the people for another apostle or prophet would be only in vain for the Last Apostle had come and gone and there was no other prophet or apostle after him to come. The only way to salvation for the faith and the people was to appeal to Husayn, the Holy Imam of the age, who was the Vicegerent of God in the place of the Holy Prophet, to come to their rescue.

The authority to rule over the destiny of the people in the various parts of the state was distributed by nepotism. Merits of personal righteousness and the sense of justice had lost their recognition and had no worth or value in the eyes of the administrators of the matters of the state.

Womanhood was once again subjected to a shameful subjugation to satisfy the brutal lust of the drunkard debauchees with the beastly lust to devour the chastity of women. Marriage had lost its sanctity and protection to married women. Deceitful measures were employed to force a husband to divorce his wife if she was wanted for the sexual lust of the ruling authority.

Human rights were deliberately denied and the rites of religion were openly defied and religious ordinances were violated with extreme impunity. There was no security of life or property. Plunder, pillage and persecution were freely practised to realise the political ends of the state.

People at last sent messengers with the written request to Husayn, the Holy Imam, to come to the rescue of the faith and the faithful, with a note of threat that should Husayn fearing death and destruction not come out and save the religion of God from getting lost and the faithful religionists from getting astray? Any longer, on the Day of Judgment the people would complain to God and His Holy Prophet against him. The deputation from the people of Kufa signed by a multitude of them approached Husayn at Mecca.

The call now was without any taint, purely for the rescue of the faith and the faithful. Husayn now could not but respond. The Holy Imam knew that it was the destined and the awaited call. He offered prayers and looked to the heavens and decided to act, to fulfil his covenant with his Lord.

Husayn at Mecca and the Deputation from Kufa

Husayn arrived in Mecca on 3rd Shaban 60 A.H. for the pilgrimage and thereafter to decide for his future step. He could not stay in Madina without paying '*Bait*' to Yazid or getting killed in return for his refusal to pay the allegiance. Allegiance meant recognising the Devil in the place of God which Husayn could never do. His murder at Madina would have caused the clash of the Madinites, particularly the

Hashimites with the Yazidian forces, resulting in the destruction of the poor citizens and the ruin of the holy city of his Grandfather for which he did not like to be responsible. Besides, if he had stayed there in Madina with death facing him, the world would have questioned his stay there and not taking shelter somewhere out of it. He came to Mecca and here he received the deputation from Kufa with the persistent implorations to go and guide them on the right path of the faith against the straying away from the faith forced on them with the infidelity and godlessness spread all over the country.

Husayn could neither blindly accept the call from Kufa, for the Kufees who were known for their unstable character and unsettled conduct, if later turn treacherous, the world would question. Husayn's ready response to their call without the necessary caution. Therefore Husayn decided to send a deputy of his to Kufa to write to him after studying the sincerity in the invitation.

Muslim the Holy Imam's Deputy to Kufa

The holy Imam commanded his cousin Muslim, son of Aqeel, to proceed to Kufa and to report from there, after studying the bonafide of the call from the people of the place. On 14th Ramadhan 60 A.H. Muslim left Mecca with two guides of the route. Muslim took two young sons of his, along with him. The party lost their way and both the guides perished in the desert. Muslim taking the death of the guides as an inauspicious omen and reaching a halting place called '*Muzeeq min Batne Jannat*' wrote to the Holy Imam informing him of the fate of the guides and requesting him to spare him and depute someone in his stead. The Holy Imam wrote back to Muslim saying:

"This is from Husayn son of Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibn Abi Talib, to cousin Muslim son of Aqeel. Verily I have heard my Grandfather, the Holy Prophet, saying that we Ahlul Bayt take not omens from events extraordinary. The moment thou receivest this letter, precede thou as I have commanded thee.

Peace and the blessings of God be with thee."

Muslim receiving the reply continued his journey and somehow reached Kufa.

Muslim in Kufa

The kufees gave Muslim a very warm reception and thousands of them paid their '*Bait*' to the Holy Imam on the hands of Muslim. Poor Muslim impressed with and guided by the enthusiasm of the deceitful Kufees and not knowing what would befall him the very next day, wrote a letter to Husayn to go over to Kufa. When the letter inviting the Holy Imam had gone with a favourable report about the situation at Kufa, Muslim learnt of the treachery, i.e., the turn of the tide of the situation. Yazid, having learnt of Muslim's arrival at Kufa as the Deputy of the Holy Imam and the Kufees having paid their homage to the Holy Imam, as their religious head, sent Ibn Zaid to handle the situation in his favour. In a day or two, almost all the leaders of the town were bribed and strong threats from Yazid's deputy the Governor of Kufa, made the people of the town as a whole, desert poor Muslim.

Under the strict ordinances issued against those who gave even shelter to him, Muslim was left all alone in Kufa. None in Kufa would now even speak to Muslim and he was left actually homeless, wandering in the streets with everyone in town, now hostile to him. None would allow him even to rest for a while in the shade of his house.

At every door he stood, he was being driven away, not even a cup of water he could have from anyone in the town. Hungry and thirsty, the helpless Deputy of the Holy Imam actually wandered in the streets of Kufa with his two innocent children, in the hope of help from some one, but none took pity on him, and not even on the innocent young children. The helpless father and his two young children were being driven away from place to place, nowhere to rest even for a while.

Hani Ibn Orvah, the good-hearted Kufee who offered hospitality to Muslim was mercilessly butchered. All those miseries and persecution did never upset Muslim in the least but the one and only worry he felt, and which grieved him the most of which he frequently shed tears, was that he had written to the son of Fatimah, the Holy Imam, in favour of such a treacherous people and had invited him to go over to a place where only death and destruction waited for him. He could not leave the town for he was not allowed to do it, nor could he send any note to the Holy Imam to intimate the treacherous change in the situation.

Muslim sends out His Children with His Message to the Holy Imam

At last Muslim somehow managed to send his two young children out of Kufa with his message to the Holy Imam, a counter to his previous communication to him, requesting Husayn never to think of Kufa anymore. The two innocents of the House of the Holy Prophet with the divine gift of bravery and courage against the odds and the miseries in the way of the Lord, walked through the desert during nights, hiding themselves from the sight of the people and during day time hid themselves in some bush or on the top of some date palms, hungry and thirsty as naturally they would but be in the desert.

But nothing daunted them from their mission. The one and the only concern of the two young souls, was to somehow reach the Holy Imam with the message. The two young innocent fugitives were passing through a dreadful and mortal atmosphere. They were passing through the Valley of Death. Whenever they happened to meet anyone they would not disclose their identity and if any one took pity on their age and their plight, and offered any hospitality, they accepted it, otherwise they contented themselves with their lot but always mindful of the Lord and prayerful to Him.

Muslim Arrested and Martyred

Having despatched his sons, Muslim, discarded by one and all in Kufa and hunted by the men of Ibn Ziad, wandered in Kufa, as a homeless destitute without any shelter or shade to lay his head or even to

rest a while against the scorching sun. None dared to give him even a cup of water. Passing through a street Muslim halted at the door of a godly lady Tau'a who asked him, not recognising him, who actually he was:

"O' man why dost thou not return home and rest?"

Muslim replied: *"Where to go? I have no home here!"*

The good lady looked at Muslim and asked: "Who art thou?"

Muslim replied: *"I am Muslim, son of Aqeel, the Deputy of Husayn the Holy Imam! hunted by the Amir."*

Tau'a, immediately as she learnt about the identity of Muslim and the name of the Holy Imam, told him to get into her house. No sooner had Muslim taken shelter in Tau'a's house, the son of the lady, an incorrigible delinquent, returned home and Tau'a advised the lad repeatedly not to let any one know about the whereabouts of Muslim. Early next morning, the lad informed the state authorities. Muslim heard the approach of the soldiers to Tau'a's house and apprehending that if he stays any longer in the house, the house of the poor lady will be ruined, rushed out and after a wonderful resistance, was arrested by the contingent and carried to the court of the Amir. Muslim entered the court without the usual salutation to the Amir. When questioned why he avoided the usual courtesy of the salutation to the Amir, Muslim replied:

"Who is the Amir? A drunkard and debanchee? My Amir is Husayn the Holy Imam!"

The Amir retorted: *"Dost thou know thy fate? Salutation or no salutation from thee, thou shalt beheaded."*

Muslim replied: *"Threaten thou with death and destruction the dogs who hunt after this world and not any one of the House of the Apostle of God!"*

Ibn Ziad called his men and commanded Muslim to be taken on the roof of a building to be beheaded and his body to be thrown down from the top, to the ground.

Hearing the verdict of the Amir about him, Muslim replied:

"Ready I am to pass on in the way of the Lord" and then turning to the audience in the court asked, if there was any Qurayshite among them there to hear his last desire in this world and execute it. Umar Ibn Sa'd, a Qurayshite, replied:

"Yes! I am here! Say thou what thou hast to say!"

Muslim said:

"Look O' son of Sa'd! The first thing I request you to do is to write to the Holy Imam or send a message

at once to him never to think of coming over to Kufa!”

Secondly, I owe seven hundred dirhams to the people here in Kufa. Here is my horse and my armour. Sell thou these two things and disburse the dues.

Thou art a Qurayshite! Bury thou my body out of my own money raised by the sale of my belongings without any obligation from any one of the Kufees”.

Umar replied we will act as deemed desirable by us. The people seated around in the court wept but none spoke a word against the brutal behaviour against Muslim.

Muslim when taken on the top of a building asked respite of the executioners to offer his last prayer to the Lord. After the prayer he turned toward Mecca and cried:

“Pardon me O' Holy Imam, for I was misled. But think thou not of coming over to Kufa!”

No sooner Muslim had finished his prayer, and his cry to the Holy Imam, fell the stroke of the sword from the executioner. His head was taken and the body was thrown down on the ground.

The heads of Hani Ibn Orwah and Muslim Ibn Aqeel were despatched to Yazid as a token of the faithful execution of his orders by his Deputy Ibn Ziad.

The bodies of Muslim and Hani, with a rope tied in the legs, were dragged into the streets of Kufa, as an active and visual warning to the people against their loyalty to the House of the Holy Prophet and particularly to Husayn the Holy Imam. At last the body of Muslim and Hani were hung at the gateway of the City and remained there hanging for days together. None of the last desires of Muslim was executed and immediately orders were issued to comb the city and its surroundings and find out the children of Muslim. A tempting prize was announced on the heads of the innocents.

Children of Muslim Martyred

The two young souls in their concealed march from Kufa, travelling during nights, lost their way in the desert. Once they were arrested and imprisoned but the pitiful guard of the prison, allowed them to escape and at last they were found by the goodhearted lady, the wife of Harith, who was already in search of the innocents to win the rich reward. The good-hearted lady hid the children in her house and Harith returned late in the night complaining to his wife saying that day and night, he was in search of the children of Muslim but could not find them. The lady asked Harith:

“What will you gain after shedding the blood of the innocents of the House of the Holy Prophet?”

Harith replied: *“What thou askest me, knowest: thou I will get the rich reward from the Amir?”*

The lady kept quiet and Harith went to bed but at midnight the innocents saw their father in a dream

telling them: *“Worry not my dear ones! very soon you will meet me!”*

Both the children awoke crying: *“Father dear! where art thou? We are wandering as helpless fugitives.”*

Hearing the cry of the innocents, Harith awoke and asked his wife as to whose cry was that, that came from one of the rooms. The good lady could no longer conceal the fact and the moment Harith came to know of the presence of the innocents in his very house, he jumped with joy and getting into the room dragged those two young souls out of their beds saying:

“I killed myself in your search the whole day for you and you are here in my own house.”

The brute kept the innocents tied to a post the whole night and at dawn Harith took them to the bank of the Euphrates and the good lady accompanied them pleading for them. When Harith wanted to behead them, the children cried to the good lady addressing her as *‘Mother dear!’* The poor lady was already imploring the brute of her husband not to lay his hands on the helpless innocents. But the heartless brute would not listen to the implorations from the lady. When he raised his sword, the lady ran to intervene and stop, the stroke, and got her two hands severed. It is reported that the two innocents prayed to the brute to allow them to offer their last prayers to which the brute consented and no sooner the holy souls had finished their supplication to the Lord, then Harith wanted to behead them. The elder brother implored saying:

“O'man ! listen to me, behead not my younger brother before me for my mother when we parted from her last, handed him over to me. Oblige me thou by beheading me first.”

With a stroke of the sword the head of the elder one of the two innocents fell and Harith threw the body into the river, and then turning to the younger one, he did the same. It is said that when the first body, i.e., of the elder brother was thrown into the river, the younger one cried to it saying:

“Brother dear! Tarry thou a little, I also come with thee.”

It is said that the body of the first innocent floated stationary in the waves of the river until the body of the second one joined it and both floated away together.

No Refuge for the Holy Imam Even in the Holy Ka'ba

News had reached Damascus that Husayn had left Madina for Mecca. Yazid hired thirty men to guide themselves as pilgrims (*Hajjies*) with daggers hidden in their pilgrim garbs to murder the Holy Imam even while performing the pilgrimage rites, be he even in the very precincts of the Great Sanctuary of the Holy Ka'ba.

Husayn had received the letter from his Deputy Muslim in Kufa to proceed to the place, the letter which Muslim had written before what befell him later. Husayn only waited for the pilgrimage to start for Kufa

thereafter. But he got intelligence about the plot to kill him even in the Holy Sanctuary.

Husayn saves the Sanctity of the Great Sanctuary

The holy Ka'ba, a Sanctuary, the Holiest of the Holy Places of Islam, a Sanctuary wherein no creature animate or inanimate could be disturbed wherein even a confirmed convict could not be killed, nor even a plant be plucked out. If the sanctity of the Holiest Shrine of Islam be violated by the shedding of the blood of the Holy Imam which was the very blood of the Holy Prophet himself, no security for any one else would be left thereafter, the Holy Ka'ba would cease to be a Sanctuary.

The next day was the day of the pilgrimage and Husayn in the interest of the sanctity of the place could remain there no more. The Holy Imam decided to leave the place with his whole caravan, performing the briefer pilgrimage 'Umra' instead of the full pilgrimage, Hajj, which could be done only the next day.

People uninformed of the secret plot of Yazid against the life of the Holy Imam, wondering at the surprising decision of Husayn to move out of Mecca on the very eve of the Pilgrimage when every Muslim rushes to the place and covets to be there, thronged to the Holy Imam enquiring about his mysterious move. Husayn replied:

"This year's Hajj I have, to perform at Karbala."

When the people asked where the animals of sacrifice were, Husayn replied:

"In this Hajj I have to offer the sacrifices, not of animals but of my own kith and kin."

Saying this Husayn said:

"Do ye like to see my sacrifices?"

Husayn called his brother 'Abbas, his eighteen-year--old son Ali (Ali al-Akbar), his nephews Qasim, Aun and Muhammad and others. When all these had come and stood before him, Husayn said:

"These are my sacrifices."

Husayn left Mecca for Kufa in response to the implorations of the people of the place.

The Holy Imam Learns of the Fate of His Deputy, Muslim

Husayn was proceeding to Kufa and a large number of the people thinking that if Husayn, the Holy Imam, the grandson of the Apostle of God stands against Yazid, the Muslim World as a whole would support the Holy Imam of the age and those who support Husayn's cause will certainly get the share of the booty accompanied him. At every step Husayn warned them saying their imagination was totally wrong and will never be realised. However, the crowd accompanied Husayn until when the news of the

fate of Husayn's Deputy, Muslim, reached him on the way, and the crowd began deserting Husayn in large numbers.

Where should Husayn go?

If after knowing the fate of his Deputy, Muslim, at Kufa, Husayn proceeds towards the town, the world would know about the atmosphere at Kufa having turned totally hostile to him, why he threw himself and his family in the jaws of death. He could not stay any longer in Madina, nor at Mecca even until the Hajj and now he could not proceed to Kufa. Where should Husayn go? Husayn now directed his move towards an unknown destination.

Water stored for the Enemies

As the caravan proceeded, at a certain place the Holy Imam directed his brother 'Abbas to see that the caravan carries with it as much water as possible. People submitted to the Holy Imam that there would not be any dearth of water in any of the coming stations. The Holy Imam mysteriously insisted saying '*tell you, you do it.*' The people were told that it would be required, but did not disclose for whom, and every one wondered at this mysterious command. However, the order was carried.

The Hunt for the Holy Imam

Information about the Holy Imam's leaving Mecca and proceeding towards an unknown destination reached Kufa and Damascus and fearing that Husayn would escape away out of the Muslim dominion and thus get out of the grip, military contingents were immediately dispatched in all directions in the desert to stop the Holy Imam where he may be found and not allow him to go any further but to get him either to Kufa or to Damascus and in case of resistance to kill him wherever he is found.

Husayn saves the Enemies from Death

As the caravan of the Holy Imam proceeded, suddenly the men in the forefront in cried aloud '*Allaho Akbar*' (God the Greatest). Husayn smiled and asked what the matter was and what had made the people glorify God all of a sudden; what was the occasion for it. People submitted that a garden is sighted which usually was not found on that route. Husayn smiled and told the people to look ahead carefully. Shortly afterwards the men reported to the Holy Imam saying that it was not a garden but an army coming towards them. It was a contingent of Yazid's army which had been sent under the command of a famous Commander '*Hurr*' to arrest the move of Husayn and divert the course to Kufa or Damascus or to fight and kill the Holy Imam.

When the contingent of the Yazidian forces under '*Hurr*' reached the caravan of the Holy Imam, both the men and the animals were dying of thirst. Having exhausted the store of water they had, the whole

regiment was practically trapped in the burning desert with the heat from all sides roasting their bodies. The whole army was about to perish. They could not get any trace of water anywhere for miles together. Hurr and his men, instead of capturing Husayn or attacking the Caravan, shouted aloud in appealing voices '*Thirst! thirst!*' water, and begged the Holy Imam to quench their thirst first. The Holy Imam at once ordered the whole of the stored water to be placed at the disposal of the enemy army under Hurr, his soldiers and all the animals of the army were fully served and were rescued from the jaws of death.

When the enemy had quenched their thirst, Husayn asked Hurr, the purpose of his coming out into such a killing heat in the desert. Whether the expedition was for him or against him. Hurr related his object and also said that he was there not to allow the Holy Imam to move from that place. The Caravan stopped.

Hurr was a good man, noble and a gallant officer, but could not allow Husayn to have his way, in the presence of his men, for he feared that they would bring calamity upon him. Without the knowledge of his men, Hurr begged the Holy Imam to have his own way as if without the knowledge of his men to some direction and to facilitate this he camped his regiment a little away from Husayn's camp. Husayn had to accept Hurr's offer and direct his Caravan to move on, but to none did he mention the destination. The Holy Imam's Caravan moved on but none knew to what destination it was bound for. It was a mysterious move divinely guided by the will of the Lord, to fulfil the Great Sacrifice destined to take place in the seed of Abraham.

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