Al-Islam.org
Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project
Published on *Al-Islam.org* (https://www.al-islam.org)

Preface

The tragedy of Karbala is an unparalleled event of the history of mankind. The great sacrifice made by Imam Husayn, the grandson of the Holy Prophet, on Ashura (the l0th of Muharram 61 A.H.) and the steadfastness shown by him is a beacon of light for everyone who has faith in his mission and is keen for its success.

When one studies the bewildering events of this incident, a number of questions arise in one's mind such as: What was the purpose of Imam Husayn's rising? Did he want to avoid taking oath of allegiance to Yazid or did he take this step in response to the invitation received from the people of Kufa? Did he wish, in the current terminology, to bring about a revolution?

Did he know that he would be killed or was he under the impression that his life would be spared? Did he act according to a predetermined plan or took decisions in the light of every new development?

When he received the news of the martyrdom of Muslim bin Aqil while he (Imam Husayn) was on his way to Kufa why did he suggest to his companions to go away and leave him alone, and thereafter why did he approach various persons to assist him?

Why did he ask all his companions during the night of Ashura to go away but also sent Habib bin Mazahir to the tribe of Bani Asad to seek their help? Why did he seek help from Ubaydullah bin Hurr Juafi in the palace of Bani Maqatil and why did he say to the sons of Aqil during the night of Ashura: "You should go away. It is sufficient that from amongst you Muslim bin Aqil has been killed?"

Why did he seek help from Zahhak ibn Abdullah Mashriqi and his friend and Zuhayr bin Qayn, in spite of their strong refusal, and insisted and even expressed willingness that Zahhak ibn Abdullah should help him till the last moment and then go away? Does all this not show that Imam Husayn was not aware of the final result and had no definite plan in mind?

Does the step taken by him not amount to endangering his life? Does a person, who knows that he would be killed, proceed towards death along with his kith and kin including the suckling?

Many baseless answers and incorrect explanations have been given to these questions. Some have

said that as the Imam was not prepared to take oath of allegiance to a person like Yazid and to recognize his unlawful government, he was obliged to leave Madina in a state of fear and reached Makkah. He considered Makkah to be a haven and intended to stay there, but the Kufians invited him and assured him of their assistance.

The Imam himself, too, was afraid lest he should be assassinated in Makkah and thereby the sanctity of the Ka'bah should suffer. He, therefore, accepted the invitation of the Kufians and went towards Karbala. Consequently he and his dear ones and companions were killed and the other members of his family were made captives.

Some have narrated that the Imam did not think that he would be killed; otherwise he would not have taken such a bold step.

Still others say that the Imam rose because he was under the impression that on account of his relationship with the Holy Prophet he would certainly not be killed, or he was fully convinced that even if he did not rise he would be killed disgracefully at the hands of Ibn Ziyad or someone else. He, therefore, preferred being killed while performing jihad (the Holy war) to dying a disgraceful death.

Some say that the step taken by the Imam amounted to endangering his life, but as the Almighty Lord had given orders in this behalf he was obliged to obey the same.

Some opponents, and those, who consider that everyone wishes to be a sovereign, also, say that love for rulership placed Imam Husayn in this perilous situation, but it was not proper to kill him in such a tragic manner. It would have been better to control and dissuade him by means of threats and allurements.

The correct answer to all these questions is that the factors for such a movement had commenced from the very beginning of the rule of Mu'awiya and were becoming stronger day after day. At last the matters had taken such a turn that if Imam Husayn bin Ali had not taken this step all the traces of Islam would have been obliterated and the pains taken by the Holy Prophet would have been wasted, neither the Qur'an nor Islam would have survived.

The root cause of all these events was the drama that was staged at Saqifa Bani Saida immediately after the demise of the Holy Prophet. The most important development was the unprecedented method that was adopted for the selection of the Caliph. In violation of the Peace Treaty that Mu'awiya had concluded with Imam Hasan and according to which the Muslims were to choose the Caliph after him, he began obtaining the oath of allegiance for Yazid.

Furthermore, he sent a circular letter to the governors and agents in the provinces saying: "Note carefully that in all the departments of the army and the State if it is proved that someone is a Shi'ah (supporter) of Ali or Ahlul Bayt (the progeny of the Prophet), you should withdraw his grant, cross out his name and violate his rights".[1]

Then Mu'awiya sent another circular letter saying: "If any person is suspected of being a supporter of Ahlul Bayt he should be subjected to torture and his house should be demolished". This order was implemented so strictly that as written by Ibn Abil Hadid, the Shi'ah took refuge in the houses of their relatives and friends. Even then they were afraid of their slaves and slave-girls lest they should divulge the secret, because if anyone was not on good terms with another he reported to the authorities that such and such person was a supporter of Ahlul Bayt. The people were, therefore, arrested on mere accusation and suspicion and were tormented and made homeless.

This persecution was more severe in Iraq during the rule of Ziyad bin Sumayya as compared with other places. In spite of Imam Ali's brilliant past record and the honor enjoyed by him in Islam it was made necessary that, in all the Islamic countries and the areas, which formed part of the territories of Islam, he should be abused and cursed in the sermons of Friday prayers and also at other times, and Mu'awiya and Yazid should be honored and praised. Mu'awiya wrote officially to Ziyad bin Sumayya, the Governor of Iraq, that the evidence given in any matter by a person, who was known to be a Shi'ah, should not be accepted, and those, who provided him shelter should also not be treated to be honorable.

Hujr bin Adi, Rashid Hujari and their eleven companions were subjected to the severest persecution and torture, so much so that Mu'awiya killed six of them who were at that time the best persons. There were many, whose hands and feet were amputated and pins reddened in fire were thrust into their eyes, and some others were buried alive.

The evil propaganda of Mu'awiya and his agents in Syria and other Islamic territories misled the people. Whosoever uttered a word against Mu'awiya was treated to be a murderer of Uthman and shedding his blood was considered lawful. Credulous persons, who are numerous in all ages, and are easily impressed by evil propaganda, came to believe that Uthman's blood was shed without any justification, and those, who were satisfied with this act deserved to be punished.

This was how Mu'awiya and his agents poisoned the public mind. The Khawarij, too, who were inimical towards both Mu'awiya and Imam Ali kept quiet with regard to Mu'awiya on account of fear, but abused the Commander of the Faithful openly and treated him to be an infidel. This thing in itself rendered great help to Mu'awiya and created a grudge in the hearts of the people against Imam Ali and his followers, so much so that when on the day of Ashura Imam Husayn mentioned the reason for his coming towards Kufa and then asked his opponents as to why they had gathered to kill him they replied: "It is due to the grudge which we have against your father".

The only tragedy was not that the newly-converted ignorant Muslims, who constituted the majority of the society of that time, hated Ali owing to the evil propaganda of Mu'awiya. A tragedy many times greater than this was that they did not know Mu'awiya properly and considered him to be a distinguished companion of the Holy Prophet and scribe of the revelations! This belief about Mu'awiya was not new.

During the time of the Commander of the Faithful also (i.e. in the 37th and 38th year A.H.) most of the

ignorant sanctimonious persons and those, who were more harmful to Islam than anything else, considered Mu'awiya to be honorable, a true Muslim, pious and a mujtahid or at least hesitated in believing him to be a hypocrite. Hence, they desisted from fighting against him in the Battle of Siffin and also obliged Imam Hasan to make peace with Mu'awiya.

In Kitab–e Siffin, Nasr bin Muzahim quotes on his own authority from Asma bin Hakam Fazari to have said: "In the Battle of Siffin we belonged to the battalion of Ammar Yasir and were serving under his command. One day while it was noon we had taken shelter from the heat of the sun under a sheet of a red cloth, which we had fixed on our spears. Suddenly we saw a man, making his way through the ranks of the army, coming towards us. Approaching us he enquired about Ammar. Ammar introduced himself.

The man said "O Aba Yaqzan![2] I wish to enquire about something. Should I mention it openly or in private?" Ammar said: "As you like". The man said: "It will be better to enquire about it openly". Then he said: "I left my house with perfect perspicacity and faith in my rightfulness and had no doubt about the fact that these people i.e. Mu'awiya and his followers were misled. I held this belief till I reached here and saw that our mu'azzin says: 'I testify that there is no deity but Allah and that Prophet Muhammad is His Prophet' and their mu'azzin also utters the same words. We believe in offering prayers and they also offer prayers like us. Similarly we make supplications and they also make supplications like us. Our Book is the Qur'an and their Book, too, is the Qur'an. Their Prophet and our Prophet is the same.

Having seen this I fell into suspicion and Allah knows how uneasy I became. I approached Imam Ali, the Commander of the Faithful in the morning and placed the matter before him. He asked me: "Have you met Ammar Yasir?" I replied in the negative. Thereupon he said: "You must see him and accept whatever he says". Now I have come to you to find out what you have to say.

Ammar Yasir said: "Do you know who is holding that black standard, which is before us? He is Amr bin As. I, who am Ammar Yasir, have fought against that very standard thrice in the company of the Holy Prophet of Allah at Badr, Uhud and Hunayn. It is now for the fourth time that I am fighting against it and as compared with the previous three occasions it has not become better but has become worse". Then he said: "Have you or your father witnessed those battles?" The man replied: "No". Thereupon Ammar said: "You must know that the centers of our standard are the very centers of the standard of the Holy Prophet at the time of Badr, Uhud and Hunayn, and their standard, too, is at the place of the standard of the polytheists.[3]iii

Nasr also says that while Imam Ali was on his way to Siffin some companions of Abdullah bin Mas'ud including Ubayda Salmani and others met him and said: "We are prepared to accompany you to Siffin, but we shall not join your army until we are satisfied as to which group is on the right, and which is on the wrong, so that we may fight against the wrong". Likewise he mentions some others, who were not willing to cooperate with Imam Ali, and said: "We have become suspicious about this fighting".

All these things go to prove that most of the Muslims had not yet realized the hypocrisy of Mu'awiya and

considered him to be one of the distinguished companions of the Holy Prophet. They were not, therefore, prepared to fight against him in support of Imam Ali or Imam Hasan. Now that a period of twenty years and even more had passed since the event of Siffin, and Mu'awiya had propagated as much as he could in his own favor and against Bani Hashim and especially Imam Ali, and most of the companions, who had heard about the merits of Imam Ali from the Holy Prophet had departed from the world, and the belief that Mu'awiya was one of the companions of the Holy Prophet, a scribe of the revelations and the maternal uncle of the Muslims, definitely became more firm and gained currency.

Thus if the matters had made their way in the same manner a day would have come when Muslims would not have recognized real Islam except that introduced by Mu'awiya and all the troubles taken by the Holy Prophet during the period of twenty three years would have ended to the benefit of the descendants of Abu Sufyan, the sworn enemy of Islam.

Abu Sufyan and Mu'awiya, who fought against the Holy Prophet for twenty years and did all they could to exterminate Islam by all possible means, and professed Islam at the time of the conquest of Makkah, which took place in the seventh year of migration, were recognized by the people as the foremost persons of Islam and Imam Ali, who, according to the narrations of both the sects, was the first to embrace Islam, was now (God forbid!) treated by the people to be accursed, and cursing him was considered to be one of the greatest articles of Islamic worship. There were persons, who considered it obligatory for themselves to make amends for the lapse of this 'worship' if they forgot on any day to perform it.

Although the Holy Prophet used to say: 'When heresies appear, and those, who have embraced Islam later, curse the early Muslims i.e. those, who expressed faith in the Prophet at the very outset, and one knows and does not manifest. One's knowledge is like one who conceals the Divine faith. A person who can distinguish between the Sunnah (The path of the Holy Prophet of Islam) and heresy should rise and save the people from deviation otherwise he will become subjected to Divine wrath.[4]

According to this very authentic Hadith (tradition) Imam Husayn considered himself to be responsible, and did not deem it permissible for him to be negligent. He considered himself commissioned by Allah to defend Islam and the Muslim ummah from the danger of annihilation. During the ten years of his actual Imamate, therefore, he was not sitting at ease, and, as far as possible, did not remain silent. Letters were exchanged between him and Mu'awiya and he used to criticize Mu'awiya severely.

The subject matter of the letters, which he wrote to Mu'awiya, was publicized in Madina or in Makkah at the time of Hajj and almost prepared the ground for his rising, so much so that once when some wealth was being taken from Yemen to Syria via Madina for Mu'awiya, Imam Husayn confiscated it and distributed it amongst Bani Hashim. Later he sent its receipt to Mu'awiya along with a letter of reproof [5]. These things themselves indicate that the Imam was thinking of revolution, for otherwise such an act would not have behooved the Imam.

All this was done by him to discharge his responsibility, and to prepare ground for his rising when it was necessary. He, therefore, performed this duty by means of letters, addresses and preaching. So much so that in reply to a letter of Mu'awiya, expressive of complaint, he wrote: "O Mu'awiya! I consider it a fault to give up campaign against you and deem myself responsible before Allah if I remain quiet and do not rise against you".

Until the time for formal movement and rising arrived, he acted according to the duty entrusted to him by Allah and the Holy Prophet in the form of ordering to do good and restraining from evil.

As regards his being commissioned by Allah it may be said that this claim is supported by a hadith (tradition), which has been quoted by Ya'qub Kulayni on a very reliable authority from Zurayr Kanasi, who says: "Hamran bin A'yun Shaybani said to Imam Baqir: "Have you observed what events took place during the period of Imam Ali and Husayn? They performed jihad but were defeated and were eventually killed at the hands of the tyrants".

The Imam replied: "Whatever happened had, of course, been ordained for them by Allah. He Himself ordered it, made it inevitable and then put it into force. The jihad performed by Imam Ali, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn (Peace be upon them) was according to the previous knowledge and instructions, which they had received from the Holy Prophet, and every Imam who remained quiet also did so according to the same previous knowledge and instructions".

This tradition goes to show that the Holy Prophet had prescribed the duties of every Imam in advance, in accordance with the Divine Command, and each one of them carried out the Divine assignment during his own time.

It is possible that someone may doubt the correctness of such traditions or may be hesitant about their true meaning. Even then he cannot entertain any doubt about the rational fact that the leader of the Muslims must be loyal to Islam. It is also obvious that if the Islamic Government falls in the hands of the enemies of Islam and they gain strength, they will uproot it. And Yazid, whose father Mu'awiya obtained oath of allegiance for him from all, during the period of his power and domination, was the very person, who made it a point to violate the Islamic commands. His corruption, deviation and blasphemies as contained in the verses composed by him before he attained to the caliphate are well-known and have been quoted by both the Sunni and the Shi'ah scholars.

Yaqubi and other historians have recorded that when Mu'awiya sent Yazid at the head of an army to conquer the Roman territories, the Muslim army camped at Ghazqazuna, where there was a convent named Murran. In this convent Yazid had an illegal sexual alliance with a woman named Umme Kulsum. In the meantime fever and small-pox broke out in the Muslim army with such severity that the soldiers began dying and falling like autumn leaves. They insisted upon Yazid leaving the place as early as possible, but he did not pay any heed to their suggestion and composed the verses as translated below: "What do I care if the entire army of Islam dies of fever and small-pox. I am resting on a soft pillow and

am embracing Umme Kulsum".

There are also some verses composed by him, wherein he has praised wine, and which show his mentality. In these verses he says inter-alia: "If wine is unlawful in the religion of Ahmad (Islam), you should take it in accordance with the religion of Jesus son of Mary".

Yazid led an extremely voluptuous life and cared for nothing except revelry and merry-making. He spent most of his time in the convents of the Christians which constituted the fifth column at that time, and indulged in debauchery and amusements, so much so that even his father Mu'awiya wrote letters to him and admonished him.

Qalqashandi has quoted 6 that when it was reported to Mu'awiya time and again that Yazid was leading a voluptuous life, he wrote a letter to him saying: "I am greatly concerned regarding the reports which I have received about you. They have pained me and destroyed the hope of my affinity to you". He added: "O Yazid! You have thrown yourself into destruction and entrusted your soul to indecency and reproach, and have chosen for yourself, destruction, disgrace and unlawful conduct instead of sublime deeds, virtues and noble acts. O Yazid! I wish that you had died at the very moment you were born. You made me happy and hopeful in your early youth. Having grown up, however, you have pained me and made me weep. Alas! Alas!"

These are the specimens of the personality of Yazid! Now Mu'awiya introduced to the Muslims as the successor of the Holy Prophet of Islam such an element, in whose person all the impurities were centered, and who was an embodiment of corruption and wickedness (as became very clear later) and completely ignorant of Islamic tenets. He made him dominate those on account of whose swords the father and grandfather of Yazid had adopted Islam, although not more than forty years had passed since the demise of the Holy Prophet, and his companions and even some of his wives were still alive.

It is, of course, evident that when rulership goes to a person, who does not believe in Allah and the Holy Prophet, does not offer prayers, drinks wine as if it were water, and insults all that is sacred according to religion, one should say goodbye to Islam and the Qur'an. In the circumstances was it possible that a godly person like Imam Husayn, the grandson of the Holy Prophet should be prepared to witness these crimes and see the religion of Allah a plaything in the hands of degraded persons, and endorse all this silently, or take the oath of allegiance to such a ruler? Certainly not!

Furthermore, it was not only Imam Husayn who refused to take the oath of Yazid. No Muslim who was acquainted with the Qur'an and recognized Allah could agree to bear this insult, just as a number of the inhabitants of Kufa and Basra, and all those belonging to Madina, opposed Yazid from the very first day.

Imam Husayn knew well that the descendants of Abu Sufyan were basically hostile to Islam. They had tried their best to exterminate Islam and were not at all prepared to tolerate that the name of the Holy Prophet should continue to exist. Therefore, the Caliphate remained with the descendants of Abu Sufyan so that no trace of Islam could remain.

Mas'udi, the renowned historian has quoted the following event: Mutarraf bin Mughira said, "My father and I were the guests of Mu'awiya in Syria. My father visited the court of Mu'awiya very often and praised him. One night when my father returned after meeting Mu'awiya, he was very sad and disturbed. I enquired from him the reason. He replied: 'This man i.e. Mu'awiya is a vicious person, rather the most abominable person of the age'. I said: 'But what has happened?'

He replied, 'I suggested to Mu'awiya: 'Now that you have achieved your object, and attained to the Islamic Caliphate, it will be better that you should behave justly towards the people, and should not misbehave towards Bani Hashim so much, because, after all, they are your relatives and nothing is now left with them on account of which you may fear that they will rise against you'.

Mu'awiya said: 'Alas! Alas! Abu Bakr became Caliph and administered justice, and nothing more than this happened that he died and his name, too, was eliminated. Umar and Uthman also died and although they behaved well towards the people, nothing except their names survived and they perished. As regards the Hashimi brother (i.e. the Holy Prophet), however, his name is pronounced in the world of Islam loudly five times a day and it is said: 'I testify that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah'. What remains to be done when the names of the three Caliphs die and the name of Muhammad remains alive except that his name too should be buried and eliminated". 7vii

Mas'udi has cited this event from the book Muwaffaqiyyat by Zubayr bin Bakar which is one of the reliable documents. He says, "In the circumstances, could Husayn bin Ali sit and remain patient, and quietly observe those people fighting against Islam and the Qur'an, and endeavoring to eliminate them? Certainly not"!

During those days the Islamic Caliphate had assumed the shape of the kingdoms of Kisra and Caesar. Mu'awiya, according to his corrupt thinking, decided to leave it as inheritance in his own family and there were two great impediments that hindered the achievement of this object. One of these impediments was the incapability of Yazid, who was known to the nobles of that time and the dignitaries of the Islamic territories, as a frivolous, incapable, shameless and wicked person, and the chiefs of the Islamic country had no regard for him. The other impediment was Imam Hasan with whom Mu'awiya had agreed in a peace treaty that after him, he (i.e. Mu'awiya) would not introduce anyone as the prospective Caliph.

As regards the first impediment, Mu'awiya found the remedy for it by suppressing the religious sentiments of the people with gifts, grants and big awards, and, if the object could not be achieved by these means, he would silence them with threats, cancellation of grants and dismissal from employment. He accomplished this task as quickly as possible.

In order to remove the second impediment he took steps to kill Imam Hasan and eventually poisoned him with a strange deceit through Ju'dah daughter of Ash'ath bin Qays. He then thought that the way was now clear and did not believe that any other impediment could exist after the death of Imam Hasan.

Later he realized that in the presence of a person like Imam Husayn in Madina, which was more

important than all other Islamic territories. Its inhabitants would not at all take the oath of allegiance to Yazid. He was, therefore, obliged to resort to another deceit. The historians have written thus in this behalf: After the death of Imam Hasan, Mu'awiya resolved to obtain allegiance from the people for Yazid, whom he wanted to appoint as his successor.

He, therefore, wrote letters to all the governors of Islamic provinces including Sa'id bin As Umavi, the Governor of Madina, whom he wrote: "Obtain oath of allegiance for Yazid from all the Muhajirs and Ansar and their descendants. Show harshness and severity in the matter, and do not be lax and negligent. However, do not exert pressure on a few persons, but leave them alone, like Abdur Rahman bin Abi Bakr and Husayn bin Ali."

When Sa'id bin As received Mu'awiya's letter he invited the people of Madina to take oath of allegiance to Yazid. However, all of them declined to do so and said that they would take the oath when the above persons also had done it otherwise they would not. Sa'id wrote a letter to Mu'awiya telling him that all the people of Madina followed those few persons, and so long as they did not take the oath of allegiance, it would not be possible to obtain it from others even through harshness. Mu'awiya wrote in reply: "It does not matter. Do not disturb anyone till I have thought over the matter".

In the same year he decided to perform Hajj and came to Madina and brought a large number of Syrians along with him. Then he met those few persons in Madina and expressed his displeasure. When they observed that they had been insulted, they left Madina for Makkah to perform Umra individually. However, Mu'awiya stayed in Madina till the Hajj season. During that period he bestowed abundant presents on the people of Madina in order to soften their hearts and win them over.

Later he proceeded to Makkah. When the people came to see him on his arrival, he met Abdullah bin Umar, Abdullah bin Zubayr, Abdur Rahman and Imam Husayn. He showed them great respect, spoke affably to them, and ordered that an animal of riding might be brought for each one of them. He addressed each of them according to their status. He called Imam Husayn, the chief of the Muslim youth, Abdullah bin Zubayr, the cousin of the Holy Prophet, Abdur Rahman, the chief and master of Quraysh and so on.

After performing Hajj he summoned them. Imam Husayn was asked by others to have a talk with Mu'awiya but he declined. They made the same suggestion to Abdullah bin Zubayr and he accepted it. They met Mu'awiya, who showed them due respect and said: "You have seen yourselves how kind I am to you. You are my kith and kin and I have great affection for you. As regards Yazid he is your brother and cousin. What I desire is that he should hold the title of Caliph whereas all the affairs of the State should be in your hands and you should exercise authority in all matters".

All of them kept silent. Mu'awiya asked them to give a reply but they said nothing. Mu'awiya repeated his words for the third time and turning to Ibn Zubayr he asked him to speak. Abdullah bin Zubayr said: "O Mu'awiya! You can do one of these three things, either, as it is said that the Holy Prophet departed from

the world without nominating any successor, you should act in the same way and leave the selection of the caliph to the people, or you should nominate a person who is not related to you and is fit to hold that office, as was done by Abu Bakr, or you should leave the matter to a consultative council, as was done by Umar". Mu'awiya asked: "Is there no way other than these three courses?" Abdullah replied in the negative.

Mu'awiya then turned to the others and said: "What is your view?" They replied: "Our view is the same as put forward by Abdullah bin Zubayr". Mu'awiya said: "All right. I shall be talking about it tomorrow and none shall have the right to object to what I say. If I speak the truth it shall be beneficial for myself, and if I tell a lie I myself shall suffer for it, but if anyone opposes me he shall lose his life".

On the following day a general meeting was called by Mu'awiya. It was attended by all those persons, who had come from different parts of the Islamic territories to perform Haj. Those few persons were also summoned and two armed men were stationed beside each one of them. Mu'awiya mounted the pulpit and the Syrians gathered round him.

He delivered a speech in which he said: "I have seen that people say many baseless things. They say that Husayn bin Ali, Abd ur Rahman bin Abi Bakr, Abdullah bin Zubayr and Abdullah bin Umar have not taken the oath of allegiance to Yazid. They are the best and the most distinguished persons among the Muslims. No task can be firm and permanent without them and nothing can be done without consulting them. I myself talked with them about the matter and found them submissive. All of them took the oath of allegiance to Yazid without raising any objection".

At this stage, as had already been settled, the Syrians shouted: "These few persons don't matter much. If they don't agree, you should permit us to chop off their heads".

Mu'awiya said; "How strange it is that people have become so hostile to Quraysh, and they don't want anything except shedding their blood. Keep quiet and don't repeat these words". Having said this he came down from the pulpit and his agents began taking the oath of allegiance from the people, whereas he himself mounted his animal and left Makkah.

After Mu'awiya's departure the people rushed towards Imam Husayn and others, and began criticizing them. They asked them: "How is it that you agreed to take the allegiance when you had been saying that you wouldn't do so?" Although they said that they had not taken the oath of allegiance and Mu'awiya had told a lie, and had deceived them, the people did not accept their words. They said: "You are lying. If it was as you say, why did you not repudiate his allegation in the meeting?" When they replied that if they had done so they would have been killed, but their saying all this was of no use.[8]

Ya'qubi has quoted the words of Abdullah bin Umar and Abdullah bin Zubayr which they uttered when Sa'id bin As Umavi, the Governor of Madina, suggested to them to take the allegiance. He says: "When Sa'id bin As asked them to take the oath of allegiance to Yazid they declined and said: "What excuse shall we have before Allah if we take the oath of allegiance to one who plays with monkeys and dogs

and drinks wine and is a confirmed licentious man. Can we cooperate with him and approve his actions?"

Ibn Jauzi says: “A group of persons went from Madina to Syria to observe the ways and conduct of Yazid. On their return they said: "We have come after seeing a man who doesn't at all have any religion. He drinks wine, plays on musical instruments and also plays with dogs. Abdullah bin Hanzala, Ghasilul Malhika used to say: "Yazid is a man, who doesn't spare even his mother, daughter and sister. He drinks wine and doesn't offer prayers".

Mas'udi says in Murujuz Zahab: "Yazid was notorious as a habitual drunkard. In the circumstances it was the duty of all Muslims not to agree to take the oath of allegiance to him, because such an oath meant approval of all his actions and an acknowledgement to assist him in whatever he did, and Islam does not permit the Muslims to remain quiet and observe patience, if Islam is being destroyed, the Qur'an is being trampled upon and the Divine religion becomes a plaything in the hands of idiots and bullies. Silence at such a stage is like the silence of the mean sufi, quoted by Syed Murtaza Dai Razi in Tabsaratul Awam. 9ix

Imam Husayn considered silence in such circumstances to be unlawful and one of the points of the tradition of his grandfather, the Holy Prophet, which he quoted before the army of Hurr while he was on his way to Kufa is this: ". If a person observes such affairs and does not oppose them and keeps quiet, Allah will be entitled to include him with the oppressor and tyrant and subject them both to similar torture". 10x

During the last years of the life of Mu'awiya, therefore, Imam Husayn invited all those persons, who had seen the Holy Prophet and had the honor of being his companions, as well as their descendants, scattered in all Islamic regions, and wrote letters to all of them. About 1000 companions and Tabi'in gathered together in Mina and he addressed them in these words: "You can see how this bully treats us and our supporters. You should narrate to your fellow countrymen in your cities whatever is said in this meeting". Then he narrated one by one the virtues and merits of his father, Imam Ali, and exhorted them to enjoin others to do good and to restrain them from evil.

As is evident from the wording and sentences of the sermon11 delivered before this gathering, it was there that the Imam commenced his mission of revolution.

We reproduce here, by way of specimen, a few sentences from that sermon so that the matter may become clear. After reciting the Qur'anic verses about the necessity of enjoining to do good and restraining from evil, he said: "O brave persons! You are well-known for your wisdom, virtue and benevolence and have created respect for you in the hearts of others through Allah. The noble persons honor you and the weak ones accord you respect. And those, who are your equals and are under no obligation to you, consider you to be superior to them".

Thereafter he said: "I am afraid lest you should get involved in difficulties, because you have attained a

position of respectability which is not held by others, and you enjoy superiority over the people. Good persons aren't being respected and you are honorable among the people for the sake of Allah. You see with your own eyes that the covenants of Allah are being violated and His laws are being opposed, and you are not alarmed, although you are worried and alarmed when the covenants made with your ancestors are broken.

The covenants made with the Holy Prophet have been broken and have become worthless, and are being held in contempt and you do not attach any importance to this fact. The blind, the dumb and the cripples in all the regions are without guardians and are not pitied. You don't discharge your responsibilities, and do not work according to your ability. You do not also pay attention to one, who performs his duty in this behalf, and do not show humility. You keep yourselves relieved by indulgence and collusion with the oppressors.

"All this is due to the fact that while Allah has ordered prevention of unlawful acts, and restraining the people from committing them but you have neglected this duty, because you have been slack in protecting the honor and respect of your scholars and have not been able to preserve their status and have made others prevail over that rank. I wish you had realized this or had made an effort in that behalf."

He added: "The reins of administration should be in the hands of those who are well-versed with the Commands of Allah i.e. lawful and unlawful things. It was you, who occupied this position, but you were deprived of it owing to your separation from truth and your differences about the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet in spite of clear proofs, if you had been patient and steadfast and had shown forbearance in the path of Allah, you would have assumed the reins of administration once again. However, you vacated your seat for the oppressors and handed over the Divine government to them, so that they might act in a dubious manner and pursue their carnal desires.

"It was your disregard for death and taking delight in this transient life which made the weak their subjects so that they might enslave and subdue some of them and deprive others of even a morsel of food. They ransack the Islamic territories for their personal benefit, and their cardinal desires bring disgrace to them. They follow the wicked person and have no fear of the Almighty Allah. In every city they make a preacher of their own mount, the pulpit and all the Islamic territories are under their control. They do whatever they like and the people are their slaves. They cannot defend themselves against any maltreatment meted out to them. Tyrants and obstinate persons oppress the weak.

"There are some rulers who do not believe in Allah and in the Day of Judgment. How astonishing this situation is! And why should I not be astonished when the land is possessed by either a deceitful person and a tyrant, or a wicked tax-collector, or a ruler, who is so cruel to the believers? Now it is Allah who can decide matters between us[12]"

It is learnt from what has been stated that the Imam was thinking of bringing about a revolution before

the question of taking oath of allegiance to Yazid arose, and he was waiting for an appropriate opportunity. Hence his movement should be treated to have commenced from the invitation which he extended to the companions and the Tabi'in in Mina.

Keeping in view the conditions of the Muslims in those days it was not an easy task to awaken the people and invite them to truth and this task could not be accomplished by means of correspondence and addresses and by sending messages. The Imam therefore, decided to bring about a revolution by means of which the inhabitants of all the Islamic regions might realize that if Yazid came into power Islam would be uprooted and no trace of it would be found anywhere.

The persons whose ancestors had considered Mu'awiya more than twenty years earlier to be a distinguished companion of the Holy Prophet, or at least doubted his falsehood and hypocrisy, could not be awakened with messages and addresses and could not be made to understand what a true Islamic Government should be. Moreover, Mu'awiya's agents were busy propagating in every town and region and making the people deviate from the right path.

Persons like Hujr bin Adi and Rashid Hujari and his friends and Amr bin Humuq Khuzai were being killed and none could pick up courage to protest, rather they were usually considered to be guilty. It was, therefore, necessary to start a sudden movement and bring about a revolution in the Islamic territories. It should thus influence all the regions, and its effects should continue for a very long period and should not cease till the matters were reformed, and the intentions of Bani Umayya in general and of the descendants of Abu Sufyan (who always wished that the people should cease to utter the name of the Holy Prophet and should no longer understand Islam were known to the people. The people should consequently recognize them (Bani Umayyah) and join their opponents, and the campaign should start. In this their rulership should come to an end. Hence the Imam started his movement with the purpose of enjoining to do good and restraining from evil.

In the testament which Imam Husayn wrote and handed over to Muhammad bin Hanafiya, while leaving Madina, he said after expressing his belief in Allah, in the Prophethood of his grandfather Muhammad bin Abdullah, in the Day of Judgment, and in Paradise and Hell:

"I have not come out with the intention of violence and rebellion or in obedience to my passions, and it is not my object to create mischief on the earth or to oppress anyone. My only object is to reform the affairs of the Muslim nation and to act according to the conduct of my father and grandfather".

When he decided to depart from Madina he went to his grandfather's grave many times at night and said: "O Allah! I love good deeds and hate bad deeds".

Imam Husayn commenced jihad knowing fully well that he would be martyred and his men and women would be made captives, but Islam and its commands would survive and the opposing powers would be annihilated; Yazid, whom his father had nominated his successor during his own lifetime, contrary to the practice followed by the previous Caliphs, and made him dominate the Muslims, would not be able to

repeat this act; Mu'awiya bin Yazid would not be at the helm of the State; Mu'awiya's scheme would come to nought; all the people would wake up from slumber with the assistance of the organization itself and distinguish between: real and artificial Islam. Consequently Bani Umayya would be disgraced and their dead bodies would always serve as an eye opener denouncing cruelty and oppression.

It is possible that an objection may be raised at this stage as Allah says:

Do not subject your lives to destruction with your own hands (***Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 195***)

and discharging the responsibility of enjoining to do good and restraining from evil is itself subject to certain conditions. It may be said in reply that Imam knows better than all others the conditions pertaining to enjoining to do good and restraining from evil and his action is in itself the best authority.

It is, of course, true that it is not permissible to subject oneself to destruction, but the jihad performed by Imam Husayn did not amount to this. If a person considers being killed for the sake of Allah to be subjecting oneself to destruction, he must also place most of the battles fought by the Holy Prophet under the same category. He must also consider whether confronting of twenty Muslim warriors with two hundred enemies in the early battles of Islam, when the Muslims were not numerically strong enough, amounted to subjecting themselves to destruction! But the Muslims unanimously agree that this viewpoint is not correct.

Furthermore, the Qur'anic verse does not mean that the Muslims should not perform jihad, because in the event of their being killed they have subjected themselves to destruction with their own hands. In fact this verse was revealed when the Muslims had been ordered that in the event of war every one of them should provide equipment, arms, foodstuffs and animals of riding according to his capacity. Apparently some persons were making excuses in the matter and were not prepared to make necessary contributions.

It was then that this verse was revealed saying:

Spend your wealth for the cause of Allah and do not subject yourselves to destruction with your own hands (***on account of negligence or stinginess***). (***Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 195***)

This meaning is confirmed by the narration of Huzayfa bin Yaman, a distinguished companion of the Holy Prophet, who has been reported to have said that this verse was revealed in connection with expenditure. This narration has been quoted by Ibn Ali Hatim and Bukhari from Huzayfa and A'mash, and by Suyuti from Ibn Abbas, Mujahid, Ikrima, Sa'id bin Jabir, Ata, Zahhak, Hasan Basri, Qatada, Saddi and Maqatil bin Hayyan. All of them were companions or *Tabi'in*.

In another narration, Aslam bin Yazid Abu Imran says: "During the siege of Constantinople one of our soldiers attacked the enemy and split their rows. Some of our men said: "This man has subjected himself to destruction". Abu Ayyub Ansari was with us. He said: "We know the meaning of this verse better and

you only guess. This verse was revealed about us, the Ansar, who had the honor of receiving the Prophet and becoming his companions.

When Islam flourished, we became negligent in assisting the Holy Prophet and said to ourselves: "Now that Islam has gained popularity and become powerful, we should take care of our families. We, therefore, paid no attention towards helping the Holy Prophet.

Thereupon this verse was revealed: Spend your wealth for the cause of Allah and do not subject yourselves to destruction with your own hands. Destruction was involved in spending on one's wife and children and in abandoning jihad. Hence, one subjects oneself to destruction by abandoning jihad and not by performing it.

This narration has been quoted by Abu Daud Sijistani, Tirmizy, Nisai, Abd bin Hamid, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Jurayr Tabari, Ibn Marduya, Abu Yala and Ibn Habban in Sahih and Hakim Nishapuri in 'Mustadrak'. All of them have quoted it from the tradition of Yazid bin Abi Habib through Aslam. Tirmizy declares that this tradition is authentic.

In another narration Abi Ishaq Sabi'i has been quoted as saying: A man said to Bara bin Azib. "If, during a battle, I attack the enemy alone and am killed, will it amount to my subjecting myself to destruction with my own hands?" Bara replied: "No, because Allah says to His Prophet:

So fight in the way of Allah. You are not responsible except for yourself." (***Surah al-Nisa, 4:84***)

Then Bara added: "This verse relates to spending money at the time of war. This narration has been quoted by Ibn Marduwayh and by Hakim in Mustadrak. Hakim says that this tradition fulfils the conditions laid down by the two shaykhs {Bukhari and Muslim).

A similar remark of Huzayfa bin al-Yaman has also been quoted in Tafsir-e 'Ayyashi and reproduced in Tafsir-e Burhan. In Luhuf Sayyid bin Tawus has also given the same meaning to this verse on the authority of these very narrations.

Furthermore, the verse relating to destruction occurs in the context of defensive jihad and a reference to the context makes the position clear.

The basic thing is that, in the terminology of Islam, being killed for the cause of Allah is not taken to mean destruction. The Holy Qur'an says about the martyrs of Islam thus:

Think not of those who are slain in the way of Allah, as dead. They are alive with their Lord and receive sustenance from Him. (***Surah Ale Imran, 3:169***)

In one of his sermons[13] Imam Ali said to his companions at the time of the Battle of Siffin: "Your death and destruction lies in your being subdued and your life consists of death when you are predominant. The life which makes one submit to every worthless person is worse than dying and being destroyed a

thousand times".

However, at this stage, Imam Husayn was not prepared to be martyred like his father and brother, because such martyrdom could not produce the desired results. It was possible that none might have paid any heed to such martyrdom and the Imam's blood might have been shed in vain.

Those who think that the Imam was not aware of the consequences of the step taken by him are gravely mistaken, because apart from the traditions saying that the Imam, who does not know what he is going to face is not the vicegerent of Allah, and the Imams were also aware when they would die, and they had an option in the matter.

The question of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn was basically well-known in the family of Bani Hashim and especially in the household of Imam Ali. Umme Salama, Umme Ayman and others had all heard from the Holy Prophet (S) that Husayn would be martyred in Karbala.

Besides this in the sermon, which he delivered in the sanctuary of the Holy Ka'bah before his departure, the Imam said: "Man is destined to die". It is quite clear that the Imam knew that he would be martyred, or else he would not have I said: "I can see as if the desert wolves are piercing my body between Nawawis and Karbala". Similarly it becomes clear from what he said on other occasion that he was fully aware of the consequences and to deny this is nothing except baseless contention.

Muhammad bin Hasan bin Farrukh Saffar says in the beginning of Basairud Darajat and similarly Kulayni says in Kafi, that a man belonging to Kufah met the Imam in Thalabiya (and apparently dissuaded him from going to Kufah and warned him that he would be killed). Imam Husayn replied to him: "If I had met you in Madina I would have shown you in my house the signs of Jibril bringing revelations to my grandfather. O brother Kufi! How can it be that the source of knowledge of the people should be with us, and they may know whereas we may be ignorant".

Furthermore, at the time of his departure from Madina he said: "Whoever accompanies me will be martyred and whoever lags behind will not share the victory".

If anyone says that Sayyid Murtaza has been quoted as having said that Imam Husayn did not know that he would be killed, we say in reply that Imam Baqir and Imam Sadiq have been quoted as saying that he was aware that he would be killed. And if an objection is raised that when he knew that he would be killed why did he take his women and children along with him, which resulted in their being made captives, our reply is the same as given earlier.

It was not his intention merely to be killed along with his companions. What he aimed at was to draw the attention of the people to the malpractices of Bani Umayya and to the fact that their rule was not an Islamic rule, and their aim was to efface and destroy Islam and especially the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

Hence, he acted according to a correct plan and proved to the world that they were not prepared to let any member of the family of Bani Hashim live, and would make even a suckling the target of their arrows. He also proved that they treated the members of the Holy Prophet's family more harshly than they treated the polytheist captives of Turkey and Dailam, and they had no intention except that of effacing Islam and the traditions of the Holy Prophet and ruling unjustly over the people. We have said earlier that the people had not recognized Bani Umayya correctly.

They were mostly mistaken and they honored them. Mu'awiya, who had been an infidel and a polytheist during the larger part of his life and was obliged to embrace Islam at the time of the conquest of Makkah, was considered by them to be a peer of Ammar Yasir and Zush-Shahadatain and Ibn Tayyahan and even Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib.

Rabi bin Khuthaym who was one of the distinguished Tabi'in and was considered to be a great ascetic, came to Imam Ali at the time of the Battle of Siffin and said: "O commander of the Faithful! Though we are aware of your rank and position, we are doubtful as to whether this battle is justified or not."

There were many other persons also upon whom the people depended for guidance. Public opinion had been completely perverted and this was especially the case with the Syrians and those, who had been under Mu'awiya's influence from the very beginning.

Nasr bin Muzahim says: "Hashim Marqal, along with a group of the reciters of the Holy Qur'an of Kufa, was busy fighting against the enemy. In the meantime a Ghassanian came in the field and began reciting epic verses and abusing Ali and insisted on cursing and vilifying him. Hashim Marqal said to him: "Young man! There is a time when one has to account for whatever he says. You should fear Allah to whom you have to return, because he will question you about your stand and your aim". The man turned and said: "I am fighting against you, because I have been told that your chief does not offer prayers and the same is the case with you people". Hashim then admonished him and removed the misunderstanding which had been created in his mind and he went back. 14

What we mean to say is that more than twenty years before the rising of Imam Husayn the people of Syria did not know Imam Ali in spite of all his virtues quoted from the Holy Prophet and the matters had turned much worse during Mu'awiya's twenty years rule. During this period he carried out intensive and extensive propaganda to distort the Islamic realities. His agents were putting his orders into practice in all Islamic regions and the foundation of Islam had terribly shaken. Lawful things had become unlawful and vice versa. And during the rule of Yazid bin Mu'awiya the Islamic traditions would have been eliminated further and the position would have been what was assessed by Imam Husayn himself who said: "If the Muslim ummah becomes subjected to the rulership of a person like Yazid one should say goodbye to Islam and abandon it".

There are some, who say that the Imam was invited by the Kufians and as he was afraid lest his blood should be shed in Makkah and the sanctity of the sanctuary violated, he accepted the invitation of the

Kufians and started his movement from that time, and in case they had not invited him he might not have possibly taken this step. They mean to say that in fact there was no movement at all, and the Imam took the decision, because he was compelled by the circumstances to do so.

In reply we ask: "When he came to know that Muslim bin Aqil had been martyred and became sure that the Kufians were not faithful and no assistance could be expected from them, why did he not return from that very place and did he not hide himself in the desert especially when Hurr's army had not yet arrived?" And he could return even after encountering Hurr's army i.e. he could fight against them. Furthermore, why did he deliver the wonderful fiery sermon which has been quoted by Tabari etc. and in which he said: "Whoever sees the cruel ruler making the unlawful things lawful and breaking Allah's pledge...."

If the question was of accepting the invitation of the Kufians why did he write letters from Makkah to the five chiefs of Basra namely Yazid bin Mas'ud Nahshali, Malik bin Musma, Ahnaf bin Qays, Munzir bin Jarud and Mas'ud bin Amr and sought assistance from them?

Certainly Imam Husayn wanted to bring about a revolution, and its voice should be heard in all Islamic territories and the victorious enemy, intoxicated with his power, should himself drag the family of the Holy Prophet to various cities and regions so that the people should see them from close view and learn that Bani Umayya did not believe in Allah and in the Holy Prophet and the fact of his being oppressed should become known universally, so that Bani Umayya might be uprooted. Otherwise, how could the people who heard Imam Ali being cursed from the pulpits for more than twenty years, distinguish between truth and falsehood?

How could the Syrians, who had never perhaps heard the names of Hasan and Husayn being uttered with honor (and did not possibly know about one out of thousands of the merits of Bani Hashim) be made aware of truth and awakened from slumber?

This could be done only by Imam Ali ibn Husayn (Imam Sajjad) mounting, in the center of Yazid's regime, the same pulpit from which propaganda had been carried on against Imam Ali and telling the Syrians about his virtues disgracing Yazid and Mu'awiya and causing the Syrians to revolt against Yazid, so that the tragedy of the martyrdom of his father and brothers in Karbala should be discussed by the Syrians for a long time in their assemblies, and the inauspicious effects of Mu'awiya's propaganda should be totally eliminated so that notwithstanding all his despotism, he should not be able to distort the facts.

Imam Ali was martyred while he was praying in the arch of the Kufa Mosque. The Syrians wondered at this event and said: "Did Ali also offer prayers that he came to the mosque and was killed in the arch?"

It is possible that someone may raise an objection and say: If Imam Husayn intended to rise, why did he say on the day of Ashura: "Let me go. I shall proceed to a safe place." We say in reply: It is true that such a statement of the Holy Imam has been quoted by Tabari in different words but this does not prove that the Imam said: 'I am prepared to return and abandon my mission and shall no longer enjoin others

to do good or restrain them from evil'. No, not at all. Of course, the Kufians had invited him and then went back on their words whereupon he said: "Now that you are regretful for what you said and wrote, it doesn't matter, and I am prepared to return". He did not say that he wanted to abandon his mission.

As regards his seeking assistance from various persons it was because they were usually those Iraqis, who wielded influence in their regions. Now whether they responded to his call like Zuhayr bin Qayn, Zahhak etc. or not, all of them played their part sincerely in supporting the revolution.

Let us take the case of Zahhak Mashriqi[15]. He observed all the happenings of Ashura with his own eyes and later mentioned the same to everyone in Kufa. Most of the events of Ashura have been quoted from him. He thus proved to be a true recorder of the events and proclaimer appointed by the Imam. Or else what benefit can one derive from the company of such a person for a few hours when he is sure that he is going to be killed?

Another person was Ubaydullah bin Hurr Juafi, who served under Mu'awiya in the Battle of Siffin, and was one of those, who claimed to be the avengers of the murder of Uthman. Although he did not come to the Imam's help and excused him– self, but when the Ahlul Bayt (the family of the Holy Prophet) proceeded from Kufa to Syria, Ibn Ziyad summoned the nobles of the city one by one and made enquiries about them, but could not see Ubaydullah bin Hurr amongst them.

After a few days Ubaydullah bin Hurr arrived in Kufa and went to see Ibn Ziyad, who asked him: "Where have you been and why did you not assist us?" He replied: "I have been sick." Ibn Ziyad said: "Was it your heart that was sick or your body?" Ubaydullah bin Hurr replied: "My heart was not at all sick. I was not feeling well for a few days and Allah has cured me." Ibn Ziyad said: "You are lying. You were with our enemy". He replied: "If I had been with your enemy this would have been evident and could not remain hidden from you."

The narrator says: Ibn Ziyad being inattentive, Ubaydullah bin Hurr suddenly went away from there and mounted his horse. In the meantime Ibn Ziyad became conscious of this and said: "Where is Ubaydullah? Bring him". The guards ran out and said to him: "The emir has summoned you and you must respond". He spurred his horse and said: "Tell him that I swear by Allah that I shall never come to him voluntarily". He then left and dismounted at the house of Ahmar bin Ziyad Tai. His friends and companions gathered round him there, and all of them went to Karbala. He was very much grieved on seeing the graves of the martyrs and composed some verses lamenting the death of the Imam. Possibly he was the first person who visited the grave of the Imam and composed an elegy for him.

Later Hurr rose in company with Mukhtar to avenge the murder of Imam and opposed the government of the time and continued harassing it till the end of his life. In his well–known book, Najjashi, the biographer of muhaddithin (traditionalists) has included him among the pious predecessors and says that he compiled a book consisting of the sermons of Imam Ali.

Another person from whom the Imam sought help was Zuhayr bin Qayn. He was one of the notables of

Kufa and wielded great influence over his tribe named Bujayla. At the time of the Battle of Siffin he was one of those, who claimed to avenge the murder of Uthman and later on supported the government of Kufa. Now that he joined the Imam this had a very good effect on others.

Furthermore, his being killed grieved the tribes of Kufa, and, consequently, they refrained from cooperating with the government and were always awaiting an opportunity to take vengeance. And it was not Zuhayr alone whose martyrdom became the source of indignation and rancour among the tribe of Bujayla but other tribes also associated with them against the government. The martyrdom of all those belonging to Basra and Kufa, who lost their lives along with the Imam, wounded the hearts of most of the tribes, because all of them were the nobles and dignitaries of these two cities, and most of the tribes residing there mourned their death. The government had to pay dearly for their bloodshed.

From the very early days the Shi'ah of Kufa became active and formed a secret party. Every night they used to gather in the house of one of them, mourned the martyrs, and secretly put the people on their oath that they would oppose the government and avenge the blood of Imam Husayn. Their number increased gradually and the political conditions of Iraq became more dangerous day after day. After three years and a few months when Yazid died they formally made their call public and arrested Amr bin Hurayth, the Governor of Kufa and expelled him from the city.

They gathered in the Masjid of Kufa and all the chiefs of the tribes also attended the meeting. Names of a few persons were recommended for the interim government, one of them was Amr bin Sa'id [16]according to Tabari, and Umar bin Sa'd as stated by Haj Farhad Mirza in his book entitled Qumqam. On hearing this, the women of Hamdan tribe poured out of their houses and began lamenting. Later the women of Nakha Rabia and Kehlan tribes also joined them. Their men, armed with swords, guarded them on all sides, and the women gathered round the pulpit, lamented and cried and said: "Is it not sufficient for Umar bin Sa'd that he has killed the son of Fatima? Now he wants to govern us and to become the ruler of Kufa!" They reminded themselves of the tragedy of Imam Husayn. Till that day formal mourning for the martyrs of Karbala had not taken place in the central Masjid of Kufa.

Disturbance also took place in Basra as in Kufa. Ibn Ziyad began to be opposed from all sides and he had to flee Basra to Syria in disguise. In Makkah Abdullah bin Zubayr took the oath of allegiance from the people for himself, and in Syria also a strange revolution took place which culminated, after Yazid's three or four years hideous rule, in the extinction of the caliphate for which Mu'awiya had been strenuously trying for four years. Thereafter none of the descendants of Abu Sufyan attained to the caliphate.

As regards the Imam's permitting his companions to leave and insisting upon it, it was evident because he did not wish to keep in the dark anyone, who might have joined him for worldly gains. It was necessary that his steps as well as those of others, who were going to be martyred along with him should have been identical. They should not have acted blindly but with perfect cognition, and no coercion should have been involved. This in itself is one of the distinctions of Islam that all its soldiers

are vigilant and intelligent and know what they are doing and this shows the difference between truth and falsehood.

The pretenders who recruit soldiers for themselves are not at all prepared to lose even one of their devotees easily. However, the godly persons are not like this. They leave the people free to choose their path with their own will and only point out to them the right path.

Imam Husayn had not undertaken this journey with the object of acquiring a kingdom so that he should have kept with him by all possible means those, who had accompanied him, and should not have allowed them to go away. On the contrary he said in very clear terms: "I think that a battle will take place with these people. I release you from the oath of allegiance taken by you. Now that it is night time and it has enveloped you in its darkness, you should avail of the opportunity and go away".

However, his companions and Bani Hashim gave a pertinent reply. They said unanimously: "Praised be Allah, who has honored us with martyrdom in your company. Even if it be supposed that this world had been eternal and we had to live in it for ever, we would certainly have preferred to be killed along j with you to living in this world".

Furthermore, the Imam wanted to put them to test and granted them full freedom, so that those, who were cooperating with him willingly, might be distinguished from those, who I were reluctant, and none of them should regret his action later, and say that he had become involved in difficulty and had no way out, or show weakness before the spiteful enemy, so that it might be said that Husayn bin Ali duped the people for the sake of rulership and worldly gains. He, therefore, said in very clear words: "You should disperse and go to your homes, because these people are after me only and if they succeed in subduing me they will have nothing to do with anyone else". He said this so that they should select the right or wrong path after careful consideration.

In short Imam Husayn did such a job that his martyred body became the symbol of Islam till eternity, and his memorial continues to be a permanent threat to the oppressive regime and will always be combating against the enemies of Islam..

Bani Umayya and Bani Abbas always restrained the people from visiting the grave of Imam Husayn. To achieve this end they constructed watch towers and forts around his grave and posted a large number of soldiers there for the purpose of observation. The supervision was so strict that a pilgrim could hardly escape. Usually they had to face torture and death. As persecution by the caliphs increased insistence by the people on visiting the grave of the Imam grew more intense and as the resistance gained strength the administration became more worried and took serious measures in the matter. Consequently many hands were amputated, many heads were chopped off, and many limbs were cut into pieces. However, all these actions were absolutely ineffective.

During the days of Bani Abbas the grave of Imam Husayn was repeatedly demolished. However, as soon as the people felt that the government was inattentive they prepared it immediately. Hence, when

one studies the history of the grave of the Imam, it becomes obvious as to when and by whom it was demolished, and who ordered its demolition, but it is not usually clear as to who repaired it, and who bore the expenses of its construction and repairs. This in itself shows the devotion and sincerity of the people in the matter.

What could be the reason for restraining the people from visiting the grave of Imam Husayn except that the oppressive regimes of the time considered the enthusiasm of the pilgrims and their assembling there to be a threat to their very existence. The pilgrims of Imam Husyan knew well that he was martyred, because of his upholding justice. He laid down his life to check oppression and to maintain the principle of enjoining virtue and restraining the people from vice. He made the supreme sacrifice, but did not submit to the tyrannical, despotic and oppressive regime and opposed it valiantly. Hence, none of the rulers could bear the devotees of Imam Husayn and their being ready to lay down their lives for the sake of pilgrimage of his grave and mourning for him.

Although the sentry posts and guards of the regime were constantly vigilant, the people reached the grave of Imam Husayn, taking advantage of the darkness of night, and took refuge before sunrise to places like Ghaziriya and Naynava which are situated near Karbala. This statement is confirmed by the following incident:

Abul Faraj Isfahani has quoted in Maqatilul Talibiyin Muhammad bin Husayn Ashnani as saying: "On account of fear I had not visited the grave of Imam Husayn for a very long time. At last I said to myself: "Come, whatever may be the consequences, I must go and pay homage to the sacred grave of the Imam". Accompanied by a perfumer I left for Karbala. We used to hide ourselves during daytime and traveled at night till we reached Ghazariya.

We left Ghazariya at mid-night and, passing through the watchmen, who were asleep, slowly approached the sacred grave of Imam Husayn. However as the grave had been demolished, its exact location could not be easily found. We found it after great difficulty. A box that covered the grave had been thrown aside and was half-burnt. The grave had been watered and consequently the earth had caved in and assumed the shape of a ditch. We paid homage to the sacred grave. The place was giving a pleasant smell. I asked my companion who was himself a perfumer as to what smell it was. He replied: "I swear by Allah that I have never smelt such a sweet smell so far." We then departed from the grave and left certain signs at some places. After Mutawakkil was killed we visited the grave with some of the descendants of Abu Talib and restored it to its original shape with mutual assistance."

This incident shows the interest which the people took in the matter. Imam Husayn was recognized to be the criterion of truth. Whoever opposed Husayn in any manner, even though the opposition consisted of restraining from mourning his martyrdom or visiting his grave, was considered to be false and was opposed.

Of course, it should not be forgotten that the Holy Imams who succeeded Imam Husayn encouraged the

people to perform the pilgrimage to his grave. It is learnt from the narrations that the Holy Imams considered the pilgrimage of the grave of the Chief of the martyrs to be a vital matter for Islam. In the case of the pilgrimage of the grave of Imam Husayn, however, the Holy Imams have said that as the danger from and prevention by the enemy increases, the spiritual reward for the pilgrimage also increases.

Now how can it be that the performance of the ceremony of Haj, in spite of all its importance, should not be permissible if there is danger for life, whereas pilgrimage to Karbala should be recommended emphatically although there was ninety per cent possibility of one's being killed[17]. Its only reason can be that in those days the Holy Imams considered the continuance of the ceremony of Haj and the pilgrimage of the House of Allah to be dependent upon the pilgrimage of the grave of Imam Husayn. Otherwise there can be no occasion for such narrations.

There is a well-known tradition of the Holy Prophet in which he has been reported to have said: "Husayn is from me and I am from Husayn". By this sentence the Holy Prophet did not mean to say only that Husayn was a part of his body, because every child is a part of the body of his father and grandfather and there is nothing particular about it. Supposing that we take this meaning of the first part of the sentence what will be meaning of its second part i.e. "I am from Husayn?" The correct meaning of the tradition, therefore, is that the Holy Prophet said: "Husayn has acquired his existence through me and is the means of the survival of my religion".

During most of the risings of the Alavis against Bani Umayya and Bani Abbas after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn their slogan was vengeance for the blood of Husayn and they usually took the oath of allegiance from one another by the side of his sacred grave. Hence the rulers were afraid of the grave of the Holy Imam as their very rulership was in a state of instability. Otherwise what reason could there be for their preventing the people from the pilgrimage to his grave? Bani Umayya remained at the helm of affairs after his martyrdom for seventy years, and their agents regularly obstructed the people from reaching there.

It may also be said that they were justified in doing so, because Husayn had been killed by the Umayyad administration and it was a matter of shame for them that the people should go to perform pilgrimage to his grave. But the question arises as to why Bani Abbas, who were not the culprits themselves, opposed the pilgrimage to his grave so much? In fact it was Bani Abbas, who were harsher and who cut off the hands and heads of the people, who wanted to go to perform the pilgrimage of the sacred grave of Imam Husayn.

However, Bani Umayya did not destroy the grave of the Imam for seventy years, but Bani Abbas demolished, watered and ploughed it. Why did they do all this? Evidently it was because they were afraid of even the martyred body of Imam Husayn, because they knew very well that the dust of the Martyrs of Ashura always tells the intelligent pilgrims expressly: O passerby! Tell our supporters that our bodies were cut to pieces because we opposed the oppressive government. It made us welter in our

blood.

We endeavored to restrain the rulers of the time from their wicked deeds and they butchered us. Our bodies were torn to pieces and crushed under the hooves of the horses of the tyrants, because we supported Islam. However, we did not give up struggle and endeavored to disgrace the spiteful enemy in the eyes of mankind. With our devotion and self-sacrifice for the protection of Islam we opened an institution for the maintenance of Islamic law for the inhabitants of the world.

Now O you, the future comers! Recognize the worth of your religion and do not sell it for petty gains, because the blood of millions like us has been shed to support and protect it. Honor the blood of the martyrs, believe in the worth of your religion, and do not be negligent in the matter of piety. The meaning of pilgrimage coupled with sincerity is that the pilgrim should know whose pilgrimage he is undertaking, what his real message is, what his position is, and why he has attained to this position?

Ali Akbar Ghifari

1. Sharh-e-Nahjul Balghah by Ibn Abil Hadid, vol. III, p. 15.
2. The patronymic appellation of Ammar Yasir.
3. Kitab Siffin, p. 320, second edition (Egypt).
4. J'ame'us Saghir Suyuti, vol. I, p. 31 narrated by Mu'az bin Jabal.
5. Sharh-e-Nahjul Balghah, Ibn Abil Hadid, vol. IV, p. 327.
6. Subhul a'shi, vol. VI, p. 387.
7. Murujuz Zahab, vol II. p. 266, printed at Bolaq, Egypt and Ibn Abil Hadid in Sharh-e Nahjul Balghah has also alluded to it.
8. This incident has been mentioned by Ibn Abdu Rabih Undulusi in Iqdul Farid, vol. II, p. 248, by Ibn Qutaybah in al-Imamah Vas Siyasah, vol. I, p. 138 and in the foot note of Amali Qali, p. 177.
9. Refer to Maqalat-e Sufiya chapter sixteen. The story has not been reproduced here on account of its being obscene.
10. The complete text of the tradition will be given later.
11. Tuhaful Uqul.
12. The Imam addressed those persons who were distinguished among the people. Their responsibility in the Muslim society was greater than that of others, but they were negligent of their duties, and were, therefore, reproached.

They were evidently the very persons, who were invited by the Imam and addressed in Mina which is a part of the sanctuary and a place of peace, because it could not be that the Imam might have mounted the pulpit formally in Madina and gathered together and addressed the remaining Muhajir and Ansar, who were then reckoned to be the chiefs in the Islamic society and the ruler of the time might not have restrained him from doing so.

This is confirmed by the contents of the later part of the tradition and there are other indications also in the light of which it cannot be said that the Imam addressed the people on these lines in Makkah after the death of Mu'awiya.

13. Nahjul Balghah.
14. Kitab Siffin, p. 354, second edition (Egypt).
15. A detailed account of this man will be given later.
16. Tabari's account is absolutely incorrect and we are not aware of any person named Amr bin Sa'id who might have participated in the murder of Imam Husayn. Exactly the same error has appeared in Ibn Qutaybah's al-Imamah vas Siyasah wherein he has throughout written Amr bin Sa'id instead of Umar bin Sa'd.
17. Kamiluz Ziyarat by Ibn Quluyah, p. 261.

Source URL: https://www.al-islam.org/probe-history-ashura-ibrahim-ayati/preface#comment-0