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Translator's Note

Praise be to Allah with all the hymns by which He is praised by the Angels, who are nearest to Him, by His creatures, who are most honorable in His sight, and by those adorers, who are best approved by Him. A praise that excels all praise in the same way as the Lord excels all His creatures. And His blessings be upon His Messenger (S), the Prophet of Mercy, and upon his Pure Progeny (a.s.), who are the lanterns in darkness and brilliant minarets of guidance, and high lofty standards of Religion. And His Special Blessings on His Last Deputy and His Remaining Emissary, the Expected Mahdi (May Allah hasten his glad advent).

Mankind has been confounded by the question of immortality since time immemorial. Philosophers and Saints alike have grappled with the question spending considerably time and energy. But none other than Islam has propounded this great fortune in it's entirety personified in the image of a Martyr (shaheed) in the way of righteousness, the way of the Almighty. Martyrdom (Shahadah) is the perfection of faith and the pinnacle of submission that is the basis of Islam. Not surprisingly, Islam has offered Martyrdom as the ultimate goal of the pious, and views it as a complete proof of piety, and consequently has guaranteed the martyr immortality as a logical outcome of his sacrifice. The Holy Qur'an elucidates this great honor in the following words:

***"Think not of those who were slain in the cause of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive, finding their sustenance with their Lord."* (*Sura Ali-'Imran, 3:169*).**

Thus it has always been the earnest desire of a devout Muslim to acquire this great felicity and attain everlasting bliss.

The concept of martyrdom (*Shahadah*) in Islam can only be understood in the light of the Islamic concept of Holy Struggle (*Jihad*), and the concept of Jihad may only be perceived if the concept of the doctrine of enjoining good (*Amr bil Maroof*) and forbidding evil (*Nahi anil Munkar*) is properly comprehended.

The concept of martyrdom in Islam has been misunderstood by both Muslims and non-Muslims. Martyrdom is closely associated with the concept of Jihad. Most non-Muslim scholars, intentionally or

unintentionally, have defined Jihad as the Holy 'war', and thus have misunderstood Jihad and Shahadah. In the literal sense of the term, Jihad means to struggle or to strive. In the words of Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Behishti (d. 1981),

"Jihad literally means utmost effort to achieve an objective. In Islamic terminology it means to endeavor and make sacrifice for the cause of Allah, i.e., for the deliverance of the people from injustice and subjugation, restoration of belief in Allah's Unity (Tawh□d), and establishment of a just social system."

Islamic Scholars have classified Jihad into two types:

(1) Jihad al Akbar (the greater Jihad), i.e., the Jihad against the passions of one's own self, and

(2) Jihad al Asghar (the lesser Jihad), i.e., struggle against the oppressors to establish truth in the path of Allah and safeguarding humanity.

Coming back to Shahadah, the word is derived from the Arabic verbal root *shahada*, which means to see, to witness, to testify, to become a model and an exemplary (Shahid). Shahadah therefore literally means to see, to witness, and to become a model. A Shahid is a person who sees and witnesses, and he is therefore the witness, as if the martyr witnesses and sees the truth and thus stands by it firmly, so much so that not only does he testify it verbally, but he is prepared to struggle and give up his all for the truth, thus to become a martyr (Shaheed). In this way, and by this struggle and sacrifice for the sake of truth, he becomes a model, a paradigm, and an example for others, worthy of emulation. Both Shaheed (Martyr) and Shahid (a witness) are derived from the same Arabic root.

The renowned Philosopher and Scholar of the Muslim world, Ayatullah Murta□a Mutahhari in his literary work Ash Shaheed, lucidly describes the role and importance of the martyr and martyrdom in the following words:

"All those who have served humanity in one way or the other, whether as scholars, philosophers, inventors or teachers, deserve the gratitude of mankind. But no one deserves it to the extent the martyrs do and that is why all sections of the people have a sentimental attachment to them. The reason is that all other servants of humanity are indebted to the martyrs, whereas the martyrs are not indebted to any of them.

A scholar, a philosopher, an inventor and a teacher require a congenial and conductive atmosphere to render their services and it is the martyr who with his supreme sacrifice provides that atmosphere. He can be compared to the candle whose function is to burn and get extinguished in order to shed light for the benefit of others. The martyrs are the candles of humanity. They burn themselves out and illuminate humanity. If they do not shed their light, no human organization can shine.

But what is the basis of the sanctity of martyrdom? It is evident that merely being killed can have no sanctity. It is not always a matter of pride. Many a death may even be a matter of disgrace.

Martyrdom is the death of a person who in spite of being fully conscious of the risks involved, willingly faces them for the sake of a sacred cause or as the Holy Qur'an says, in the cause of Allah (fee Sabeelillah). Martyrdom has two elements: firstly life is sacrificed to achieve a sacred cause and secondly it is made consciously and willingly.

A martyr through his blood immortalizes his entire being. His blood forever flows in the veins of the society he belongs. Every other group of people can make only a part of its faculties immortal, but a martyr immortalizes all his faculties."

Ayatullah al Uzma Sayyid Ruhullah Musawi al Khumayni, while extolling this great felicity says *"Martyrdom is eternal honor", and "Martyrdom is the secret of victory."*

The best and the most prominent example of struggle against oppression for enjoining good and forbidding evil is embodied in the exalted personality of Imam Husayn (a.s.), the grandson of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S), whose martyrdom was an event of momentous political and religious significance in the Islamic world and has a powerful impact upon the Muslim community in particular and humanity as a whole, from the time it occurred in the middle of the seventh century (61 A.H. / 680 A.D.) right up to the present day and for all times to come.

To understand the struggle at Karbala (in Iraq), we need to turn back a few pages of history. It was a Divine Decree and the need of the hour for Imam Hasan (a.s.), the elder grandson of the Holy Prophet (S) to enter into a peace treaty with Mu'awiyah, the son of Abu Sufyan and father of Yazid, thus shifting the temporal rulership to him. But before shifting the caliphate to him, Imam Hasan (a.s.) laid down some specific terms and conditions for Mu'awiyah to abide by, which were readily accepted by him. The terms being:

(1) That Mu'awiyah will abide by the Holy Book (Qur'an) of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet (S).

(2) That he shall have no authority to nominate anyone as his successor, and the Caliphate will be surrendered back to the custody of Imam Hasan (a.s.) to be followed by his brother Imam Husayn (a.s.).

(3) That the Muslims of Syria, Iraq, Hijaz and Yemen shall enjoy peace and amnesty.

(4) The friends and companions of Imam Ali (a.s.) and all their women and children shall be protected against all fear and shall be allowed to live in peace.

(5) That Mu'awiyah shall not, in any way, either openly or secretly, plot against, injure or threaten Imam Hasan (a.s.), Imam Husayn (a.s.) and other kinsmen of the Holy Prophet (S). He will abstain from afflicting any loss of life or property, directly or indirectly, to the members of the Imam's family.

(6) That he shall pay the annual yield of the land of Darabjurd to Imam Hasan (a.s.).

(7) That abusive language shall not be used with reference to Ameerul Mo'meneen Ali bin Abi Talib

(a.s.), and that the custom of cursing Ali (the 'Fourth Caliph') and his followers in Prayers and on pulpits shall be discontinued.

The terms of the peace treaty as given above have been recorded with slight textual variations by all the historians viz. Tabari, Ibn Aseer, Ibn Hajar, Ibn Shahna, Abul Fida etc. and all the above mentioned have unanimously noted that Mu'awiyah did not observe any of the terms. In fact he shamelessly declared, "O Muslims! I have succeeded in acquiring power and dominion over you by means of the peace treaty with Hasan. Now all the terms and conditions of the treaty lie under my feet and it simply rests with my whims to abide by them or not."

But although the temporal Caliphate was shifted to Mu'awiyah, the Divine Leadership and Religious Authority (i.e., Spiritual Caliphate) remained with Imam Hasan (a.s.) being the beloved Grandson of Prophet Muhammad (S) and himself an exemplar of excellent morals and virtue.

"Astute, unscrupulous and pitiless, the first Caliph of the Umayyads (*Mu'awiyah*) *shrank from no crime necessary to secure his position. Murder was his accustomed mode of removing a formidable opponent"* says Osborn.

Mu'awiyah always aspired to perpetuate the Caliphate into his own family (Bani Umayyah), but could not do so until Imam Hasan (a.s.) was alive. Thus he allured Ja'dah bint Ash'as, an avaricious wife of Imam Hasan (a.s.), into poisoning him, and ultimately achieved his goal.

The ground being now clear, yet his insecurity remained, for the younger brother of Imam Hasan (a.s.), viz. Imam Husayn (a.s.), the only surviving grandson of Prophet Muhammad (S) was still alive and would voice his protest if Mu'awiyah openly tried to transgress the covenant of the peace treaty. Imam Husayn (a.s.) succeeded his brother in Islamic Leadership and Divine Authority, himself being an embodiment of virtue and ethics.

When Mu'awiyah sensed that his end was near, he feared that the Caliphate would revert back to the younger brother of Imam Hasan (a.s.) after his death as was specified in the terms of the Peace treaty. In furtherance of his own treacherous designs and at the suggestion of guileful people like Mugheerah ibn Sha'bah, he started taking the oath of allegiance for his son Yazid, thus securing the Caliphate in his own family.

Mu'awiyah died in 60 A.H. after securing the oath of allegiance for his son Yazid, who thus assumed the Caliphate forcefully. "Mu'awiyah's son Yazid", says Philip Hitti, "was the first confirmed drunkard among the caliphs and won the title, Yazidal Khumoor, the Yazid of wine. One of his pranks was the training of a pet monkey Abu Qays, to participate in his drinking bouts." To quote Ibn Aseer, a famous Muslim historian, "Yazid was notorious and well known for his love of numerous musical instruments, passion for hunting and play with young boys, dogs, monkeys, etc.

Every morning he rose still drunk. His monkeys and young boys wore gold caps. If a monkey died, he

spent a considerable time in mourning it." "As cruel and treacherous as Mu'awiyah", writes Justice Ameer Ali, "Yazid did not, like his father, possess the capacity to clothe his cruelties in the guise of policy. His depraved nature knew no pity or justice. He killed and tortured for the pleasure he derived from human suffering. Addicted to the grossest of vices, his boon companions were the most condemned of both sexes."

Yazid's disbelief is well apparent from verses he recited after the murder of Imam Husayn (a.s.):

"I wish those of my clan, who were killed at Badr, and those who had seen the Khazraj clan wailing (in the battle of Uhad) on account of lancet wounds, were here. They would have hailed me with loud cries and said, 'O Yazid! May your hands never be paralyzed', because I have killed the chiefs of his (the Prophet's) clan. I did so as revenge for Badr, which has now been completed. The Bani Hashim only played a game with government. There has come no Message (Risalah, from Allah), nor was anything revealed (as Wahy). I would not belong to the Khandaq family, if I had not taken vengeance upon the descendants of Muhammad. We avenged the murder of Ali, by killing his son, a horseman and a brave Lion."

Immediately after coming to power, Yazid started demanding the oath of allegiance (bay'ah) from one and all by means of force, threat or bribes, including the grandson of the Prophet Imam Husayn (a.s.). Paying allegiance was an old Arab practice that was carried out in important matters such as that of rulership and authority. Those who were ruled, and specially the well known among them, would give their hand in allegiance, agreement and obedience to their king or the one in authority and in this way would show their whole-hearted support for his actions without any opposition to him.

Acknowledging Yazid would have implied according sanctity to all his sinful deeds by none other than the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (S), the Messenger of Allah, and which would in future have constituted the tenets of Islam. Almost all of the Muslim Community had pledged the oath of allegiance to Yazid, some under influence of wealth and status, while others under pressure. Thus allegiance was demanded from Imam Husayn (a.s.) and he had a firm "No." This "No" of the Imam had enraged Yazid. But why? Apparently Husayn's single vote mattered very little. But no, it mattered very much as it was not simply a vote, it was a veto. It would have been a confirmation of his actions and caliphate by none other than the only surviving grandson of the Holy Prophet, and the most powerful candidate to the caliphate who was more entitled to succeeding his grandfather than Yazid himself.

Imam Husayn (a.s.) strongly protested against this in the following words,

"Yazid is corrupt, habitually drunk, killer of innocents, and notorious for his vices. A person like me can, under no circumstances, agree to take the oath of allegiance to such a immoral and debased person like Yazid."

Allegiance to Yazid was death to Islam and the affirmation of his rule was a negation of all ethical and moral values.

Mas'oodi says that,

"Whoever accepted the slavery of Yazid by swearing fealty at his hands was spared, otherwise he was subjugated. Thus the meaning of allegiance to Yazid was not merely the acceptance of a new caliph, but it meant to sell one's Religion and faith in slavery to a tyrant."

It was left to Imam Husayn (a.s.) that he should either swear the oath of allegiance to the tyrant Yazid and thus lead a humiliated life, or be killed and thus attain the greatest felicity, martyrdom and immortality. And Imam Husayn (a.s.) most generously replied,

"Death with honor is better than a life of degradation."

Thus he was forced to leave his hometown (Madina) and seek refuge in the Sacred Sanctuary (Ka'bah), but was compelled to depart from there too and settle at a land devoid of water or vegetation named Karbala (lit. grief and trials). Imam Husayn (a.s.) said,

"Surely this is the plain I was in quest of. This is the plain where my Holy Grandfather (S) had prophesied that I, with all my companions will lay slain. Here will the garden of Fatima (a.s.) be cut and destroyed. I cannot and I will not move from this place. I have reached the destined destination."

Vehemently pursued, Imam Husayn (a.s.) ultimately found himself a reluctant party to the greatest battle of all times, a struggle of truth against falsehood, humanity against villainy, righteousness against evil, justice against corruption. The grandson of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (S) stood in the scorching heat of Karbala along with seventy two of his companions, thirsty and weary but with a firm determination, against the huge army of seventy thousand men satiated and well equipped with arms. His friends, companions, brothers, sons, nephews, including his six month old babe fell martyr one after the other zealously offering their lives for truth.

Even after this the Imam's strong determination and resolute stand could not be repressed. Time and again, through his speeches, he relentlessly made them see the truth. He invited them towards righteousness and forbade them from evil and immorality, but they were heedless and obstinate in their ignorance.

Now Husayn stood alone in the desert of Karbala in the midst of the forces of evil and corruption. But before laying down his life he displayed to them his unique valor that he had inherited from his father and pushed back the army, until voices of request sprang from amidst them. One of those who fought the battle of Karbala against him says, "I have never seen a person bereaved of his sons, menfolk and his companions more Lion-hearted than him. The foot soldiers were scattering to his right and left like goats when a wolf come upon them."1

It was the voice of Allah Almighty that called out to him saying,

"O Serene Soul (O soul that art at rest!)! Return to your Lord, well-pleased (with Him), well-

***pleasing* (*Him*), *So enter among my servants, And enter into my Paradise.*" (*Sura al-Fajr, 89:27-30*)**

Hearing this Imam sheathed his sword and bowed down his head in submission (to Allah). Seeing this the enemies pounced upon him like hungry wolves and cut off his sacred head, while still in prostration. Thus Husayn was martyred, but his concept, aim, ideology, and above all the truth prevailed.

Some men think that at Karbala, Imam Husayn (a.s.) lost the battle. But if one tries to understand the personalities of Imam Husayn (a.s.) and Yazid in the light of their respective aims and objectives for which they fought the battle, Husayn was decidedly the victor in the fulfillment of his objectives.

The mission of Husayn was not to allow Yazid to undo the spiritual and moral treasure of Islam, which the latter was bent upon destroying. Husayn faced the worst types of oppression, he suffered death and destruction, his immediate relatives were subjected to torture and butchery, his women-folk and tender children were humiliated and taken captives, but the cumulative forces of coercion could not deter him from fulfilling his objectives.

One cannot also ignore the complete resolve and unflinching faith that these womenfolk led by Sayyidah Zainab (a.s.) and Sayyidah Umm Kulthum (a.s.), the sisters of Imam, and the tender children displayed in the objectives that Husayn stood for, at Karbala and much after that. Even these frail and tender members of the Household of Husayn had to pass through untold trials and torment, and have made sacrifices that are unparalleled in the annals of history.

With his blood, Husayn saved the richest and the noblest possession of mankind - spiritualism. By his sacrifices, Husayn created a new manifesto for men and women of the entire world and for all times to come. Soren Kierkegard has truly said,

"The tyrant dies and his rule ends, the martyr dies and his rule begins."

At this juncture of human history, when humanity has achieved a significant position on account of its advancement in the field of knowledge, it can better understand Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his ideals. Beyond doubt, the world has progressed in the fields of Science and Technology, but in social and moral fields, there has been no considerable improvement. Frustration is the general theme and people appear to be groaning under the stress of malaise. Further, materialism seems to have eaten up the vitals of life. The only remedy is spiritualism and where there is spiritualism, there is Husaynism. Those who are groping in the dark and are in search of 'light and life', may approach Husayn, for he provides both.

It is now up to all to maintain his remembrance, the grand legacy (*Aza*) passed on to us by the Infallible Imams (a.s.) and the Eminent Scholars. We should thus preserve it's honor and sanctity and above all voice our protest against any kind of injustice and immorality which prevails in the society, in one form or the other, thus following the foot-steps of the Master of Martyrs Imam Husayn (a.s.), who is a paradigm of truth, morality, humanity, justice and righteousness.

Ayatullah al Uzma Sayyid Ruhullah Musawi al Khumayni says:

"Let (Ashura) mourning gatherings in commemoration of the Martyr of Noblemen and the oppressed (Imam Husayn) be held with increasing attendance and splendor, for these ceremonies mark the triumph of reason over ignorance, justice over tyranny, trust against treason and Islamic rule over that of the despot. Let the blood smeared flags of Ashura be hoisted higher and higher as token of the arrival of the day for the oppressed to take their vengeance (against oppression)."

Lastly, as Ben Johnson says,

"Who falls for the love of God, shall rise a star."

Numerous books have been compiled by Muslim and non-Muslim authors regarding the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.), it's concept, significance, and effects. Ayatullah Aqa Buzurgh Tehrani (d.1389 A.H. / 1970 A.D.) in his encyclopedic work entitled Az Zari'ah ila Tasaneef ash Shi'ah mentions the names of two thousand books written in various languages on this subject alone until his time.

The pioneer in this field was Asbagh bin Nabatah Mashaje'i (d.140 A.H.), one of the distinguished companions of Imam Ali (a.s.), who was very much alive during the tragedy of Karbala. He was the first to compile a book on Martyrdom (Maqtal) of Imam Husayn (a.s.). He was followed by Jabir bin Yazid Jo'fi (d.128 A.H.), a companion of Imam Muhammad al Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Ja'far as Sadiq (a.s.). Following them was Abu Makhnaf Loot bin Yahya bin Sa'eed Azdi (d.157 A.H.).

Abu Makhnaf was alive during the tragedy of Karbala and had the opportunity to meet and personally interview those who were present in Karbala and directly relate from them. He wrote the renowned book named "Maqtal al Husayn." As opined by the author in his preface that the Maqtal referred to by Allamah Majlisi in his Biharul Anwar is not the original Maqtal, while this book is extant and also quoted by some ancient historians who have narrated from him in their books viz. Tabari in his Tareekh, Baladhuri in his Ansab al Ashraf, Ibn Kathir in his Tareekh.

Mention must be made of the four manuscripts of the Maqtal, located at Gotha (No.1836), Berlin (Sprenger, Nos.159-160), Leiden (No.792), and St. Petersburg (Am No.78). It was from the first two that Ferdinand Wustenfeld made a German translation of the work entitled Der Tod des Husein Ben Ali und die Rache (Gottingen, 1883).2

Other ancient compilers being Nasr bin Muzahim Manqari (d.212 A.H.), Muhammad bin Umar Waqidi (d.207 A.H.), Abu Ishaq Ibrahim bin Ishaq Nahawandi (269 A.H.), Ibn Ishaq Saqafi (d.283 A.H.), Ahmad bin Abi Ya'qoob (d. after 292 A.H.), Ibn A'sam Kufi (d.314 A.H.), Abdul Aziz bin Yahya Jaludi (d.332 A.H.), Abul Faraj Isfahani (d.355 A.H.), etc.

The book "Nafasul Mahmoom" (lit. The Sigh Of The Aggrieved!) is a comprehensive work authored by the eminent traditionist Shaikh Abbas Qummi (a.r.) (d.1359 A.H./1940 A.D.) who has compiled it quoting

from various authoritative books as stated by him in the Preface of this book. Nafasul Mahmoom forms the basis of reference for contemporary authors, researchers, historians and orators (Zakereen) and is acclaimed by one and all.

The present Spiritual Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran Ayatullah al Uzma Sayyid Ali al Husaynee Khamenei, in one of his speeches of 29 Zilhajj 1415 A.H., while highlighting the importance of Ashura and Azadari to the Ulema and seminary students, specifically said that, "For the mourning (of Imam Husayn) open and read the book Nafasul Mahmoom of Muhaddis Qummi. You will witness that it will be a means of invoking grief for the listeners and will give rise to a tempest in the sea of love (of Ahlul Bayt)."

Shaikh Abbas Qummi was a Master Traditionist, being the student of the Celebrated Scholar Ayatullah Mirza Husayn Noori Tabarsi. He has authored numerous important books viz. Safinatul Bihar, Muntahal Amal, Tohfatul Ehbab, Kunna wal Alqab, Baytul Ehzan, Tohfatur Razawiyyah, Mafatihul Jinan – the renowned book of Dua', etc.

The present book happens to be the second in the translation series of Muhaddis Qummi's books, the first being Manazelul Akherah. For the sake of convenience, I have divided the book into two volumes, the first one ending at the martyrdom of the companions of Imam Husayn (a.s.), and second volume beginning with the martyrdom of the Bani Hashim ending with the revenge of Mukhtar bin Abi Ubaydah Saqafi and the elimination of Ubaydullah bin Ziyad (l.a.)

Being purely reportage, the author has directly quoted the versions of the narrators and has refrained from altering the original texts or furnishing his own opinion regarding a particular report, except in some cases. Being a translator, I too have emulated him and have neither added not deleted any text from the original narration. Perhaps the readers may find some of the reports as being unacceptable or against what is popularly understood. Wherever I have found it necessary, I have annexed notes to it for further understanding and clarification. Thus readers are requested to refer to these notes.

Arabic being an eloquent and a lucid language, it is usually impossible to translate certain words or phrases into any other language, thus it becomes necessary at some places to quote the original Arabic words.

Notwithstanding whatever knowledge and effort put in such work, it remains far from being perfect, for perfection is the essence of Allah. I therefore request the readers to write in, should they feel it necessary, to raise any point or make any remarks in so far as the translation goes and not the actual text of the book.

Last but not least, May his (Imam Husayn) angelic soul guide us, and act as a beacon of light to restore sanity in this strife-torn world full of vices and immorality, with men thirsting for each other's blood, despite all the scientific achievements he has gained. The need for remembering Imam Husayn (a.s.), his achievements and practicing his ideals is ever so imperative.

May the Imam accept this humble service of mine seeking his pleasure and the pleasure of Allah. And may Allah exalt the position of the author of this informative book, Shaikh Abbas bin Muhammad Ridha' Qummi, and offer him refuge under His Empyrean in Qiyamah amongst the slaves of the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.).

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Baqirul Uloom Islamic Library & Research Centre
Bombay, India.
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1. Tareekh Kamil – Ibn Aseer.
2. Origins and Early Development of Shi'ah Islam – S.H.M. Ja'fari

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