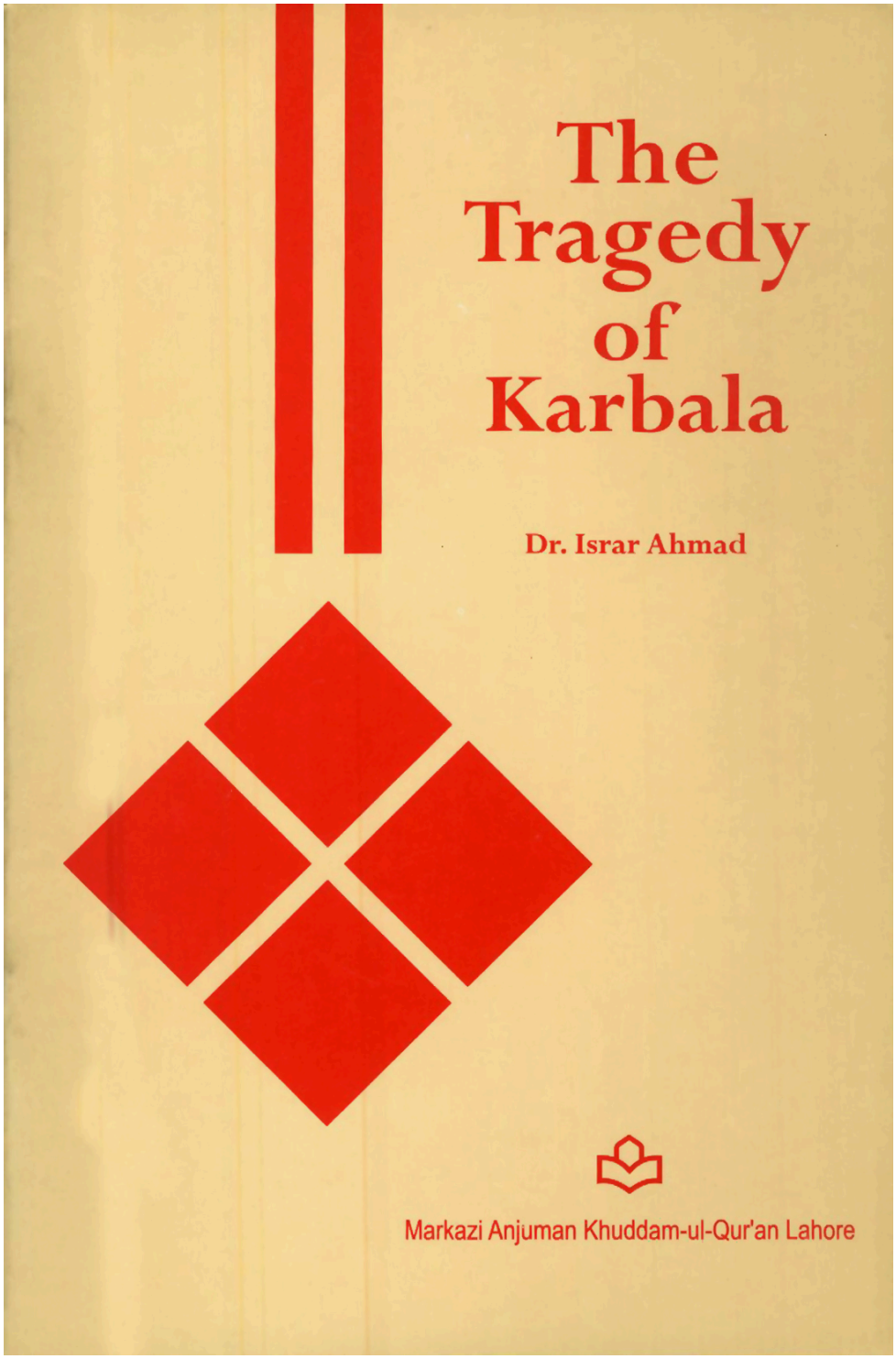

The Tragedy of Karbala

ڈاکٹر اسرار احمد

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Lahore

Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an

2007

Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an Lahore

Title in Urdu: سانحہ کربلا

Title in English: **The Tragedy of Karbla**

First Edition

1st Print Sep. 1992 1100 copies

2nd Print Aug. 1994 1100 copies

Second Edition

1st Print Dec. 1997 1100 copies

2nd Print Oct. 2003 1100 copies

3rd Print Jan. 2007 2200 copies

Third Revised Edition

1st Print Feb. 2020 500 copies

2nd Print Sep. 2025 1100 copies

Printed at: Maktaba Jadeed Press, Lahore

Published by:

Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an Lahore

36-K, Model Town, Lahore-54700

Phone: (042)35869501-3, Online Store: 0301-1115348

E-Mail: maktaba@tanzeem.org

Webpage: **www.tanzeem.org**

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FOREWORDA lthough medieval Muslim historians undoubtedly give the impression that Islam has grown into a large number of sects (or parties, *firaq*), most of these are not "sects" but legal and theological schools, as pointed out by orientalists like Goldzihr. Indeed, throughout the history of Islam one looks in vain for a sect based entirely on doctrinal differences. The doctrinal and theological extremes to which, for example, certain sufis and philosophers went — let alone the Mu'tazila and even the Khawarij — are obviously incompatible with orthodox teaching, and yet this by itself has given rise to sectarian developments. The criterion of the permissibility of a schism in Islam has, rather, been something that can perhaps be best called "community solidarity," and has been characteristic-ally concerned from the beginning with practical and above all political issues.

The Shi'ah constitute the only important schism in Islam. Unlike the Khawarij, who rebelled against the *Ijma'* of the community at the practical level, the Shi'ah have, over the centuries, evolved a doctrine of Divine Right (both with regard to religious and political life) that is irreconcilable with the very spirit of *Ijma'*. The occasion of the Shi'ah

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secession was also the political event of hostility between Hadrat Ali رضی اللہ عنہ and his opponents, the Umayyads. After Ali's رضی اللہ عنہ assassination, the Shi'ah (party) of Ali in Kufa demanded that Caliphate be restored to the home of the ill-fated Caliph. This legitimist claim on behalf of Ali's descendants is the beginning of the Shi'ah political doctrine. The motives that led to this curious legitimist claim on the part of the Kufan Arabs are not very clear, except the fact that certain southern tribes, in their traditional enmity against the Northerners, decided to champion the Hashimites claim against the ruling Umayyads, and also the fact that the Prophet ﷺ being from the Banu Hashim came to be easily exploited. This legitimism, i.e., the doctrine that the leadership of the Muslim Community rightfully belongs to Ali رضی اللہ عنہ and his descendants, was the hallmark of the original Arab Shi'ism which was purely political. Monuments of this Arab Shi'ism are to be found today among the *Zaydis* of Yemen with their Shi'ah Imam, and in Morocco where the ruler is a decedent of the house of Ali رضی اللہ عنہ but the religion is that of Sunni Islam. But already among the earliest Shi'ah partisans there were strong traces of a religious enthusiasm for Ali رضی اللہ عنہ combined with the political motive, although

there was not as yet the dogmatic extravagance that was to develop in the 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th centuries. The social struggles in early Islam, when the discontent of Persian clients (Mawali) was broiling against the ruling Umayyads, gave undoubtedly a further spur and quite a new turn to the socio-political activities of the Shi‘ah

Thus, we see that Shia‘ism became, in the early history of Islam, a cover for different forces of social and political discontent. The fundamental religious impulse was derived from the violent and bloody death of Hussain (رضی اللہ عنہ), Ali’s son from Fatima (رضی اللہ عنہا) at Karbala at the hands of government troops in the year 61 A.H. (681 C.E.) whence the passion motive was introduced. This passion motive combined with the belief in the “return” of the Imam gives to Shi‘ism its most characteristic ethos. From the very beginning, however, the practice of moderation and catholicity of spirit, which had created the Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama‘ah, i.e., the orthodoxy, developed into a theoretical and doctrinal principle, according to which although “there can be no obedience to sinful command,” yet “the ruler should be obeyed even though he be unjust” for “an unjust ruler is better than lawlessness.” Therefore the charge of conformism against the *Ulama* as a whole seems justified, and the principle of “obedience even to a tyrant” was often carried to its extremes. It is, nevertheless, true that this political wisdom of the *Ulama* has done a fundamental service to the community which cannot be underscored. For, under the cover of this principle, the *Ulama* exercised a stabilizing function in the political chaos especially after the break-up of the Abbasid Caliphate when the adventurer sultans had to, at least externally, observe the *Shari‘ah* (whose guardians were the *Ulama*) which checked their excesses and kept their rule generally humane.

The contents of this booklet mainly consist of a speech delivered by Dr. Israr Ahmad, Ameer of Tanzeem-e-Islami,

on 8th of Muharram Al-Haram (the first month of the Islamic calendar). The speech was delivered in Darussalam Mosque, Lahore, and was later published in *Meesaq*, the monthly magazine and the organ of Tanzeem-e-Isalmi. After a persistent demand from the readers, the speech was published in the form of a booklet under the title *Saniha-e-Karbala*.

The substance of the booklet is an endeavor to reveal the real background of the tragedy of Karbala and to lay bare the events leading to a series of tragedies in the Islamic history. The tragedy taken in a distorted perspective has led to tremendous confusion about the conflicts of the Companions of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). It gave rise to a separate sect in Islam, the Shi‘ah. It is necessary for every Muslim to be aware of the real background of the events in order to avoid distorted concepts about the Companions of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), as it is a part of our faith to show due respect to them all and consider everyone of them free from perversion of intention in their actions.

The Urdu booklet was translated into English by Commander (Rtd.) Muhammad Tufail. May Allah (سبحانہ وتعالیٰ) accept the efforts of the author and the translator and make it effective in dispelling misconception from the minds of Muslims.

Dr. Absar Ahmad

Director English Department

بسم اللہ الرحمن الرحیم

On the 10th of Muharram Al-Haram, 61 A.H., a most abominable and tragic event occurred in the desert of Karbala that resulted in the martyrdom (*shahadah)* of Hussain Ibn Ali (رضی اللہ عنہما), the grandson of our Prophet (ﷺ) and the son of his daughter, along with most of the members of his family and their supporters. It should be borne in mind that this tragedy did not take place all of a sudden like a bolt from the blue. It was in fact the manifestation of the plot of *Sabayees* which had claimed the life of Uthman (رضی اللہ عنہ), the third Caliph and the son-in-law of the Prophet (ﷺ) twenty-five years earlier. Caliph Uthman's martyrdom took place on 18th of Dhu Al-Hajj, 36 A.H.

We must not overlook the fact that the struggle between the forces of good and evil is a continuous process which never ends. In the history of mankind, evil has reigned supreme most of the time whereas the triumph of good has been sporadic and short-lived. Another well-established fact is that the evil forces, even if subdued and subjugated, never acknowledge total defeat. On the contrary, they become submissive for a while and lay low, waiting for an opportunity to strike back. Often the evil forces, when subdued, go underground but never abandon their struggle to cause rift and strife among their opponents. The Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) brought about an incomparable and unprecedented revolution in the history of mankind, a unique miracle for all times, and established a state and government to dispense justice to the people over a vast tract of the globe. In the words of the Qur'an:

{جَآءَ الۡحَقُّ وَ زَهَقَ الۡبَاطِلُ}[الاسرا : ۸۱:۱۷]

"…the Truth came and the falsehood vanished..." (Al-Isra 17:81)

But toward the end of the Prophet's revolution, the evil forces put on a disguise and lay low, waiting for the right moment for a counter-attack. Thus, immediately after the demise of the Prophet (ﷺ), insurgencies raised their ugly heads against the Islamic state. False prophets and defiants of *Zakat* challenged the central authority and waged wars against the state of Al-Madinah Al-Munawwara. These

were the counter-revolutionary forces, determined to disintegrate the newly established Islamic state; but through resolute and prompt action, Abu Bakr Siddique (رضی اللہ عنہ), the first Caliph, defeated them and consolidated the achievements of the Prophet's Islamic Revolution. It was a great service to Islam rendered by the first Caliph رضی اللہ عنہ who had a short but glorious reign.

In the next twenty years which include the reigns of Omar (رضی اللہ عنہ) and Uthman (رضی اللہ عنہ), the second and third Caliph of Islam, many more countries were conquered under the banner of Islam and the Muslim empire extended over a vast expanse of the globe, comprising Iraq, Syria, Iran on one side and a large part of North Africa including Egypt and Morocco on the other. But the historical process has its immutable laws. As the Revolution of the Prophet (ﷺ) was challenged by the reactionary movements on the Arab land, the same happened with the conquests of those two Caliphs رضی اللہ عنہما. The first target of these reactionaries was the person of Omar (رضی اللہ عنہ) who was assassinated by Abu Luloo Feroze, a Parsi slave from Iran. It was purely an Iranian plot hatched by Hurmuzan, an Iranian general, who thought that if Omar (رضی اللہ عنہ) was removed from the scene, the empire of Islam would fall like a house of cards. But by the grace of Allah (سبحانہ وتعالیٰ), it

survived the calamity. Abdullah Ibn Saba, a Jew from Yemen, under the garb of a Muslim, took his sojourn at Madinah. He had all the trappings of an expert plotter and the Jewish genius at intrigues, an attribute of his clan. He planted subversive ideas among the people. He pleaded for the usurped rights of the house of the Prophet (ﷺ), carried out a propaganda campaign against Caliph Uthman (رضی اللہ عنہ) and incited the people to revolt. He declared Ali (رضی اللہ عنہ) to be the rightful successor to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and dubbed Uthman (رضی اللہ عنہ) as a usurper. He told people that every Prophet has a *wasee* (وصی) and Ali (رضی اللہ عنہ) is the *wasee* of Prophet Mohammad (ﷺ) and, therefore, entitled to be the caliph after the Prophet. He also preached the divinity of Ali (رضی اللہ عنہ), thus striking at *Tauheed*, the very root of Islam. The Iranians, who had embraced Islam only a few years before, were taken in by this propaganda because they had a long history of kingship and hero-worship. They were familiar with the divine rights of kings, and hero-worship was diffused in their blood. They readily accepted these ideas and became their champions. Similarly Abdullah Ibn Saba floated another viewpoint related to the second appearance of Prophet Isa (علیہ السلام). He argued that Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), who is the best amongst the prophets of Allah (سبحانہ وتعالیٰ), would also appear with Christ, for the contrary would imply that he is inferior to Prophet Isa (علیہ السلام). This was the same argument used by the Qadianis in later years, who invented the notion of the death and burial of Prophet Isa (علیہ السلام) in Kashmir. They argued that it was illogical for Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) to have died and for Prophet Isa (علیہ السلام) to be alive in the heaven. Unsophisticated and illiterate Muslims saw a point of adoration in it for Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and fell an easy prey to that sort of propaganda.

Abdullah Ibn Saba travelled all over the Muslim lands and set up his propaganda centers at Basra and Kufa, but his attempts failed in Damascus. Then he went to Egypt where he formed a

party of his supporters. Consequently, the last two years of Caliph Uthman's رضی اللہ عنہ reign were filled with machinations, intrigue, and turmoil all over Muslim territories. It culminated in the most unjustified murder (martyrdom) of Caliph Uthman (رضی اللہ عنہ) who was the ruler of a vast empire and had tens of thousands of soldiers under his command but refused to shed the blood of Muslims in self-protection. Governors of provinces from all over the empire besought the Caliph to allow them to send troops to quell the uprising and to protect his person from the rebels who had surrounded his residence, but he remained strict and steadfast in his decision. It is perhaps a unique and unprecedented episode in the entire history of mankind that a very powerful man, like the Caliph Uthman (رضی اللہ عنہ), refused to use authority for his personal safety and let himself be assassinated. May Allah (سبحانہ وتعالیٰ) shower His blessings on him رضی اللہ عنہ.

The murder of Habeel (son of Adam) by his brother Qabeel is perhaps an incident comparable to Caliph Uthman's assassination. When Qabeel declared his intention to kill Habeel, the latter announced his resolve, in the words of the Qur'an:

{لَئِنۡۢ بَسَطۡتَّ اِلَیَّ یَدَکَ لِتَقۡتُلَنِیۡ مَاۤ اَنَا بِبَاسِطٍ یَّدِیَ اِلَیۡکَ لِاَقۡتُلَکَ ۚ اِنِّیۡۤ اَخَافُ اللّٰہَ رَبَّ الۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ ﴿۲۸﴾} [المائدة ۲۸:۵]

"Even if thou stretch out thy hand against me, I shall not stretch out my hand against thee to kill

thee; lo! I fear Allah the Lord of the worlds."(Al-Ma'ida 5:28)

So, Habeel was assassinated by his brother and that was the first act of homicide in the history of mankind. It was a totally unjustified murder in which the victim refused to offer resistance as in the assassination of Caliph Uthman (رضی اللہ عنہ). For such an act, Allah (سبحانہ وتعالیٰ) has declared His reward and punishment in the Qur'an:

{مِنۡ اَجۡلِ ذٰلِکَ ۚۛ کَتَبۡنَا عَلٰی بَنِیۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِیۡلَ اَنَّہٗ مَنۡ قَتَلَ نَفۡسًۢا بِغَیۡرِ نَفۡسٍ اَوۡ فَسَادٍ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ فَکَاَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِیۡعًا} [المائدة ۳۲:۵]

"Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely." (Al-Ma'ida 5:32)

Before Caliph Uthman's assassination, Abdullah bin Salam h, a Jewish scholar who had converted to Islam, addressed the rebels surrounding the residence of the Caliph رضی اللہ عنہ in these words: "O people! beware of murdering a caliph of a *Rasool* (Messenger of Allah) for, I am a scholar of Torah and I tell you that Allah avenges the murder of His prophets and the murder of the deputies of his prophets (caliphs). There has hardly been any murder of a prophet which Allah has not avenged by inflicting death on seventy thousand people and the murder of a caliph by inflicting death on thirty five thousand people." Now it is on record that, after the martyrdom of Hadrat Uthman رضی اللہ عنہ, the conflict and strife among the Muslim continued for almost five years. Civil war broke out and three major battles — Jamal, Siffeen and Nahrwan — were fought, causing eighty-four thousand deaths of Muslims at the hands of other Muslims. Many a pious and good Muslims were slain by the sword of fellow Muslims. Amongst them were eminent Companions like Talha رضی اللہ عنہ, Zubair رضی اللہ عنہ, Ammar bin Yasir رضی اللہ عنہ and many more. Ali رضی اللہ عنہ, the fourth Caliph, also sacrificed his life in this strife. Ameer Mu'awiya رضی اللہ عنہ was also attacked but survived. Amr bin Al-Aas رضی اللہ عنہ survived a murder attempt due to an alibi; his proxy was killed instead. The schism and strife among the Muslims caused by Abdullah bin Saba and his followers claimed countless valuable lives.

An instance from the authenticated record of the battle of Jamal is narrated here to illustrate how Muslims fell victims to the traps laid by the Sabayees. After the occupation of Basra, *Umm Al-Momineen* Ayisha رضی اللہ عنہا received a message from Caliph Ali رضی اللہ عنہ for talks and negotiation. It should be remembered that she was never a claimant for the caliphate. Her only demand was that the murderers of Uthman رضی اللہ عنہ must be punished immediately. Ali رضی اللہ عنہ offered to accept her demand if his hands were first strengthened by a declaration of allegiance to him by her group. Both the armies of Ayisha رضی اللہ عنہا and Ali رضی اللہ عنہ were facing each other and camping on the battle field when these negotiations started. The news of this negotiation reached Abdullah bin Saba and Malik bin Ushter Nakhey. They immediately pursued their nefarious plot to undermine the peace talks. Accordingly, under the cover of darkness, they, along with some of their followers, mounted an attack on Umm Al-Momineen Ayisha's رضی اللہ عنہا camp and the rumor was spread that the attack was made by the forces loyal to Ali رضی اللہ عنہ. At the same time, they sent the word to Ali's camp that Umm Al-Momineen Ayisha's forces had initiated the attack. Consequently the opposing armies clashed with each other with all their might, leaving thousands dead on the battle field. It is a very painful part of Muslim history that no investigation to discover the truth in time was ever successful. The same thing happened at the battle of Siffeen. When a stage for peaceful negotiations was set, the *Sabayees* undermined it and a new scion of dissidents, the Khawarij, appeared on the scene, opening another front for the warring factions.

During the reign of Caliph Ali رضی اللہ عنہ, the Muslim empire did not exist as a single state under one central authority but broke up into various power centers. Ameer Mu'awiya رضی اللہ عنہ, the governor of Syria, demanded avenge of Uthman's رضی اللہ عنہ murder. "The

assassins of Uthman رضی اللہ عنہ are in your camp and they are your advisers. I will not declare allegiance to you unless they are punished," he insisted. It should be borne in mind that Ameer Mu'awiya رضی اللہ عنہ did not put forward his claim to the Caliphate and was contented with the governorship of Syria. Whether his demand and pressure on Ali رضی اللہ عنہ was justified or not is an open issue, and everyone is entitled to have an opinion.

Caliph Ali رضی اللہ عنہ was killed by a Khariji, and his son Hassan رضی اللہ عنہ accepted the allegiance of the people at Kufa, a big army base. It appeared that another conflict was in the making. Hassan bin Ali رضی اللہ عنہما, leading a forty thousand strong contingent, marched to Medinah where he had to confront Ameer Mu'awiya رضی اللہ عنہ, the governor of Syria, who faced him with a huge army. A small squad was leading the army of Hassan رضی اللہ عنہ. It was rumored that the squad had a clash with the enemy and suffered a defeat. The persons responsible for spreading this rumor were never identified. Upon hearing the rumor, the Kufi forces revolted against Hassan رضی اللہ عنہ and not only looted his camp but also manhandled him. He had to take refuge in Chosroes' palace. But this incident shook the confidence of Hassan bin Ali رضی اللہ عنہما in his Kufi supporters; he therefore sent a word to Ameer Mu'awiya رضی اللہ عنہ for peace talks. Ameer Mu'awiya رضی اللہ عنہ not only accepted the offer but also sent a blank cheque, so to say, for a settlement in accordance with the terms of Hassan رضی اللہ عنہ, who laid down the following conditions:

1. The tax collections from the province of Ahwaz shall be paid to Hassan رضی اللہ عنہ.

2. A grant of two million dirham shall be paid annually to Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ, his younger brother.

3. Banu Hashim shall be preferred in the distribution of allowances and grants.

4-A general amnesty shall be declared for all who took part in the battle.

Ameer Mu'awiya رضی اللہ عنہ accepted all these terms and peace was restored in the sprawling empire. Strife and civil war came to an end and the state was unified under one central authority as he forced allegiance from all the dissidents. Hassan bin Ali رضی اللہ عنہما, commenting on the transfer of authority, said, "If Mu'awiya was the rightful successor to the Caliphate, he has received it and if I had that right, I, too, have passed it on to him; so the matter ends there." This was in accordance with the prophecy of the Holy Prophetﷺ about Hassan رضی اللہ عنہ when he ahad said, "Through my son Hassan, Allah will bring about peace between two warring factions of Muslims." It was an honor bestowed on Hassan bin Ali رضی اللہ عنہما by Allah سبحانہ وتعالیٰ, but the *Sabayees* were highly indignant at his peace move. They called him names and taunted him with the words "*Ya Aar Al-Momeneen"* (O, Shame for the believers!)

and *"Ya Mozill Al-Momineen"* (You, the debaser of the Believers!). Ostensibly they were his supporters, but in fact expressed their utter resentment at his action for peace making which ushered in an era of twenty years of unity and tranquility in the Muslim empire.

Muslims belonging to Ahl Al-Sunnah Wal-Jama'ah (the Sunni sect of Islam) do not include Ameer Mu'awiya's reign in *Al-Khilafah Al-Rashidah* (the period of Rightly Guided Caliphate). But Ameer Mu'awiya's twenty years reign is still considered to be the best period in the entire Muslim history after *Al-Khilafah Al-Rashidah*, because during his reign all the functions of a Muslim state — maintenance of peace, dispensation of justice, struggle for the supremacy of Islam, dissemination of the Word of Allah سبحانہ وتعالیٰ — were performed admirably well. The reign of Omar bin Abdul Aziz رحمۃ اللہ علیہ is also considered a glorious era of Islamic

history, but it should be borne in mind that Ameer Mu'awiyah رضی اللہ عنہ — who was not only a Companion of the Holy Prophet رضی اللہ عنہ but also a scribe of Divine Revelation — stands much higher in rank and status than Omar bin Abdul Aziz رحمۃ اللہ علیہ because the latter was a *Taba'ee* (a companion of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ) and not a *Sahabi*. It is the common belief of the Sunnis that however pious a person may be, he cannot be rated equal to the lowest among the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ.

Hassan bin Ali رضی اللہ عنہما lived for ten years during the reign of Ameer Mu'awiya رضی اللہ عنہ , and after the peace agreement between the two, they had a very close and friendly relationship. However, Hassan رضی اللہ عنہ was poisoned to death, most probably by the same group who were enraged at his armistice with Ameer Mu'awiya رضی اللہ عنہ . By no stretch of imagination this heinous deed can be ascribed to Ameer Mu'awiya رضی اللہ عنہ who had no grudge against Hassan رضی اللہ عنہ .

Before we discuss the nomination of Yazeed as a successor to his father, it would be appropriate to understand some basic and relevant issues. Firstly, the differences in belief (*aqeeda*) and juristic interpretation (*fiqh*) among the various sects of the Muslim *Ummah* have been grossly exaggerated. The Sunnis have no disagreement regarding belief, and have only some minor differences over the interpretation of the *Shari'ah.* In fact, there are only two sects in Islam, i.e,. Sunni and Shi'ah, because they differ over beliefs as well as over the interpretation of *Shari'ah*. There are certain differences which do not cause the parting of ways. For instance, opinions about historical events and personalities can be overlooked. If one considers Ali رضی اللہ عنہ better than Abu Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ, one can do so because it does not contravene any basic tenet of Islam. Similarly, the Sunnis believes Abu Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ the best among the entire mankind

after the prophets of Allah سبحانہ وتعالیٰ, yet this does not constitute any basic article of faith of a Muslim. However, the concept of the *Infallible Imamate* maintained by the Shi'ahs is unacceptable because it

strikes at the very root of the concept of Proph ethood. Only the prophets were continuously guarded against and protected by Allah سبحانہ وتعالیٰ from any sin, and with the termination of Prophethood the privilege of infallibility has been taken away by Allah سبحانہ وتعالیٰ from all the progeny of Adam. The door of personal judgment (*Ijtihad*) is open while the door of Divine Revelation (*Nabuwwah*) has been closed forever.

Ijtihad, the exercise of personal judgment within the framework of the guidance provided by the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* (the sayings and doings of the Prophet ﷺ) is a privilege vouchsafed to every Muslim who is well-versed in the teachings of Islam. The possibility of an error of judgment can never be ruled out because to err is human. But any judgment or decision made in good faith and with a clear conscience has a reward for the judge, regardless of the correctness of the judgment. That is the belief of the Muslim *Ummah*. In the light of this principle, we can judge the actions of all the caliphs of Islam to be without malice and can hold any opinion we like provided it is not derogatory to their status as the Companions رضی اللہ عنہم of the Prophet ﷺ.

Now let us look at the issue of Yazeed's nomination by his father, Ameer Mu'awiya رضی اللہ عنہ, as an heir-apparent to the caliphate. According to authentic historical records, it was done on the advice of Moghira bin Sho'ba رضی اللہ عنہ, who was a very intelligent and far-sighted Companion of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He argued that on the death of Ameer Mu'awiya رضی اللہ عنہ, the issue of his succession, if remained uncertain, might plunge the *Ummah* once again into a war as had happened in the pre-Mu'awiya period; hence it was advisable to nominate a person to wield

authority in the event of Ameer Mu'awiyah's رضی اللہ عنہ death. He also suggested the name of Ameer Mu'awiya' رضی اللہ عنہ son Yazeed for the job. Now it is open to question whether this decision was justified or not, but no aspersions should be cast on Ameer Mu'awiya رضی اللہ عنہ or Moghira رضی اللہ عنہ who arrived at the conclusion with a clear conscience and in good faith. Both occupy venerable positions in the order of merit of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ. Moghira رضی اللہ عنہ was one of those who swore allegiance to the Prophet ﷺ under the tree (on the occasion of *Baiy'ah Al-Ridwan*) and Allah سبحانہ وتعالیٰ has commended all of them who took part in that (Al-Qur'an: Al-Fat'h 48:18). He remained a faithful friend and supporter of Ali رضی اللہ عنہ throughout his life. But much water had flown under the bridge since Ali's رضی اللہ عنہ times and he could apprehend danger in the absence of most of the influential Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who had died by then (60 A.H.). The new generation did not have that sense of responsibility or moral embellishment as the old had. In view of such arguments, they took a decision counter to the democratic spirit inculcated by the Prophet ﷺ among his followers. Nevertheless, they cannot be condemned as having ulterior motives of their own, apart from the good of the *Ummah,* because the Sunnis believe in the diction which asserts:

اَلصَّحابَةُ كُلُّهُم عَدُول

"All Companions of the Prophet ﷺ were just."

We can differ with the Companions, but we cannot malign them as *mala fide.*

Now look at the other side of the picture. Many prominent dignitaries among the Muslims including the three *Ibad Allah* — i.e., Abdullah bin Zubair رضی اللہ عنہما , Abdullah Bin Omar رضی اللہ عنہما, Abdullah bin Abbas رضی اللہ عنہما as also Hussain bin Ali رضی اللہ عنہما and Abdur Rehman bin Abu Bakr رضی اللہ عنہما —

not only disapproved of Yazeed's nomination but also declared it against the spirit of Islam. The historic comment of Abdur Rehman bin Abu Bakr رضی اللہ عنہما, when he was asked for allegiance to Yazeed's heirship, is well worth taking note of. He said, "Now instead of acting upon the Prophet's ﷺ and the rightly guided Caliphs' tradition, do you want to adopt the tradition of Caesar and Chosroes?" Also, the fact cannot be overlooked that, except these five prominent Muslims, many others, including a large number of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, swore allegiance to Yazeed's nomination. All these people cannot be maligned and declared *mala fide.* Some may even allege that Ameer Mu'awiya رضی اللہ عنہ bought their loyalties. If we accept this premise, by the same token it can also be alleged that Hassan bin Ali رضی اللہ عنہما too was bought over, and the Shi'ahs consider Hassan رضی اللہ عنہ to be an *Imam Masoom* (an infallible guide or leader). Obviously this is not the right course of thought and argument because, if pursued to the logical conclusion, it would tarnish many illustrious names among the Muslims. The only right conduct for us could be to absolve all those who supported Yazeed as well as those who opposed him of all blame because they all acted according to their convictions and for the good of the Muslim *Ummah.*

Now let us examine the stand which Hussain bin Ali رضی اللہ عنہما took in the situation. As said earlier, he رضی اللہ عنہما sincerely believed that the nomination of Yazeed to the heirship of the Caliphate would destroy the spirit of democracy and republicanism nurtured and developed so assiduously during the Prophet's ﷺ era and afterward, and that it would lead to hereditary kingship which was repugnant to the original political teaching of Islam. He therefore resolved to oppose this with all the resources at his command. The bag load of communications, sent to him رضی اللہ عنہ by

the people of Kufa, not only approved of his stand but also promised support and loyalty to his cause. Kufa was a military base and a very strategic city situated at the crossroads to Iran and Syria. He رضی اللہ عنہ thought that if the people of Kufa supported him, as their letters written to him indicated, it would be possible to effectively neutralize the change being brought about in the body politic of the Muslim *Ummah*. So he argued and resolved to act for that cause. Abdullah bin Abbas رضی اللہ عنہما also shared his thoughts but he opposed Hussain's going to Kufa because he knew the Kufis better and warned him not

to repose his confidence in their loyalty. The Kufis had earlier betrayed Ali h and his son Hassan رضی اللہ عنہ. Abdullah bin Omar رضی اللہ عنہما and Abdullah bin Zubair رضی اللہ عنہما also had similar opinions about the Kufi character and vehemently besought Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ not to depend on their words would be against him; "Under the slightest pressure or pecuniary coercion the Kufis would change their loyalties," the three *Ibad Allah* warned Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ. But he appeared to have taken a firm decision. So he brushed aside all their pleadings and warnings, and decided to proceed to Kufa, placing his confidence in Allah سبحانہ وتعالیٰ. For he acted in the true spirit of Allah's and the Prophet's ﷺ command:

{فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللهِ} [آل عمران ۳:۱۵۹]

"So when you have decided (on a course of action) repose your confidence in Allah." (Aal-e-Imran 3:159).

It may be argued that Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ committed a mistake in the assessment of the situation, but no insinuations about his intentions can be entertained. He رضی اللہ عنہ had no lust for power or avarice for wealth. This is the common belief of the Ahl Al-Sunnah Wal-Jama'ah (the Sunnis). They do not consider him, like all non-Prophets, to be infallible; at the same time they do not doubt his integrity either.

When the nomination issue was deliberated upon in Madinah, Abdullah bin Zubair رضی اللہ عنہما went over to Makkah and so did Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ, because some prominent Muslim were of the opinion that Makkah would be the best place as a stronghold or base for launching a campaign for building up public opinion against Yazeed's heirship. However, before any significant work could be done in this regard, Ameer Mu'awiya رضی اللہ عنہ died and Ameer Yazeed took over the reigns of government. Now Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ received heaps of letters from the Kufis pledging their loyalty and support to him if he mounted an attack against Ameer Yazeed's forces. He رضی اللہ عنہ sent his cousin Muslim bin Aqeel رضی اللہ عنہ to Kufa to find out facts. Soon he received an affirmation of the loyalty of Kufis from his cousin and he started preparations for a journey to Kufa. Abdullah bin Omar رضی اللہ عنہما and Abdullah bin Abbas رضی اللہ عنہما pleaded vigorously against his plan and entreated him to at least leave women and children in Makkah if he was determined to proceed to Kufa. But Hussain رضی اللہ عنہما ignored their suggestions. On the way he رضی اللہ عنہ received the report of Muslim bin Aqeel's death at the hands of Ameer Yazeed's men and the apathy and indifference displayed by the people of Kufa at this incident, and also the news that the Kufis had shifted their loyalties to Ameer Yazeed, pledging support to him against Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ and his followers.

Now Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ was in a dilemma: should he continue his journey towards Kufa or return to Makkah? The Arab tradition of avenging the murder of their man, at all costs, was too strong for him to resist. Besides, the close relatives of Muslim bin Aqeel رضی اللہ عنہ, who were accompanying Hussain

رضی اللہ عنہ, declared their resolve to punish the assassins and continue their march. For Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ, it was below his dignity to abandon them and return to Makkah. So, he decided to continue his march to Kufa. Meanwhile Auon and Mohammad, the two young sons of

Abdullah bin Jaffer Tayyar رضی اللہ عنہ, a cousin of Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ, arrived with their father's message: "For God's sake, don't go to Kufa." However, Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ continued his journey with these two boys joining his camp and arrived at the desert of Karbala. Ibn Ziad, the governor of Kufa, arrived there with one thousand soldiers under his command and offered one option to Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ in accordance with the instruction from Ameer Yazeed: "You can neither go to Kufa nor return to Makkah, but you can go any where else you want." Obviously, the only course open for Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ was to Damascus, the capital. It is very unfortunate that he رضی اللہ عنہ turned down the offer and continued his sojourn at Karbala trying to win over the support of Ibn Ziad's men because in his addresses to the Kufis under Ibn Ziad's command, he mentioned the persons by name who had written letters to him pledging loyalty and support and pleaded with them to honor their pledges. The Kufis, fearing the possibility of ensuing persecution and punishment, disowned their letters and denied their authorship.

Meanwhile, a reinforcement of four thousand soldiers, under the command of Amr bin Sa'd, arrived at Kufa from Damascus. Amr was the son of Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas رضی اللہ عنہ, the conqueror of Iran, and was also related to Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ for whom he had all the sympathies. Talks of reconciliation continued but the Kufis, fearing reprisals in case of reconciliation, forced their leader Ibn Ziad to toughen his attitude. Realizing this, Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ placed three options before them: "Allow me to return to Makkah safely, or allow me to proceed to the frontiers of the Muslim empire so that I may continue my campaign against non-Muslims, or allow me a safe passage to the capital, Damascus, where I may settle the issue with Ameer Yazeed in person."

The conspirators, however, succeeded in undermining the reconciliation talks and forced Amr bin Sa'd to corner Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ.

"Either surrender unconditionally or get ready for war," they demanded. Obviously an unconditional surrender by Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ was a tall order and a challenge to his honor and dignity. He was constrained to fight the enemy though heavily outnumbered and under-quipped. Thus, the *Sabayee* conspiracy that sabotaged the peace talks just before the battles of Jamal and Siffeen was successful once again, and Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ and all his camp followers were slain mercilessly on the sands of Karbala. However, all of them displayed unflinching courage and valor on the battle-field.

In apportioning blame for this tragedy, fictitious stories have been fabricated about the disagreements between Ali رضی اللہ عنہ and Uthman رضی اللہ عنہ. In fact, there were no disagreements between the two,

who respected and loved each other like brothers. It is again the *Sabayee* elements who concocted bogus stories and phony events to cover up their own heinous acts of perfidy in this drama of strife and partisan-politics forced on the Muslims. No attempt has ever been made to unmask their ugly faces and instead their version of these episodes has been accepted as authentic, resulting in deep malignity against the highly venerable and illustrious personalities of the Companions j of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

From the assassination of Uthman رضی اللہ عنہ right up to the tragic event at Karbala, one can easily discern the hidden hand of Sabayee agents who successfully plotted against the solidarity of the Muslim Empire and plunged in into senseless bloodshed. The entire blame must be placed on them, where it rightfully belongs, and the fair names of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, who are all *adool* (scrupulously just), must be exonerated from the calumny and ignominy to which they have been exposed through the malicious propaganda of the Sabayees.

It would be worthwhile to mention here two instances of fair play and God-fearing conduct of Ali رضی اللہ عنہ and Ameer Yazeed. When Ali رضی اللہ عنہ defeated Umm Al-Momineen Ayisha رضی اللہ عنہا at the battle of Jamal, he treated her with the same reverence and decorum to which she was entitled as one of the "Mothers of the Believers." He رضی اللہ عنہ conducted her and her retinue of ladies and gentlemen with all the respect and security to Madinah. This amply demonstrates that there was no personal enmity or malice between the two. Again, when the battle survivors, ladies, and children from Hussain's camp of Karbala arrived at Damascus, Ameer Yazeed treated them with due regard and respect and expressed his sympathies with them. He also expressed his sincere condolences at the needless bloodshed and said, "Had Ibn Ziad not gone to such an extent, I would have been pleased with him even then."

The two martyrdoms, that of Uthman رضی اللہ عنہ and of Hussain رضی اللہ عنہ, have caused agony in the hearts of the Muslim *Ummah* and have cast their gloomy shadows over its fourteen hundred year history. They have caused dissension and fighting among the Muslims who have fallen into the trap of those who sowed the seeds of discord and shifted the blame to the most respected persons of the *Ummah*. It is, in fact, the triumph of those intriguing elements who were jubilant over their accomplishment. Now, we are at each other's throat and hurl bad names and odium on the very honorable personalities of Islam. Some people consider names of Yazeed and Shimer a symbols of profanity and an anathema while some others use Amr bin Sa'd's and Ameer Mu'awiya's names as expletives. May Allah guide such people to the right course and protect us from sharing their company or views and give us the wisdom and strength to heed Prophet's ﷺ warning:

((اَللّٰهَ اَللّٰهَ فِی اَصْحَابِی ،لَا تَتَّخِذُوهُمْ غَرَضًا مِنْ بَعْدِی ، فَمَنْ اَحَبَّهُمْ فَبِحُبِّیْ اَحَبَّهُمْ ، وَ مَنْ اَبْغَضَهُمْ فَبِبُغْضِی اَبْغَضَهُمْ))

[رواه الترمذی، عن عبد اللہ بن مغفل رضی اللہ عنہ]

“Beware of expressing opinions about my Companions and, after I am gone, do not use them for your own ends; for whosoever will love them would do so because of their love for me and whosoever would have rancor against them, would do so because of their rancor against me.”

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