

Imam Hussein

Bin Ali (as)

حسين

Al Balagh Foundation

PUBLISHER'S WORD

"Hussein is from me and I am from Hussein. Allah loves whoever loves Hussein. Hussein is a disciple of the disciples." Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.)

All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. There is no god but Allah, the One. Peace and blessings be with Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah and his pure and sinless Ahlul-Bait.

In the twentieth century, and particularly in the last quarter of it, we have witnessed many revolutions resulting in drastic changes in the geographical, political and sociological faces of the world. Most of these changes, if not all, have affected large groups of Muslims in one way or the other.

World events move quickly and man forgets the lessons of the past. But history is connected by a series of circumstances and continues to repeat itself. Thus, the past affects the present and the present, no less, affects the future. The human conflicts we are witnessing in the world today are merely a reflection of the conflicts of the past. The essence of these conflicts are based on right and wrong, good and evil, truth and falsehood.

We often find the unjust ideologies, regimes and methods of ideology threatening the security of the people and destroying man with the pressure of their interests and enmity. We often find this to be in effect in this land, in Europe, Asia, America and Africa. When we search history we find that what we are suffering today is a continuation of the stories of injustice of long ago and that the oppressors of the world today are the successors of the oppressors of yesterday.

If we contemplate these and the many other events that are affecting the Muslim world today, we will find that there is a strong parallelism to the subject of our book.

This is a brief account of the life of Imam Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), the second grandson of the Holy Prophet and the third divinely chosen caliph from the Ahlul-Bait (a.s.).

He was the leader of a movement that was very unlike his illustrious predecessors. Although the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) engaged in war for the sake of Allah, it was at a time when Islam was struggling to establish itself as a divine religion. Later, during the Imamate of Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), again he was driven to war to protect Islam from the deviators. At the time of the Imamate of Hassan bin Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) his followers had lost much of their power and force and because the bloodshed of war would cause further division in the ummah, Imam Hassan (a.s.) opted for a peace treaty with the enemy in order to protect the religion.

Imam Hussein's (a.s.) approach to Imamate was unique and extraordinary in that he took a position of opposition to the so-called caliph of the ummah. At first his opposition resembled that of his father, quiet seclusion and disassociation during the caliphate of Mu'awiyah who had not only assassinated Imam Hassan (a.s.) in order to override the terms of the treaty, but further broke all its limits in assigning the caliphate to his son Yazid as an inheritance. Later, when Yazid became caliph the pressure on Imam Hussein (a.s.) to give his pledge to this wayward and deviated ruler brought about the open opposition and refusal of Imam Hussein (a.s.) to comply.

The repercussions of his position brought about the horrendous event of the massacre at Karbala' in central Iraq. Unlike his grandfather and father (a.s.), Imam Hussein (a.s.) was not confronting non-Muslims. The killers of Imam Hussein (a.s.), his cousins, his sons, his brothers, his friends and followers, were the same ones who would join him for prayer and stand behind him as he led it! Yet, we see that even this did not deter these same people from carrying out the most atrocious orders to cut off his head and trample his body, leaving it unburied on the desert sands.

Many books have been written about the revolution of Imam Hussein (a.s.) any many misunderstand his position. It was not one of war. He was not marching to Kufa to organise an army to turn upon the ruler of the time. He was invited to come to lead them in their matters and to do his sacred duty. But he was not allowed to do so. The political implications of his refusal to give his pledge to Yazid would have weakened the

illegitimate leader's position and that was something that Yazid was not prepared to accept. He wanted all power and authority and he accepted no opposition. Thus, the tragedy of Karbala' was not about war, it was about greed and oppression. It was about truth and falsehood, right and wrong, belief and disbelief. The condition of the Muslim world today is so parallel with that time of fourteen centuries ago that one is confirmed to believe that history does repeat itself.

Imam Hussein (a.s.) a revolutionary, a leader, a saint, a pure and bright soul, a human being concerned about his fellow man. The Muslim world has been taken over by kings and presidents and prime ministers with no legitimate right and who desecrate Islamic law every day. Islam had become a source of wealth and power and is in a state of constant turmoil and confusion so that Muslims are being killed by Kuffar and Muslims alike! This was the condition of the ummah during the time of Imam Hussein (a.s.).

He saw the religion established by his grandfather, the Holy Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), defended by his father and brother (a.s.), and now his personal responsibility, being abused and practically discarded for power, wealth and glory. He saw the rule of Muslims in the hands of unbelievers. He saw hypocrisy and oppression and he rebelled. Not unlike what is happening in the Muslim world where the rulers, some in the name of Allah, and some not, have sold out their people and their religion for some of the same reasons. The Muslims of these countries, now and in the past, have made stands against these illegitimate rulers. Why have they not succeeded to take their right to rule as Allah had ordained?

Superficially we can answer this question by saying the now patent phrase, "Muslims are disunited." At a closer look we will find it is because those rulers, of the past and present, have succeeded to innovate Islam to the point that Muslims have no identity or self-esteem. A sad reminder of the warnings of our Prophet and his Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), when they repeatedly commanded us to adhere to them.

Imam Hussein (a.s.) was one of those reminders. He rose up against an illegitimate ruler who was innovating the faith and misguiding the Muslims. This ruler played on the disintegration of unity that began at the moment of the death of Muhammad (s.a.w.). Imam Hussein (a.s.) took his stand so that we could understand our position. It was a stand or fall situation. He could not win the battle, but he won the revolution. On the fields of Karbala', a bleak desert plain in central Iraq, he stood

and fought and was martyred for the sake of re-establishing what had been forgotten.

This book is about a revolutionary. A righteous man. A religious authority. An Imam of the Muslim ummah. He was killed! By whom? By others Muslims in a struggle for power and rule of the Islamic state. Who was there to help him? Precious few. Why did he take a stand that meant certain death for him and his family and followers? For Allah and Islam. What was he trying to do? Teach us that fighting unto death is more honorable than submitting to injustice. Why have we not grasped the true essence of his message? This final question remains unanswered.

Around the world on the 9th and 10th of Moharram, you will find Muslims of all creeds crying their eyes out for Imam Hussein (a.s.), and then going home to their comfortable beds to have a restful night's sleep while their brothers and sisters starve to death and suffer oppression and aggression in various countries. What a bunch of rubbish! Is that what Imam Hussein (a.s.) sacrificed his pure and blessed blood for? A few tears once a year? Allah preserves us from the ignorant!

We pray to Allah, with all our soul, that upon reading this brief account of the life of Imam Hussein (a.s.), the third rightful caliph of the Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) that the reader will be encouraged to research more deeply into his life and message. Scores of books are available in many languages. A study of his stand may help us to take a more righteous position in our own lives.

An understanding of what Imam Hussein (a.s.) was trying to instill in the soul of the ummah may wake us up before it is too late, if it's not too late already. We suppose the best way to capsulize his message is in his own words:

"It is better to die fighting for truth, than to live under an oppressive ruler."

"Of the believers are the men who are true to what they covenanted with Allah; of them is he who has fulfilled his vow and of them is he who awaits (its fulfilment); and they have not changed in the least,"

Holy Qur'an (33:23)

If we can honestly include ourselves among any of those mentioned in the above verse, our tears for Imam Hussein (a.s.) may have real content.

With Allah comes success.

Chapter 2

INTRODUCTION

Praise be to Allah, and blessings and peace be upon our master and leader, Muhammad, and his pure household and the righteous among his companions.

As centuries pass by, the uprising of Imam Hussein (a.s.), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), shines more powerfully, as a medal on the brow of history. It becomes firmly fixed in the conscience of the Muslim ummah, and is more understandable in the view of the historians and researchers.

Similarly, the free faithful get more determined to follow in its footsteps, and hold firmly to its noble goals so as to destroy the oppression of the tyrants, and root up the governments of the agents of the east and west all over our great Muslim world.

As in the far past, all efforts made by the sympathizers, and the spiteful alike, to thwart Imam Hussein's determination to begin his blessed and tremendous uprising, which awakened the ummah and pulled down the thrones of the Umayyad, had failed. Now all the hectic and poisonous plots being made to deflect the revolution from its right path, or obliterate its landmarks, or extinguish its blazing flame, will also certainly fail. There is no way these efforts could succeed, whether they center on distorting the image of the uprising, inventing stories and myths around it, or emptying it of its Islamic meaning and depicting Imam Hussein (a.s.) as a 'rejecting leftist', or an 'ambitious adventurer', or an 'avenger', or a 'mutinist', or employing any other means of diversion, cover-up and distortion.

Imam Hussein (a.s.) rose up. He continued his uprising and stuck to it until its last stages. He sacrificed all that he had, and offered the most dear men and pure souls to Allah for one goal. It was to defuse a 'bomb' which Mu'awiyah expertly timed and planted. That was Mu'awiyah, the son of Hind, the 'Eater of Kidneys'. The 'bomb' was planted to blast off

the principle of 'Islamic legitimacy' at the hands of his son Yazid, to root out that principle after being gradually pushed off the stage. This being achieved, it would be an easy task to violate all Allah's bounds and laws, the first of which are the qualifications the Muslim leader should possess to answer the office of leadership, and the last of which is the cancelling of Islamic rituals and ethics.

It is no wonder, then, that the orientalist, including the Jews and Christians, praise the Umayyad rule, particularly Yazid, as the strongest leader in the history of Islam!

Al-Balagh Foundation hopes, as it presents to its dear readers 'Rays of Light from the Life of Imam Hussein (a.s.)', the third Imam of the household of the Prophet (s.a.w.), and his second grandson, who, along with his brother, Imam Hasan (a.s.), are the masters of the youths of paradise, that it can spread sweet wafts of the fragrance of the family of the Prophet (s.a.w.), and reach the masses of our Muslim ummah with the momentum of a principled uprising, the match of which history never witnessed.

We beseech Allah, the Most High, to aid and grant success to all the culturally aware vanguards, who reject their corrupt status quo, and believe in their promising Islamic future. He is the best of helpers.

Al-Balagh Foundation

HOW ISLAM IMMORTALIZED IMAM HUSSEIN (A.S.): THE BLESSED INFANT

On the third of the blessed month of Sha'ban, the fourth year after Hijrah and a year after the birth of Imam Hassan (a.s.), the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) was given news of the birth of Imam Hussein (a.s.). He hurried to the house of Imam Ali and Fatimah al-Zahra' (a.s.).

"O Asma'," he ordered Asma', the daughter of Umays, "bring me my son."

She took the newborn to him. The infant was wrapped in a piece of cloth. The face of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) lit up upon seeing his grandson. He took him in his arms. He recited the call to prayer (adan) into his right ear, and read the shorter version (iqamah) in his left ear. He, then, placed the baby in his lap and wept.

"May my father and mother be your sacrifice," Asma' asked him, "why are you crying?"

"Because of my son," he replied.

"He is a newborn baby," she said.

"O Asma'," he said, "After me, the transgressing party will kill him. May Allah never grant them my intercession."

Then he said: **"Asma', don't tell Fatimah about this, for she has just given birth to him."**(1)

Then the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) turned to Imam Ali (a.s.) and asked him: **"What name have you chosen for him?"**

"I would never precede you in naming him, O Messenger of Allah," he replied.

At that moment, the revelation descended on the beloved Messenger, Muhammad (s.a.w.), with the name of the infant. Having received the divine order, the Messenger (s.a.w.) looked at Imam Ali (a.s.) and said: **"name him Hussein."**

Seven days later, the Prophet (s.a.w.) hastened to the house of al-Zahra' (a.s.). He slaughtered a lamb as an offering to Allah and ordered the infant's head shaved, its weight in silver to be given to the poor.

Thus, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) applied the very same Islamic rites he had earlier performed for his brother, Imam Hassan (a.s.).(2)

THE STATUS OF IMAM HUSSEIN (A.S.)

The status of Imam Hussein (Abu-Abdullah) (a.s.) is unparalleled, except by that of his father, mother, brother, and the Imams of his offspring, on all of them be the peace and blessings of Allah. Should a historian make a good research, collecting the stories and traditions concerning Imam Hussein (a.s.), he would certainly end up with the Imam (a.s.) as the top example among the Muslims. He would write a voluminous, great work covering this Imam.

As much as we can, we will delve into the key points which portray the great position of Imam Hussein (a.s.) according to Islamic criteria.

The Glorious Qur'an, the supreme divine document, which falsehood can never reach from before or behind it, expresses in many verses the lofty position Imam Hussein (a.s.) achieved in the sight of Allah, the Exalted. Following are some of these verses:

1. Verse of Purification (Tathir):

"Allah only wishes to keep away uncleanness from you (Household of the Prophet) and purify you thoroughly."

Holy Qur'an (33:33)

Traditionists say, regarding the reason this verse was revealed, that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) called for a shawl. With it he covered Ali, Fatimah, Hassan and Hussein (a.s.). "O my Lord," he said, **"these are the members of my family. Remove uncleanness from them and purely purify them."**(3) and so this noble verse was revealed on this occasion. It is a testimony by Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, on the purity of the Prophetic house (Ahlul Bait (a.s.)) and their great stature.

2. Verse of Malediction (Mubahala):

"If anyone disputes with you about it (your prophethood) after the knowledge has come to you, say, 'Come, let us bring our sons and your

sons and our women and your women and ourselves and yourselves and pray to Allah to curse the lying party."

Holy Qur'an (3:61)

The Qur'anic exegetes and scholars say that this noble verse was revealed when the Christians of the city of Najran agreed with the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) to pray to Allah to destroy the party which stuck to falsehood. As agreed, and on time, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) went out to the place chosen for the contest. He carried Imam Hussein (a.s.) and took Imam Hassan (a.s.) by the hand. Fatimah followed behind while Imam Ali walked in their wake. **"Say 'Amen' at the end of my prayer,"** the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) told them. But, upon seeing those brilliant faces filled with piety and grandeur, the Christians stopped short of entering the contest. They recognized the Prophet's authority, and paid the tribute. (4)

The noble verse called Hassan and Hussein "our sons," mentioned the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), and referred to Ali as "ourselves" and Fatimah as "our women." She symbolizes the whole of womankind in this verse. Had there been other people who had higher status than these people, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) certainly would have brought them along with him.

3. Verse of Affection (Mawada):

"... say: 'I do not ask you for any payment for my preaching to you, except the love for my relatives...'"

Holy Qur'an (42:23)

The Qur'anic exegetes state that this verse was revealed concerning Ali, Fatimah, Hassan and Hussein (a.s.).

Jabir bin Abdullah is reported to have said: "A bedouin came to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and said, 'O Muhammad! introduce me to Islam.'

"You should bear witness," replied the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) **'that there is no god but Allah, Who is the only God, Who has no partner whatsoever, and that Muhammad is His Servant and Messenger.'**

"Do you ask for recompense in return?" asked the bedouin.

"No," said the Prophet (s.a.w.), **'except that you should love the relatives.'**

"Mine or yours?" inquired the man.

"Mine," said the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.).

"Hold out your hand," said the bedouin. 'I give you my pledge of allegiance. My Allah curse whoever doesn't love you or your kindred.'

"Amen," said the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.)."(5)

It is reported in the Musnad (Book of traditions) of Ahmad bin Hanbal, the two Sahihs (Authentic books of traditions), and the exegesis of al-Tha'alibi and al-Tabarsi, that Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, was quoted as saying, "when the verse (say: I do not ask you for any payment for my preaching to you except the love for my relatives) was revealed, Muslims asked the Prophet (s.a.w.), 'O Messenger of Allah! Who are your kinsfolk whom we should love?! **'Ali, Fatimah and their two sons,'** answered the Prophet (a.s.)."

Next to the verses of the Glorious Qur'an, we quote certain statements, from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) as additional evidence expressing the lofty position occupied by Imam Hussein (a.s.) in the world of Islam and the Muslim ummah.

1. In the Sahih of al-Tirmidhi, Ya'la bin Murrah is quoted to have said, "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said, **'Hussein is from me and I am from Hussein. Allah loves whoever loves Hussein. Hussein is a disciple of the disciples.'**"(6)

2. Salman al-Farsi is reported to have said, "I heard the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.) saying, **'Hassan and Hussein are my two sons. Whoever loves them then he loves me. And whoever dislikes them then he dislikes me. And whoever dislikes me then Allah dislikes him. And whomever Allah dislikes, He will throw him into hell face downward.'**"(7)

3. Al-Bara' bin Azib is quoted to have said, "I saw the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) carrying Hussein bin Ali (a.s.) on his shoulder. He was saying, **'O Lord! I do love him so love him.'**"(8)

4. Abdullah bin Mas'ood is reported to have said, "The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said, concerning Hassan and Hussein, **'These are my two sons, whoever loves them then he loves me. And whoever dislikes them he dislikes me,'**"

5. Ali bin Hussein (a.s.) said, on the authority of his father, on the authority of his grandfather (a.s.), **'The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) took the arms of Hassan and Hussein and said, 'Whoever loves me and loves these two and their father, he will certainly be with me on the Day of Judgement.'**"(9)

Chapter 5

ASPECT OF HIS CHARACTER

In our latest booklet (10) we referred to the fact that the characters of both Imams Hassan and Hussein (a.s.) have many traits in common. Both of them received their initial stage of training before shouldering the heavy task of propagating and defending the da'wah. Both of them had one and the same education, indoctrination, and spiritual and ideological teachings, under the supervision of their grandfather (s.a.w.), their father and their mother (a.s.).

As a result, the aspects of their characters fused together personifying the message of Allah, the Blessed and Exalted, in thought, action and conduct.

In our booklet on Imam Hassan (a.s.), we cited some examples which put his character into perspective. Here, we do the same regarding Imam Hussein (a.s.).

His Relationship With Allah

We can better understand the depth of Imam Hussein's (a.s.) relationship with Allah, the Most High, if we don't lose sight of the fact that the Prophet (s.a.w.) himself taught him the ideology of Islam and brought him up spiritually as he had done with his father, Imam Ali, his mother, al-Zahra', and his brother, Imam Hassan (a.s.). By so doing, his path was defined and his character was formed.

One day he was asked, "How great is your fear of your Lord?"

"No one would be secure on the Day of Judgement except those who feared Allah in this life," he replied.(11)

His face would turn pale, and he would tremble at the time of doing his ablution. He was asked about this and answered,

"Whoever stands in the presence of the Almighty Allah is not to blame if his color turns pale and his limbs shake."

On the night before the tenth of the month of Muharram, Imam Hussein (a.s.) asked the Ummayyad army to delay the battle till the following morning. He said, **"This night we want to offer our prayers to our Lord, and we want to ask His forgiveness. He knows that I love to offer my prayer to Him, recite His Book, and pray much asking for His forgiveness."**

During the most critical and horrifying hours of the last day of his earthly life, he realized that it was midday and he had to perform his prayer. The battle of Karbala' was in full swing. He asked the enemies to stop fighting so as to let him and his followers offer their prayer. No better testimony than this can reflect the depth and strength of his relationship with Allah and his love for Him.

He used to recite this supplication, **"O Lord! Grant me the desire for the other world, till I realize that it is a real thing in my heart, through my apathy to this world. O Lord! Grant me perception with regard to the other world so much that I will seek the divine reward with acute longing, and flee from the bad deeds out of fearing You, O Lord..."**(12)

We Will address this plea more elaborately when we cover the uprising of Imam Hussein (a.s.) and his heroic, and matchless sacrifice for the sake of Allah, the Most High.

His Relationship With People

A look at the ethical side of Imam Hussein's (a.s.) character would be enough to shed light on the vividness of his relations with the ummah, for he was the most perfect and exemplary leader during his time. We don't mean that Imam Hussein (a.s.) was different from the other Imams in this respect. The nature of the relationship between the Imam and the ummah is actually outlined by the Divine Message. Imams represent it, as personified in their daily life.

Following are some examples of that great, high and brilliant relationship.

His Humbleness

Once Imam Hussein (a.s.) passed by poor men eating crumbs of bread on a mat. He greeted them and they invited him to their meal. He sat among them and said: **"If your food were not alms, I would have eaten with you. Come home with me,"** he asked them. There, he fed them, clothed them and provided them with money.(13)

One could easily detect the depth of his humbleness through examination of this vivid testimony, particularly when we take into consideration that Imam Hussein (a.s.) was the political and ideological figure who was appointed as the legitimate leader of the Muslims by Allah, through His Messenger (s.a.w.).

As for his social position, he was so matchless and unique, that Ibn Abbas, the revered companion of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), used to hold the stirrup of his horse when he would mount it. Ibn Abbas was older than Imam Hussein (a.s.), but he did this out of his respect for him.(14)

It is because of his glorious social status that the people would dismount from their horses and camels, on the way to Mecca to perform their pilgrimage, as long as he would travel on foot.

Another example reflecting his humble nature is that of his acceptance of an invitation to having food with the poor. He encountered a number of poor men. Having had their food they hastened to ask him to share with them. He dismounted from, his horse saying, **"Surely, Allah doesn't like the haughty."** He partook of their food and said: **"I have accepted your invitation. Won't you accept mine?"**

"Certainly, we Will," said they. He took them to his house and said to al-Rabab, his wife, **"Bring us what you have been storing."**(15)

He did care for the people. He would always help them, even though, for the most part, they wouldn't recognize his legitimate right. Shu'aib bin Abdul-Rahman is reported to have said: "On the way of al-Taf (battle of Karbala', wherein he was martyred) a mark was seen on the back of Hussein bin Ali (a.s.). Imam Zain al- Abideen (a.s.) (his eldest son, and the son who survived the battle) was asked about it. 'It is the trace,' he replied, **'of the bag, which he puts on his back (carrying food) to the house of the widows, orphans and the poor.'**(16)

This fact attests to his remarkable humbleness, his care for the ummah, his awareness and deep feeling of his responsibility toward the people.

His Forgiveness of the Wrongdoers

This is another one of his key attributes. Once a young servant of his did something which deserved punishment. When Imam Hussein (a.s.) wanted to punish him, the servant said:

"Who curb their anger." "Let him go", said the Imam.

"And those who forgive their fellow-man," added the servant.

"I forgive you," said the Imam.

"And Allah loves the charitable, sir," said the servant.

"I set you free, for the sake of Allah," said the Imam. **"Henceforth I am going to give you the double of what I have been giving you."**(17)

These are only brief instances of the ethical side of the character of Imam Hussein (a.s.).

Aspects of His Thought

We deem it suitable to mention some of his activities in the field of Islamic thought. These texts testify to his great intellectual capacity, polished by the divine message and set on the right track by Allah, the Almighty.

Nafi' bin al-Azraq, the head of the Azraqis who were among the Khawarij (those who mutinied against Imam Ali (a.s.) after the Battle of Siffeen), once asked him to describe his Lord Whom he worshipped.

"O Nafi'!", Imam Hussein (a.s.) started, **"Whoever uses symbolism in religious matters will always remain in confusion, deviated as he stumbles off the right path, sticking to deviation wherever he goes, straying off the right course, and saying bad, and worthless things. O son of al-Azraq! I can describe my Lord with the very words He used to describe Himself: Never recognized by the five senses. Never compared to man.**

Very close but not to the point of being touched. Very far but not so far that He can't be detected. He is One and can't be partitioned. Known by His signs. Described by His attributes. There is no god but He, the Great, the Exalted."

At that point Ibn al-Azraq wept and said: "What beautiful words are yours."(18)

On his way to Karbala', he assessed the general situation, pointing to the great deviation the ummah had been drawn into, and talked about his determination to win martyrdom, in the following words:

"Life has certainly changed disguises and its good has gone forever. This has continued till the remaining good in it amounts to the thin sediment at the bottom of a drinking utensil. Life is a mean food, a pasture covered with bad grass. Do you not see that the truth is not followed and falsehood not discouraged? The faithful must certainly desire to meet his Lord righteously. I do not deem death other than felicity and life among the unjust other than suffering and boredom. People are certainly enthralled with life. Faith is only something licked by them. They take good care of it as long as it secures their living. But once put to the tests of tribulation, religious men should be rarely found amongst them."(19)

With his sharp awareness, he defines the different levels of the relationship with Allah. He says:

"Some people serve Allah desiring (His rewards). It is the worship of merchants. Some people serve Allah out of fear. It is the worship of slaves. And some people serve Allah out of gratitude. This is the worship of the free. It is the best kind of worship."(20)

He addressed the people, prior to the battle of Karbala', defining the characteristics of the Ummayyad rule, and analyzing the political and administrative situation from an Islamic point of view He said:

"... O people! the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.) had said: 'Whoever witnesses an unjust ruler considering the prohibitions of Allah as permissible, breaking the covenant of Allah, opposing the practices of the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.), treating His servant sinfully and cruelly, and had seen all these misdeeds but did not oppose him by words or actions, Allah surely will punish him as He wills.'

"Certainly these people have come to staunchly obey Satan, and given up obeying the Compassionate. They showed mischief, stopped acting in accordance with Islamic laws, took Muslims' property to themselves, made the haram designated by Allah, halal, and turned His halal to haram. I am more entitled than anyone else (to make the change). Your letters arrived, and your envoys came to me carrying your pledge of allegiance that you will not hand me over to my enemy, nor will you fail me. Should you stick to your pledge of allegiance, you have surely made the right decision. I am Hussein bin Ali, and the son of Fatimah, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). I am, myself, with you, and my family is with yours. You find a good example in me. But, however, if you will not hold onto your pledge of allegiance, break your covenant, and throw off my pledge of allegiance, then, by Allah, it is not the first time you do it. You did it with my father, and you have done it with my brother, and my cousin Muslim bin Aqeel. He is certainly gullible who is deceived by you. You are missing your luck and losing your lot. He who breaks his oath, breaks it at his own peril. Allah will certainly compensate me if you leave me."(21)

These are only scattered small examples of his great thought which occupies the center of original, serene Islam. Should the dear reader tend to know more about Imam Hussein (a.s.), he can refer to the books which dealt with his life. He will find out himself how deep and great were Imam Hussein's (a.s.) thought and faith.(22)

Chapter 6

PROLOGUE

Imam Hussein's role in Islamic life started very early. While still a young man, he contributed effectively to the rising movement of Islam. Eminent was his role during the Imamate of his father, the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.). Side by side with his father, brother, and the loyal men around his father, he took part in the major battles of his father: al-Jamal, Siffin and al-Nahrawan.

During the Imamate of his brother, Hassan (a.s.), he lived as his loyal, obedient soldier. They shared the same views and acted in unison. He experienced, with his brother, the events, including the signing of the peace document with Mu'awiyah. Afterwards, he went to Medina along with his brother and the members of the house of the Prophet (s.a.w.). There, they did their best to carry out their mission of keeping the Divine Message away from the current of mounting deviation. As we have explained in our study of the life of Imam Hassan (a.s.), their religious task centered around ethical and ideological teachings, straightening up people's conduct, and pointing out their religious responsibility to them.

In the wake of Imam Hassan's (a.s.) departure to his Exalted Lord, Imam Hussein's (a.s.) role entered a new phase due to the complications which sprung up in the midst of the ummah. Since the role of any Imam from the house of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) is defined by the nature of the social, ideological and political developments in his time, Imam Hussein (a.s.) blazed a new trail in defining the progress of the Islamic movement which he led after taking the office of the legitimate Imam, in harmony with the Divine Will which was expressed in the statements and words of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) in this respect.

Jabir bin Sumrah is reported to have said: "I went with my father to see the Prophet (s.a.w.). I heard him saying: '**Life will not come to an end before twelve caliphs have appeared.**' Jabir went on to say: "I could not

figure out what he said afterwards, and so I asked my father: "What has he said?"

"He (s.a.w.) said," my father replied, '**All of them are from the Quraish.**'"(23)

Ababah bin Rab'i bin Jabir is reported to have said: "**The Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.) said: 'I am the master of the prophets, who will come after me are twelve, the first one of whom is Ali and the last one is al-Mahdi, who will revolt against injustice.'**"(24)

Salman (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "I went to see the Prophet (s.a.w.). I saw Hussein on his lap. The Prophet was kissing him on the cheeks and mouth. I heard him saying: '**You are a master, the son of a master, and the brother of a master. You are an Imam, the son of an Imam and the brother of an Imam. You are the Proof of Allah, the son of a Proof of Allah, and the brother of a Proof of Allah, and the father of nine Proof s of Allah, the ninth one of them is al-Mahdi, the one who will revolt against injustice.**'"(25)

There are a plethora of statements and traditions reported from the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.) in which he states, implicitly and explicitly, that his successors are twelve caliphs.(26)

Imamate took a new turn during Imam Hussein's (a.s.) term. That is what we Will explain, Insha'llah, in the following pages.

POST-PEACE TREATY EVENTS

Mu'awiyah entered the city of Kufa after signing the peace treaty with Imam Hassan (a.s.). His army encircled it. He addressed the Kufans in these words: "O people of Kufa! Do you think that I have fought you for the sake of prayer, poor-rate and hajj (pilgrimage), whilst I know you offer your prayers, give the poor-rate and perform hajj? Nay, I fought you so as to be your ruler and seize control of your lives. Allah granted any property plundered or any blood shed in this sedition is irretrievable. Any promise I have given is trampled under these two feet of mine..."(27)

This address of Mu'awiyah amounted to a public revocation of the treaty which was conducted with Imam Hassan (a.s.) as expressed in these words: "Any promise I have given is trampled under these two feet of mine." Not a few days had passed after the signing of the peace document, when Mu'awiyah began implementing a new plan, totally in contrast to the terms of the peace document. The following goals figure in his notorious plan:

1. Unleashing a wave of terror, and embarking on elimination of all opposition forces, particularly the followers of Imam Ali (a.s.). They were bunted down, and every means of oppression and terror was employed to silence every free voice. No better testimony to the danger of this savage and horrifying policy than the following text, which carries the orders of Mu'awiyah to one of his military officers:

" ... And kill any one you come across who does not hold the same views you hold, and attack every town you pass by. And plunder property as plundering property is tantamount to killing, and it is more hurting to the heart..."(28)

If the deviant Ummayyad plot, expressed clearly in this text, is devilish, it was first implemented during the life of Imam Ali (a.s.); it took on more dangerous proportions after the signing of the peace document

with Imam Hassan (a.s.). More innocent blood was shed, and opponents, who came from different schools of thought, at the head of which were the followers of Imam Ali (a.s.) and the Ahlul Bait (a.s.), were put to the sword.

Mu'awiyah wrote to his governors in all provinces: "See to it that whoever is proven, by irrefutable evidence, to love Ali and his household, his name is erased from the public register and his pay and food allotment are dropped."(29)

In another letter, he wrote: "Whomever you accuse of being loyal to these people, severely punish him and tear down his house."(30)

In short and expressive words Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (a.s.) depicts this bloody tragedy. He says: "... **Our followers were killed in every city. Hands and legs were cut off at the slightest suspicion. Whoever was reported to love us or had any contact with us would either be imprisoned or robbed of his property or his house destroyed. Oppression increased in volume and became unduly harsh, till the time of Ubaidullah bin Ziyad, the murderer of Hussein (a.s.).**"(31)

At the head of the victims of that horrible carnage was a group of pious companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.) including Hijr bin Uday and his followers, Rasheed al-Hajari, Amru bin al-Humq al-Khuza'i, Awfa bin Hisn and many others. Books such as al-Tabari, al-Kamil and Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah collected countless stories about Mu'awiyah's hatred for the followers of Ahlul Bait (a.s.).

2. Dispersing money for the sake of buying-out men, and weakening their Islamic character, and helping the deviant policy of Mu'awiyah to fulfill its devilish objectives. In reality, two kinds of men were bought out:

A. A number of preachers and traditionists whose role was outrageous in working in favor of Mu'awiyah. They forged traditions and narratives and falsely attributed them to the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.) in order to deprecate Imam Ali (a.s.) and all the members of his family.

B. Leading social men who might act against the Umayyad rule. It was a policy practised by Mu'awiyah and the other rulers of the Umayyad dynasty. This policy became an adopted line of action throughout the Umayyad rule. No better testimony to this policy than Mu'awiyah's sending 1,000 Dirhams to Malik bin Hubairah al-Sakoon. The latter was enraged to hear of the murder of the great companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.), Hijr bin Uday, and his followers (may Allah be pleased with them). Mu'awiyah sent him the money. Al-Sakooni, upon

receiving it, gave up any intention of rising against oppression and corruption.

3. War of starvation. It was the most effective weapon used by the Ummayyads. The Muslim ummah felt humiliated and unable to challenge the rulers.

As this policy was based on fighting the opposition forces with their daily bread and depriving them of the means to earn their living, Mu'awiyah employed the most horrendous way to besiege the followers of Ahlul Bait (a.s.) in particular. His recorded directive, which he sent to his governors in this respect said: "... See to it that whoever is proven, by irrefutable evidence, to love Ali and his household, his name is erased from the public register, and his pay and food allotment are dropped."

One can see for himself the repercussions of this inhuman policy, adopted by the Ummayyad house to corrupt people and numb their conscience. It was not a temporary line of action. Mu'awiyah made it a consistent policy throughout the twenty years of his rule (41-60 A.H.).

4. Breaking the bonds holding the Muslim ummah as one entity by stirring up the nationalist, tribal and regional spirit among the different groups. Thus, plunging the Muslims into infighting at the expense of their real opposition to the oppressive rule of the Ummayyads. Mutual spite and hatred between the Arab tribes were awakened and soon differences and violence began to surface. The tribes of Qays and Mudhar fought each other. The people of Yemen and those of Medina jumped at each other's throats. And so was the case among the tribes of Iraq! In the same way sectarianism was revived between the Arabs and non-Arab Muslims who came to be historically known as al-Mawali. This policy of ignorance was expressively reflected in the poetry of many poets like Miskeen al-Darimi, al-Farazdaq, Jareer, al-Akktal and others.(32)

5. Assassination of Imam Hassan bin Ali (a.s.) as he was the legitimate symbol of original Islam.

6. Crowning Yazid as the new king after his father, Mu'awiyah. Such a move was taken in a severe atmosphere of oppression, and in line with the stick-and-carrot policy, which ran counter to the peace treaty which appointed Imam Hassan (a.s.) as the next caliph after the death of Mu'awiyah. If Imam Hassan (a.s.) himself was already dead at the time of Mu'awiyah's death, the document said that Imam Hussein (a.s.) would be the next caliph.

And so Mu'awiyah completed his plot of revoking every term of the treaty he concluded with Imam Hassan (a.s.). Mu'awiyah, thus, went another step in trespassing the Islamic concept of rule, by adopting the

hereditary rule, which implies dictatorship, as a system of rulership in the Muslim world. Islamic principles and the Muslim ummah were exposed to the most violent tragedy in their history. The ummah's movement swerved off the right track it was supposed to tread.

Deviation took a clear shape shortly after the death of Mu'awiyah and the ascension of Yazid to the office of caliphate. Such was the desire of Mu'awiyah who nurtured and kept it alive till it was completely realized.

The mandate given to Yazid to lead the Muslim ummah, plan its future, and define its course of action meant, in reality, the liquidation of the Islamic existence. It was an actual regression from it shrouded in another attire.

Yazid, as history testifies, was overwhelmed by deviation in his thought, practices and feelings. Unbiased researchers would admit that Yazid could not find the chance to consciously open to Islam and its high objectives which models man as an individual and a member in a society in a way that keeps him totally away from the pillars of ignorance. It is the best model of man any ideology can produce.

When Yazid got rid of the atmosphere of good education furnished by Islam for its followers, it is no wonder that our history brims over with stories about Yazid's daily practices which were immersed in deviation, under the noses of the majority of the Muslims in Syria. He plunged himself into debauchery, loose entertainment, alcohol-drinking, womanizing and singing... He was so careless and morally loose that he used to put gold bangles on his dogs!(33)

And so the ummah stood at the threshold of a new stage of its history. Ahead of it, there were two choices:

Either to develop a strong rejection of the type of life being imposed on it, whatever the price; or accept the de facto life, wherein it had to give up its Message, the source of its greatness and symbol of its pride among other nations.

Then, which choice did the ummah prefer?

THE UPRISING: WHY?

If we study the life of Imam Hussein (a.s.), the events he witnessed, and the circumstances which beset him, we will easily detect the fact that he had no chance whatsoever of scoring, materialistically speaking, a victory over the oppressive authorities of the Ummayyads. Even those Kufans who wrote to him, were not trusted by him. He declared his opposition to the rule of Yazid before the arrival of the Kufans' envoys and messages.

He announced his first communiqué in the city of his grandfather, Muhammad (s.a.w.), whereas he heard of the Kufans' commitment to his cause while in Mecca, i.e. after his declaration of opposition to the Ummayyads.

On the other hand, the province of Hijaz failed to assist him, if we leave out the sentimental lip service the people there paid him. He soon realized the inability of Mecca to protect him from the Ummayyad authorities which were intent on getting rid of him.

So that no drop of blood of the family of the Prophet (s.a.w.) might be shed in the sacred town, he moved towards Iraq.

Though he was quite sure that he would be killed, he was insisting on starting his uprising, and standing his ground till the tragically inevitable end.

Why did he insist so? Rather, why was the uprising? In answering this big question, let's take into consideration the following facts;

First, Yazid took the office of caliphate, while being a young deviant and inexperienced man. Yazid was obstinate and rash. He was a real threat to the ummah. He had no sound, good Islamic education, as he lived in a house never lightened by the sun of Islamic guidance. So it comes as no surprise that historical annals attest to the fact that Yazid took to alcohol, gambling and every kind of unacceptable anti-Islamic behavior.(34)

Yazid, with all his deviations and the bad life he had led, not to mention his lack of adequate experience in discharging the affairs of the Islamic state, was coronated as the new Muslim caliph..!!

His ascension to the high office of caliphate opened the doors wide to all kinds of corruption, and made it easy to break from the Islamic shari'ah. But the committed Islamic forces, at the head of which was Imam Hussein (a.s.), took advantage of the weak points and the manifest immorality in Yazid's character. Lots of people came to realize, to the point of certainty, the make-up and goals of this un-Islamic character. Rejectors of deviation found in that a good chance to melt the stupor which engulfed the mentality of the Muslims. They moved to awaken and enlighten the ummah towards the Muslims' high interests. Violence was a choice that could not be ruled out. And so Imam Hussein (a.s.), the immortal hero of Islam, stood before the Ummayyad army, under the leadership of al-Hurr bin Yazid al-Riyahi, (35) addressing them, pointing to the worst aspects of the Ummayyad rule's deviation. The two parties came across each other in Iraq. Imam Hussein (a.s.) said:

"... O people! the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.) had said, 'Whoever witnesses an unjust ruler considering the prohibitions of Allah as permissible, breaking the covenant of Allah, opposing the practices of the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.), treating His servants sinfully and cruelly, and had seen all these misdeeds but did not oppose him by words or actions, Allah will surely punish him as He wills. Certainly, these people have come to staunchly obey Satan, and given up obeying the Compassionate. They showed mischief, stopped acting in accordance with the Islamic laws, took Muslims' property to themselves, made the forbidden by Allah lawful, and turned His lawful things to unlawful ones... "

By such addresses and speeches Imam Hussein (a.s.) shed light on the nature of the Ummayyad rule. He awakened peoples' sentiments and steeled their wills to shed off the layer of dust descended on their awareness and totally rejected the unconditional surrender to the illegitimate rule of the Ummayyads.

Secondly, the ultimate level of awareness of the ummah was below the needed one to head off the overwhelming wave of deviation. This is a morbid phenomenon which painfully took shape in the nature of leaning, on the part of the average Muslim, to comfort and ease and coveting private interests. The spirit of jihad had vanished from the social conscience. This dangerous phenomenon had surprisingly crystalised in the

form of amassing wealth on the part of the high echelons of the Islamic leadership.(36)

If power-wielding people among the ummah had exploited their influence to win and double their profits, nearly all walks of life in the Islamic society developed this mundane tendency in an outrageous way. It manifested itself in leaning to comfort and luxuries as a substitute to the spirit of jihad which is expressed in the ability to brave hardships. It was a condition arrived at after at least 25 years of life not so much connected with heaven as with the earth.

As a result, it is no wonder that many eminent men among the Muslims advised Imam Hussein (a.s.), shortly after his announcement that he would challenge the Umayyad authorities, to change his mind and cancel his plans in this respect. They knew full well that the Umayyad rule was corrupt, and they were aware that Imam Hussein (a.s.) was the one who was most entitled to defy the Umayyads. But it was the fear that Imam Hussein (a.s.) might attain martyrdom that prompted them to offer their advice. Umar al-Atraf said to him: "Abu Muhammad al-Hassan told me that he had heard his father, the Commander of the Faithful, saying that you would be killed. So it would be better for you, if you gave your pledge of allegiance (to Yazid)."

Abdullah bin Umar bin al-Khattab and Abdullah bin al-Zubair, and a number of his own family urged him not to stand up against the Umayyads.(37)

The masses, on the other hand, tended to deal passively with politics and in the most horrible way. The people of Kufa, for example, gave their pledge of allegiance to Imam Hussein (a.s.) and made a covenant with him that they would jump to his help when he came to their city. They declared their readiness to support him in the countless letters they sent him. But once the local ruling tyrant, Ubaidullah bin Ziyad, unleashed a wave of terror in the city, and scattered money-bags among the Kufans promising them alluringly the best of rewards, they forgot all their promises and covenants with Imam Hussein (a.s.). What expressive words are those of al-Farazdaq (an illustrious poet) to Imam Hussein (a.s.) when he asked him about the prevailing situation in Iraq. "Their hearts are with you," al-Farazdaq replied, "and their swords are with the Umayyads."

The pitiful phenomena of lack of responsibility before Allah and the faith on the part of the majority of the people amounted to hypocrisy, and was the driving force behind the declaration of the uprising. Imam Hussein (a.s.) wanted to awaken the dead conscience which clung to the

earth, and shake the dust of ambivalence from it. He knew full well that conditions of extreme humility among the ummah at the time could never promote this awakening from the religious point of view. Shari'ah itself presents concepts and laws which make it obligatory on its followers to reject a life never warmed by the sun of justice and freedom, the life wherein sticking mundane comfort, and competing for sensuous pleasures and lusts were the ultimate goal. These are shining facts reflected in more than one place in the Glorious Qur'an.

Shari'ah condemns materialistic lifestyle if it runs counter to the spirit of sacrifice for the sake of the faith:

"O you who believe! What if the matter with you that when it is said to you, "Go you forther (to fight) in the way of Allah," you incline heavily to earth; What! Are you content with the life of this world instead of the hereafter? But the provision of the life of this world compared to the hereafter, is but little. Unless you go forth, He will chastise you with a painful chastisement and He will replace you with a people other than you, and no harm will you do to Him; and verily Allah has power over all things."

Holy Qur'an (9:38-39)

Trusting the unjust rulers is prohibited by Islam:

"And (believers) incline not to those who act unjustly lest you touch the fire of Hell... "

Holy Qur'an (11:113)

Elsewhere in the Qur'an there is the fact that the faithful have to be at the beck and call of the faith. They should always be ready to safeguard its interests and spare no effort to defend it:

"Surely Allah has purchased from the faithful their selves and their properties in exchange for paradise. They fight for the cause of Allah, so they slay and are slain; (this is) a true promise binding on Him in the Torah and the Evangel and the Qur'an... "

Holy Qur'an (9:111)

Relying on his deep understanding of the Message of Allah, the Exalted, Imam Hussein (a.s.), the pure, and real image of the faith, proclaimed his total rejection of the status quo heedless of the fears and reservations expressed by his fellow men.

It was Imam Hussein's (a.s.) awareness of his responsibilities and the soundness of his attitude of rejection that made him call the advisors and those who were anxious about his life to stand on his side and adopt his position which was defined by Allah for his faithful servants. He did this with Abdullah bin Umar who asked him to abandon his decision to rise

against the Umayyad deviation. Imam Hussein (a.s.) said to him, "**O Abdul-Rahman! Be on your guard against Allah and do not shy away from aiding me.**"

Thirdly, awakening the ummah to the Islamic concept of legitimate caliphate and its dimensions and goals was a necessity. The threat which encircled Islamic concepts did not come from the common people, but from the high ranks of state officials who monopolized the means of social orientation. It is a point worth examining and studying.

As Imam Hussein (a.s.) was aware of this, he began alerting the ummah to the potential threat of the Umayyad rule, as it was a rule completely contrary to Islam's concept of caliphate, both in its men and institutions. The system of hereditary dictatorship, introduced by Mu'awiyah when he took the pledge of allegiance from the Muslims for his son Yazid, was alien to Islam. Mu'awiyah, by doing this, had placed the corner stone of the most dangerous structure in the history of Islam. Its harmful consequences are still present. These illegitimate rulers serve the foes of Islam beyond their imagination.

In line with Islam's instructions, and the qualifications the Muslim ruler should possess, Imam Hussein (a.s.) set on explaining this point to the Muslim masses by means of the speeches and statements he made whenever the chance offered itself.

He delivered a speech, in Karbala', to the followers of al-Hurr al-Riyah, in which he said:

"O people! Should you be on your guard against Allah and recognize the truth, it will be more pleasing to you. We, the household of Muhammad (s.a.w.), are certainly more entitled to this question (caliphate) than these people who claim what is not theirs, and who rule with injustice and aggression."

In a letter he sent to the people of Basra, he wrote:

"Allah, certainly, chose Muhammad (s.a.w.) from among His creatures, honored him with His prophethood, and chose him for His Message. Then He took his life, raising him to His nearness, after he had advised His servants and preached what he was entrusted. We were his family, his pious men, his trustees, his inheritors and the most entitled among people to inherit his status. The people monopolized that to themselves and we assented, disagreeing to discussion, and chose patience. We know that we are more entitled to that legitimate right than those who seized it. I am sending my messenger to you with this letter. I am calling you to the Book of Allah and the sunnah of His Prophet. For certainly the sunnah was weakened and

innovation was revived. Should you listen to what I tell you, you will be guided to the righteous path."

By these resounding words, and by similar speeches, Imam Hussein (a.s.) made it plain to the ummah that the Ummayyads were not fit to rule, due to their acting contrary to the defined Islamic law. Likewise, he explained to them the source to which the Muslim ruler should stick and the Islamic qualifications, which he possessed, because of being the sapling of prophethood, the disciple of sacred revelation and the one who lived the faith from birth.

Fourthly, from the Islamic point of view, man is by no means excusable to abandon his duty of preaching the faith. In the spacious field of Islam, he is not an independent individual. Rather, he is a member fused with others, in the faith. He should yield to its demands, do his obligations towards it, and sacrifice for the sake of it. The duty of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, jihad in the way of Allah, and similar obligations are not but a real translation of this spirit shed on Muslims by their faith. But man's progress in this field goes in parallel with his advancement in gaining spirituality.

Imam Hussein (a.s.), the second son of Imam Ali (a.s.), and the grandson of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), was a pure page of the book of Islam, and a vivid translation of all its goals and concepts. That is why he was the first one who responded to the call of faith in his time. In order to honor his commitments to the Shari' ah, he had no other way before him other than that of uprising. Without it there would be no reforms. The first communiqué of his uprising incarnated this fact with all its positive implications:

"... And I am not taking up arms in order to make merry, or be ecstatic over what I possess. I am not making mischief, nor exercising oppression. But I am ready to fight for the sole goal of seeking reform of the ummah of my grandfather, the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.). I want to enjoin good and forbid evil and guide the affairs of the people as my grandfather, and my father, Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), were doing... "

These are the basic justifications which gave Imam Hussein (a.s.) and his followers the right to start their uprising. An uprising which still echoes in the minds of the people today. It is the revolution that immortalized Islam and inspired the revolutionaries throughout the ages, to defend Islam and fight recklessly in the battle of sacred jihad.

WIND OF THE UPRISING

Shortly after the death of Mu'awiyah, his son, Yazid, took over. He ordered his governors to take the pledge of allegiance to him from the people. He focused on Imam Hussein (a.s.), in particular, due to the Umayyad conviction that he was the unshakable resisting force among the opposition. Once they subjugated him, all dams before them would collapse. The opposition, minus Imam Hussein (a.s.), would be easily subdued.

Instantly Yazid wrote to the governor of the city of Medina, al-Walid bin Utbah, to take the pledge of allegiance from the people, in general, and from Imam Hussein (a.s.), in particular. The governor wasted no time in carrying out the orders of his superior. He sent one of his retainers for Imam Hussein (a.s.) late in the night. Imam Hussein (a.s.) realized what the governor was up to. He got himself ready. Escorted by thirty men from his family and followers, he went to the house of the governor. He told them that if he called them they had to break into the house.

As soon as they were seated, the governor asked Imam Hussein (a.s.), to give his pledge of allegiance. Imam Hussein (a.s.) suggested the matter be delayed to a more suitable time. It would better if it was with the people of Medina. He said: "**... The likes of me do not give their pledge of allegiance secretly. When you call the people to give their pledge, call us with them. So it will be one call.**"(38)

Imam Hussein (a.s.) wanted the delay to prepare himself for the inevitable conflict. He would not like to raise the anger of the local authorities prematurely. But Marwan bin al-Hakam, who was also present, urged the governor to forcibly take the pledge of allegiance from Imam Hussein (a.s.). Should he refuse to yield, Marwan went on, the governor had to kill him. Otherwise, the matter would get out of al-Walid and his master's hands. But Imam Hussein (a.s.) acted decisively and determinedly. He was tough with Marwan and warned him. A violent skirmish

between the two parties ensued. The companions of Imam Hussein (a.s.) broke into the house and returned him to his house.(39)

That was the starting point of the rejection of the policy of treachery and oppression. Imam Hussein (a.s.) made up his mind to shoulder his responsibility, to challenge the oppressors, as he was the legitimate Imam of the ummah, and the righteous leader entrusted with the faith.

He went to the tomb of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), his grandfather and offered prayer beside it. Then he raised his hands in prayer:

"O Allah! This is the grave of your Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), and I am the son of the daughter of your Prophet. You know what I am going through. O Allah! I love good and detest evil. I beseech You, O! The Lord of glory and honor, and adjure You by this grave and its contents, to choose for me whatever pleases You and Your."(40)

And so Imam Hussein (a.s.) made a covenant with Allah that he would defend the faith no matter how high the price was, as long as that would please Allah.

In the prayer he said beside the tomb of the Prophet (s.a.w.), Imam Hussein (a.s.) presents himself as a soldier, whose self was totally molted at the threshold of the faith. He could not separate his self from the faith. His life would only express itself through the faith.

Imam Hussein (a.s.) hastened to gather the members of his family and the loyal among his companions. He told them about his decision to move to Mecca, the sanctuary of Allah.

The objectors increased in number. They pressed him to change his course for fear of being killed. Still others called him to yield. They were helpless and thought he would kill himself in vain.

Imam Hussein (a.s.) was too determined to back down. He announced the first communique of his uprising in the form of a will he wrote to his brother, Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyyah:

"... and I am not taking up arms in order to make merry, or be ecstatic over what I possess. I am ready to fight for the sole goal of seeking reform of the ummah of my grandfather, the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.). I want to enjoin good and forbid evil and guide the affairs of the people as my grandfather, and my father, Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.), were doing. Whoever justly accepts my call, Allah is the Source and Sustainer of justice, but whoever turns my offer down, I will opt for patience, till Allah judges between me and these people, and He is the best of judges."(41)

His first official communique of his uprising pointed to the scope of deviation which had set in, when enjoining good vanished and forbidding evil ceased. In the same manner, the statement covered the key goals and motives of the uprising in so few words.

The caravan of Imam Hussein (a.s.) marched towards Mecca. The name of Allah was on his tongue, and his heart was filled with love of Allah. Upon entering Mecca, he recited the glorious verse:

"And when he turned his face towards Madyan, he said: Maybe my Lord will guide me in the right path."

Holy Qur'an (28:22)

He stayed at the house of al-Abdul-Muttalib. Throngs of the faithful gathered to welcome him.(42)

Imam Hussein (a.s.) monitored the reactions of the Muslims throughout the Islamic provinces towards the ascension of Yazid to the office of caliphate. Kufa, the capital of Iraq, was witnessing a revolutionary movement and a remarkable political shake-up. After long periods of terror and suppression the opposition forces stirred seeing it the golden chance to free themselves from the yoke of the tyrants. At the head of these revolutionaries were the followers of the Ahlul-Bait (a.s.). They held an emergency meeting to discuss the mounting tension in Kufa and the responsibility they should take vis-a-vis the change in the government, after Yazid bin Mu'awiyah had taken the affairs of the ummah into his own hands. Sulaiman bin Sird al-Khuza'i, at whose house the meeting was held, delivered a speech. He informed the gathering of Imam Hussein's (a.s.) announcement of his opposition to Yazid and that he rejected him as a legitimate caliph. He told them that Imam Hussein (a.s.) was in Mecca, and since they were his followers and helpers they had to do something. If they were able to support and back him, sparing no effort in doing that, they had to inform him of their position. But were they unable to live up to their principles, it would be most incorrect to write to him and then fail him when the best comes to the worst.

The Shi'ites who were present at the meeting declared their full support to the Imam. They would defend him by any means available. "We fight his enemy, and kill ourselves defending him,"(43) they vowed.

After reaching a consensus on this point, the leading men of Kufa wrote a letter in which they declared their total and final rejection of the Umayyad rule and that they knew no substitute for Imam Hussein (a.s.). Then letters poured in from Kufa carrying the urgent call of the Kufans for Imam Hussein (a.s.) to join them, to take office as the caliphate and Imam of the Muslims. The wave of support for Imam

Hussein (a.s.) was so massive that a list of the tribes waiting for his arrival, totalling 100,000 fighters, was prepared.(44)

After studying these letters, Imam Hussein (a.s.) concluded that it was necessary to send an envoy to Kufa authorized to take the pledge of allegiance from the people of Iraq, on his behalf, and campaign for the sake of rallying the people around Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), represented at the time by Imam Hussein (a.s.).

Imam Hussein chose his cousin, Muslim bin Aqeel, for this mission. The man was known for his piety, courage, and high qualifications in thought and leadership. He would be able to steer the wave of enthusiasm for the interest of the faith.

With him, Imam Hussein (a.s.) dispatched a special letter to the people there, and particularly their chiefs. He explained the qualifications of his envoy, and the nature of his mission. He was to closely examine the situation and describe precisely what was going on there.

Following is the full text of the letter:

"In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful...

From Hussein bin Ali,

To the leaders of the believers and the Muslims.

Hani and Sa'id have brought me your letters; they are the last two of your messengers who have come to me. I have understood everything which you have described and mentioned.

The essential statement of the majority of you is: 'We have no Imam. Therefore come; through you, may Allah unite us under truth and guidance'. I am sending you my brother, Muslim bin Aqeel, who is my cousin and trustworthy representative from my house. I ordered him to write to me about your conditions, affairs and views. If he writes to me that the opinion of your leaders and of the men of wisdom and merit among you is united in the same way as the messengers who have come to me have described, and as I have read in your letters, I will come to you at once, Allah willing. By my life, what is the Imam except one who professes the religion of truth, and one who dedicates himself to the essence of Allah, and Salam."(45)

Kufa welcomed Muslim as any loyal and dutiful following would. The pledge of allegiance was taken for Imam Hussein (a.s.). Ibn Aqeel, by now, was convinced that the change was on behalf of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) and the Message of Allah, the Exalted. It was by no means something common and could not be ignored. It was a truth, tangible and subjective. They should quickly deal with the situation before something happens and spoils the situation.

And so Muslim, may Allah be pleased with him, saw it fit to dispatch an account to Imam Hussein (a.s.) about the direction of the de facto situation. In his account he called him to come to Kufa. He wrote:

"Certainly, the man sent by a caravan in a desert to explore the way ahead of it will never lie to those who had sent him. All the people of Kufa are with you. Eighteen thousand of them have given their pledge of allegiance to me. So make haste and come to us as soon as you read this letter of mine. And peace and the blessings of Allah be on you."(46)

In the meantime, Imam Hussein (a.s.) thought it would be wise to contact the chiefs of Basra and discuss with them his decision to oppose deviation and in justice. He wrote to them. Yazid bin Mas'ood sent a letter in which people spoke volumes for the loyalty of the tribes of Tamim and Bani-Sa'd to AhlulBait (a.s.). Quite painfully and regrettably, his letter arrived too late.

Al-Nahshali's troops were late to arrive. The man was so shocked at the news of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (a.s.) that he died. He had missed the opportunity to help the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.).

Chapter 10

KUFANS' REGRESSION

At first, the authorities of the Umayyad party were panic stricken at the great success achieved by the faith and its real representative, Imam Hussein bin Ali (a.s.). They were paralysed in front of the massive wave of loyalty and obedience to the Imam (a.s.).

The local Umayyad administration, headed by al-Nu'man bin Basheer, felt inept and helpless vis-a-vis the changing and unstable situation. The odds, they sensed, were against them.

Al-Nu'man, as if what was going on in Kufa did not concern him, proclaimed a policy of non-interference. He said:

"Certainly, I will not fight except the one who fights me. I will not attack anyone except the one who attacks me. Nor will I arrest anyone for the slightest suspicion..."(47)

The top leaders of the Umayyad party held a meeting, and discussed what would be their next step. They decided to provide Yazid bin Mu'awiyah with the latest news, and the actual situation in the city of Mecca.

Umar bin S'ad, Umarah bin Aqabah al-Umawi, and Abdullah bin Muslim wrote a letter to their master in Syria telling him of all the successive developments in Kufa. Yazid was flustered at the news. His special advisor suggested that Ubaidullah bin Ziyad replace al-Nu'man bin al-Basheer as the governor of Kufa. Ibn Ziyad was murderous, the emptiness of his heart of such human emotions as mercy or compassion and his black hatred of the household of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) made him a prime candidate for the job.

Ibn Ziyad received the decree issued by Yazid appointing him the new governor of Kufa. Installing his brother in his place in Basra, he hurriedly headed for Kufa leading a 500-strong division from the Umayyad army.

Accompanying him were also certain eminent chiefs of Basra who had influence over the Kufans due to their blood relations.

Ibn Ziyad resorted to both military tactics and diplomatic tricks and schemes. Disguised, he preceded his soldiers in entering Kufa. He went into the governor's palace and informed al-Nu'man bin Basheer that he was relieved of his post.

Then he gathered the people, and addressed them. He promised those who sided with the Umayyads handsome rewards. He threatened the opponents of the Umayyad dynasty with harsh punishments, i.e. death. He said:

"Certainly, Yazid the commander of the faithful has appointed me as the governor of your city, (the protector of) your borders, and put me in charge of the treasury. He ordered me to restore the rights of the wronged among you, give out money to the deprived among you, and to be kind to the listening obedient among you, like a doting father. I will use the whip and the sword against those who abandon my commands and oppose my appointment. So, let one guard oneself..."(48)

Under coercion, he ordered the tribal chiefs to present lists of the names of those who overstepped the Umayyad redline. Otherwise, they would be crucified at the doors of their houses.

An atmosphere of heavy gloom set in on the city. The scales of power tipped in favor of Yazid. The Shi'ite leaders and the loyalists to Imam Hussein (a.s.) were rounded up.

Fear spread its wings, and despair descended on the hearts of the people. Events took so vicious a turn that the tribes began to prevent their chiefs from opposing the Umayyads in any form. Mothers locked up their children lest they help Muslim bin Aqeel. Those who were after wealth hastened to the governor's mansion, happy with the abundant money Ibn Ziyad lavished on them. Practically, the society of Kufa was torn into small shreds.

The loyalists to the call of Islam, who were still free, adopted secrecy in their contacts with Muslim. He ordered them so, under the pressure of the new conditions.

Call to pure Islam went underground. From his first headquarters, the house of al- Mukhtar bin Abi-Ubaidah, where he had received the pledge of allegiance from the people, Muslim moved to the house of Hani' bin Urwah, as the fittest place, given the changing situation. Hani was faithful to Islam, and he had a long-standing reputation for being loyal to the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) since the time of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (a.s.). In Kufa, he was an illustrious man, enjoying a

high social status, and leading a large tribe with many allies and subtribes.

Ibn Ziyad was obsessed with one thought. He wanted to know the secret place where Muslim hid himself. Fingers of suspicion pointed to Hani's house because of being an established local leader, and due to the fact that he was the invincible fort sheltering the Husseini call in Kufa. Yazid and his agents were aware of this.

The spies of the Ummayyad's local terrorist authorities lost no time in spreading throughout the city. One of them, who went by the name of "Ma'qal" stole into the house of Hani. He pretended to be loyal to Imam Hussein (a.s.) and frequented the house. Being cunningly treacherous, he realized that Muslim was in that very house.

So as to challenge Hani face to face, Ibn Ziyad worked feverishly to discourage the followers of Hani. He left no stone unturned to shatter the great force Hani was relying on. He lavished promises of good jobs on the people along with threats, tricks and lies. The plan paid off. Some eminent men were won over. Finally an attempt was made to arrest Hani through a devilish plan.

The arrest of Hani meant a total paralysis of the Husseini movement, and his killing would lead to the putting down of the revolution in the city of Kufa.

Muslim was well aware of the critical situation. He had to act quickly to save what he could, or he might have the same destiny Hani, the fort and solid basis of the revolution in Kufa, had. He had to create a massive political and social turmoil, whose repercussions would echo throughout history.

Shortly after the news of the arrest of Hani bin Urwah by the local authorities, Muslim began his military preparations. He laid siege to the government building. Ibn Ziyad and his supporters closed the gates of the mansion, finding a good refuge inside it. Battalions took their positions. The Ummayyad rule came to the verge of collapse.

The army led by Muslim, may Allah be pleased with him, historians say, was great both in equipment and number. It was divided into divisions, battalions and detachments.(49) But, Ibn Ziyad had made use of every possible means of trickery to get out of the crisis. He floated rumors, through his spies and followers, that a tremendous Ummayyad army was at the threshold of Kufa. Rumors were soon on every lip. Gossip increased and terror ruled. Women prevented their sons from joining Muslim, and those who already were with him were forced to quit. Men

discouraged their sons and brothers from taking part in the military actions.(50)

The situation further deteriorated. Many people left Muslim's army, and panic prevailed. Inducement and discouragement of the opponents succeeded. Muslim, eventually, was left with a few loyalists who engaged the Ummayyads in street fighting. They made the neighborhood of "Kinda" their base. Muslim fought in a rarely seen reckless and courageous way. After all had deserted him or been killed he fought the Ummayyad police alone. Finally he was overcome and promised safety. When he was brought before Ziyad he refused to honor the promise of safety given by the police and ordered Muslim to be executed. After dictating his last will, Muslim was taken to the torrents of the palace and thrown down. Later he was beheaded. His head, along with the head of Hani were sent to Yazid in Syria.

The two pillars of the Husseini movement in Kufa were torn down. The movement was lost by the martyrdom of Muslim and Hani, two of its greatest field leaders in Iraq. Kufa was humiliated with defeat and the darkness of terror descended on it. The tyrants seized control of the lives of the people.

Chapter 11

AN ROUTE TO IRAQ

The Umayyads were extremely worried at the news of the success of Hussein (a.s.) in Mecca. He had won over nearly the whole city. Fearing the spread of the opposition movement, Yazid dispatched an army from Syria. He appointed Umar bin Sa'id bin al-Aas as its commander-in-chief and ordered him to kill Imam Hussein (a.s.) whenever he found him and at whatever price.

Imam Hussein (a.s.) had got the word that the Umayyad army was on its way to Mecca. Given the Umayyads disrespect of the Sacred House of Allah, he had decided to leave the city. It was impossible for him to allow the sacredness of the city to be violated because of him. In advance, he knew of his inevitable fate in Iraq. He expressed it in the speech he delivered in Mecca before he left. He said:

"Praise be to Allah. What Allah desires is certainly done. There is no power but in Allah. Blessings of Allah be on His Messenger. Death had been decreed on man, as the neckless encircles a girl's neck. How great is my desire to see my predecessors. It is as strong as Ya'qoob's (Jacob) desire to see (his son) Yusuf (Joseph).

"It is better for me to face my death. It is as if I am seeing now my members being torn to pieces by the wolves of the desert, in a place between Nawawees and Karbala. They will fill their empty stomachs and their hungry bellies. There is no escape from a day decreed by the divine pen..."(51)

Lots of people could see Imam Hussein (a.s.) leaving, for fear of being killed within the holy precincts of the Ka'ba. While he expressed his final decision to leave, he was assuring them that he would be killed. When Ibn Abbas pleaded with him to change his mind, he said:

"... By Allah, they will not leave me till they tear the very heart from the depths of my chest. When they do that, Allah will give power to

someone over them who will humiliate them. They will be more humiliated than even a woman's menstrual cloth."(52)

And to his brother Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyyah, he said:

"After you left me, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) came to me and said, 'O Hussein! Go out (to fight). Allah certainly willed to see you being killed.'"(53)

And to Abdullah bin Umar, he said:

"... By Allah, even if I go into hiding in a hole of an insect, they will flush me out, till they do with me what they wanted. They would abuse me the way the Jews desecrated the sabbath."(54)

Certain as he was of his own death, Imam Hussein (a.s.) marched on. But he was sure that the faith would be revived after his death and there was no defender of the faith next to him. It is because of these considerations that he went on to achieve the real, historical victory. Only with shedding his blood and sacrificing his soul would Islam be immortalized.

En route to Iraq he would ask the travellers he met about Iraq and the current situation there. The only reply was: "The people were with the Umayyad, but their hearts were with him!"

He knew and understood that duplicity on the part of the people. Terror was ruling. Anyone there was being torn apart by two faces: His belief in the faith and the right of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) to steer the ship of Muslims' lives on the one hand, and fear from the Umayyad authorities, the terrorism of the rulers, and the love of life and a comfortable, easy living on the other.

Chapter 12

IMAM HUSSEIN (A.S.) IN KARBALA'

Imam Hussein's (a.s.) caravan set off on the eighth day of the month of Dhul- Hijjah, (the day the pilgrims get ready to perform hajj), in the year of 60 A.H.

Many had questioned as to why he would leave without performing the hajj ceremonies. He replied:

"By Allah, should I be killed a span's distance away from Mecca, that would be more desirable for me than being killed in it. And should I be killed two spans' distance away from it, that would be more desirable for me than being killed a span's distance from it."(55)

On his way, at a place called al-Sifah, Imam Hussein (a.s.) came across al- Farazdaq, a poet known for his love for Ahlul-Bait (a.s.). Imam Hussein (a.s.) asked him about the public opinion and the political conditions in Iraq. "The hearts of the people are with you, but their swords are against you. The decision comes from Heaven and Allah does what He wishes."

"You have spoken truly of the affair belonging to Allah," replied Imam Hussein (a.s.). "Every moment He is in a state of glory. If fate sends down what we like, we praise Allah for His blessings. He is the One from Whom help should be sought. However although fate may frustrate our hopes, yet, It does not destroy the souls of those whose intention is the truth, and whose hearts are pious."(56)

The Ummayyad authorities in Kufa were confused. Measures were taken to prevent Imam Hussein (a.s.) from going on with his uprising. The governor of Kufa and chief administrator, Ubaidullah bin Ziyad, ordered the way to Kufa blocked and the traffic into and out of the city closed so that no one could contact Imam Hussein (a.s.) or find the chance to join him. He sent the head of his police, al- Husayn bin Numair al-Tamimi, to carry out his orders. Al-Husayn encamped at al-Qadisiyyah and deployed his troops on the main road to Kufa. The

troops were widely positioned in an area extending from al-Qadisyyah to Khaffan, and from al-Qadisyyah to Qatanah and the mountain of La'la'.

The plan to prevent people from entering and leaving Kufa was a successful for the most part. Only a handful of brave ones managed to reach Imam Hussein (a.s.) during his journey. The messengers whom Imam Hussein (a.s.) had sent to Kufa had all been captured and martyred. Even the deaths of Muslim and Hani were not known to him until these few men had managed to escape from Kufa and inform him.

At a place called Zubalah he heard of the martyrdom of both Muslim bin Aqeel and Hani bin Urwah. He gathered his companions and the members of his family and disclosed to them the news of the Kufans' failing of him.

"Our Shi'ah have deserted us," he told them. "Those of you who prefer to leave us, may do so freely and without guilt."

Some people had joined Imam Hussein (a.s.) in Mecca feeling sure that with the support of the Kufans he would be victorious and become the new caliph. When they heard this news they dispersed from him right and left until there were only left with him those close companions and his family members including the women.(57)

Deep inside Iraq, Imam Hussein (a.s.) came face to face with a great army led by al-Hurr bin Yazid al-Riyahi. He chose a good, fortified place and encamped there. The Umayyad commander encamped, in a military broad line, in front of the camp of Imam Hussein (a.s.). Imam Hussein's (a.s.) army Wag, by then, facing the hostile army, but they were protected, from the rear, by the mountain of Dhi-Hasm. Obviously the enemies could not lay siege to them or surround them.

Tension was already mounting between the two camps facing each other. When it was midday, and the time for midday prayer entered, Imam Hussein (a.s.) ordered one of his companions to recite the call to prayer. He began to address the two sides. He conveyed to them his viewpoints concerning the general situation in the Islamic homeland. He explained to his enemies the motives behind his move, and asked them to honor their promises and the covenants they had made with him, and the pledge of allegiance they had given him. They only listened and said nothing.

Having finished his speech, Imam Hussein (a.s.) led both sides in prayer. All of them offered their prayer behind him.

Once again, after the afternoon prayer, Imam Hussein (a.s.) delivered another speech. In front of them, he emptied two bags full of letters sent

by the Kufans to him, calling him to come to Kufa and giving their pledge of allegiance to him. Hurr replied that he and his men were not the writers of those letters. When Imam Hussein (a.s.) had addressed them he told that if they did not like him he was prepared to turn back toward Hijaz, al-Hurr bin Yazid al-Riyahi said:

"We are commissioned to follow you until we take you to Ibn Ziyad."

Imam Hussein (a.s.) replied:

"You will find your death easier than that."

Imam Hussein (a.s.) and his followers left the place with Hurr traveling parallel but at a distance. When Imam Hussein (a.s.) attempted to return to Medina, Hurr blocked his path.

Hurr then said:

"I have not been ordered to fight with you. I have to follow you until you reach Kufa. If you do not want to go to Kufa then I suggest to you to go towards a station which is neither Kufa nor Medina."

Imam Hussein (a.s.) considered this a fair proposal and turned his caravan to the left of the road which ran between Qadsiyyah and Azib.

Hurr marched along parallel to Imam Hussein (a.s.) While marching, the two spoke. Hurr said:

"I appeal to you in the name of Allah to avoid battle because you are bound to be killed."

Imam Hussein (a.s.) retorted:

"Do you think you can frighten me with death? Could a worse disaster befall you than killing me? I can only say to you what the brother of al-Aws said to his cousin when he wanted to help the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.). His cousin feared for him and said: 'Where are you going, you will be killed.' But he replied: 'I will depart, for there is no shame for a young man whenever he intends to do what is right and fight like a Muslim. He who soothes righteous men through the sacrifice of his life, has parted with the cursed and opposed the criminal. If I live, I will not regret what I have done, and if I die, I will not be blamed. Let it be enough for you to live in humiliation and be reviled.'"

Al-Hurr gave up all hope of persuading Imam Hussein (a.s.) to go to Kufa, so he kept a good distance between the two armies. Imam Hussein (a.s.) continued his journey to the target he desired to reach. The Umayyad army kept the other army under surveillance. The two armies reached a village called Nainawa. At it a messenger sent by Ubaidullah bin Ziyad, arrived and delivered a message to Hurr. The message read:

"When this letter of mine arrives and my messenger comes to you, force Hussein to a halt. But only let him stop in an open place, without

vegetation or water. I have ordered my messenger to stay with you and not take his leave until he brings the news of your carrying out my instructions. Wassalam."(58)

Having finished reading, al-Hurr conveyed its contents to Imam Hussein (a.s.). Imam Hussein (a.s.) said: "Then let us stop at Nainawa, al-Ghadhriyah or Shufayyah." Al-Hurr turned down the suggestion, saying that he feared the authorities and the spies in his army.

Imam Hussein (a.s.) thereupon, addressed his followers:

"No doubt you are aware of the gravity of the situation which you are witnessing yourselves here and now. Life has certainly changed disguises, and good has gone forever. This has continued till the remaining good in it amounts to the thin sediment at the bottom of a drinking utensil. Life is a mean food, like a pasture covered with bad grass. Do you not see that the truth is not followed and falsehood not discouraged? The faithful must certainly desire to meet his Lord righteously. I do not deem death other than martyrdom and life among the unjust other than suffering and boredom."(59)

Then Imam Hussein's (a.s.) army defiantly resumed its march deep into Iraq. It was not long before the Ummayyad army blocked his way and forced him to encamp at a place called Karbala'. That was the second day of the month of Muharram in the year 61 A.H.

When Imam Hussein (a.s.) learned of the name of the place he dismounted and ordered his camp to be set up. He had reached his destination. The plain of Karbala', the cradle of the uprising, the site of the massacre of the heroes, the beacon of glory, and the symbol of power. When he dismounted he stated that his father, Imam Ali (a.s.), on his way to Siffeen had passed by this desert plain when he himself had been in his company. Imam Ali (a.s) had informed him that he would be forced to camp here and his blood would be shed here.

Chapter 13

KARBALA'

On the desert of Karbala' Imam Hussein (a.s.) emerged as a symbol for free men, and a slogan for the revolutionaries throughout the ages and generations.

On the other hand, the Ummayyad authorities, at the helm of which stood Ubaidullah bin Ziyad in Kufa, started sending reinforcements and mobilizing more forces for Karbala'. They knew full well that Imam Hussein (a.s.) was not someone unknown or with no weight. They were still obsessed by fear, in spite of the fact that Imam Hussein (a.s.) would be defended by only a few men, and that the Kufans had failed him.

Ziyad replaced al-Hurr with Umar bin Sa'd as the new commander who would engage Imam Hussain (a.s.). First, Umar hesitated to accept the command, but finally he gave in to the lures of governorship and imaginary wealth. He agreed to take up the task. At the head of an army of 4,000, he set off to fight Imam Hussein (a.s.). He ordered his army to encamp nearby.

Imam Hussein (a.s.) started talks with Umar bin Sa'd. They sat down many times. At the end, Umar was convinced to lift the siege he had laid to the camp of Imam Hussein (a.s.), and open the way for him to leave Iraq. He sent a message to Ubaidullah bin Ziyad notifying him of the result of their talks. Ubaidullah conceded and tried to put it into effect, when Shimr bin Dhil-Jawshan, a vowed enemy of Imam Hussein (a.s.) interfered. He warned Ziyad that Imam Hussein (a.s.) would, after the lifting of the siege, act from a position of strength, and it would be extremely difficult to face him. The balance of power would tip in his favor. Persuaded, Ubaidullah wrote a letter to Umar bin Sa'd, in which he threatened him and turned down his offer. He ordered Shimr to deliver the letter in person to Umar. Furthermore, he presented two choices before Umar; he should either go to war with Imam Hussein (a.s.), or he

would be relieved of his post as commander of the army. Shimr would occupy his place in this case and dispatch his head, as well, to Kufa.

Umar bin Sa'd got the letter. He pondered over it for a length of time. He could either fight Imam Hussein (a.s.) or lose power and his post as commander of the army. Satan, eventually, got the better of him. He chose the loss of this life and the hereafter. He would certainly fight Imam Hussein (a.s.). Accordingly, he moved his troops, on the seventh of the holy month of Muharram, to surround the Husseini army. They cut his camp off from access to the river Euphrates, so as to deprive them of water to force them to surrender.

Two days later, on the ninth of Muharram, the treacherous Ummayyad army began closing in on the camp of Imam Hussein (a.s.). Imam Hussein (a.s.) thought of a way to stop the march of the enemies. He asked his brother, Abbas, to call on the army to stop their aggression. Their response was a reply of a weak-willed, helpless army manipulated by the rulers, "Let Hussein accept the judge of the prince, or, otherwise, we will fight him."

Imam Hussein (a.s.) saw that he could not negotiate with this herd of weak-willed men who dedicated themselves to win booty and wealth. He asked his brother, Abbas, once again, to talk to the army and demand a delay of only one night. Umar bin Sa'd and his officers agreed to grant Imam Hussein (a.s.) the delay he asked.

On the morrow, history would turn a new page in the life of Islam. Men would fight one another in a great and glorious battle in Karbala'.

Chapter 14

THE DAY OF ASHURA'

Imam Hussein (a.s.), together with his pious companions, passed the night before the tenth of Muharram in prayers, supplications and getting ready for the following day.

That night came to an end. It was as if a long history had elapsed. The tenth of Muharram, the day of blood, jihad and martyrdom, the day of the decisive battle, was already born.

Umar bin Sa'd was arranging his troops in line, and mobilizing his soldiers to fight the fifth member of the purified family of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), whose love was decreed by Allah on the ummah through the explicit words of the Holy Qur'an.

Imam Hussein (a.s.) stared unperturbably and strong-hearted at the great army which was equipped to the teeth. Like a towering mountain, determined and unshakable, Imam Hussein (a.s.) did not show the smallest sign of weakness.

Never did he think of reconsidering his decision. There was no one but Allah to look to. He raised his hands in prayer:

"O Allah! It is You in Whom I trust amid all grief. You are my hope amid all violence. You are my refuge and provision in everything that happens to me. How many grievances that weaken the heart, leaving me with no means to handle them, during which friend deserts me, and the enemy rejoices in it. I lay it before you and complain of it to You, because of my desire in You. You alone. You relieve me of it and remove it from me. You are the Master of all grace, the Possessor of all goodness, and the Ultimate Resort of all desire."(60)

Imam Hussein (a.s.) went out of his tent, completely ready to engage the enemy. The battle was unescapable. So he started fortifying his camp where the children and women were waiting for what would happen next. He ordered the digging of a trench at the rear of the camp. This was to prevent the army from attacking the camp from that point. He set the

trench ablaze. Secure as the back of the camp was, the battle would be fought in the front only.

Once again, Imam Hussein (a.s.) delivered a speech. He reminded the Kufans of their letters and envoys, combined with their pledge of allegiance, but to no avail. His call fell on deaf ears.

He mounted his horse, and galloped to a place before the hostile army, in his hand he grasped the Qur'an. He opened it, raising it above his head, and said: **"O people! Let us have the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of my grandfather, the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.), to arbitrate between us."**(61)

No one seemed to be influenced by the words of Imam Hussein (a.s.). Rather, Umar bin Sa'd ordered the standard-bearer of his army to advance and gave the go-ahead for the war to start. He, himself, fired the first arrow toward the camp of Imam Hussein (a.s.), shouting, "All of you be witness that I am the first to shoot."

That was the outset of a catastrophe and tragedy which victimized the scion of prophethood and the leader of the Muslims, the grandson of the noble Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), Hussein bin Ali bin Abi-Talib.

The men lunged at one another, first in single battles, then in a full war. It was only natural that strength would help the army of Yazid bin Mu'awiyah massacre this small group of warriors.

The whole tragedy of the Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), and their painful suffering at the hands of their enemies was crystally incarnated in the battle of Karbala'.

History tells us of scenes and tragic sights which are extremely difficult for writers, poets and artists to depict. A baby, for example, was in the arms of Imam Hussein (a.s.). It was his son, Abdullah, sometimes called Ali Asghar. It is after this child that Imam Hussein (a.s.) was given the title "Abu Abdullah" recorded in many books and salutations when referring to Imam Hussein (a.s.). He took Abdullah to the Ummayyad camp asking them to give him some water. Detachments were stationed at the banks of the Euphrates. With no access to the water, the family of Imam Hussein (a.s.) and their followers felt thirsty. Imam (a.s.) wanted to awaken their conscience and stir their human sentiments; but the stone-hearted enemies targeted the six-months old baby with an arrow which struck him in the throat and slaughtered him instantly.

Imam Hussein (a.s.) felt an unbearable wave of pain. The sight of the slaughtered baby was etched forever in his mind.

But his heart did not give way to weakness. He filled his palm with the blood of his little baby, and threw it upwards, complaining to his

Lord, "I find consolation in the fact that what I am suffering is witnessed by Allah."

The battle got more horribly ferocious. One after the other, the followers and the members of Imam Hussein's (a.s.) family attained martyrdom. The last one to be martyred in that eternal battle was Imam Hussein (a.s.) himself. He became the sacred offering and the "greater sacrifice" to Allah. A three-pointed arrow hit Imam Hussein (a.s.) in the chest. Deeply embedded, he could not dislodge it. The blood gushed out of his holy chest unhalting. He fell down to the ground swimming in a pool of his blood.

The Ummayyad were not satisfied. Their hatred for Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) was too blazing to be extinguished by this. One criminal from the army of the Ummayyad, Shimr bin Dhil-Jawshan, walked over to Imam Hussein (a.s.), sat on his chest and cut off his head from the back of his neck. Ibn Sa'd ordered the horsemen to trample over the supine body of Imam Hussein (a.s.).

The star of Imam Hussein (a.s.) set. The tragedy set in. The head of Imam Hussein (a.s.), along with the heads of his companions (and even the tiny head of Abdullah) were distributed among the criminals, as gifts, carrying them to the Ummayyad governor of Kufa.

For three days the pure, holy bodies of the martyrs were left lying on the desert of Karbala' before men from the tribe of Bani-Asad who were living not far away from the battlefield buried them. The criminals, not yet satisfied with all this, carried the children and women, in addition to the sick son of Imam Hussein (a.s.), Imam Zain Al-Abideen (a.s.), as prisoners from Kufa to Syria. At the front of the sad procession were the heads of Imam Hussein (a.s.) and his followers.

Chapter 15

ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE UPRISING

It is a historically foregone conclusion that Imam Hussein (a.s.) was fully aware of the fact that his opposition to the Ummayyad policy and the strong stance he took against it would only lead to his martyrdom in the way of Allah, whether he remained in the city of Medina, Mecca or any other city. But he wanted his martyrdom to have an impact on the life of the ummah as wide and great as the personal reward, comfort and eternal pleasure of Allah which he won. That is why he planned to foil all attempts of assassination against him, hatched by the Ummayyad rulers. That kind of death has no reverberations, or at least its consequences are quite limited. No turmoil would follow it as big as desired, nor would there be a furor that would be potential in the life of the ummah.

Thus, the key elements that would promote a historical shock in the body of the ummah, that would leave its marks on the present and future of the ummah, had to be ripened. Imam Hussein (a.s.) began preparing himself and his followers for a real battle between his camp, the camp of the faith, and the camp of falsehood led by the Ummayyad house. He called on the men to join the revolutionary forces. He spared neither tribes, nor the Arab neighborhoods which he passed by on his way to Iraq, without calling them to aid him and join his forces. Historically and horizontally, the outcry would be sharper. This fact made him to bring his womenfolk and children, though he was totally convinced that he would not survive the battle.

Imam Hussein (a.s.) had a conviction, to the point of certainty, that his women and those of his supporters would be taken captives and would be humiliated at the hands of the regime's stooges. But he also knew that this outrageous abuse would not be publically approved of. It would serve as a good and effective element in disclosing the nature of the Ummayyad policy and leave it, undisguised, before the masses. Shedding

off the layers of humiliation and passivity, the Muslim conscience would be thrown into the center of the big challenge.

The women, on the other hand, played no less effective roles. In captivity they talked to the people, laid the facts bare before them, and unveiled the schemes and plots of the Umayyad policy, both in Kufa and Syria. Through the speeches, discussions and tirades on the part of the women, Imam Hussein (a.s.) drove home his message. The reader will not remain in doubt as to why Imam Hussein (a.s.) brought with him his women to Karbala'.

Based on these considerations, we ascertain, without the slightest doubt, that the participation of the women in the Husseini revolution was planned and pondered over beforehand.

Hence, Imam Hussein's (a.s.) reply to his brother, Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyyah, who asked him why he was taking the women with him prior to his departure from Mecca, "**Certainly, Allah desires to see them captive.**"(62)

We deem it of great use to quote texts from the addresses delivered by Zainab, the Great Lady, and the other virtuous women from the house of Imam Hussein (a.s.).

Zainab, the noble woman from the tribe of Bani-Hashim, the daughter of Fatima al-Zahra' and Imam Ali (a.s.), the sister of Imam Hussein (a.s.), stood among the Kufans, assuming her responsibility as the spokeswomen for her brother's revolution, addressed them in these words:

"Praise be to Allah and divine blessings be sent on my grandfather, Muhammad, and his good and exemplary descendents. O People of Kufa! Do you shed tears? May your tears never dry up, and your loud lamentations never cease. You are like the woman that unravels to bits the thread which she has formerly spun. Your faith is nothing but deceit and betrayal. Are there any among you but the immodest, disgraced, proud, spiteful, idolator, enemy, and reviler? There are among you those who are as guileful plants growing in filth, or the silver on a grave.

"Certainly evil is that which your souls have sent before for you. Allah is displeased with you and in punishment shall you abide. Are you crying and wailing? Indeed, by Allah. Do cry endlessly and laugh but little, for your deed was so horrendously disgraceful that you will never be able to atone for it. How can you wash away the crime of murdering the scion of the Seal of the Prophets, the essence of the message, the lord of the youth in paradise, the refuge of your nobles, the refuge

to whom you resorted during affliction, the bright divine proof of yours, and your master who spoke for you.

"What an awful sin you did commit! Away with you, there will be no forgiveness for you. Certainly, your efforts failed, your hands suffered loss, and your bargain was brought to naught. You have made yourselves deserving of the wrath of Allah. Abasement and humiliation have been brought down upon you.

'Woe to you! Do you know how you tore the liver of the Prophet of Allah? Whom of his womenfolk you exposed? What blood of his you shed? What honor of his you defamed?

"Your deed is most certainly so dangerously ugly and foul, that it filled the earth and sky with its putridness. Are you surprised that it rained blood? Certainly, the punishment of the Hereafter is infinitely more abasing, and you shall not be helped. Do not make light of the delay of punishment in that it is not hastened by the fear of missing the taking of revenge. Most surely Allah is watching..."(63)

Zainab, the Great Lady, alerted the people of Kufa of their crime and punishment and of their responsibilities. The situation was critically dangerous, she told them, after their murdering of Imam Hussein (a.s.). A massive wave of anger went through the masses against the Ummayyad policy and its decision-makers.

Then, it was the turn of Fatima, daughter of Imam Hussein (a.s.), to talk to the Kufans. She said:

"... O people of Kufa! O you who are cunning, treacherous, and arrogantly proud. We are the household who are being put to the test (of guiding you to the right path), and put you to the test (of following us). He made our trial good. He imparted His knowledge and sagacity to us. We are certainly the store of His knowledge, the utensil of His sagacity and wisdom, and the divine proof on earth for His servants. Allah honored us with His honor and preferred us over lots of the people He created, by means of His Prophet (s.a.w.). But you charged us with falsehood, and disbelief. You viewed it permissible to fight us, and considered our property as loot, as if we were of Turkish extraction or from the city of Kabul, as you had killed our grandfather not so long ago. Your swords are still dripping with our blood, Ahlul-Bait, due to a deep-rooted rancor. Your eyes delighted, and your hearts rejoiced at our death. You were certainly audacious towards Allah. You plotted, but Allah is the best of plotters. So, do not let yourselves induce you to exalt in the blood of us which you shed, and the money of us which you plundered, for the horrible misfortune and great

calamities that have befallen us are ordained before Allah brings them into being. That is easy for Allah; so that you may not grieve for the good things you miss, or be overjoyed at what you gain, Allah does not love the haughty and vainglorious...

"Woe to you! Wait for the imprecation and chastisement. It is as if I were witnessing the vengence descending on you repeatedly from Heaven. Allah will exterminate you by what your hands had won and make some of you taste severe punishment at the hands of others. Then you will eternally abide in the painful chastisement on the Day of Judgement. That is because you have wronged us terribly. May Allah curse the oppressors."(64)

In Damascus, the role of the women took a clearer shape. Many discussions, hectic arguments and speeches were made. The women were on the offensive. They assailed the tyrants with sharp words. Yazid bin Mu'awiyah was particularly attacked. Let us take, for example, in the presence of Yazid. It is a brightly unique example of pioneering jihad with words:

"Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. Blessings be sent on the Messenger of Allah and all his household. Truthful, indeed, are the words of Allah:

"The evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the signs of Allah and used to mock them."

Holy Qur'an (30:10)

"Do you think, Yazid, that since you have literally imprisoned us, having us being driven forward as if we were bondmaids, we are humiliated in the sight of Allah and you are honored in His eyes and that is because of your great status you enjoy in Allah's eyes? And so you put on airs, and looked happily and joyfully proud. That is because you have the world at your feet, your affairs arranged and sorted out, and you have our right to rulership unjustly taken on your behalf. Wait! Wait! Have you lost sight to what Allah had said:

"And let not those who disbelieve think that Our granting them respites is better for their souls; We grant them respite only that they may add to their sins; and they shall have a disgraceful punishment."

Holy Qur'an (3:178)

"Is it fair, son of the people, whom the Prophet (s.a.w.) had set free, to protect your women and bondmaids, and to drive the daughters of the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.) as captives, after you have unveiled them and exposed their faces? Is it fair that the enemies should drive their mounts from one country to another, while being stared at by the

people of the houses which line the roads, and those who live wandering from one place to another, their faces scrutinized by the near and the far-off, the base and the noble, with no one of their protectors to defend them, and no man of theirs to guard them? But how could those who threw up the livers of pure men, and who grew up feeding on the blood of the martyrs, guard themselves against evil... .?"(65)

"It is enough for you to have Allah as a Judge, the Prophet of Allah a foe and Gabriel a helper of the Prophet. The one who appointed you, (a caliph) [she refers to his father Mu'awiyah] and helped you to seize control over the Muslims, will surely know what a bad substitute the wrongdoers had. Who is worse, and more deviant, you or your father? I am surely belittling you. I do not see that scolding you is something awfully discouraging. I certainly know whom I am addressing. It is you who has left Muslim's eyes tearful, and their chests heated, whenever they remember Imam Hussein."(66)

"Plan your plots, and do you best, for, by Allah, who had honored us with the revelation, the Book, the prophethood, and preference over other people, you will never attain our status, nor will you reach our end, nor will you erase our end, nor will you erase our remembrance. The disgrace you brought upon yourself will never be washed off. Are not your views but hollow and worthless? Are not your days but numbered? Will not your party be but scattered men on the day when the caller will call out, 'May Allah curse the aggressive oppressor...'"(67)

These are only a few fragments of the tempestuous statements made by Zainab and her sisters in the way of jihad. We have made a mention of it to ascertain that the women played a highly effective media role in explaining the objectives of the uprising, disclosing the plight of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) and their right to manage the affairs of the people. The women succeeded in uncovering the deviated policy adopted by the Ummayyad house to steer the life of the people as they wished, mislead the ummah, and deceive the weak-willed people among the ummah.

Chapter 16

RESULTS OF THE UPRISING

Elsewhere, we have explained that Imam Hussein's (a.s.) uprising aimed, first and foremost, at creating an environment suitable for the making of an anti-Ummayyad wave which would finally wash the Ummayyad entity away and put the ummah back on the track of guidance.

The final result came as the Imam had planned and hoped for. In no time, Imam Hussein (a.s.) along with his followers were made martyrs by the masses. The Ummayyads lost their *raison d'être*. Naked as they stood before the ummah, they were discovered as holding beliefs contradictory to Islam, and to the vital interest of the ummah. Even those who took part in the tragedy of Taf on behalf of the Ummayyads had undergone a drastic wild change under the swipes of their conscience and new found inner reawakening.

As a result, the Muslim society witnessed a violent shake up, expressed in a series of popular uprisings, including the Tawwabeen (penitents) uprising in Iraq, and that of al-Mukhtar al-Thaqafi, who totally liquidated the clique which was responsible for murdering Imam Hussein (a.s.) and his companions.

If these uprisings could not put an end to the Ummayyad rule, they practically served as marks of the change which the ummah had undergone. Anti-deviation opposition was on the rise, and the ummah, as a whole, was taking a different stance; one against the Ummayyad aggressive policy.

The Abbasid movement made good use of the rising anti-Ummayyad passion among the people and called for the support of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.). That set the scene for the Abbasids to eventually liquidate the Ummayyad entity. They, however, were also avid enemies of Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) and were responsible for the martyrdom of thousands of their Shi'a.

In conclusion, we can say that Imam Hussein's uprising had practically foiled the Ummayyad policy to derail the Islamic march and plunge

the ummah, once more, into the darkness of ignorance. The uprising did that by reviving the spirit of jihad in the ummah and adopting the choice of rejection, perseverance, and challenge towards the current of aberration.

Peace be on the dozens of martyrs, Abu-Abdullah Hussein (a.s.), the grandson of the Prophet of Allah (s.a.w.). We make a covenant with him to follow in his footsteps on the path of sacred jihad.

And we promise to be loyal to him, and to ready ourselves to sacrifice ourselves in defending the great message of Islam.

And praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

Chapter 17

ENDNOTES

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4. *Fadha'il al-Khmasah min al-Sihah al-Sittah* (Merits of the Five in the Six Authentic Books of Traditions), vol. 1, p.244. It refers to the great books which confirm this narrative. Among them are: *Tafsir al-Zamakhshari* (Qur'anic Exegesis by al-Zamakhshari), *Sahih Muslim*, *Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal*, *Al-Durr al-Manthoor* (The Scattered Pearls), by al-Suyooti, *al-Fakhr al-Razi*, and *al-Tirmidhi*.

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From the same author on Feedbacks

IMAM HASSAN BIN ALI (as) (2013)

This book is about the second Imam, Imam Hasan [a]. He was the son of the first Imam who received his commission upon the death of his father, may Allah allow us to be called his Shi'ah. Many erroneous accounts have been given about Imam Hasan [a], the most treacherous of them being about the number of wives he had and attributing worldly passions to him, God forbid! The most misunderstood and underestimated act of this great Imam was the signing of a peace treaty with the usurper Mu'awiyah.

A large portion of this book has been dedicated to clarifying this treaty. Why it was made, why Imam Hasan [a] was forced to sign it. What it contained and how it was broken.

We pray that Allah is pleased with our efforts and that the true glory of this Imam shines forth for all to see.

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IGNORANCE IS A CHOICE

*"Wisdom is the lost property of the Believer,
let him claim it wherever he finds it"*

Imam Ali (as)