



The Two Chiefs of the Youths of the Paradise

A Brief Account of the Life of Ḥaḍrat Imam
al-Ḥasan al-Mujtbā (A.S.) and Ḥaḍrat Imam
al-Ḥusayn Sayyid al-Shuhadā (A.S.)

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Translated by
Ahmad Rezwani

Islamic Research Foundation
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Publisher's Note

Studying the life and *sīra* of the Infallible ones (A.S.) is incumbent upon every Muslim, as their life is a full-length mirror reflecting the Islamic thought and they are considered as the symbols of the purified Prophetic Sunna. First of all, it is to be noted that both the Prophet Muḥammad (S.A.W.A.) and the Imams (A.S.) have all enjoyed Divine and human virtues and excellences. From this perspective, there is no difference between them; and if a virtue is more saliently symbolized in one of them, it is due to the circumstances and conditions that the Imam has been situated in.

In *Sūrat al-Shūrā*, (Q: 42/23), Allah

(S.W.T.) says to His Apostle, ﷺ Say, “I do not ask you any reward for it except love of [my] relatives.” Whoever performs a good deed, We shall enhance for him its goodness. Indeed Allah is All-forgiving, All-appreciative. ﴿﴾

The Islamic Research Foundation of Astan Quds Razavi is honored to undertake the promotion of the thoughts and words of the Infallible Imams (A.S.), which represent the pure Islamic intellectual thought. Accordingly, with the translation of *Chahārdah Akhtar-i Tābnāk* into English (*The Fourteen Luminaries of Islam*) and publishing it in a single volume as well as six separate volumes, this Foundation has tried to take a step, however small, toward the introduction of these luminary figures and the dissemination of Islamic and human values.

Chahārdah Akhtar-i Tābnāk, originally

written by the late eminent researcher Aḥmad Aḥmadī Bīrjandī (a member of the Islamic Research Foundation), is such a valuable and concise work that has managed to address a great number of seekers after perfection and has been published several times. Being decided to be published in English; however, the Persian version was assigned to the IRF Department of History of Islam to be revised and then handed over to the Translation Department to be rendered into English.

It is hoped that as a part of the above-mentioned translation, this volume may pave the way for further familiarization of the interested readers with the profound and prominent Islamic culture.

**Islamic Research
Foundation
of Astan Quds Razavi**

The Fourth Infallible
Ḥaḍrat Imam al-Ḥasan al-Mujtbā
(A.S.)
The Second Imam

Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) is the son of Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (A.S.) and Fāṭima Zahrā (A.S.), the best of women, and daughter of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.).

Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) was born in Medina on the eve of Ramadan 15, in the year 3 A.H. He was the first son born to 'Alī (A.S.) and Fāṭima (A.S.).

The Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.) took hold of him right after his birth and recited *adhān* in his right ear, and *iqāma* in the left one. Then, he sacrificed a sheep for him, cut short his hair and gave its equivalent weight in silver – a bit more than a *dirham* – to the poor. The Prophet (S.A.W.A.) had his head perfumed; and since then the rituals of sacrificing a sheep (*‘aqīqa*) and giving alms equal to the weight of the head hair of the newly born babies became a tradition. He named this baby Ḥasan, a name which had been unprecedented in *Jāhiliyya* (during pagan period). He was also given his only patronymic, Abū Muḥammad.

His nicknames include: Sibṭ, Sayyid, Zakī, Muḥtabā, the last being his most well-known one.¹

The Holy prophet (S.A.W.A.) was

1 *Sulḥ-i Imām Husayn*, p. 37.

especially interested in al-Ḥasan (A.S.) and his brother, al-Ḥusayn (A.S), frequently saying that al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are my children, in respect to which ‘Alī (A.S.) would say to his other children, “You are my children and al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn are the Prophet (S.A.W.A.)’s.

Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) lived on for some seven years close to his honorable grandfather, enjoying his warm embrace until the latter’s demise followed by his mother’s passing away after two or three months, when he was taken care of solely by his noble father.¹

Upon the martyrdom of his esteemed father, and by God’s ordain and his father’s will, Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) attained Imamate and took over the apparent caliphate as well, managing the Muslim’s

1 *Shī‘a dar Islām*, p. 130.

affairs for about six months. In the meantime, Mu'āwiya who was an obstinate enemy of 'Alī (A.S.) and his family, and had for years fought with him (first under the pretext of revenging 'Uthmān's blood and in the end seeking explicitly for the caliphate), led an army to Iraq which was the seat of Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.)'s caliphate and started a war. Later on, we will talk more about this issue.

Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) was very similar to the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.) in countenance, morality, physical figure and nobility. He has been characterized as follows:

Having whitish countenance mixed with a light shade of red, black eyes, flat cheeks, a bushy beard, dense curly hair, silvery neck, a proportionate stature, broad shoulders, large bones, a narrow waist, a medium height – neither too tall, nor too

short – a handsome face regarded as among the most good looking and charming.

Ibn Sa‘d is quoted as saying that al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) used to dye their hair black.

Human Perfections

In his human perfections, Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) was a reminder of his father and a replica of his honorable grandfather. During the lifetime of the Prophet (S.A.W.A.), al-Ḥasan (A.S.) and his brother were close to him. Sometimes, he would let them ride on his back, and he would kiss and caress them.¹

The Holy Prophet is quoted as saying about Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) and Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.), “These two sons of mine are Imams whether they are sitting or standing

1 *Shī‘a dar Islām*, p. 131.

(referring to the fact that in any case and condition they are Imams).

Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) performed Ḥajj pilgrimage as many as twenty five times on foot, while fine horses were being led behind. Whenever he remembered death and grave, he would weep and as he recalled that he would stand trial on the Judgment Day he would let out such a loud cry that he would fall unconscious; when he was reminded of Paradise and Hell, he would writhe like a snake-bitten one. He would ask for Paradise from God and seek His protection from the Fire. When he performed ablution and stood up for saying prayers, his body would start trembling and his face would turn pale. Three times he shared his property with God [i.e. gave part of it away for the cause of Allah] and two times gave up all his wealth in the way of Allah. It is said that, Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.)

was the most pious and the most heedless of his time toward the worldly ornaments.

In his inner disposition and nature lay the topmost indications of humanity. Whoever saw him would regard him as great, whoever associated with him was treated with kindness and whoever, whether friend and foe, heard his talk or sermons, would simply become all ears until he ended his speech. Muḥammad b. Ishāq said, “No one, except the Messenger (S.A.W.A.), was superior to Ḥasan b. ‘Alī (A.S.) in status, nobility, and eminence. When he would come out of his house to sit in front of the house, where a rug had already been spread for this purpose, the way would be blocked and nobody would pass there out of respect for him, and when he would find this out he would return into the house, easing people's passage.” On the way to Mecca, he dismounted his horse and walked on the

way. All people in the caravan, even Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, followed him and started walking along with him.

Ibn 'Abbās, who was older than Imam al-Ḥasan and Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.), would take hold of the stirrups of their horses and was proud of this, stating, "These are the sons of the Messenger of Allah."

With such status and dignity, Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) was so humble and modest that once he was passing by a number of the poor and needy who were eating pieces of bread before them on the ground. As they saw Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.), they said, "O son of the Messenger of Allah come and share food with us". Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) dismounted the horse immediately, saying, "God doesn't like the haughty", and started eating with them. Then invited them to his house, and gave them both a meal and clothes.

There have been many stories about his generosity and liberality, including one narrated by Madā'inī:

“Al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥusayn and ‘Abd Allāh b. Ja‘far were on the way to Ḥajj, when their provisions got lost. Thirsty and hungry, they arrived at a tent in which an old woman was living. They asked her for water. She told them to milk the sheep and mix the milk with water and drink it. They did so, and then asked for food. She said, ‘I have only got this sheep, you can slaughter and eat it.’ One of them slaughtered the sheep and roasted some of its meet and all ate it, after which they fell asleep. When departing, they told the old woman, ‘We are from Quraysh and are going on Ḥajj; when we return, come to visit us; we will treat you benevolently’. And they left. When the woman's husband arrived and found out what had happened, said, ‘Woe to you! You

killed my sheep for strangers and you say they were from Quraysh?’ After a while, when the situation became difficult for the old woman, she migrated from that place and happened to pass through Medina. Ḥasan b. ‘Alī (A.S.) saw her and recognized her. He went near and told her ‘Do you know me? ‘No,’ she said. ‘I am the one who was your guest on such and such a day.’ He said, then had a thousand heads of sheep and a thousand gold *dīnārs* given to her. After that he sent her to his brother Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī (A.S.), and he also treated her the same. When she was sent to ‘Abd Allāh b. Ja‘far, she was also granted the same gifts.”¹

Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.)'s forbearance and forgiveness was such that, according to Marvān, it was comparable to mountains.

1 *Ṣulḥ-i Imām Ḥusayn*, p. 43.

People's Allegiance to Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.)

When the abominable and horrible assassination of Imam ‘Alī (A.S) occurred in the mosque of Kūfa and ‘Alī (A.S.) fell in his sick bed, he ordered al-Ḥasan (A.S.) to lead people in congregation prayers. At the last moments of his life, he chose him as executor of his will (*waṣī*) by these words, “My son! After me, you are the successor to my position and the claimant of my blood.” He had al-Ḥusayn (A.S.), Muḥammad and his other children as well as the chiefs of his followers and the elders of his kin witness this last will, and then handed over his Book and arms to him and said, "My son! The Messenger of Allah has ordered me to make you my executor and give my Book and arms to you, as His Holiness has made me his executor and given me his Book and arms and has commissioned me to order you to hand them over to your brother al-

Ḥusayn in the last moments of your life”. Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) joined the gathering of the Muslims and stood upon his father's pulpit to talk about the great tragedy of his father's martyrdom to people. After praising God the Almighty and the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.), he said, “At this night, a man was martyred that nobody in the past had emulated him nor in the future will anybody catch up with him.” He, then, talked about Imam ‘Alī (A.S)'s bravery, *jihād*, and his endeavors for Islam as well as the victories achieved by him in wars, pointing out that when he passed away all he possessed was seven hundred dirhams, that was his share of the public treasury, by which he intended to provide his household with a servant.

At this moment in the Friday Mosque which was crowded with people, ‘Ubayd Allāh b. ‘Abbās rose to his feet and

encouraged people to swear allegiance to Ḥasan b. ‘Alī (A.S.). People enthusiastically swore allegiance to him. This happened the same day as his father's martyrdom, i.e. twenty first of Ramadan, 40 A.H.

People of Kūfa, Madā’in, Iraq, Hijāz, and Yemen, all swore allegiance to Ḥasan b. ‘Alī, except Mu‘āwiya who wished to go another way and treat him the same way as he had treated his father.

After people's allegiance, he delivered a sermon and enjoined people to obey the Ahl al-Bayt of the Prophet (S.A.W.A.) who are the lesser of the two weights (*thaqalayn*) – the greater being the Qur’ān – and warned them against the Satan and the satanic ones.

Anyhow, Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.)'s lifestyle during his residence in Kūfa made him focus of attention, popular with the hearts, and a source of hope for people. Requirements of leadership were all met in

him since he was, first of all, from among the household of the Prophet (S.A.W.A.) and loving him was a requisite of faithfulness; and besides that, swearing allegiance to him necessitated their obedience to him.

Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) put everything in proper order and appointed governors in different cities, taking over the rule of the state. Very soon, however, when people found Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) as decisive in implementation of justice, ordinances, and Islamic penal laws as his father, a great number of influential individuals appealed to secret conspiracies and even wrote secretly to Mu‘āwiya and promoted him to move toward Kūfa. They even assured him that as his army approaches Ḥasan b. ‘Alī (A.S.)'s camp, they will either surrender him handcuffed to Mu‘āwiya, or kill him at

once.¹

The Khawārij, too, due to their enmity with the rule of the Hashemite, conspired with them in this intrigue.

Against this gang of hypocrites, were the Shī'ites of 'Alī (A.S.) and a number of Emigrants and Helpers who had come to Kūfa and had settled there. These noble figures proved their sincerity and intimacy in all stages – both right after allegiance or during the time the Imam (A.S.) ordered *jihād*.

When Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) saw Mu'āwiya's rebellion against himself, he sent him letters enjoining obedience to him to give up conspiracy and bloodshed. Mu'āwiya, however, in reply to Imam (A.S.) merely argued, "I am more experienced in ruling than you are and have been involved

1 *Sulḥ-i Imām Husayn*, p. 100.

in this affair for a longer time and I am your senior in age, that is all!”

Sometimes admitting Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.)'s competence, Mu‘awiyah would write in his letters, “After me, caliphate will be yours since you are the most deserved of all”. The last response that he gave to an envoy from Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) was, “Go back, between you and us lies but a sword.”

Thus it was Mu‘āwiya who started animosity and mutiny and rebelled against his Imam of the time. Mu‘āwiya, through morbid conspiracies and choosing appropriate occasions and creating a climate of violations and hypocrisy, succeeded in his ominous plans. He paved the road for himself through buying off the mean consciences and scattering various kinds of lies and slanders around and weakening the morale of the unfaithful. On the other hand, he had all his troops mobilized.

Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.), in return, made his decision to respond to the belligerency of Mu‘āwiya and formally declared *jihād*. Contrary to the army of Mu‘āwiya, in which some had gathered coveting position and gold, the army of Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) consisted of outstanding Shī‘ites such as Ḥujr b. ‘Adī, Abū Ayyūb Anṣārī, ‘Adī b. Ḥātam... who as described by the Imam (A.S.), “Each was stronger than an army”. However, against these noble figures were also weaklings who responded to battles by fleeing and were capable only in hypocrisy, and who were enamored by the worldly gains. Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) was, from the beginning, worried about this incongruity.

The total number of Iraqi military troops is reported to have been 350 thousands.

Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) spoke in the mosque of Kūfa, urging the troops to move on towards “Nakhīla.” ‘Adī b. Ḥātam was

the first one who accompanied the Imam (A.S.) and made obeisance to him. Many others also followed him.

Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) dispatched ‘Ubayd Allāh b. ‘Abbās who was one of his relatives and the first persons who encouraged people to swear allegiance to Imam, along with twelve thousand troops to Maskan, located in the northernmost part of the Hashemite Iraq. But temptations from Mu‘āwiyā deluded him as the most trusted of the Imam's commanders, and attracted him to Mu‘āwiyā's camp in return for a million dirhams, half of which was paid immediately. Consequently, following him, eight thousand out of twelve thousand troops rushed into Mu‘āwiyā's camp and thus sold their faith for the worldly gains.

After ‘Ubayd Allāh b. ‘Abbās, commandership was handed over to Qays b. Sa‘d, who was later on rumored by troops of

Mu‘āwiya and hypocrites to have been killed, degrading the morale of Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.)'s troops. A group of Mu‘āwiya's functionaries who arrived in Madā'in to hold a meeting with Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.), also spread the rumor of the Imam's acceptance of peace among the people. In the meantime, it happened that one of the Khawārij assassins pierced Imam's thigh by throwing a lance at him, injuring his thigh very seriously. Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) got into such a dire situation, however, that left him with no choice but “making peace” with Mu‘āwiya.

Finding the circumstances favorable, anyhow, Mu‘āwiya brought up the issue of making peace with Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.). In order to consult his troops, the Imam (A.S.) delivered a sermon and prompted them to choose either of the ways – sacrificing their lives or yielding to peace. A

large number of them demanded peace. Some also persecuted the Infallible Imam with their tongue-lashings. At last, Mu'āwiyah's peace proposal was accepted by Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.), but it was only intended to bind the former in conditions and commitments which would obviously not be abided by him and in near future he would disregard all of them one after another; and as a result, Mu'āwiyah's vicious nature and non-commitment to faith and treaties would become manifest to all people. By accepting the peace proposal, Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) also prevented the fratricide and bloodshed which was Mu'āwiyah's main target, by which he planned to uproot, by any possible means, the Shī'ism and the Shī'ites of 'Alī (A.S.)'s household. In this way, the brightly shining feature of Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) – as predicted by his noble grandfather the

Apostle of Allah (S.A.W) – emerged in the horizon of Islam as the “Great peacemaker.” In offering peace, Mu‘āwiyā had no other goal than material gains as well as clutching at the *ḥukūma* (rule over the Muslims). But Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) agreed to this peace only to safeguard his school and principles of thought against extinction and protect his followers (Shī‘ites) against being wiped out.

Among the terms included in the peace agreement were:

Mu‘āwiyā was required to act according to the Book of God, the tradition of the Prophet (S.A.W.A.) and the conducts of the competent caliphs; not to appoint anybody as his successor after his death; not to devise any tricks and treachery against Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.), the progeny of ‘Alī (A.S.), and their followers all over the Islamic lands. He was also obliged to abandon cursing ‘Alī (A.S.) and not to inflict any loss on any

Muslim. They called God, the Apostle of God, and a great number of people as witness to this agreement. Mu'āwiyā came to Kūfa to have the peace agreement carried out in the presence of Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S) and let the people be informed about the event. Throngs of people headed towards Kūfa.

First, Mu'āwiyā mounted the pulpit and said a few words, some of which are as follows. "O people of Kūfa! Do you suppose I fought with you for the sake of prayers, fasting, alms tax, and Ḥajj pilgrimage? Actually, I knew you would observe all these. I waged the war upon you only to rule over you and to take over your affairs. God has now granted me this wish, though you are not pleased with it. Now I tell you, any blood that is shed in this revolt would be wasted and any treaty I have signed with anybody is trampled under my feet."

Thus, he disregarded the treaty that he himself had concluded, proposed, and signed. How fast he disgraced himself!

Then, Ḥasan b. ‘Alī (A.S.), in full splendor and dignity of Imamate – being gazed at respectfully by those present – climbed up the pulpit to deliver his critical and historic sermon.

After glorifying and praising the Lord of the worlds and lauding the Apostle of Allah (S.A.W.A.), he said:

“... By God I swear I hope to be the most benevolent to people and thanks and praise God that I have no hatred in my heart of any Muslim and wish them no malice...” Then he continued, “Mu‘āwiya suspects that I regard him as befitting caliphate and do not regard myself as such. He is telling a lie. According to the Book of God the Almighty and as judged by His Apostle (S.A.W), we have priority over everyone else in rulership,

and have, since the demise of the Prophet (S.A.W), constantly suffered tyranny and oppression”. Then he proceeded to point out the event of Ghadīr Khum and the usurpation of his father's caliphate, and deviation of caliphate from the right path, saying, “This deviation prompted some freed slaves and their children, i.e. Mu‘āwiya and his cronies, to covet the caliphate.”

And as in his talk Mu‘āwiya insulted ‘Alī (A.S), so did Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) after introducing himself and the superiority of his ancestry and status, cursed Mu‘āwiya and a large number of people said amen. And we say so, too!

A few days later, Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) set out for Medina.

In this way, Mu‘āwiya took over the Islamic caliphate and entered Iraq, violating the peace terms by a public formal address. He used every possible way to inflict the

most adverse pressures and tortures on Imam's household and the Shi'ites.

During the entire period of his ten years of Imamate, Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) lived in intense distress and political strangulation, having no security and peace of mind. Finally, in the year 50/670, he was poisoned and martyred by his wife, Ja'da, who was instigated by Mu'āwiya and was laid to rest in Baqī'.

Wives and Children of Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.)

Enemies and mercenary historians have fabricated stories about the number of Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.)'s wives; even simple-minded friends have made up words in this regard. According to what the genuine histories have recorded, however, the Imam's wives are as follows:

Umm al-Ḥaqq, daughter of Ṭalḥa b.

‘Ubayd Allāh.

Ḥafṣ, daughter of ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Abī Bakr.

Hind, daughter of Suhayl b. Amr.

Ja‘da, daughter of Ash‘ath b. Qays.

It is not recalled that the number of the Imam's wives has ever in his life exceeded eight or ten, according to two traditions, and concerning that his slave-wives (*umm walad*) are also included in this enumeration.

Umm walad is a woman retainer who gives birth to a baby from her master and this would result in her freedom after her master's death.¹

Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) had 15 children, both daughters and sons, by the following names:

Zayd, Ḥasan, ‘Amr, Qāsim, ‘Abd Allāh,

1 *Ṣulḥ-i Imām Ḥusayn*, p. 38.

‘Abd al-Rahmān, Ḥasan Athram, Ṭalḥa, Umm al-Ḥasan, Umm al-Ḥusayn, Fāṭima, Umm Salama, Ruqayya, Umm ‘Abd Allāh, and Fāṭima [from a different mother].

From among his children, only his two sons, Ḥasan and Zayd, had progeny; so except through these, relating others to Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) is invalid.¹

Some Sayings of Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.)

1. Avoid evils by doing benevolence.
2. Get over hardships and problems through forbearance.
3. Preserve your religion and attract people's affection to yourselves.
4. Remove the plights of the distressed before they express them.
5. Do not refrain from consultation in affairs.
6. A relative is one who is kind to you, even though he or she is a stranger.
7. Put up with people in life, so that they

1 *Ṣulḥ-i Imām Ḥusayn*, p. 39.

become tender to you.

8. Beware of idle talk.

9. Avaricious people are poor (since they are never satisfied and should always be striving).

10. It is base and ignoble not to be thankful for blessings.

11. That which doesn't contain evil is thankfulness for blessings and forbearance in the face of the mishaps.

12. Any time you meet your brother in faith you should kiss him on the forehead, where there is the trace of light (i.e., the place of prostration on the forehead).

13. No people will be guided aright unless they counsel each other.

14. Practicing avarice (in earning one's livings) is like committing sins. (*Tuḥaf al-Uqūl*)

The Fifth Infallible
Ḥaḍrat Imam al-Ḥusayn, Sayyid al-
Shuhadā (A.S.)
The Third Imam

Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.), second child of ‘Alī (A.S.), whose mother was Fāṭima (A.S.) daughter of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.), was born on the third of Sha‘bān in the year 4 AH (January 8, 626). After martyrdom of his honorable brother, Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.), he attained Imamate by the command of Allah and his brother's last will.

As pointed out in the life account of the fourth Infallible, Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) was

forced to accept Mu'āwiyā's peace proposal due to hypocrisy of many of his troops; the escape of 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Abāss, his chief of army to Mu'āwiyā's military headquarters; deception of a large number of his troops which, by historical evidences, included two thirds of his whole army; apostasy of the rest of his troops; intrigue of the Khawārij; and the culmination of slanders and false charges against him. By signing the peace agreement, Mu'āwiyā conceded that: companions of 'Alī (A.S.) and his followers and the Shī'ites in all cities be secure and protected from aggression, no trickery or deception be made against them, and nobody be appointed as Mu'āwiyā's successor after him. Shortly after peace agreement, however, he showed that he is truly disloyal to his pledge. Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) had accepted Mu'āwiyā's peace treaty proposal for the interests of Islam and the

unfavorable circumstances for the household of ‘Alī (A.S.) and prevention of fratricide, and Mu‘āwiya had apparently agreed on all items of the peace treaty but he actually did not believe in Islam, and like his father Abū Sufyān, had accepted the outward of Islam out of fear or for the sake of worldly pleasures, gradually revealing his plan which was gaining power and taking over the rule and thus exposing the falsity of his faith.

After making peace with Imam al-Ḥasan, Mu‘āwiya was the absolute ruler of Shām (Syria), ten years of which being during the life of Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.), and ten years during the Imamate of Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.).

Because of the popularity and influence of Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) and his own peace treaty, Mu‘āwiya had to restrict his rebellion and aggression – although ostensibly – and

at times procure some friends for himself through fraudulence and compromise. And since he viewed Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) as in a way opposed to many of his anti-Islamic and ambitious goals, he plotted the murder of the Holy Imam (A.S.) with the help of Ja'da, the wife of Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) and martyred the grandson of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.) in the final days of Safar, 50 A.H (March, 670 CE). Upon the martyrdom of Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.), Mu'āwiya found it more convenient to carry out his ominous intentions. First of all he commenced a series of persecutions, tortures, and murdering of the Shī'ites and followers of Imam 'Alī (A.S.). This horrific era coincided with the Imamate of Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.), who was an Imam for ten years. All his Imamate period – except his last six months of life – was spent during the caliphate of Mu'āwiya. The circumstances

then were of an extremely adverse nature and toughest strangulation. Among the elements which prompted the great uprising of Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) were: reappearance of the paganism (*jāhiliyya*); increasing spread of monarchy and royal luxury; wasting and embezzling of public treasury of the Muslims; unduly liberality; oppressions and cruelties done in the name of Islam; deprivation of the followers of ‘Alī (A.S.)'s household of their undeniable rights in the public treasury and granting them to the sycophant of the court; and above all, invalidation of religious rules and the Islamic laws and violation of divine precepts and indifference to commands and prohibitions of Allah and of the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.A.).

Mu‘āwiya and his cronies made great efforts to force Ahl al-Bayt (A.S) into seclusion, eradicate the Shī‘ites by any

means, and obliterate the name of ‘Alī (A.S.) and his progeny. When they uttered his name, they did it with curse and abuse. At the same time the propaganda system (of Shām) was to convince people that cursing such a great man as ‘Alī (A.S) was regarded as worship and would be rewarded in the next world!

With his vile and crafty plans, Mu‘āwiya intended to gradually establish the foundations of the rule and kingship of his lewd, nasty, and drunkard son, Yazīd. When gradually Mu‘āwiya's intention about his son, who was notorious as a despicable and lewd person, was revealed, a group of Muslims were unhappy about it and began to express their dissidence. Mu‘āwiya, however, proceeded with new crackdown and severities to prevent the widespread dissidence.

Imam al-Husayn (A.S.) was well aware

that the Abū Sufyān's clan basically opposed Islam and the name of Muhammad b. ‘Abd Allāh (S.A.W.A.) and had done their best to extinguish the light of Islam. This vile intention was most of all pursued by Mu‘āwiya. To understand this we quote a *ḥadīth* related in reliable sources:

“... Muṭrif b. Mughayra said, “My father and I were guests to Mu‘āwiya in Shām. My father used to frequent Mu‘āwiya's court. One night when he returned from Mu‘āwiya's palace I found him very disappointed and upset. I asked him about the cause of his sadness. He said, 'This man, i.e., Mu‘āwiya is an evil-doer and the filthiest man of all times'. 'What has happened'? I asked him. He replied, 'I suggested Mu‘āwiya now that his wishes had been fulfilled and he had taken over the Islamic caliphate, he had better treat the people with justice and not to mistreat the

Banī Hāshim so harshly, as they are also your kindred and nothing much is left with them to scare you of revolting against you.' Mu'āwiya replied, 'Alas! Abū Bakr practiced caliphate and spread justice and nothing happened except that he died and his name also faded out as well as 'Umar and 'Uthmān who died similarly, even though they were benevolent and well-behaved toward the people. However, they left but a name and passed away. But the name of this Hashemite man (i.e., the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.A.) is called out five times a day from atop the minarets of the world of Islam, '*Ashhadu anna Muḥammadan Rasūl Allāh*' (I profess that Muḥammad (S.A.W.A.) is the Messenger of God).

Now that the caliphs' names have died and Muḥammad's name lives on, nothing is left to be done but the name 'Muhammad'

to be buried and obliterated.”¹

Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) and Mu‘āwiya

As long as his brother was alive, Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) was not to oppose the decisions made by his brother who was a proof (*ḥujja*) of God and an Imam, to whom obedience was incumbent on every Muslim and obeying him was the same as obeying God. On the other hand, Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) was well aware of the reasons forcing Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) to accept peace treaty. Imam al-Ḥasan al-Mujtabā (A.S.) never did anything opposed to wisdom and the expediency of the Muslims to which his brother would have disagreed. If Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) had been in his brother's place, he would have done the same as what Imam al-Ḥasan (A.S.) had

¹ *Barrasī-yi Tāriḫ-i ‘ĀShūrā*, p. 17.

done in his time. The Imamate and leadership are, in any case, in the same line; but in different times they differ in tactics: a time is for peace, a time for war; a time is for supplication, a time for guidance and teaching. In any era, each one of the noble leaders has somehow struggled against the tyrant rulers and held up the banner of the Truth.

Anyhow, little by little Mu'āwiya exposed his filthy plan and paved the way for its implementation. He intended to make monarchy and authority over Muslims hereditary in his dynasty and, through this devastating act, thoroughly uproot Islam.

He wanted to appoint his son Yazīd as Amīr al-Mu'mimīn and the ruler of Muslims. Yazīd actually had no art except hedonism and wearing flamboyant clothes. He was so reckless that he would easily and frankly declare lawful the things proclaimed

as unlawful by the Prophet (S.A.W.A.). Following is what he has been quoted as saying:

“If wine has been made unlawful in the religion of Aḥmad, let's then turn the goblet around by the religion of Jesus, son of Mary.”

Yazīd was such a person to perpetrate incest in his drunken state.¹ He was constantly indulged in seeking pleasures, drinking, playing with monkeys, and engaged in other amusements. Whenever indulged in drinking, he was apt to whisper what was hidden in his heart as follows:

“My companions! Come over and listen to the intoxicating tune of the singers. Pour yourselves cups after cups of wine and let go of your scholarly rhetoric. The pleasant tune

1 *Zaynab (A.S.) Ḥimāsa-ī Abadī Bar Farāz Tārikh*, p. 59.

reverberated from a harp and lute distracts me from the call of *Allāhu Akbar*. I have exchanged the paradise houris with the dregs of wine. This exciting tune of music, these dancers with their enticing bodies, and the goblets of ruby-colored wine suffice me; I neither wish for houris nor other such things.”

It was for such a mean and nasty son of his that Mu‘āwiya wanted to secure allegiance from people.

First, Mu‘āwiya pursued this goal in cities other than Medina, since he knew the latter was more significant than other cities. At first, he ordered Marwān b. Ḥakam to take allegiance from the people of that city... even from Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī (A.S.).

In order to pave the way, Mu‘āwiya left Shām to go on Ḥajj but went to Medina and spoke harshly to Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī (A.S.), Zubayr's son and ‘Umar's son. Then, he

gathered the people in the mosque and talked to them about Yazīd's competence, asserting that “all Muslims except you have sworn allegiance...”

Interrupting him, Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) stood up and said, “I swear by God, you are putting aside, in favor of Yazīd, the one whose father and mother are better and more competent than Yazid's father and mother and he himself is better than Yazīd.”

Mu‘āwiyā said, “It sounds you mean yourself?”

Ḥusayn (A.S.) retorted, “Yes.”

Mu‘āwiyā went on, “Verily, your saying that your mother is better than Yazīd's mother is true because Fāṭima is the daughter of the Messenger of Allah, and her religiosity and bright lifespan is evident to everybody... As for your saying that your father was better than Yazīd's father, however, God made his father superior to

your father.”

The Imam (A.S.) said, “The ignorance suffices you that you regard the transient world as superior to the Eternal World.”

Mu‘āwiyā said, “As for your opining that you are better than Yazīd, I swear by God that Yazīd is better and more competent for the *umma* of Muḥammad (A.S.) than you.”

The Imam (A.S.) replied furiously, “This is a lie and calumny. Is the drunkard and negligent Yazīd better than me?”

When Mu‘āwiyā noticed this open opposition, he ordered to station two armed agents in each allegiance center so that if anyone uttered any word of dissidence, they would do away with him. This was not acceptable to Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.), however, and Mu‘āwiyā's attempts did not come through. A study on the states of Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) shows that during the reign of Mu‘āwiyā, Imam al-Ḥusayn

(A.S.) would always consider rebelling against the tyrannical rule of the Abū Sufyān's clan and constantly pointing out Mu'āwiya's innovations (*bid'a*) and wrong doings. However, he would regard his noble brother's peace agreement and the presence of Mu'āwiya as a barrier to his uprising and waited for a time when the people would get informed about the corruption in the Umayyad ruling system and would become well-aware of the poisonous propaganda against the household of 'Alī (A.S.). It would take years for the people to feel the bitter taste of the despotic rule, so that they could appreciate the uprising of such a pious man as al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) and make it their paradigm for ever.

If Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) had started his movement in time of Mu'āwiya, the latter would have been able to, by his trickery and cunning tricks, murder the Imam and

neutralize the efficacy of his spilled blood. However, the collapse of Mu'āwiyā's ruling system by way of unlawful acts, tyranny, and impurities, gradually paved the way which reached its peak in the time of Yazīd. Perforce the bloody uprising and the immortal epic of the Prophet (S.A.W.A.)'s grandson was matured enough to get ready to emerge.

Preparation for the Everlasting Epic of Karbalā

Mu'āwiyā died on the fifteenth of Rajab, 60 and his son, Yazīd, succeeded to the throne. First of all, he decided to secure al-Ḥusayn (A.S.)'s allegiance. To this end, he wrote a letter to Walīd b. 'Ataba, the governor of Medina, and demanded him to elicit allegiance from Ḥusayn b. 'Alī (A.S.) as soon as possible, not allowing any delay in this respect. The same night, Walīd sent

an envoy to Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) to invite him to his palace. The Imam called a group of his kin and told them to get armed and accompany him to the governor's seat of rule, telling them that Walīd had sent for him supposedly to ask him do something which he would be unable to do. He advised them to keep his company to the gate of the palace and as soon as they heard him raising his voice enter the house and get rid of Walīd. Then, Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) went to Walīd who received him warmly and humbly, then he read the letter and brought the issue of allegiance. Marwān b. Ḥakam was also present.

Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) addressed Walīd, “I do not suppose you would be content with my secret allegiance. If you want my allegiance, let it be sworn in the presence of people.” “Yes it is better,” responded Walīd. To which the Imam (A.S) added, “So, you'd

better wait until tomorrow morning." Walīd asked him to leave then to attend a public meeting the next day. Marwān said sycophantically, "Do not let Ḥusayn b. 'Alī leave. You will not find another chance like this. Either incarcerate him or have him swear allegiance, or behead him!" The Imam (A.S.) rose to his feet, signs of fury in his countenance, saying:

"Oh son of the blue-eyed woman, is that you or Walīd who will kill me? I swear by God that you lied and sinned." Having said this, he left them.

Since Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) did not agree with allegiance, within a day, i.e. Friday night of Rajab 19, 60 AH (Dec. 29, 679), he left Medina for Mecca.

Before Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) together with his family and some of his relatives left Medina, he bade farewell to the tomb of his noble grandfather (S.A.W.A.),

Fāṭima (A.S.), and his brother and wrote a testament to his brother Muḥammad Ḥanafīya who was a noble, brave, and pious man, proclaiming in it both his uprising and the reason for his movement, clarifying that in this movement he had no goal but enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, and reviving the Religion of God and the way of his grandfather, the Apostle of Allah (S.A.W.A.) and his father, ‘Alī Murtaḍā (A.S.). He also wrote a letter to Banī Hāshim and called for help, and another letter to the people of Baṣra, explicating the philosophy of his movement.

Anyhow, Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) who was the guardian of truthfulness and Islamic justice entered Mecca, which was frequented by Muslims from all over the Islamic lands, to take the required measures and to inform people, by eloquent sermons and letters and talks, of the hazards threatening Islam. For

several months he stayed in Mecca and made many negotiations and wrote many letters to introduce Yazīd and to uncover his evil and ill-famed face and the wrongdoings of his functionaries.

Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.)'s stay in Mecca lasted until the time of Ḥajj pilgrimage.

Muslims from all over the Muslim world were entering Mecca in groups and were preparing to perform Ḥajj rituals. At this time, the Imam (A.S) took advantage of any moment and position to propagate the religion, to guide the people and to clarify his sacred goals and the chaotic situation of Islam and the Muslims through giving speeches and writing letters. It was then that he found out that a number of Yazīd's agents had set out for Mecca, apparently to perform Ḥajj but actually to assassinate Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.). They had the mission to carry arms hidden under their

pilgrimage garments to shed the pure blood of the Prophet (S.A.W.A.)'s grandson in the Sanctuary of Ka'ba. Consequently, the Imam performed the 'Umra (minor Hajj) in lieu of Hajj of *Tamattu'* (major Hajj), after which he gave a short talk to a group of people and told them of his preparedness for martyrdom in order to revive his grandfather's religion, and asked the Muslims for help to this end. The next day, Dhu'l Hijja 8, he set out for Iraq with a group of his companions and kindred. Some of the dignitaries tried to prevent his journey, however, the Imam (A.S.) said, "I will not swear allegiance to Yazid and confirm the rule of tyranny and corruption. Now, I leave Mecca to preserve the sanctity of the House of Allah."

Letters of Invitation from the People of Kūfa

In the five-year period of ‘Alī (A.S.)'s fair and impartial rule, the people of Kūfa had partly become familiar with his virtues and had witnessed his piety, asceticism, and justice. They heard of Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.)'s abstention from swearing allegiance to Yazīd and his going to Mecca. Thus, they wrote many letters to him and invited him to Kūfa.

First, Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) sent his cousin, Muslim b. ‘Aqīl, who was an efficient, brave, and self-sacrificing man to Kūfa to verify the genuineness of their invitation. The Kūfans apparently welcomed him warmly and 12 thousand of them swore allegiance to him, eagerly looking forward to the arrival of Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.). Muslim b. ‘Aqīl wrote to the Imam informing him of the favorable situation of

Kūfa and the people's enthusiasm for his visit.

On the other hand, the administration of the Umayyads which was frightened by this invitation got embarrassed and appointed ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād, who was a ruthless and murderous man, as the governor of Kūfa. ‘Ubayd Allāh went to Kūfa and dispersed the people from around Muslim b. ‘Aqīl by threat and deception, so that the latter was eventually left alone. At last, the blood thirsty troops of ‘Ubayd Allāh besieged Muslim who stood up to them bravely and with amazing resistance, but finally was arrested and killed as a martyr. Ḥurr b. Yazīd Riyāḥī, who later on joined the companions and martyrs of Karbalā, was assigned to block the road on Ḥusayn b. ‘Alī (A.S.) who was on the way to Kūfa; however, being decisive in self-sacrifice and fighting against Yazīd, although he got

informed on the way to Kūfa of his cousin's death, he continued his way toward Kūfa.

Ḥurr planned, by the order of ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād, to persuade Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) to surrender, but the Prophet (S.A.W.A.)'s grandson refused to give up. He turned his way to another direction and arrived in a land called “Karbālā” on the second of Muharram.

Before arriving in Karbalā, Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) delivered a sermon in a place called “Bayḍa” addressing Ḥurr and his troops and those present at the place, and elaborated on his sacred movement and its causes. The following are excerpts of that sermon:

“O people! Whoever sees that a ruler is tyrannizing and violating the Divine laws, committing perjury and opposing the traditions and *sīra* of the Apostle of Allah (S.A.W.A.), and not to prevent his

wrongdoing, verily God will punish him along with the tyrant.” Then, pointing out Yazīd's despotism, he went on to say, “They have given up the obedience to God and taken to obey Satan. They regard as lawful what is ordained unlawful by God and as unlawful what is ordained lawful by God. Now, as the son of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (A.S.) and Fāṭimat al-Zahrā (A.S.) daughter of the Apostle of Allah (S.A.W.A.), I am the most competent of all to make a stand against all these... If you are ready, as you have written in your letters, to help me, you will achieve eternal bliss.”

Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.), then, said the noon and afternoon prayers in the residence of Sharāf together with his companions and troops of Ḥurr b. Yazīd. After prayers the Imam (A.S.) said:

“O people! If you are pious and regard the truth as belonging to the people of

truth, this will please God. We, the household of the Prophet (S.A.W.A.), are more competent to be your leaders and Imams than the ones who are now in charge and practicing tyranny and oppression. If your opinion is different from what is implied from your letters, I will return.”

Ḥurr b Yazīd said, “I swear by God that I am not aware of these letters.” The Imam (A.S.) ordered one of his companions to bring two packs of the Kūfans’ letters to Ḥurr. He said he did not know anything about those letters and that he was commissioned to take him to Ibn Ziyād. The Imam (A.S.) told him, “Death is closer to you than this mission.” Then he ordered his companions to mount the horses and return. Ḥurr tried to stop the Imam (A.S.) and supposedly began to advise him, saying, “I swear you by God not to wage war;

otherwise, you will be killed.” The Imam (A.S.) retorted indignantly, “Are you frightening me of death? Do you think you will be relieved and your problems solved by killing me?”

All those who were present heard the precious words of the Imam (A.S.). But there was only one conscious and living heart that heard him and was influenced, and that was Ḥurr himself, who joined the camp of al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) in the morning of ‘Āshūrā and was martyred in the way of Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.).

On Thursday of Muhararm 2, 61 AH/ October 2, 680, Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) stopped in an area of Naynawā called Karbalā, where he set up the tents of his pure household. The next day four thousand troops led by ‘Umar b. Sa’d arrived from Kūfa and positioned before the Imam (A.S.).

From that day on, frequent negotiations took place which resulted in proposing that Imam al-Husayn (A.S.) get prepared to surrender and to swear allegiance to Yazīd. Husayn b. ‘Alī (A.S.) said, “I will not tolerate baseness, neither will I go hand in hand with Yazīd. I regard death in the path of Allah nothing but happiness, and life with the tyrants nothing but destruction and wretchedness.”

As the poem goes:

The man of God does not submit to degradation,

Man is free to acquire dignity or disgrace.

Finally, on the day of ‘Āshūrā (Muharram 10, 61 AH), the most tragic event and at the same time the most outstanding epic in the history of Islam and the world occurred. Imam al-Husayn (A.S.) and his children and companions stood out firmly to the cost of their lives and

embraced all kinds of afflictions and hardships in order to restore Islam and to set up the truth; they sacrificed their loved souls to pull down the tyranny palace of the cruel and corrupt dynasty of the Umayyads and to reveal to people the hideous face of the oppressors.

Throughout the day of 'Āshūrā, Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S) encountered disasters and hardships, the smallest of which would have been enough to render a man helpless. However, this man of truth, with his thorough faith and trust in God, stood up to all those afflictions and sufferings honorably and did not surrender his body and soul to disgrace and degradation. With full bravery he said:

“I swear to God that I will not stretch my hand in begging before you, and will not flee from you like slaves.” Anyhow, the battle started quite fiercely on the day of

‘Āshūrā. The retainers, companions, and the Banī Hāshim, each in turn, fought with several of the enemy troops, while chanting brief rhetoric epic verses by means of which they would clarify the reality of their uprising and express the reasons for their support of Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.). Ḥaḍrat Zaynab (A.S.), Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.)’s sister, was, in this awesome situation, engaged in pacifying the women and children of Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) and helping him and assisting in gathering the sacred bodies of the martyrs, and above all, taking care of Imam’s son, Ḥaḍrat Sajjād (A.S.), who was due to Divine expediency sick and feverish in those days. She did all this as steadfastly as a mountain, and at the same time maintained her patience and tolerance as she was aware of the ending and the secret of Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.)’s great uprising.

The more the pressures intensified and the close companions of the Imam were martyred and their number decreased, the more would Imam al-Ḥusayn (A.S.) become cheerful and smile at the beauty of martyrdom. The battle continued until the afternoon of ‘Āshūrā. Almost eight hours of incessant hand-to-hand fighting and attacking of thirty thousand troops against seventy two people, was carried out. What an astonishing event! One person versus a full scale army! Indeed, Ḥusayn (A.S.) drank up the bitter goblet of love and lay down his head on the hot soil of Karbalā, while all his body was strewn with painful wounds and blood was flowing down as if from fountains. In this state, however, he was – as always – in remembrance of his Beloved, the Almighty Allah, and praying as follows:

“I am content with Your ordinance and

decree, and patient with the disasters You send on me; I have no beloved and goal but You, O Helper of those who call for help.”

After that, the tents were set on fire, the pure household of Sayyid al-Shuhadā were taken captive, and then taken to Kūfa, Shām, and finally to Medina. These are events which are heart-rending and bringing blood to the eyes of his Shī‘ites and lovers.

Some Sayings of Ḥaḍrat Sayyid al-Shuhadā (A.S.)

1. People are slaves of the world, with the religion only at the tip of their tongues; as long as it provides for their material life they stick to it but once they are afflicted (and the religion contradicts their interests), then the number of real religious people will diminish.

2. When there comes a trial, people can be known (it will then be known who is

really faithful).

3. Benevolence and good-doing must like the rain of mercy fall upon both the acquainted ones and the strangers.

4. On the journey to Karbalā, he said, “Verily, this world has turned upside down and bizarre; its good has vanished and nothing is left but a little moisture like that remaining inside a bowl, and a troublesome life. Truly, I see death but happiness and life with tyrants but misery...

5. He said to the man in his presence who was speaking ill behind another man, “Keep away from backbiting, since it is the food for the dogs of the Hell.”

6. God's gradual leading man to perdition (*istidrā*) is in that He gives him abundant bounties and takes away from him the [chance of] thankfulness.

7. He said, “It is not that doing favor to the unworthy is wasteful, benevolence is like a fast rain which falls upon both good and evil.”