Chapter-III

Betrayal of Kufans
Husain’s call to or invitation by the Kufans

Correspondence, letters etc.

There were many in Iraq especially in Kufah who professed to be the supporters of Ali and his descendents. Hazrat Hasan, it is true, found little support, during his short-lived Khilafah there but the fond and fickle-minded people once again after the death ofMuawiyah turned eagerly to his brother, Husain. The news of Muawiyah’s death raised new hopes in the minds of such people. Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi on the authority of Ibn Kathîr holds that the news of the death of Muawiyah was greeted with satisfaction at Kufah, the majority of whose inhabitants were shi‘is.¹ Rashîd Akhtar Nadvi holds the same view point and writes that never were the people of Iraq overjoyed than they were at the death of Muawiyah.² Ibrahim Ayati and Hamiduddin write that the news of the death of Muawiyah spread throughout Iraq and the people also came to know that Husain and Abdullah bin Zubair had declined to take the oath of allegiance to Yazid and had gone to Makkah. The Iraqi or for that matter the Kufi supporters of Husain gathered in the house of Sulaiman bin Surad Khuzai and thanking Allah on the death of Muawiyah, they took the stock of situation. On the suggestion of their leader, Sulaiman bin Surad, it was decided to send a letter to Husain bin Ali, asking him to come to Kufah.³
According to Ibrahim Ayati, the letter's contents are reproduced as follows:

"This letter is being written by Sulaiman bin Surad, Musayyib bin Najbah, Rafa'ah bin Shaddad Bajali, Habib bin Mazahir and other Muslim and faithful supporters of Husain residing in Kufah. Praise be to Allah who has destroyed your oppressive and spiteful enemy, the man who prevailed over this nation, assumed unlawfully the reigns of government, usurped the public treasury and became the ruler of the Muslims without their consent. At present we, the Iraqis, do not have any leader and Imam. Hence, we request you to proceed to us. We have nothing to do with Numan bin Bashir in the matter of Friday and Eid prayers. He is alone in the Governor's house. If we come to know that you left to join us we shall turn him out and shall, if Allah wills, pursue him upto Syria."^{4}

Moreover, they sent this letter through Abdullah bin Sabi Hamdani and Abdullah bin Dāl and instructed them to leave for Makkah immediately. They reached Husain in Makkah on the 10th of Ramzan, 60 A.H. and delivered the letter to him. Qazi Zainul Abidin on the authority of Ibn Kathīr opines the same and further writes that the people of Kufah learnt that Husain had refused to pledge allegiance to Yazid, they met in a secret meeting in the house of Sulaiman bin Surad al-Khuza'ī who was their leader. Spirited speeches were made. Finally, it was decided that Husain
be invited to Kufah and on his arrival there should be a general rising against Yazid. Accordingly, the following letter was addressed to Husain:

“Allah’s peace be on you. Allah be thanked that He has caused the death of an enemy of yours who was so cruel and haughty, who sowed disruption among the people, who ruled over the people against their will, who slew good people, who made wicked people his comrades and who squandered away public money to further his own interests. We are at present without a leader. Please come so that we might join together for the sake of truth. The governor of Kufah, Numan bin Bashir lives all alone in his palace. We don’t offer our Jum‘ah prayers or Eid prayers behind him. If we can be sure that you would be coming, we can drive away this man to Syria.”

In addition to this, the scholars like Atiqur Rahman Sambhali and Sayyid Ali Naqi Naqvi on the authority of Tabari claim that after Sulaiman bin Surad al-Khuzai had done his duty, a letter was addressed to Husain saying: “This letter is being addressed to Husain bin Ali, on behalf of Sulaiman bin Surad, Musayyib bin Najba, Rafāh bin Shaddad, Habib bin Mazahir and other friends from among the Muslims and supporters of Kufah.” The letter then dealt with the death of Muawiyah and the succession of Yazid and went on to say:
“There is no guide at our head. Please come so that we might perhaps, unite in helping the truth because of you. Numan bin Bashir is present in the governor’s house, but we do not join him in the Friday prayers, nor do we go to the Eid prayer. If we hear that you are coming here, we will turn him out, forcing him to repair to Syria.”

These scholars also say that this letter was sent by Abdullah bin Sabi Hamdani and Abdullah bin Dāl, and was the first to be received by Husain on 10th of Ramzan 60 A.H. 680 A.D.

According to the sources, more than one hundred and fifty letters are reported to have been sent to Husain before he yielded. Sambhali and Athar Abbas Rizvi on the authority of Tabari say, that in one of these letters, i.e., the letter dated 10th Ramzan 60/14 June 680, Husain received a letter from Sulaiman bin Surad al-Khuzai and other Shi‘i leaders of Kufah asking him to come to Kufah and save them from Yazid’s sacrilegious domination. The scholars like Chirag Hasan Hasrat, Hamiduddîn, Murtaza Ahmad Khan, Shah Moinuddîn Ahmad Nadvi and Taha Husain are unanimous in supporting this statement. They also hold that a flood of letters began to flow, especially, from the city of Kufah, inviting Husain to go there and accept the leadership of the people there with the aim of beginning an uprising to overcome injustice and inequity.
According to sources and the Urdu scholars, these letters set Husain seriously thinking. He consulted his friends and relatives. The general opinion was that the people of Kufah should not be trusted. It was they who left Hazrat Ali in the lurch. Again it was they who took the oath of allegiance to Hasan and went back on it. The friends of Husain who regarded the Kufans as troublemakers and knew them to be unreliable and they were not impressed by these appeals, so they advised him against accepting their offer. The scholars like S.M. Imaduddin who writes that the fickle-minded Kufans who once received Hasan turned eagerly to his brother Husain and invited him to Kufah to claim his right.  

Advice of well-wishers of Husain

His reaction

According to J.J. Sanders and M.Y.M. Siddiqui, Kufah was always anti-Umayyad.  

In this connection the scholars like Khurshid Ahmad Fariq, Shah Moinuddin Ahmad Nadvi, Abul Kalam Azad and Sayyid Amîr Ali unanimously hold that all the friends and well-wishers of Husain tried to persuade him not to trust the Iraqi’s character. Eager, fierce, and impetuous, the people of Kufah were utterly wanting in perseverance and steadfastness. They could deceive him at any time, for they were not reliable. His friends also reminded him of the proverbial infidelity and fickle-mindedness of the Kufites. “They knew not their own minds
from day to day. One moment ardent as fire for some cause or person, the next they were as cold as ice and as indifferent as the dead."¹² Wahīduddīn Khan in his *Zahoor Islam* writes that Hazrat Hasan had also warned Husain about these fickle-minded Kufans and advised him not to trust the Kufan character as they could deceive him at any time.¹³

Urdu scholars like Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi, Atiqur Rahman Sambhali, and Ali Ahmad Banarsi also quote Ibn Khaldun's statement regarding the response of the Sahabah of the Prophet (SAW), which may be summarized as follows:

"The men around Muhammad (SAW) other than al-Husain, in the Hijaz and with Yazid in Syria and in the Iraq, and their followers were of the opinion that a revolt against Yazid even though he was wicked, would not be permissible, because such a revolt would result in trouble and bloodshed. They refrained from it and did not follow Husain in his opinion, but they also did not disapprove of him and did not consider him at fault. For he had independent judgment. One should not fall into the error of declaring these people to be at fault because they opposed Husain and did not come to his aid. They constituted the majority of the men around Muhammad (SAW). They were with Yazid and they were of the opinion that they should not revolt against him."¹⁴
Several scholars like Abul Kalam Azad, Qazi Zainul Abidîn Shah Moinuddîn Nadvi and Akbar Shah Khan Najibabadi hold that it is a well-recognized fact that all the well-wishers, friends and relatives who knew the intention of Husain were extremely perturbed and dissuaded him from doing so, reminding him of the proverbial infidelity and fickle-mindedness of the Kufîtes. So they requested Hazrat Husain to postpone his proposed journey to Kufah. Among the great ones Hazrat Abdullah ibn Abbas said:

"The people are extremely worried over your proposed journey to Iraq. The factual position may please be known to the public. Allah protect you! Are you going amidst such people who have made their Amîr helpless, crushed their opponents and have taken over the control of the country? If so, you may gladly go to Kufah and if otherwise, their invitation to you is an open declaration of war, I am afraid, that they may betray you."\(^{15}\)

According to many scholars like Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi, Qazi Zainul Abidîn, Shah Moinuddîn Ahmad Nadvi, Akbar Shah Khan Najibabadi and Bashirur Rahman Siddiqui Husain paid no heed to this advice of Hazrat Abdulla ibn Abbas and replied clearly that he had taken a firm decision in this regard that he would leave for Kufah within a day or so. He patiently heard him and politely indicated that his resolve was impossible to change.\(^{16}\) Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi and Bashirur Rahman Siddiqui on the
authority of Tabari write that "Abdullah ibn Umar advised both Ibn Zubair and Husain to have fear of Allah and abstain from creating fuss among Muslims."\(^7\)

Abbasi on the authority of Ibn Kath\={i}r further writes that in order to persuade Husain, Yazid wrote a letter to Abdullah bin Abbas in Makkah and informed him about Husain’s migration from Madinah to Makkah who has been approached by a few men from East (Iraq) and had motivated him for the Khilafah. The letter reads:

"You are aware of the circumstances and have experience of the past happenings, if it is so that Husain has contradicted the relation and traditions of the Ummah. You are the respected personality of Ahl-i-Bait and most favourite person of Husain, so it is imperative upon you to try to stop him from creating differences among Muslims."\(^8\)

Abbasi on the authority of Ibn Kath\={i}r says that Abdullah ibn Abbas sent reply to this letter of Yazid which reads:

"I hope Husain will not indulge in any such revolt that will generate hatred. I will not hesitate from advising him in this regard and I will try to put an end to the conflict which can maintain love and affection among the Muslims".\(^9\)

Abbasi on the authority of Ibn Kath\={i}r mentions the march of Husain and Ibn Zubair from Madinah to Makkah. According to him Yazid wrote:
"I complain to all of you (Ahl-i-Bait) that I have received the information about Husain whose Iraqi supporters are writing him letters and are trying to motivate him for acquiring the Khilafah. Husain is reported to assure them of his claim for the Khilafah. You know we (Banu Umayya and Banu Hashim) are the supreme symbols and admirers of relation, which is strongly challenged by Husain and does not abide by the tradition. You (Ibn Abbas) are the respected person of Banu Hashim. So you can play a decisive role in preventing Husain from dividing the Ummah by creating the differences among them."²⁰

A number of Urdu scholars like Arshad Amanullah, Bashirur Rahman Siddiqui and Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi clearly claim that these letters prove that it was the Iraqi Sabāʾīs²¹ who were feigning time to motivate Husain to revolt against Yazid with regard to his own claim for Khilafah.²²

However, as all the Urdu writers hold and state on the authority of various original sources, that against their advice Husain accepted the invitation and sent his cousin, Muslim bin Aquil to Kufah to assess the situation there and inform him of the correct position. He also wrote the following letter to the Kufans which he sent through Hani and Sa‘eed. The letter reads:

"In the name of Allah, the Beneficient, the Merciful.
From Husain bin Ali to the believers and Muslims of Iraq. Hani and Sa‘eed Your last messengers have
brought your letters. I have read what you have written and pondered over it. You have written that you do not have an Imam and asked me to come to you so that Allah may perhaps draw you together on truth and guidance through me. Now I am sending to you my cousin Muslim bin Aquil in whom I have full confidence. If he writes to me that your elders and wise men confirm what your messengers say and what you have written in your letters I may proceed towards you soon. I swear by my life that a true Imam and leader is only he who takes decision according to the Quran, establishes justice, promotes the divine religion and dedicates himself to the path of Allah. And peace be upon you."^{23}

It can be concluded from the above discussion that despite the fact that all the well-wishers of Husain advised him repeatedly not to trust the fickle-minded Kufans for they are not reliable; they are treacherous and could deceive at any time. But Husain did not pay any heed to their advices and ultimately decided to go to Kufah. Dr. Graham Weir, a German Scholar, concluded this by saying that Husain was unwise and inexperienced enough to accept the summons of the wavering and treacherous Kufans.^{24}
Notes and References


21. According to Maulana Mufti Muhammad Ishaq Siddiqui Nadvi, ‘Sabā’îs are called after its leader Abdullah ibn Saba who joined Muslim society in the guise of a Muslim saint concealing his true intentions in his Jewish heart. Since he was a Yemenite Jew by origin. Taking under advantage of the ignorance of the newly converting Muslims, he invented and introduced a new religion called Shiaism. The followers of that religion were called Shias. Abdullah ibn Saba, however, convinced his followers, the Shias, that his religion was true Islam and they were true Mūmins (Muslims) as compared to those, who were not Shias. He was the founder of Shiah religion and Shiaism took its roots during his lifetime. Named after its founder, the Shias are known as Sabā’îs. For details see his book, Behind the Curtain, Pakistan (n.d.).


The author in addition to the above discussion further writes that Husain clearly wrote in his letter to the people of Kufah, “As you have written me that you really agree to my Khilafah, if Muslim bin Aquil feels so and informs me accordingly then I shall start from here”; Aslam Jairajpuri, *op. cit.*, p. 23; Shah Moinuddīn Nadvi, *op. cit.*, p. 45.