Chapter-VI

Post Karbala Developments
Family of Husain at Kufah

The next day after the tragedy of Karbala the Caravan of Ahl-i-Bait (Husain's family members) along with his head was sent to Ibn Ziyad to Kufah. There are, however, different reports regarding their treatment by Ibn Ziyad.

The scholars like Maulana Maududi, Abul Kalam Azad, Atiqur Rahman Sambhali, Akbar Shah Khan Najibabadi and several others hold that Ibn Ziyad sat in the government house at Kufah and before him was laid Husain's head. These scholars further state that after Husain's head was placed before Ibn Ziyad he struck it with the stick, turning it around. At the moment Husain's family was ushered into the court. They lamented, cried and wailed.¹ Urdu writers like their Arabic predecessors are in fact divided into two groups on the issue of the treatments of Hazrat Husain's head: A group regards that the incident took place at Kufah; the other believes that it happened at Damascus. According to the scholars of the first group like Qazi Zainul Abidīn, Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi, Abul Kalam Azad, Rashīd Akhtar Nadvi and Shauk Amritsari, Ibn Ziyad's behaviour was quite insulting as he knocked out some teeth with his cane, when he repeated this process of striking, Zaid the son of Arqam, a Companion of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), cried out, "Remove your cane from these lips. By Allah! These two eyes of mine have witnessed that
the Prophet (SAW) used to kiss them.”\(^2\) Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi writes that the Companion who admonished Ibn Ziyad was Ans bin Malik who objected Ibn Ziyad.\(^3\) But some scholars like Abu Bakar Ghaznavi and Taha Husain claim that the incident took place at Damascus where Yazid brought his cane and turned the head of Husain. The Sahabi Abu Barzah standing nearby was heard to say “Gently, O Caliph I had seen those very lips kissed by Prophet Muhammad (SAW).\(^4\) Some scholars like Sayyid Mahmudun Nasir, William Muir and Percy Sykes do not mention the name of the Companion and simply say that it was an old man who rebuked Ibn Ziyad.\(^5\)

However, there is a third group represented by Khurshid Ahmad Fariq who on the authority of Tabari states that Husain’s family and other survivors were treated by Ibn Ziyad with respect. He provided them all possible help and made arrangements for sending them to Damascus.\(^6\)

**Burial place of Husain’s Head**

There are different reports about the place where Husain’s head is buried. The subsequent history of the burial place of Husain’s head has puzzled many scholars. Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi and Arshad Amanullah and some others have made researches on the issue and came to conclusion that as many as eight different places are reported to be burial place; the most probable place is
Madinah where it was sent along with the family of Hazrat Husain. The possible burial place of Husain’s head, reported by Abbasi and Arshad Amanullah are examined as follows:

Karbala

It is a place mentioned by the scholars like Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi and Bashirur Rahman Siddiqui, who report that the head was placed by Ali Zainul Abidin in the tomb at Karbala with the rest of his body, which later became his shrine, and has remained there to the present day. Arshad Amanullah claims that this statement has no authentic proof.7

Madinah

Another set of scholars which include Abu Bakr Ghaznavi, Arshad Amanullah, Abbasi and M.Y.M. Siddiqui state on the authority of Ibn S‘ad that it was given by Yazid to Husain’s sister, who carried it to Madinah and buried near the grave of her mother Fatima, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in Jannat al-Baqi.8 Strangely, Abbasi also reports that it was buried near the burial place of Hazrat Hasan.9

Damascus

Abu Bakr Ghaznavi on the authority of Ibn Kathîr and some other scholars like Shauk Amritsari and Abbasi state that it was buried according to another report at Damascus in a place called the Garden-gate. They argue that in the eastern end of the Great
Umayyad Mosque there is a small chamber where the head is supposed to lie, concealed by a black silk curtain and enclosed in a silver niche. Not far away lies the shrine of St-John Baptist, which perhaps contains the head of the Baptist.\textsuperscript{10}

**Asqalan**

Asqalan is a place near Damascus. Another report according to Abbasi and Arshad Amanullah is that it was buried in Asqalan.\textsuperscript{11}

**Cairo**

Scholars, Abbasi and Arshad Amanullah further report that it was removed from Asqalan and afterwards buried in Cairo and a monument was erected over it, called the ‘Sepulchre of Husain the martyr.’ Abbasi also describes another report that Husain’s head was brought from Asqalan to Cairo after five hundred\textsuperscript{th} year of the Hijra by a soldier of the Ubaidite tribe.\textsuperscript{12} Contrary to this, Arshad Amanullah on the authority of Ibn Taimiyah claims that Husain’s head was buried neither in Asqalan nor in Cairo.\textsuperscript{13}

**Najaf**

It is another burial place mentioned by Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi, Arshad Amanullah and Bashirur Rahman Siddiqui who cite the report that it was buried beside his father Ali, i.e. al-Najaf\textsuperscript{14} Arshad Amanullah further claims that this statement is
also baseless. He argues that the head was not severed from the body at all; therefore the place mentioned has no authenticity.\(^{15}\)

**Yazid's Reservoir**

It is another burial place mentioned by Abbasi, Arshad Amanullah and Abu Bakar Ghaznavi who report that it was kept in the Yazid's reservoir for thirty years, afterwards in 99AH, Sulaiman bin Abdul Malik removed it and buried it in the graveyard.\(^{16}\) But Arshad Amanullah on the authority of Ibn Tulûn claims that this statement is fabricated (*mauduh*).\(^{17}\)

**Reservoir of Banu Umayyah**

According to another report mentioned by a set of scholars that include Bashirur Rahman Siddiqui and Abbasi that it was placed in the reservoir of Banu Umayyah at Damascus for seventy five years and afterwards the Abbasids removed it and buried it there.\(^{18}\) According to Arshad Amanullah this story also is not authentic at all.\(^{19}\)

Abu Bakar Ghaznavi, a scholar of some prominence claims that the majority of the *Ulama* firmly believe that the actual burial place of Husain's head is Madinah's famous graveyard i.e. *Jannat al-Baqih*.\(^{20}\)

**Family of Husain at Damascus**

Khurshîd Ahmad Fariq on the authority of Tabari states that Husain's family and other survivors were sent along with his head
to Yazid to Damascus.\textsuperscript{21} But Maududi on the authority of the same historian claims that the survivors of Husain’s family were sent along with the heads of all the martyrs to Yazid to Damascus.\textsuperscript{22} Several other scholars like Aslam Jairajpuri, Hamiduddin, Qazi Zainul Abidin, Moinuddin Ahmad Nadvi and Fazl Ahmad describe that when the grief-stricken family entered Yazid’s court, Husain’s head was laid beside him. The sight of it brought a stream of tears from the eyes of Fatima and Sukayna, Husain’s two daughters. Noticing this Yazid addressed the bereaved family and said, “All this took place without my knowledge. If I had been there, I must have taken a lenient view of Husain’s step and must have forgiven him.”\textsuperscript{23} Khurshid Ahmad Fariq describes on the authority of Tabari that when Ibn Ziyad’s messenger came to Yazid and wished him his success on the death of Husain, Yazid wept and said “these are my close relatives. If Ibn Ziyad had ever been related to Husain he could never have committed this nefarious act.”\textsuperscript{24} This is supported by several other scholars like Abul Ala Maududi, Aslam Jairajpuri, Moinuddin Ahmad Nadvi, Abul Kalam Azad, M.Y.M. Siddiqui and who hold that when Yazid became aware of this tragic event, tears came out of his eyes and he said, “I should have been very well pleased without the death of Husain; God may curse the son of Sumayya. If I had captured Husain, I would have forgiven him. Allah Bless him.”\textsuperscript{25} This is also supported by Ibn
Kathīr, Ibn Athīr and Ibn Asakīr and several other scholars of the past.\textsuperscript{26}

Sayyid Fayyaz Mahmud maintains that Yazid was displeased at what had happened and even protested to Zaynab, who was now head of the family (\textit{Ahl-i-Bait}), that he had neither intended Husain's death nor ordered such a thing, and that Obaidullah had exceeded his orders.\textsuperscript{27}

**Treatment by Yazid**

Moinuddīn Ahmad Nadvi on the authority of Tabari and some other scholars like Abdul Qayoom Nadvi, Wahīduddin Khan and Akbar Shah Khan Najibabadi hold that Yazid ordered that the house adjoining the palace be vacated for Husain's family. He also took steps to compensate for the plunder by his troops. He made inquiries from each lady and gave her double of what she had lost.\textsuperscript{28} According to Abdul Qayoom Nadvi and Akbar Shah Khan Najibabadi when Yazid's wife came to know that Husain had been slain, she felt shocked and started weeping. She along with other ladies of her household called on Husain's family and did her best to console them.\textsuperscript{29}

It is clear from the above discussion that the women's of Husain's family and his ailing son Ali (Zainul Abidīn) were brought before Yazid. He treated them kindly. He felt sorry for the conditions in which they were placed.
Qazi Zainul Abidin and Moinuddin Ahmad Nadvi on the authority of Ibn Athir and several other scholars like Abul Kalam Azad, and Akbar Shah Khan Nijibabadi assert that on the occasion Yazid assembled the people and said:

"Do you know the factors which gave rise to this development? It is the result of Husain's error of judgment. Husain thought that his father is superior to Yazid's father and his mother is superior to Yazid's mother and his grand-father is superior to Yazid's grand-father and he himself is superior to Yazid and therefore, he is more entitled to rule than Yazid. Although his notion that his father was superior to my father is not correct, for, Ali and Muawiyah fought against each other and the world has witnessed the verdict. As to his thought that his mother was superior to my mother it is undoubtedly true. Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet of Allah, is far greater than my mother and likewise his grandfather is greater than my grand father. I swear by Allah and say that whoever believes in Allah and the Day of Reckoning can never suppose that any man is superior or even equal to the Prophet of Allah."

But Husain erred in his judgment and he forgot this verse of the Holy Quran:

"O God! Lord of Power (and Rule), Thou givest Power to whom thou pleasest, and thou strippest off Power from whom Thou pleasest: Thou enduest with honour whom Thou pleasest, and Thou bringest low
whom Thou pleasest: In Thy hand is all good.
Verily, over all things Thou hast power.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{(Al-i-Imran, 26)}

According to Moinuddin Ahmad Nadvi, Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi and Hamiduddin, Yazid was not at all aware of what transpired at Karbala, for he was at Damascus. He had only ordered to take the oath of allegiance from Husain and did not order to fight and assassinate.\textsuperscript{31} Wahiduddin Khan opines that if Yazid had been with Husain at Karbala and the former would have offered the third condition, the latter would surely have agreed to it. By all possible means he would have saved his life.\textsuperscript{32} According to Murtaza Ahmad Khan, Yazid disowned responsibility for the acts of his officials and laid the responsibility of Husain’s tragic end upon Ibn Ziyad.\textsuperscript{33} But it is difficult to assess how far he was right. Either Yazid or Ibn Ziyad, whoever might have been responsible for the event of Karbala, it must be admitted that it is one of the most tragic chapters of Islamic history. It was never expected or even thought that such a harsh treatment would be meted out to the beloved grandson of Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Sending the family of Husain to Madinah

M.Y.M. Siddiqui on the authority of Ibn Kathir and Ibn Athir and Moinuddin Ahmad Nadvi on the authority of Tabari and several other scholars like Abul Kalam Azad and Qazi Zainul Abidin hold that after Husain’s family’s short stay at Damascus,
they were resolved to set out for Madinah. In fact Yazid offered them two alternatives: Either to stay at Damascus and he would look after them or if they desire to go to Madinah he would make arrangement for their journey. Accordingly, he commanded Numan bin Bashir to provide them with all necessary provisions, and send them home under a safe convoy. They further state that at the time of their departure Yazid said to Ali Zainul Abidin:

"God curse the son of Marjana. If your father had fallen into my hands I would have granted him any condition he desired, and would have tried my level best to save Husain utilizing all possible means lying in my power or even at the cost of my own children."³⁴

He further assured to him of providing to them whatever they desired or needed. Moinuddin Ahmad Nadvi on the authority of Tabari and Qazi Zainul Abidin on the authority of Ibn Athīr state that in recognition of this good behaviour of Yazid, Sukayna used to say, “I have never seen any ungrateful person who was more hospitable and more kind in treatment than Yazid.”³⁵

Abul Ala Maududi, Taha Husain and several other scholars claim that though Yazid sent the family of Husain back to their home as his honoured guests, however, there is nothing to show that he reprimanded or deposed or gave any other punishment to Ibn Ziyad.³⁶
Aftermath of the Tragedy

The tragedy of Karbala raises many questions. They are of juridical as well as political nature. The Muslim Ummah and its great thinkers are dismayed in finding their answers.

However, many scholars, theorists and thinkers have definite opinions. The most disturbing question is about the revolt of Husain against Yazid, leading to doctrinal discussion about the permission or provision of rebellion or uprising against the establishment in Islam. Hazrat Husain despite all oppositions from his well-wishers as well as the Sahabah rose against the ruling Khalifah.

In this regard the great historian Ibn Khaldun in his Muqaddimah states that the Companions of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) of Makkah and Madinah and also those who were in Syria, Iraq, as well as their followers, were of the opinion that a revolt against Yazid, even though he was wicked, was not permissible, because such a revolt would result in trouble and bloodshed. They refrained from it and did not follow Husain’s example or support his move. Strangely, neither did they disapprove of him and consider him at fault but they became neutral considering it as his independent judgement. They also maintained that one should not fall into the error of declaring those people who opposed Husain at fault because they opposed Husain and did not come to his aid.37
M.Y.M. Siddiqui on the authority of Ibn Kathir and Ibn Athir holds that since it was Husain's independent judgment that is why no one except few supported him in his move; Due to this fact Hazrat Abdullah bin Jafar, Abdullah bin Abbas, Muhammad bin al Hanafiya and all others in Makkah and Madinah took oath of allegiance to Yazid and considered him fit for the Khilafah.  

The most ticklish issue is about the assassination of Hazrat Husain: Did he die as a martyr or as a rebel of the Islamic state? The Muslim opinion or so to speak the views of the Urdu scholars are divided on the issue.

Ibn Khaldun who opines that one should not fall into error of declaring that his murder was justified because it was the result of independent judgment, even if one grants that he on his part exercises the correct independent judgement.

The great Imam Ibn Taimiya in his 'Husain wa Yazid' declares that Husain's revolt did not result in any of the benefit of Din or Dunya and nothing was achieved. Instead, it created a situation in which, cruel people got the opportunity to have a control upon the grandson of Prophet (SAW) and put him to martyrdom. His revolt and his martyrdom gave birth to many fitnas (crises). Had he stayed at his own place, ugly incidents would not have occurred. Whatever was the cause he should not have done so; it only resulted in the failure and chaos.
The second aspect was the reaction of the people of Makkah and Madinah. They received the distressing tragedy with sadness, regret and anger. They were sad because of the atrocity, which had taken place at Karbala. They felt regret because the followers of Husain at Karbala had failed in their help and support. They were angry at the Umayyad regime because it had committed a dreadful crime.

According to the scholars like Abdul Qayoom Nadvi, Sarwat Saulat and Moinuddin Ahmad Nadvi the tragedy of Karbala caused a sense of horror throughout the Muslim world. The Muslims of Makkah and Madinah were greatly shocked and enraged at the savagery of Yazid perpetrated on the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW).41

Fazl Ahmad holds that the tragedy of Karbala made Yazid the most hated man in the Muslim world.42 While several other scholars like Abdul Qayoom Nadvi, Hamiduddin and Moinuddin Ahmad Nadvi hold that the news of Husain's martyrdom was received with a great shock by the Islamic world, especially in Hijaz where the people did not like Yazid from the very beginning and many influential personalities who had not taken the oath of allegiance in his favour were greatly grieved. They broke the oath of Yazid and took new oath of allegiance on the hands of Abdullah bin Zubair.43
Edward G. Browne quotes the words of Al-Fakhri:

“This is a catastrophe whereof I care not to speak at length, deeming it alive too grievous and too horrible. For verily it was a catastrophe than which naught more shameful hath happened in Islam. Verily, as I live, the murder of Ali was the supreme calamity; but as for this event, there happened therein such foul slaughter and leading captive and shameful usage as cause men’s flesh to creep with horror. And again I have dispensed with any long description thereof because of its notoriety, for it is the most celebrated of catastrophes. May God curse every one who had a hand therein, or who ordered it, or took pleasure in any part thereof! From such may God not accept any substitute or atonement! May He place them with those whose deeds involve the greatest loss, whose effort miscarries even in this present life, while they fondly imagine that they do well!”

The tragedy of Karbala as says William Muir:

“Decided not only the fate of the Caliphate, but of Muhammadan kingdoms long after the Caliphate had waned and disappeared. Who that in the East has seen the wild and passionate grief with which, at each recurring anniversary, the Muslims of every land spend the live-long night, beating their breasts and vociferating unweariedly the frantic cry — Hasan, Husain!, Hasan, Husain! — in wailing cadence, can fail to recognize the fatal weapon, sharp and double-edged, which the Umayyad
dynasty had thus allowed to fall into the hands of bitter enemies.\textsuperscript{45}

According to Amīr Ali, “the tragedy of Karbala caused a thrill of horror throughout Islam, and gave birth in Persia to a national sentiment which afterwards helped the descendants of Abbas to destroy the Ummayad.”\textsuperscript{46} Maulana Maududi in his *Shahadat Imam Husain* claims that it was a religious job that Husain proved by sacrificing himself in the field of Karbala.\textsuperscript{47} Atiqur Rahman Sambhali on the authority of Ibn Taimiya says that Husain was killed innocently which is a proof of his martyrdom.\textsuperscript{48} He further writes that nothing can be said regarding this event as it was only the will of Allah which resulted in the martyrdom of Husain.\textsuperscript{49} Sayyid Mahmudun Nasir states that the massacre of Husain and his family was an event of greatest significance. The rift that existed between the Hashimites and the Ummayyads was further strained and the dissension ultimately weakened the Umayyad power and continued to act as a potent factor for the disintegration of their empire. Whatever may be the historical consequence of the death of Husain at Karbala, one thing is clear that it divided the Muslims into hostile camps for all time to come.\textsuperscript{50}

P.K. Hitti says:

“The blood of Husain even more than that of his father proved to be the seed of the Shiite church.
The Shiite party was born anew on the field of Karbala. Henceforth the first ten days of Muharram came to be observed by the Shiite Muslims a battle cry that ultimately proved to be one of the causes of the fall of the Umayyad dynasty. The division of Muslims into two hostile camps was harmful to the progress and prosperity of future Islam.\textsuperscript{51}

According to Hamiduddin the news of the tragedy had already reached Madinah. As soon as it was known that the remaining members of Ahl-i-Bait had returned, the ladies belonging to Hashim’s house rushed out wailing and weeping to greet them. At Madinah, their return caused a wild outburst of grief and lamentation. Everything around intensified the catastrophe. In fact, it deepened the rift between the Shiah and other Muslims. Due to this event many movements emerged which resulted in the downfall of Umayyads.\textsuperscript{52}

The third attitude was the attitude of Umayyad regime especially of Ibn Ziyad who insisted upon the unconditional surrender of Husain. Had he agreed to any one of Husain’s conditions the tragedy of Karbala would not have occurred. The scholars like Maududi, Sayyid Amīr Ali, Rashīd Akhtar Nadvi, Abul Kalam Azad and Sarwat Saulat hold that Yazid had been nominated king on hereditary basis against the accepted principles of filling the vacancy to the Khilafah by election and selection. Also as a candidate for the office of Khilafah he was
comparatively less qualified than Husain. Fazl Ahmad claims that efforts of Amīr Muawiyah produced no enduring results. The empire he took such pains to build up and to hand over to his son, stayed in his own family on more than a few years. And Yazid got nothing out of it except guilt and an abiding infamy.

From the above discussion it can be said that on the one side there was sympathy and a high regard for Husain. On the other hand it was only the Umayyad regime and its supporters who presented him as a ‘baghi’, that is, as a rebel against the established authority, and thus condoned his murder by Yazid, but their opinion was opposed not only by those who despised the Ummayyad regime, but also by those Muslims who refused to recognize that the murderers had acted according to their consciences and at the same time sought pretexts to refrain from blaming either the rebel Husain or the Companions and Tabiun who had remained neutral in order to avoid war. In this almost universal exaltation of Husain due to his descent from the Prophet (SAW) and to the conviction that he had sacrificed himself for an ideal, it is not possible to make a clear distinction between the opinions of various historians and scholars, except in the case of certain privileges and attributes which only the Shi’i scholars accorded him.
Notes and References


30. Ibn Athir, vol. IV, p. 73 cited by Moinuddin Ahmad Nadvi *op. cit.*, p. 56; Qazi Zainul Abidin, *op. cit.*, p. 80. See also;


32. Wahiduddin Khan, *op. cit.* p. 112.

33. Murtaza Ahmad Khan, *op. cit.* p. 112.


54. Fazl Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 147.