Chapter-VII

Socio-Religious
Consequences of the
Tragedy of Karbala
The news of the tragedy of Karbala leading to Husain's martyrdom was received with great shock by the Islamic world, especially in Hijaz. In its immediate effect, the tragedy of Karbala sent a thrill of horror throughout the Muslim world. The Muslims of Makkah and Madinah were greatly shocked and enraged due to the martyrdom of grandson of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The news of Karbala tragedy ran space throughout the length and breadth of Islamic World. The account of the tragedy added fresh fuel to the hatred and indignation of the people of Madinah.

The historians have described Karbala as a brief episode, which began in the early hours of the morning on 10th Muharram 61A.H./10th October 680 A.D., and ended in the same afternoon. But this seemingly short event has left lasting impressions and impact on both the contemporary society as well as on the later Muslims.

Impact on the Contemporary Society

According to G.R. Hawting in its immediate effect after the tragedy of Karbala, there were two opposition movements in particular which were in contact with Ibn Zubair. One was a revolt of the people of Madinah who had publicly withdrawn their allegiance to Yazid, the other opposition movement involved Kharijites, apparently from both Basrah and parts of Arabia.
The martyrdom of Husain and his followers did not give Yazid peace, for among the other pretenders to the throne, Ibn Zubair still remained at Makkah and though he had been an aspirant to the same power that Husain had grasped, and was therefore during his life time one of his rivals, he now dared to call loudly upon the faithful to revenge his death. He depicted in glowing words the marvellous character of Husain, set him up as a martyr, called to mind his particular virtues, his watching, his prayers, his fasting, his lofty heroism, all the frightful circumstances of his taking off, and denounced in unmeasured terms the perfidy of the people of Iraq, especially of the Kufans, the blackest villains, as he assumed them, on the face of the earth. Never, he exclaimed, did this martyr prefer the sound of music to the reading of the Quran, the pleasures of the chase to pious conversation. As he uttered the words doubtless his hearers made mental comparisons quite to the disadvantage of Yazid.¹

The scholars like Akbar Shah Khan Najibabadi, Qazi Zainul Abidin, Hamiduddin and Chirag Hasan Hasrat hold that when the news of martyrdom of Husain reached Makkah, Abdullah bin Zubair assembled the people, addressed them and said:

"Iraqis are the worst people in the world and the Kufans are the worst among the worst who again and again wrote to Husain, consciously invited him there and took oath of allegiance to him. But at the
arrival of Ibn Ziyad in Kufah they changed their sympathy and martyred Husain who was a pious, generous Muslim and legitimate to Khilafah.3

Then Ibn Zubair wept and the people reacted and declared him the genuine candidate for Khilafah and accepted him as the legitimate Khalifah. In this way people of Makkah made Zubair as their Khalifah.

The Scholars Abul Ala Maududi, Qazi Zainul Abidin and Hamiduddin hold that in Madinah agitation ran high against the Umayyads on the pathetic scene of Karbala. The people of Madinah sent a deputation to Yazid demanding redress of wrong done to Ali’s family. Being greatly enraged, the people of Madinah disowned Yazid as Khalifah and drove away his governor.4 However, according to Akbar Shah Khan Najibabadi, Yazid remained in deep thought how to control Ibn Zubair without causing any damage to the sanctity of the Kabah. He sent a Syrian army under Muslim bin Uqbah against the people of Madinah.5

Two scholars, namely, Akbar Shah Khan Najibabadi and Qazi Zainul Abidin, in particular and several others in general hold that Yazid sent a Syrian army under Muslim bin Uqbah against rebels of Madinah. Muslim bin Uqbah after camping near Madinah sent a message to the people of that city saying that Amīrul Mumīnīn Yazid dislikes any bloodshed. So it will be better to obey him, otherwise he would have to use sword to accomplish
the task. Muslim waited for three days to motivate them but the people of Madinah decided to fight. In response to it, Muslim then ordered to invade Madinah that resulted in a battle known as the battle of Harrah. It is a place where the Ansars and the Madinites fought the Syrian army. But they fought bravely and forced the Syrian army back. But by the bravery and experience of Muslim bin Uqbah the Madinites was defeated. It is said that the Syrian army sacked Madinah and desecrated it for three days. It is reported that many eminent people like Abdullah bin Hanzla, Fazl bin Abbas bin Abdul Muta'llib, Muhammad bin Thabit bin Qais, Abdullah bin Zaid bin Asim, Muhammad bin Amr bin Hazam Ansari, Wahab bin Abdullah bin Zam'a, Zubair bin Abdur Rahman bin Auf, Abdullah bin Naufal bin Hars bin Abdul Muta'llib were killed in this war. The victorious army entered Madinah and Muslim bin Uqbah continued massacre and plunder for three days, killing nearly one thousand people including three hundred Ansars and eminent personalities of Quraish. On the 4th day Muslim stopped the war and ordered for taking oath of allegiance. Those who accepted the orders were kept alive and those who refused to accept them were put to death. It is said that on On 27 Dhul-Hijjah 63 A.H. Muslim bin Uqbah entered Madinah the same day Muhammad bin Abdullah bin Abbas bin Abdul Muta'llib was born,
who later on became famous as Muhammad Abul Abbas al-Safah, the eventual first Khalifah of Abbasids.⁶

There are, however, different reports by different writers regarding the incident of Harrah. Abul Ala Maududi on the authority of Tabari claims that the pathetic event of Harrah took place at the end of 63 A.H. i.e., during the last days of Yazid’s life. He described this event by saying that the people of Madinah declared Yazid *fasiq wa fajir* (sinful and antagonist) and cruel person and started rebellion against his establishment. They expelled his *Āmil* (commander) out of the city and appointed Abdullah bin Hanzla as commander. Yazid on receiving the information deputed Muslim bin Uqbah (nicknamed as Musrif bin Uqbah) along with twelve thousand army to attack Madinah and ordered him to invite the people of the city to take oath of allegiance to him. In case they refused to do so, inflict war on them. After taking a victory handover the Madinah to the army for 3 days. The army went to invade the city on these directions. Madinah was conquered and army was allowed to wander and enjoy its victory for three days as per orders of Yazid. The city was haunted by the soldiers attempting killings and plunder. The inhabitants of the city were massacred. Maududi quotes words of Imam Zuhri that seven hundred eminent persons and ten thousand people were killed. These uncivilized and wild soldiers, according
to Maududi, entered the houses and raped the women on mass scale. Maududi also claimed on the authority of Ibn Kathîr that about one thousand rape victim women became pregnant.\(^7\)

Maududi exclaims that though the rebellion of people of Madinah was unjustified, was such a treatment suitable for a rebel Muslim population or even non-Muslim rebels and Kuffars as per the Islamic law? But it was not the issue of any other city but it was directly related to the city of Prophet (saw) regarding which he (Prophet) had said that any person who will have nefarious designs against it (Madinah) will be melted in Hell by Almighty Allah and the person who will inflict pain on the people of Madinah will be subjected to curse by Allah, the Angels and all human beings. Allah will not accept his any service in lieu of this sin on the day of Qayamat (the Day of judgment). Maududi on the authority of Ibn Kathîr further says that on these bases a group of Ulama have justified cursing Yazid. Imam Ahmad also supports them at one place. But the second group of Ulama prohibited from saying it because they fear that in such a situation there lies the possibility that his parents or any other Sahabah may be subjected to such sort of disgrace.\(^8\)

Sayyid Amîr Ali claims that the inhabitants of Madinah were subjected to torture. Mosque of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was turned into stable. The eminent personalities of Madinah were
done to death. The colleges, hospitals and other public property were destroyed.⁹

Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi claims that an army sent by Yazid was given a fight by the people of Madinah at a place called Harrah in 63 A.H./682 A.D. The Madinites were defeated with terrible loss. Yazid allowed the commander of his army Muslim bin Uqbah to do whatever he liked in Madinah for three days.¹⁰

Nadvi quoting Ibn Kathir writes:

“It is difficult to narrate the revolting atrocities perpetrated in the city of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) during these three days. Yazid wanted to remove every trace of an obstacle to his kingdom and strengthen it, but God rendered all his efforts futile and he failed to achieve his ends.”¹¹

He further writes that Yazid did not live long after this incident. His reign lasted only for four years and he died on the 13ᵗʰ of Rabi al-Awwal, 64/9ᵗʰ November 683 A.D.¹²

Contrary to this M.Y.M. Siddiqui also on the authority of Ibn Kathir clearly writes that it is necessary to mention that regarding this incident of Harrah different writers have put forward biased and derogatory reports that have no bearing with the facts.¹³

Besides, Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi and Mir Mahmud Ali Qaisar hold that after the tragedy of Karbala there remained peace and harmony for three years. There was only a single obstacle in
the person of Ibn Zubair who stayed at Makkah and tried to make propaganda against the established government.¹⁴

Arshad Amanullah on the authority of Bukhari says that since the event of Harrah took place during the Khilafah of Yazid, therefore he is held responsible for it, but it is not true. The truth is, that by ordering invasion on Madinah, Yazid committed a blunder. But it should be borne in mind that in order to maintain law and order (peace) every Khalifah would have done what Yazid did. In fact the root cause of this incident were the people of Madinah who took a lead and initiated the event; they revolted against the Muslim Khalifah, which is prohibited. It was the reason why Muhammad bin Hanafiya and Abdullah bin Umar (R.A.) not only refrained from disobeying Yazid but tried their level best to persuade people to avoid the conflict. Hazrat Abdullah bin Umar even told his family members and relatives that he considers that man most treacherous, who will take a pledge to anyone on behalf of Allah and Prophet and will take a sword to fight against the same person later on. One who will break his pledge with Yazid among you will have no relation with me.¹⁵ Arshad Amanullah quoting Masud Ahmad describes this statement of Hazrat Abdullah bin Umar as follows:

1. The incident of Harrah was a conspiracy against Yazid and Muslim rule.
2. Hazrat Abdullah bin Umar considered Yazid the right Khalifah, so he disliked any revolt against him. He further says that the people of Madinah committed a second mistake when they did not take advantage of the three days gap but instead stayed firm on their stand.

However, the scholars like Sarwat Saulat, Abdul Qayoom Nadvi, Moinuddin Ahmad Nadvi and several others claim that the root cause of the incident of Harrah was the tragedy of Karbala.

Several Urdu scholars like, Akbar Shah Khan Najibabadi, Rashid Akhtar Nadvi and Qazi Zainul Abidin hold that after completing the task in Madinah, Muslim bin Uqbah started for Makkah with his army. During the journey the condition of Muslim bin Uqbah, who was already suffering from illness, worsened and he called Hasuin bin Numayr and posted him as chief of the army and then died. The people who escaped Madinah also had assembled in Makkah. Khawarij also decided to help Ibn Zubair and came to Makkah. In this year all the people of Hijaz had accepted Ibn Zubair as Khalifah at the occasion of Hajj. Then the war started on Muharram 64 AH and on the next day Hasuin bin Numayr installed catapult on the mountain of Abu Qubays and started throwing stones on Kabah and encircled the city of Makkah. The siege and storming continued till 3 Rabiul Awwal 64 AH. The stoning by Syrian army dismantled the walls and roof of
the Kabah and the black stone was torn into pieces. In addition to this Maududi on the authority of Ibn Athīr claims that the Umayyad Army pelted stones on Kabah which not only destroyed one of its walls but it caused fire to it as well.

Muhammad Munir holds that the Syrian army first came to Madinah, killed many men and caused severe damage to the town. Then they proceeded to Makkah and besieged the town but Yazid died in the meantime and the siege was lifted.

Two scholars, Abdul Qayoom Nadvi on the authority of Ibn Athīr, and Moinuddin Ahmad Nadvi on the authority of Tabari, assert that the martyrdom of Husain shocked the Muslims of Makkah and Madinah. Ibn Zubair further inflamed the sentiments of the Makkans against the Umayyads and took this opportunity to declare himself as Khalīfah.

Maududi concludes the events and says that these acts indicate that these rulers were desperate in maintaining and protecting their reign even at the cost of most sacred and valuable things. Arshad Amanullah claims that the invasion on Kabah was an un-recommended move which Yazid had to conduct because of the uncompromising attitude of Hazrat Abdullah bin Zubair who established his Government in Hijaz even though the whole Ummah was united under Yazid’s Khilafah. On the other hand, Abbasi and Banarsi hold that it is necessary to say that this
incident has been misinterpreted and fake reports have been put forth due to the prejudice and bigotry of some authors. These reports are totally wrong and have no reality in them.\textsuperscript{25}

However, with Yazid the rule of the Abi Sufyan's branch ended. It was transferred to Marwan bin Hakam\textsuperscript{26} and ultimately to the Abbasids.

According to Sayyid Mahmudun Nasir, the tragedy of Karbala had its repercussions on the history of the Umayyads. The Kufans pleaded for revenge and the Kharijis who mostly settled in Basrah lamented their desertion of Ali after the battle of Siffin and rose on behalf of the Alids. But an even more dangerous adversary for the Umayyads was Abdullah ibn Zubair who, on learning about the martyrdom of Husain, rose at Makkah and claimed the Khilafah for himself in 61/680 A.D.\textsuperscript{27}

Muhammad Husain, a Shiah writer of Iran, holds that greatest cause of the advancement of Shism, however, was the event of Karbala, which revolutionized the Islamic world. This painful event of 61 A.H., which is known as the tragedy of Karbala, was the most momentous of its kind. The effects of the martyrdom of Husain were felt by all, even those living in the most distant regions of the Muslims territory, with the result that many groups of people began to declare their love for Ali and his descendants. The numerical strength of the Shias increased
dramatically with the same rapidity with which tyranny of Banu Umayyah was intensified. The love for Ahl-i-Bait was also increasing in the hearts of the common people. It is related that Imam Sh'abi said to his son:

"Oh my son, the world can not harm the values which religion has brought, but those things which were made and adorned by the world can all be destroyed by religion. Just reflect upon Ali and his affairs. Did the descendants of the Umayyads ever relinquish their oppression? They concealed the merits of Ahl-i-Bait. They tried to hide the realities of the situation and never left off singing the praises of their ancestors. But all their plans were reversed."\[^{28}\]

The same author quotes the words of Imam Zamakhshari as well as the said statement of Sh'abi: "Our condition was very perplexing. If we loved Ali there was fear of murder, and if we became enemies to him, our ruin was certain."\[^{29}\]

Mahmud M. Ayub on the authority of al-Majlisi in the Encyclopedia of Religion writes that the death of Husain produced an immediate reaction in the Muslim community, especially in Iraq. It is reported in al-Majlisi's Bihar al-Anwār that when people of Kufah saw the head of Husain and the pitiful state of the captives they began to beat their breasts in remorse for their betrayal of Husain. This reaction produced an important movement known as al-Tawwabin (the repenters), which nurtured a spirit of
revenge for the blood of Hussain and provided fertile soil for the new Ashura Cult. The movement of Tawwabun actually aimed at the elimination of all the Killers of Hussain. Under the heading of Sulaiman b. Surad Khuzai they fought an unsuccessful battle against Ibn Ziyad and his army, but the latter movement of Mukhtar Saqafi achieved its end by Killing Ibn Ziyad and other assassins of Hazrat Husain in a series of wars. Several scholars like Ghulam Rasul Mohr, M.Y.M. Siddiqui, Moinuddin Ahmad Nadvi and Rashid Akhtar Nadvi hold that after inviting Husain to Kufah, letting him alone in the field of Karbala some of the Shia groups five years later thought to recompense for their sins. So they established a warrior groups by the name of Tawwabun and proceeded to Syria to have the revenge of the murder of Husain. One their prominent leaders was Sulaiman b. Surad al-Khuzai. In Iraq itself they have to confront with the army of Ibn Ziyad at a place called Ain al-wid'a. In this fierce fighting the group of Tawwabun got finished and Ibn Ziyad emerged as complete victorious. This event occurred in 65AH/685A.D.

In addition to this the scholars Akbar Shah Khan Najibabadi, Hamiduddin and others write that Mukhtar b. Abu Obaid Thaqafi was an experienced and political personality. Although initially a devotee and follower of Hazrat Husain to take advantage of the conditions. After the Karbala event he stood calm and traveled to
Makkah and Kufah to examine the situation. He provoked Husain's son Ali Zainul Abidin and his brother Muhammad b. Hanafiya for rebellion but they denied. After the degeneration of Tawwabun Mukhtar became the leader of the Shias of Kufah. In 66AH/685AD, he rose with the mission taking revenge of the murder of Husain and captured Kufah and Mosil where Ibn Zubair had the power. Later Ibn Zubair's brother Musaib b. Zubair proceeded against Mukhtar in 68/687 near Kufah a tough war took place in which Musaib defeated and killed him. In this way the fitna (crisis) emerged through Mukhtar Thaqafi ended.32

Besides this while discussing the socio-cultural impact of Karbala, a Shia Scholar, Sadiq Naqvi, writes that an event, in history, is assessed not by its magnitude but by its impacts over the humanity. It is valued high when it goes to elevate the human standards of virtues. The historians follow the path through which it had flown down to them, carefully measuring its intensity against the time before they fix a value to it. Without the slightest doubt, it can be said that no event in history had ever produced greater results as Karbala did. Its impact on society was manifold. On one side it paved the way for spiritual path and on the other it elevated those who identified themselves with it, to such heights that humanity still feels proud of them. Karbala was a battle fought on principles. It was not the battle between two rulers but it
was the struggle between two principles, philosophies and values.  

Another Shia scholar, Lallan Nazmi writes that the tragedy of Karbala sparked off the national sentiments of Arab clans—Bani Abbas appeared on the horizon. They finished Banu Umayyads. They were in no way better than Umayyads. They were despotic. They treaded in the foot steps of Banu Umayyads and were against the truthful and truth.

Professor Fazl Ahmad claims that the 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 no more than a few years. Yazid got nothing out of it except a big crop of guilt and an abiding infamy.

In support of this Maududi on the authority of some historians like Tabari, Ibn Athīr, and Ibn Kathīr reports that during the Khilafah of Yazid three major events took place. In this regard Maulana Maududi on the authority of the above historians writes that during Yazid’s rule, Husain was martyred in the most atrocious manner along with his children, relatives and friends. Secondly, he ordered a general massacre of Madinah that is the event of Harrah. And thirdly, he had the sacred Kabah destroyed and burnt.
According to Masudul Hasan the consequences of tragedy of Karbala were fatal. The tragedy of Karbala did not have much of political repercussions. The Umayyads instead of being dislodged came to be further entrenched in power. The Alids did not succeed in their bid to capture power. Even when the Umayyads were overthrown in 750 AD., power was captured by the Abbasids and not by the Alids. The tragedy of Karbala thus did not have any repercussion on Islamic polity.37

Yahya Armajani writes that the death of Ali and his two sons Hasan and Husain was the culmination of a series of unsuccessful political moves on the part of the partisans of Ali to secure the Khilafah. Very likely in any other situation, the ambush at Karbala would have been recorded as another political failure. Indeed, at the time the incident did not create much excitement. In the subsequent history of Islam, however, the ambush at Karbala assumed important religious significance. Ali and Husain became more formidable foes of the established Khilafah through the deaths than their lives. Husain came to be considered the prince of Martyrs and the anniversary of his death on the 10th of Muharram (680) became a rallying occasion for opponents of the Khilafah. With the result of these Martyrs, the followers of Ali separated themselves from the main body of Islam and formed a religious-political community with a theology and philosophy of its own.38
M.Y.M. Siddiqui in his *Tarikh Tahzīb Islami* while discussing the impact of Husain’s martyrdom holds that Karbala event is really a painful event in Islamic history. But it has been described in a diversified manner hiding the originality and factual status of the whole event. According to the author, there are two historical facts which give the clue of the incident to some extent.

1. Non-cooperation of the Companions of Prophet (SAW) and other well-wishers of Husain regarding his visit to Kufah.

2. Lack of followers of the Sunnat-i-Husaini in the later period.

Whatever the self engineered details of the Karbala event may depict, the reality is that the event neither changed the demography nor the status of the Islamic state, neither had it any impact on Islamic society or any sort of religious, moral and management changes took place.\(^{39}\)

**Impact on the Later Muslims**

Due to the impact of tragedy of Karbala and the martyrdom of Husain on later Muslims many movements emerged in the Muslim world. Secondly, in commemoration of this event the first ten days of Muharram are observed annually as days of sorrow and grief by Muslims, especially by the Shiah’s. The *chehlum*, the fortieth day after the murder of Husain, is also observed as the day of mourning because on that day, according to the reports, the head of Husain was returned by the Umayyad forces and buried
along with the body at Karbala. Thirdly, the tragedy of Karbala was shrouded in a mist of mysticism and invested with such religious bias as to make it test of faith in Islam. In the welter of such confusion the Muslims were naturally divided into numerous sects, which, in so far as the tragedy of Karbala was concerned, were broadly grouped under the popular denomination of ‘Shiah’ and ‘Sunni.’

Hasan Qasim Murad in his article in ‘Hamdard Islamicus’ quotes R. Strothmann who places the beginnings, if not of the sectarian Shiism, at least of the religious Shiism as early as the times of Ali himself. The author regards Husains martyrdom as the seed of Shiism by which perhaps he means the origins of sectarian shiism.⁴⁰

On the other hand the martyrdom of Husain occupies a particularly important place in the religious life of the twelver Shia, for whom it represents the supreme sacrifice on behalf of the people. They share in the way he was deserted in his hour of need, grief for his suffering, and are anxious to atone for it and avenge it. Throughout history the cry of “vengeance for Husain” has acted as a compelling revolutionary call among adherents of twelver Shiism. Its most manifestation has been the Iranian Revolution of 1978-1979, where the Pahlavi Shah was denounced as Yazid.
Nor was the impact of Husain’s martyrdom limited to Twelver Shiism. In Fatimid Egypt, for example, rites of remembrance were held regularly, although the Ismailiyah subsequently gave this event much less emphasis in their religious lives.⁴¹

Prof. Waheed Akhtar writes that Imam Khumani’s success in bringing about the Islamic revolution in Iran and through it influencing the entire Muslim world lies in the fact that he made the Ashura movement an instrument continuing process in human history for evolving a better society that could safeguard the principles of justice, social equity, cultural independence of the East. The tragedy of Karbala has also its impact on Muslim polity, culture, mysticism and philosophy, its impact on socio-economic reforms in Muslim world, its impact on political upheavals in the Muslim world and its impact on fine arts and other creative expressions of the Muslim ethos etc.⁴²

Yearly, on the tenth day of Muharram the tragedy is rehearsed in Persia, in India, in Turkey, in Egypt, wherever a Shiite community or colony exists; and who has been a spectator, though of alien faith, of these Ta‘ziyas without experiencing within himself something of what they mean to those whose religious feeling finds in them its supreme expression? It all comes back: the wailing chant, the sobbing multitudes, the white
raiment red with blood from self-inflicted wounds, the intoxication of grief and sympathy.\textsuperscript{43}

This tragedy was the origin of the passion plays, which are acted annually not only in Persia, where Shiism is the official religion but also throughout Asia wherever Shia Muslims gather together. Indeed the passion plays represent a force of poignant grief which it would not be easy to estimate, and the scenes will remain unforgotten. Moreover, it was as a result of this tragedy that the Shiah or "Faction" of Persia came into existence. It is asserted by Arabic writers, among the earliest being Al-Yaqubi of the ninth century.\textsuperscript{44}

Apart from this the religious basis and doctrines of Shiah sect was also the result of this tragedy. But this important matter has a religious side. In accepting it as authoritative, the Shiah naturally reject as usurpers Abu Bakr Siddique (R.A), Umar Farooq (R.A.), and Uthman Ghani (R.A.), and deem Ali (R.A.) and his descendants, the \textit{Imams}, to be the only true successors of the Prophet (SAW). So exalted is Ali, the "hand of God", that the saying runs, "Muhammad is a city of learning, Ali is its gate". It was because of the fact that after this tragedy, bloody wars have raged between the Sunnis and Shiah, and even today union between these two divisions of the Muslim world appears to be as unattainable as ever. It is important to note that Sunni Mujtahids,
or Doctors of the Sacred Law, follow the interpretation of that law, as laid down by the founders of the four orthodox sects, viz. Hambali, Shafi, Hanafi and Maliki, and this interpretation is immutable. Shiah Mujtahids, on the other hand, while following the laws of the Quran as interpreted by the Imams, may modify their meaning or interpret it anew.

It may further be observed that Shiah make pilgrimages to Karbala, the scene of the martyrdom of Husain, and Karbalai is a title which ranks only second to that of ‘Haji’.45

However, this tragedy was the origin of the Persian passion plays, which are acted annually not only in Persia where Shiism is the official religion, but also throughout Asia whenever Shia Muslims gather together.

Some scholars say that ever since the Iranian Shii dynasty of the Buyids popularized the Muharram ceremonies in the fourth/tenth century the Karbala drama has been the object of fervent annual lamentations. In the sixteenth century, the introduction of Ta‘ziyah (Passion play) by the Iranian Safavid dynasty strengthened the popular character of the ceremonies, which together with rawdah Khani (recitation of the sufferings of martyrs), Zangir Zani (Self-flagellation) and other street processions formed distinct cult despite the opposition of the religious hierarchy, who disapproved of them on account of their
crude dogma and irreligious historians. So far was Maulana Ahmad Raza Khan Barelvi is concerned he too has forbidden these customs of Muharram and called them unlawful. He prohibited even watching them. It is his futwa (decree) that one should not watch the Ta‘ziya.

Dr. M. Ershadul Bari of Dhaka University, Bangladesh holds that the commemoration of Ashura, the 10th day of Muharram on which Husain embraced martyrdom in Karbala, played a significant role in making the Islamic Revolution in Iran a success. The martyrdom of Husain acted as a constant source of inspiration for the Iranian people throughout the revolution.

In a declaration issued on 31 October 1971, Imam Khomeini also depicted the far-reaching impact on the accession of Umayyads thus:

“The greatest disaster that befell Islam was the usurpation of the rule by Muawiyah from Ali, which caused the system of rule to lose its Islamic character entirely and to be replaced by a monarchical regime. This disaster was even worse than the tragedy of Karbala and the misfortunes that befell the lord of the martyrs, and indeed it led to the tragedy of Karbala. The disaster that did not permit Islam to be correctly presented to the world was the greatest disaster.”

Sayyid Athar Abbas Rizvi on the authority of Maqrizi writes that the Ismaili Fatimids of North Africa, and then of Egypt and
Syria (297/567-989-1171), who claimed Alid descent and derived their name from the Prophet’s (SAW) daughter Fatima, introduced mourning rituals into their Khilafah. The monument known as the Ras al-Husain or al-Mashhad al-Husaini in Cairo became the center of the mourning ceremonies of Muharram.\textsuperscript{50} The Egyptians believed, and still believe, that Yazid transferred Husain’s head to Cairo (as discussed in chapter VI) where it was buried. From 360/970-71, the mourning assemblies on the eve of 10\textsuperscript{th} Muharram were enthusiastically organized in Cairo and other parts of the Fatimid Khilafah. The markets were closed and the towns plunged into deep mourning.

After the extinction of the Fatimid Khilafah the Ayyubids, who ruled over Egypt, Damascus, Aleppo, Diyarbakar and the Yemen from 564/1169 to the 15\textsuperscript{th} century, reverted to the Umayyad tradition of hostility towards Ali’s house. They made Ashura a day of rejoicing and festivity.\textsuperscript{51}

However, Allama Tabatabai, a Shia writer, claims that the tragic death of Husain played a major role in the spread of Shiism, especially in regions away from the center of the Khilafah such as Iraq, the Yemen, and Persia.\textsuperscript{52}

Some scholars like Sayyid Fayyaz Mahmud while discussing the effects of Husain’s martyrdom hold that his tragic death was the worst thing that could have happened to Islam or the
Umayyads. At first, especially when the Umayyad power was on the rise, it was but a ripple on the surface of events, but ultimately the wrong done to the house of Ali left many with a deep sense of grievance. The rallying—cry of the party of Ali was now 'Husain the martyr' and it was adopted by a new element in the nascent world of Islam, the neo-Muslims, (*Mawali*), who began to chafe against the inferior social status given to them in the Arab world. What was worse, the sense of dispossession became an article of faith with the *Shian-i-Ali*, who now became Shiites and developed separate and secret loyalties, and not long afterwards, a code of their own. Earlier differences took new forms and whole tribal groups aligned themselves on different sides. Shiaism found a home first in Iraq, which had age-long Persian associations, and then shifted to Persia, where the political climate was more favourable.\(^3\)

These sectarian groups, Shiah and Sunni, regardless of the fact that they subscribe to the essential articles of Islamic faith regard each other, at best, as heretics. Inspite of the fact that all the Muslims without sectarian distinctions hold in utter contempt those who were directly or indirectly responsible for the tragedy of Karbala and hold the memory of Husain in high reverence and regard.
The event of Karbala has attained a mythic quality in Muslim, especially Shiite, tradition. For the Shia Karbala is the supreme example of the pattern of suffering and martyrdom which has afflicted their Imams and the whole of the Shiite community. Each year the day of Karbala, 10 Muharram, is marked by Shiites as their greatest festival, the passion plays and flagellants procession which accompany it illustrate the feeling which memory of the event inspires. It is only to be expected, therefore, that it is virtually impossible to disentangle history from the legend and hagiography with which it is associated. Even Sunni Muslims are moved by the fate of the Prophet's grandson.54

Professor Masud-ul Hassan exclaims that it is strange that the memory of tragedy of Karbala is kept alive by Muharram celebrations every year but the memory of the tragedy of the assassination of Hazrat Uthman is not kept alive in the way it should have been kept to commensurate to the historical importance of the event.55

However, the Umayyad Khilafah lasted for ninety years from 661-750. Though name of this line is soiled with the blood of Karbala, but it must not be forgotten that more Muslim conquests are due to this than to any other dynasty.56

Apart from this, the nature of the tragedy of Karbala captivated every man who read about it or heard about it. then, in
addition to Muslims non-Muslims were also affected by it, both at the level of ordinary people and of men of culture. This was the case in past and it still continues. A numerous creative works of poetry, which non-Muslims have composed in which they express their emotions about the martyrdom of Husain. There are numerous manifestations of the rites of remembrance which non-Muslims undertake in some areas (the Indian sub-continent, for example) to express their veneration for the revolution and their respect for Husain.

Rich tributes have been paid by intellectuals belonging to many walks of life to Husain and Karbala. The following are the few amongst various statements of the intellectuals inspired by Karbala:

**Thomas Carlyl** (b. Dec. 4, 1795 – d. Feb. 5, 1881, London), British Historian and essayist has reacted as:

"The best lesson which we get from the tragedy of Karbala is that Husain and his followers were the rigid believers of God. They illustrated that numerical superiority does not count when it comes to truth. The victory of Husain despite his minority marvels me."^{57}

**Edward Gibbon** (b. May 8, 1737–d. Jan. 16, 1794, London), English rationalist historian and scholar best known as the author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* opines:
"In the history of Islam especially the life of Husain stands unique, un-approached and unapproachable by anyone. Without his martyrdom Islam would have extinguished long ago. He was the saviour of Islam and it was due to his martyrdom that Islam took such a deep root, which is neither possible nor imaginable to destroy now. In a distant age and time the tragic scene of the death of Husain will awaken the sympathy of the coldest."

Rabindranath Tagore (b.May 7, 1861, Kolkata –d.Aug 7, 1941), Bengali Poet and Nobel Laureate suggests:

“What did Husain teach us? This material world in which we live loses its balance when it loses contact with the world of love. When this happens, we have to pay for lowly things with our soul. At this juncture only that person can help us, who by the sacrifice of his life, re-establishes the supremacy of the human soul that live in the kingdom of love. And when we achieve spiritual freedom, the artificial glitter of material ambitions attracts us no more.”

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (b.Nov.14, 1889, d. May 27, 1964, New Delhi) remarks:

“There is a universal appeal in this martyrdom Husain sacrificed his life but he refused to submit to a tyrannical government. This sacrifice is a beacon light of guidance for every community and every nation.”
Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, (b. Oct.2 1869, d. Jan. 30, 1948, Delhi) maintains:

“I read about Karbala while I was still very young. I was truly amazed I have nothing new to offer to the people of India. I have studied the life of Husain very carefully and am now convinced that India’s Salvation lies in following the path shown by Husain.”

Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Ajmiri, (12th century a Sufi Saint of Chishti Order) writes:

“Shah ast Husain badshah ast Husain
Deen ast Husain deen panah ast Husain
Sar dad na dad dast dar dast-e-Yazid
Haqqa ke binaye la ilah ast Husain”

Husain is the king Husain is the Emperor,
Husain is faith Husain is the saviour of faith,
He gave his head rather giving his hands
In the hands of Yazid. By God Husain
Is the founder of La-ilah (The doctrine of Islam).

These couplets are inscribed on the Holy Shrine of Khawaja Sahib in Ajmir (Rajasthan).

Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) known to the world as the Poet-Philosopher of the East devoted his life to awaken the Muslim Ummah and to make it pursue the path of spirituality, knowledge, jihad, sacrifice and martyrdom.
Dr. Iqbal had an abiding faith in *Ahl-i-Bait*. He was intensely moved by the tragic event of Karbala so much so that in many of his couplets he carried a universal message to the mankind for emulating Hazrat Husain. His elegies on the martyrdom of Husain stand unmatched and are an eye-opener to all those who are giving a mere lip-service to Islam. In the following couplets Dr. Iqbal gives vent to his sentiments and feelings on Imam Husain. Allama Iqbal writes:

“Jis tarah mujhko shahid-e-Karbala sey piyar hay
Haq ta’ala ko yatimon ki dua sey piyar hay”.

Dr. Iqbal expresses his extreme love for Husain. Just as Almighty Allah loves to listen to the invocation of the orphans, he also has the same kind of love for the martyr of Karbala.

“Sidq-e- Khalil bhi hai ishq sabr-e- Husain bhi hai ishq
Marika-e- wujud main Badr-o- Hunain bhi hai ishq”

Dr. Iqbal says that love of Allah manifests itself in many ways. Prophet Ibrahim (AS) had suffered many difficulties in the cause of Allah. He accepted being thrown into the fire, and the fire was turned into a blooming garden.

Professor Gopichand Narang (b.Feb.11, 1931 Blouchistan) expresses his sentiments as follows:

“The Muharram alums are revered by most Hindus like the Ram lila processions. The way virtuous lord Rama fought against the tyrannical Ravana, so did
Husain against Yazid, the only difference being that Husain got martyred while Rama defeated Ravana."\(^6\)

From the above discussion it can be concluded that after its immediate effects the tragedy of Karbala created an upheaval in the Islamic world. The Muslims could not tolerate the assassination of Husain and it shocked the whole *Ummah*. A wave of hatred spread all over against the Umayyads. The people turned against Yazid for there was a great respect for Husain with regard to his ancestral background. Karbala tragedy not only caused chaos but also posed a serious threat to the unity of Islamic world. Thus this event was a major factor in the overthrow of Umayyad rule. Among its immediate results were the revolts and rebellions combined with bloody wars which continued for twelve years. It gave birth to the concept of hierarchy and regionalism, diluting the life long tradition of *Khilafah* —the unified command for the whole community, leading to sectarian influence on the whole scenario resulting in the emergence of many movements. Banu Umayyah were dethroned and were done to death in such a manner that it is difficult to find any parallel in the history.

After the death of Yazid the government ran into the hands of other people of Umayyads and it was then taken from them by Abbasids. Abbasids succeeded only because of their anti-Umayyad propaganda. Fatimids also reigned Africa for a long period in the
back drop of Karbala event. Sunni and Shiah differences got generated right from this tragedy. Hence the immediate result was the creation of Shiah and Sunni schools of thought. Thus the Muslim community got divided into two main sects.

The impact of tragedy of Karbala on the *Ummah* also resulted into the inter community clashes and conflicts on the issue of Khilafat resulting in wars which took a heavy toll of life besides destroying and causing damage to the cultural and religious affairs. There emerged a clear cut demarcation in the thought and belief of the intellect class and the literature was fabricated to satisfy the needs of a particular school of thought which led to the communication gap preventing original sources and factual position to reach the masses, building confusion that has got birth in the due course of time.

Karbala event has been the favourite episode for the shiah sect who consider weeping and mourning on this day a means of blessings. The life long tradition of passion plays and breast beating by the Shiah sect as a means to mourn the martyrdom of Hussain during the days of Muharram has far reaching impact on the socio-religious developments. The Shias feel obliged and convinced with the passion plays to which Sunnis are a bit indifferent giving a sense of dual understanding of the whole episode. In short it can be inferred from the study of the Karbala
tragedy and post Karbala period that the great religion and its firm believers who shared the common code of conduct and unified command were forced to infuse and divide on the basis of varied perception of the incident that apparently came into being by sheer negligence and mishandling of the plethora of situations that got generated by the demands and the deeds of the masses of the region.
Notes and References


8. Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*, vol. VIII, p. 223, cited by Abul Ala Maududi, *op. cit.*, p. 171. Maududi describes that the details of the saying of Imam Ahmad bin Hambal which have
been quoted by Ibn Kathîr are that once Abdullah the son of Imam Ahmad asked him about the heavenly ruling regarding cursing Yazid he replied that how he will not curse the person who has been cursed by Allah. He then recited the verse from Holy Quran which read:

“Then, it is to be expected of you, if ye were put in authority, that ye will do mischief in the land, and break your ties of kith and kin? Such are the men whom God has cursed” (Muhammad, 22-23).

After citing this verse Imam said what else can be the example of violating peace and spreading evil as Yazid has committed. This saying of Ahmad has been noted by Muhammad bin Abdur Rasul al-Barzanji in his Al-Isha’a fi Ashrat al-Sa’a and Ibn Hajr in Al-Sawaiq al-Muhriqa. But Allama Safarini and Imam Ibn Taimiya say that the authentic sources indicate that Imam Ahmad did not like to curse Yazid. The prominent scholars who support the idea of cursing Yazid include Ibn Jauzi, Qazi Abu Yala, Allama Taftazani and Allama Jalaluddin Suyuti and those who are against this are the great Imam Ghazali and Imam Ibn Taimiya. Maududi’s own observation is that the people who are sinful and commit such atrocities can be cursed e.g., it can be said that may Allah shower curse on those who are cruel but to curse a particular person permanently is not genuine because if he would have been alive and if the Almighty Allah may pardon him after his repentance and if he is dead we don’t know his last status at
the time of his death and the state of affairs he faced. So we must first refer to the wrong deeds of such persons and abstain from cursing them. But at the same time it does not mean that we must appreciate Yazid and write Radhi Allah-o-Anhu with his name. Once in the meeting of Umar bin Abdul Aziz a man while referring to Yazid used the word Amīrul Mūminīn with his name. Then he got very angry with him and subjected him to the punishment of twenty Kodas.(whip)


Contrary to this Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi quotes Qazi Abi Bakar bin Arabi:

“And the story refers to that Imam Ahmad considers Yazid great and has placed Yazid in the list of pious Sahabah and Tabiun whose sayings are followed and considered as source of learning. More to it he has discussed him before Tabiun just after Sahabah. So there are no evidences of Yazid’s bad characters as has been reported by some historians. Don’t they feel ashamed on their baseless attempts. (Kitab al-Awasim p. 232. cited by Abbasi op. cit., p. 52).

Imam Ghazali in reply to Imaduddin Abul Hasan Ali Al-Harasi who belongs to Shafi school of thought (d.503 AH) declared that saying Radhi Allah-o-Anhu to Yazid is jaiz (permissible) as well
as Mustahab (desirable) as he was a pious Muslim and a Mūmin. He further writes:

"And Yazid was a good Muslim and it is not true that he murdered Husain or ordered the same. So when Yazid is not guilty of this murder then how is it justified to blame him of killing Husain and dislike him. It is against the Islamic teachings to suspect a Muslim. Almighty Allah says, "Keep off from suspicion as some sorts of suspicion are most sinful." Prophet has also conveyed the same. Therefore the person who thinks that Yazid has ordered the murder of Husain or was pleased by such act must realize that he is a fool. It is difficult to trace the origin of such controversies if we take the example of an ordinary kingdom. Then how is it possible to find out the reality of Husain's tragedy, which has taken place in the past and has been forwarded by historians in a biased manner? Therefore it is a difficult issue, which cannot be verified in the light of available evidences. So when we are not clear about an incident and the factors responsible for it then how can we blame a person who was a responsible Muslim, a Khalifah and desirable for the title of Radhi Allah-o-Anhu or even is prayed in our every prayer where we refer Mūminīn as he was a Mūmin (Dafyat al-‘Ayan li ibn Khalīkān vol. I Cairo, p. 465. For full details see Hafiz Salahuddin Yousuf, Mah Muharram aur Maujūda Musalman op. cit., pp.48-52).
Ibn Kathîr referring to the verdict of Ghazali and Al-Harasi has also prohibited from blaming Yazid. As he was a Muslim and it is not proved that he was with the decision of Husain’s murder. Abbasi on the authority of Ibn Kathîr who quotes Ghazali and says:

“And Imam Ghazali has proscribed from blaming yazid because he was a Muslim and it has not been proved that he was satisfied with the murder of Husain. As for saying Radhi Allah-o- Anhu to him it is justified and we are praying for him whenever we refer to Muslimîn and Mûminîn in our prayers.” *(Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya, vol. 12, p. 173. For details see Abbasi, op. cit., pp. 52-55)*.

In support of this Arshad Amanullah claims that we must not talk ill of Yazid because:

(1) The command of the army invading the city of Constantinople was in the hands of Yazid. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has assured that “whosoever firstly invades Constantinople will be having highest place in Jannah” *(Sahih Bukhari, Ma al Fatah, vol. VI, p. 102)*

This hadith is considered as the proof of Yazid’s Khilafah and for his pardon, as is reported by Nawab Siddique Hasan Khan that “from this Hadith it becomes clear that Yazid is heavenly blessed.” *(Aun al-Bari la Hal Ad Lat al-Bukhari, vol. V, Qater 1983, p. 391).*
(II) It is prohibited in Shariah to curse a particular person even if he may be a traitor. Hamar a Companion of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was many times warned because of his drinking habit. Once a companion of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) cursed him but Prophet Muhammad (SAW) prohibited and said “don’t curse him because he loves and keeps dear Allah and his Prophet (SAW). (Abdur Razzaq, *Kanz al-Amal fi Sanan al-Aqwal wa al-Afa‘l*, vol. V, p. 507. See also Ibn Taimiya, *Minhaj ul- Sunnh*, Urdu tr. Ghulam Ahmad Hariri, Lahore 1965, pp. 425-27. For full details see Ibn Taimiya, *Husain wa Yazid*, Urdu tr. Abdur Razzaq Malihabadi, Lahore, pp. 38-42).

(III) In Shariah the grave sins have been narrated with strong condemnation. Therefore any particular person cannot be referred to as *jahnamy* (Sinner). May be it so that Almighty Allah may have pardoned him.

(IV) One of the reasons that made Yazid an unwanted person may be the incident of Harrah where the battle was fought by his orders in which a number of respected Companions and great Tabiun were martyred. But it was an attempt to safeguard the government, which was justified by Shariah. The same mistake was committed by Hazrat Ayesha (RA) and Hazrat Ali (RA) in the battle of Jamal which resulted in the martyrdom of thousands of Companions. But despite this fact we love and respect them both.
Several verses and Hadith order us to love the Mūmins. If we
cannot be so affectionate to Yazid as we are to Sahabah, Solihīn
(right ones) and Awliyā (holy man) but we can love him to the
extent we love Muslims. *(Haditha Karbala Sabā‘ī Sazish ka


229.

*ibid*, p. 229.

229.

Siddiqui, *Banu Hashim aur Banu Umayya ke M’aashrati
T’aluqat, op. cit.*, p. 79. For these biased and derogatory
reports regarding the incident of Harrah, see Ibn Athīr, *al-

14. Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi, *Khilafat Muawiyah was Yazid, op.


26. Muawiyah b. Yazid succeeded his father. The oath of allegiance in his favour was taken on 14th Rabi al-Awwal 64/10th November 683. Most of the historians and scholars unanimously hold that he was pious and mild but he wielded the scepter only for a short period. He retired to private life, fell ill and died at the age of 21 (or a bit less as reported by others). The Umayyads assembled and swore allegiance to Marwan b.Hakam on the 3rd Dhi-al-Qada 64/22 June, 684 AD but he died a year later. He was succeeded by Abdul Malik bin Marwan. The Marwan's branch continued to rule for a long time until the Abbasids wrested power from them and ruled for several centuries.


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


49. The declaration was issued from Najaf in condemnation of Shah's plan to impose on the nation the celebration of two-and-a-half millennia of monarchy. *Ibid*, p. 113.


58. Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of Roman Empire*, *ibid*, p. 142.


63. Dr. Iqbal http://www.al.Islam.org/ashura/51htm

64. Prof. Narang cited by Firoz Bakht Ahmad in his article, *The Tenth day is a Day of Remembrance*, *The Times of India*, New Delhi, Monday, April 17, 2000.