ABSTRACT

The sad demise of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) (571-622AD) created a vacuum in the Muslim *Ummah*. However, this vacuum was filled by the able guided and pious Khulafa (*Khulafa-i-Rashidin*) who ruled *Ummah* one after another. Except the first Khalifah, all the subsequent three Khulafa were unfortunately martyred either by their co-religionists or by antagonists. Though the assassination of Hazrat Umar (RA) did not create any sort of havoc in the *Ummah*, but the assassination of Hazrat Uthman (RA) caused a severe damage to the unity of Muslim *Ummah*. This was further aggravated by the internal dissensions caused by the assassination of the third Khalifah during the period of the fourth Khalifah, leading to some bloodshed of the Muslims in two bloody wars of *Camel* and *Siffin*; Hazrat Ali’s assassination was actually a result of that internal strife of the Muslims, dividing the Muslim community into two warring camps. Hazrat Hasan’s abdication of the Khilafah tried to bridge the gulf but temporarily, and the situation became explosive once again when Hazrat Muawiyah (RA) nominated his son Yazid as his successor whose candidature was questioned and opposed by a
group of people especially by Hazrat Husain (RA) on the ground that he was not fit for the Khilafah.

The same stand is adopted by the majority of the Urdu scholars justifying Husain's claim that Yazid was not fit for the Khilafah. They argue that he was cruel, wicked, treacherous and drunkard. These scholars also blame Muawiyah for introducing hereditary succession. While another set of Urdu scholars declare Yazid fit for the Khilafah by arguing that he was generous, pious and possessed various noble qualities which a Khalifah should have.

However, difference of opinion on the issue of the nomination of Yazid and its opposition especially by Hazrat Husain is found among some Urdu scholars. Several Urdu scholars like Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi, Muhammad Ishaque Siddiqui Nadvi, Dr. Asrar Ahmad, Zafar Ahmad Sialkoti and others conclude that Hazrat Husain was not willing at all to accept and recognize the Khilafah of Yazid on any account, and in order to avoid paying the oath of allegiance to Yazid, he escaped to Makkah to mobilize the public opinion against Yazid's Khilafah. According to these Urdu scholars, when the people of Kufah learnt that Husain had refused to pledge
allegiance to Yazid, they once again tried to mobilize Hazrat Husain as they had been doing during the Khilafah of Hazrat Muawiyah, but Hazrat Husain did not pay any heed to them. But Hazrat Husain's new stand viza viz the Khilafah of Yazid revived the hope of the Kufan leaders who once again sent a series of letters to Husain in which they assured him that they would extend their whole hearted support to him for shouldering the responsibility of Khilafah. Almost all the Urdu scholars unanimously admit that at this juncture, the notables, friends and well-wishers of Husain who were apprehensive of the changing nature of the fickle-minded Kufans advised him not to go to Kufah. But Hazrat Husain remained adamant in his stand and dispatched his cousin Muslim bin Aquil to obtain first hand information regarding the actual position in Kufah.

All the Urdu scholars agree that the mission of Muslim bin Aquil to find out the situation in Kufah was directed by Husain and the Killing of Muslim bin Aquil by Ibn Ziyad was a result of that design.

These Urdu scholars also agree that on Husain's decision to leave Makkah for Kufah, his well-wishers again tried to
dissuade him with their pleas and arguments that such an undertaking would be dangerous not only for his own health but also to the health of the Islamic *Ummah*. But Husain politely ignored their advices and towards the close of the year A.H 60/AD 680, set out for Kufah along with his family members and some supporters.

Several Urdu scholars like Atiqur Rahman Sambhali, Bashirur Rahman Siddiqui, Akbar Shah Khan Najibabadi and Hafiz Salahuddin Yousuf hold that on his journey to Kufah, Husain stayed at many places and explained his stand to the people he met; many people coming from Kufah who knew the actual political situation in Kufah, also requested him to go back to Makkah, but he continued his journey. He, however, was convinced to return back when he received the news of the murder of Muslim bin Aquil at a halt near his destination. But many Urdu scholars hold that now the relatives of Muslim bin Aquil refused to go back and impressed upon him to take revenge of Muslim's murder. Moved by their fealty and support which they had extended to him Hazrat Husain decided to continue his journey, and ultimately his caravan
reached Karbala where he was encircled by the army of Ibn Ziyad, the governor of Kufah.

Almost all the Urdu scholars unanimously hold that at Karbala after losing his confidence in Kufans and becoming aware of the changed conditions, Husain offered to the governor of Iraq to either allow him to return back to Makkah or to send him to join the Muslim armies to fight for the Muslim state at some frontier or to allow him to go to Yazid at Damascus. However, the opinion of some later Urdu scholars varies regarding the second and third proposal Husain offered. Moreover, majority of the Urdu scholars agree that Ibn Ziyad refused and insisted on Husain's unconditional surrender. There were only two options left for Husain i.e., either to surrender or to fight. He however, preferred death to surrender.

Since the three proposals suggested by Hazrat Husain had implications for those who believe in the Imamat of Husain, for he was, in fact ready to accept Yazid as Khalifah and was willing to renounce his whole mission are not acceptable to them therefore they reject them calling them unhistorical and untenable.
All the Urdu Scholars as well as historians hold that the battle of Karbala ended with the death of Husain and his male companions, who included several of his sons and cousins. These scholars also hold that the numbers of martyrs who laid down their lives with Hazrat Husain were seventy two. Thus the day on which this tragedy befell was 10th Muharram 61 AH/10th October 680 AD.

Majority of the Urdu scholars claim that Husain’s head was severed from his body. There is however a different opinion adopted by a section of Urdu scholars who also differ on the issue of the burial place of Husain’s head. But the most probable burial place according to a set of scholars like Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi, Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui, Abu Bakar Ghaznavi, Arshad Amanullah and some others is Madinah’s famous graveyard i.e., Jannat al-Baqih.

The treatment of Husain’s head after his death is another example of difference of opinions, and more importantly the question who was responsible for the whole tragedy: Yazid or Ibn Ziyad? On the first issue many scholars like Abul Ala Maududi, Abul Kalam Azad, Akbar Shah Khan Najibabadi, Qazi Zainul Abidin, Abdul Razzaq Malihabadi, Rashid Akhtar
Nadvi and several others hold that both Yazid and Ibn Ziyad did strike the head of Husain. But some scholars like Abu Bakar Ghaznavi and Taha Husain claim that the incident took place at Damascus. On the other issue different views are found; some of these scholars blame Ibn Ziyad only, absolving the Umayyad Khalifah, while others put all blame on the shoulders of Yazid. But several scholars like Khurshid Ahmad Fariq, Aslam Jairajpuri, Hamiduddin, Qazi Zainul Abidin, Fazl Ahmad, M.Y.M. Siddiqui, Moinuddin Ahmad Nadvi are of the view that Yazid declared that this all took place without his concurrence; neither he had intended Husain’s death nor ordered such a thing and that Obaidullah had exceeded his orders. Instead he (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. I should have been very well pleased with Kufans without the death of Husain; God may curse the son of Sumayya. If I had captured Husain, I would have forgiven him”.

Ibn Kathir, Ibn Athir, Ibn Asakir and several other scholars of the past also support this.
Majority of the Urdu scholars agree that the surviving members of the family of Hazrat Husain were brought before Yazid, he treated them kindly and sent them under a safe convoy to Madinah.

Despite the difference of opinion on the question of the tragedy 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).

The news of Husain’s martyrdom was received with a great shock by the Islamic world especially in Hijaz where the people were greatly grieved. After its immediate effects the tragedy of Karbala left lasting impressions and impact on both the contemporary as well as on the later Muslims. A wave of hatred spread all over against the Umayyads. Several scholars like Sarwat Saulat, Abdul Qayoom Nadvi, Moinuddin Ahmad Nadvi and Rashid Akhtar Nadvi claim that the root cause of the incident of Harrah was the tragedy of Karbala. Majority of the Urdu scholars including Abul Ala Maududi, Sayyid Amir Ali, Ghulam Rasul Mohr, Sayyid Ali Naqi Naqvi, Sarwat Saulat, Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi, Abul Kalam Azad and
Murtaza Ahmad Khan hold that after its immediate effects the people of Madinah rose against the Umayyads and with the result 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 and damaged Kabah. However, there is difference of opinion among the scholars regarding this issue. The scholars like Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi and Mir Mahmud Ali Qaisar claim that after the tragedy of Karbala there remained peace and harmony for three years. Whatever the facts, Ali Ahmad Banarsi, Abbasi, M.Y.M. Siddiqui and some others conclude that the incident of Harrah has been misinterpreted and derogatory reports have been put forth due to the prejudice and bigotry of some authors.

Besides, several scholars like Muhammad Ishaque Siddiqui Nadvi, Dr. Asrar Ahmad, Abbasi, Hafiz Salahuddin Yousuf, Arshad Amanullah and Bashirur Rahman Siddiqui hold that both the tragedy of Karbala and the incident of Harrah were a conspiracy of Sabā’īs against Yazid and Muslim rule.

It was because of the tragedy of Karbala that many movements generated in the Muslim world. Due to the
emergence of these movements the intercommunity clashes and conflicts resulting in wars took a heavy toll of life. Moreover, these events were the major factors in the overthrow of Umayyad rule.

Whatever may be the historical consequence of the tragedy of Karbala, as many Urdu scholars hold and maintain, that one thing is quite clear that it divided the Muslims into two hostile camps for all time to come. Thus Muslims were broadly divided under the popular denomination of Shiah and Sunni sects. This division was harmful to the progress and prosperity of future Islam. But this interpretation is partly true for a great majority of Sunnis also deplore and criticize the Umavi Khalifah and his government for the great tragedy.

The Urdu writings during 19th and 20th century frame different judgements and exhibit divergent approaches to the tragedy of Karbala, which may be categorized as follows:

There appear however, three categories of these writers who are influenced by a particular school of thought and have brought forward a different picture of the scenario which resulted in a varied spectrum of socio-religious consequences in the post war era.
The approaches of these different writers regarding the tragedy of Karbala have been classified in the following three categories:

1. Pro-Ahl-i-Bait

2. Pro-Khilafah

3. Moderate.

The Pro-Ahl-i-Bait writers justify Husain’s attempts and have maintained almost common opinion regarding the whole event. Their viewpoint is generally accepted by the Muslim *Ummah*. The pro-Khilafah writers support the candidature of Yazid for the Khilafah. They resist the moves of Husain and equate it as a revolt against the established Khilafah of Yazid. While the Moderates are fair towards both the disputants and have maintained a balance in their writings.

However, the historical fact about the tragedy of Karbala is that it is the outcome of the ugly political developments which took place after the assassination of Hazrat Uthman (RA), the third Khalifah of Islam. The martyrdom of Husain created chaos and in no way this incident was beneficial for the Muslim *Ummah* and Islam as well. In fact the tragedy of
Karbala caused ideological flux in the Muslim intelligentsia upto the present times.

The need of time is that one must not see history through a specific point of view. The duty of a historian is to put forward facts whatever they may be. Instead of Islamizing or de-Islamizing history one must present history as it is. Even Islamic history must be kept away from the sectarian bias.