Introduction
The chequered history of Islam and Muslims passed through a number of glad tidings as well as upheavals that shaped and at times unshaped the destiny of the believers and other peoples also. From the period of the Holy Prophet SAW (571-632 A.D.) down to the Umayyad Khilafah (661-750 A.D.) Islamic people experienced various vicissitudes of time: conquests and experience of political and religious powers as well as the internal strifes and conflicts. They in fact shaped the Islamic History.

It is a historical fact that the period from Prophet Muhammad (SAW) upto the period of Hazrat Uthman (RA) Muslims never fought among themselves. It was from the period of Hazrat Ali (RA) that Muslims started fighting among themselves, with the result the unity of Islam was lost and the gates of civil war were opened.

A great historian and sociologist Ibn Khaldun states:

“There are the wars that took place in Islam among the men around Muhammad and the men of the second generation. It should be known that their differences concerned religious matters only, and arose from independent interpretation of proper arguments and considered insights. Differences may well arise among people who use independent judgement. Now, we may say that in the case of problems that are open to independent judgement, the truth can lie only on one side, and that he who does not hit upon it is in error. But, since it has not
been clearly indicated by general consensus on which side (the truth lies). Every side may be assumed to be right. The side that is in error is not clearly indicated, either. To declare all sides to be at fault is not acceptable according to the general consensus. Again, we may say that all sides have the true answer and that “every-body who uses independent judgement is right”. Then, it is all the more necessary to deny that any one side was in error or ought to be considered at fault.

The differences between the men around Muhammad and the men of the second generation were no more than differences in the independent interpretation of equivocal religious problems, and they have to be considered in this light. Differences of the sort that have arisen in Islam include those (1) between Ali on the one hand, and Muawiyah, as well as Zubair, Talha, and Aishah on the other, (2) between Husain and Yazid, and (3) between Ibn Zubair and Abdul Malik.

The seat of Khilafah since the emergence of Islam was Madinah and the Khulafa governed from this important city of Arabia. After Hazrat Uthman (RA) there was a change when Hazrat Ali (RA) shifted the centre of Khilafah from Madinah to Kufah. The trend got a new shift when Hazrat Muawiyah (RA) shifted it to Syria in his period and governed for twenty years. Yazid who took the reign of Muslim Ummah in his hands following his father Muawiyah, continued to carry out the affairs
of governance from the same place. As there had been a sort of intercommunity clashes just after the Khilafah of Hazrat Uthman, the conditions became worse when Muawiyah nominated his son Yazid as his successor whose candidature was questioned by a group of people especially Hazrat Husain on the ground that his Khilafah was not justified.

This thesis aims at acquainting the reader with the true nature of the opinions, approaches and consequences of the tragedy of Karbala on the basis of historical narrations. In this study an attempt is made to have a discussion on the whole event of the tragedy of Karbala, presenting an analytical study of Urdu historical writings during the past two centuries. The entire thrust of the thesis is to bring forth the different reports and information regarding the tragedy of Karbala especially from the nomination of Yazid bin Muawiyah (RA) upto the martyrdom of Husain bin Ḥāfiz Ali (RA) on October 10, 680 AD/Muharram 10, 61AH at Karbala. Karbala is a place near Kufah situated about 950 miles from Makkah on the south bank of the river Furat (Euphrates), to the north of Kufah. There can be no denying the fact that every writer has his own way of expression, inclinations and viewpoint, his own ideology and political leanings which determine the framework of his undertaking. He may have a vast library at his disposal, but he may limit his inquiry to works on a particular
theme or topic, and the later writers may also blindly follow him to present the same account and views. But, as the ancient seers have said, that those who take the lead leave a lot to be explored by those who come after them. Historiography always needs an explorer, as a poet has correctly said:

'Never think of a task that the cup - bearer has completed, The wine has a hundred drinks still untasted.'

The history has to record every event and casualty and historian cannot leave out the narration of any mischance and misfortune, howsoever painful it may be for him. Such events become a part of history: Their exclusion would render history incomplete and deform evaluation of the course of events. There is, therefore, no alternative but to narrate these painful happenings with due apology to those who are aware of the reverence every believer owes to the holy Prophet's household and his family. The tragedy of Karbala has been discussed by the Urdu scholars with different view-points. These scholars are divided in their opinion regarding the issue of nomination of Yazid, claim of Husain for the Khilafah and lastly the martyrdom of Husain and its consequences.

This thesis, which is devoted to the tragedy of Karbala, is almost entirely concerned with the reactions of two men to Yazid's recognition as Khalifah. These two men, al-Husain bin Ali bin Abi
Talib and Abdullah bin Zubair bin al-Awwam, represent two of the most influential Islamic families. They are the sons of two great Islamic leaders and they opposed Yazid’s succession. Thus, the central question involved in the Khilafah of Yazid is the constitutional question of succession.

In order to understand Urdu scholar’s handling of this problem, it is useful to examine and analyze the sources they used and how they used them. For example, Abul Ala Maududi and others like him concentrate on the opposition to Yazid’s Khilafah from Husain and Ibn Zubair.

A great historian Ibn Jarir Tabari holds that all the sources are agreed on the point that after his succession Yazid was anxious to obtain the oath of allegiance from Husain and Ibn Zubair. He argues that these are leading Muslims, the sons of famous fathers, therefore it was only natural that Yazid should want them to pledge allegiance to him. On the other hand, Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi and other scholars like him have concentrated on the acknowledgement of Yazid’s nomination by the people of Hijaz, Iraq, Basrah, Syria and other places. The historians Ibn Kathîr and Ibn Khaldun state that nomination of Yazid was done with the agreement of people on a wide and universal scale.

Several Urdu scholars like Khurshîd Ahmad Fariq, Aslam Jairajpuri, Mîr Mahmud Ali Qaisar, Hafiz Salahuddin Yousuf and
Abdul Qayoom Nadvi suggest that in presenting Husain’s and Ibn Zubair’s reaction to the nomination of Yazid one must not ignore the role of Al-Walīd, the governor of Madinah, in taking the oath of allegiance from Husain and Ibn Zubair.⁶ All the Urdu scholars agree on the sending of invitation-letters by the Kufans to Husain. They also agree that the mission of Muslim bin Aquil to find out the situation in Kufah was directed by Husain and killing of Muslim bin Aquil by Ibn Ziyad. Tabari has also given the same account about the killing of Muslim bin Aquil by Ibn Ziyad.⁷

All the Urdu scholars gave a detailed account about the speeches delivered and letters sent by Husain during his journey to Kufah. Almost all the Urdu scholars unanimously admit that the notables, friends and well-wishers of Husain tried their level best to persuade him not to go to Kufah. It is a well recognized fact that these well-wishers of Husain dissuaded him from doing so, reminding him of the proverbial infidelity and fickle-mindedness of the Kufites. Despite that Husain did not pay any heed to them and left for Kufah.

In the historical presentation of the account next major issue is the responsibility for Husain’s death. The consensus of Urdu Scholars and historians at this point is that Husain had offered Umar bin Sad, Ibn Ziyad’s commander, three options that:

a) He would go back to Makkah.
b) He would go to a frontier post.

c) He would go to meet Yazid at Damascus.  

However, there is a difference of opinion among some scholars regarding the second and third option Husain offered. If these proposals were really offered then Ibn Ziyad’s task was over. All he had to do was to send Husain to Yazid. However, majority of the scholars admit that Ibn Ziyad insisted that Husain must submit to him. On this provoking and insulting insistence of Ibn Ziyad, Husain and his party preferred death to surrender.

However, it also 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.

The treatment of Husain’s head after his death is another example of the difference of opinions, and more importantly the question who was responsible for the whole tragedy: Yazid or Ibn Ziyad? On the first issue many Urdu scholars report that both Yazid and Ibn Ziyad did strike the head of Husain. There are also different reports of scholars regarding the burial place of Husain’s head. On the other issue different views are found; some blame Ibn Ziyad only absolving the Umayyad Khilafah completely while other put all blame on the shoulders of Yazid.

Scholars like Khurshid Ahmad Fariq, Aslam Jairajpuri, Hamiduddin, Qazi Zainul Abidin, Fazl Ahmad, M.Y.M. Siddiqui
and some historians like Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Athīr and Ibn Asakir, are of the view that Yazid treated the surviving relatives of Husain well and declared that if he had been there he would have never killed Husain.¹⁰

Martyrdom of Husain was for a long time a problem for the conscience of devout Muslims. He was, after all, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). For some Muslims its significance is much deeper; Husain served in their eyes as a hero, who by his actions set an example for Muslims that will be always remembered. But at the same time it is also debatable from juridical point of view; all the jurists (fuqaha) and political scientists and thinkers do not subscribe to the example of Husain.

After the martyrdom of Husain, there was a big opposition especially in Hijaz against Yazid’s Khilafah. Yazid tried to persuade Ibn Zubair (who got an edge from this event to claim for the Khilafah) and the people of Makkah and Madinah to accept his Khilafah but they refused to submit. The major reason for this revolt was the arrival of Husain’s family from Damascus to Madinah. They revolted against the established Khilafah and withdrew their allegiance to Yazid. The same is the case for the battle of Harrah, desecration of Madinah and massacre of its people and stoning of the Kabah. There is a group of Urdu
scholars who try to mitigate the responsibility for these events for Yazid.

Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi and Mīr Mahmud Ali Qaisar hold that after the tragedy of Karbala there remained peace and harmony for three years.\(^1\) In addition to this M.Y.M Siddiqui holds that many writers have put forward biased and derogatory reports that have no bearing on the facts.\(^2\)

However several scholars like Muhammad Ishaq Siddiqui Nadvi, Asrar Ahmad, Hafiz Salahuddin Yousuf, Arshad Amanullah, Mahmud Ahmad Abbasi 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.\(^3\) Whatever the truth, the fact remains that the assassination of Husain was one of the tragic event of Islamic history.

The historians have described Karbala as a brief episode but this event left lasting impressions on both the contemporary society as well as on the subsequent generation of Muslims. It is because of this event that many movements got generated in the Muslim world, and the Muslims were broadly divided under the popular denomination of Shia and Sunni sects. This event not only caused chaos but also posed a serious threat to the unity of Islamic World.
The tragedy of Karbala is one of the saddest events of Islamic history. To ponder over this tragedy many questions arise such as, why did Hazrat Husain take up the uprising at the accession of Yazid? Why did not Husain call off his mission at Kufah in midway after knowing the changed stand of Kufans? According to some accounts Hazrat Husain took up the stand because at the time of the abdication of Hazrat Hasan it had been stipulated that after Hazrat Muawiyah the succession would revert to Hazrat Husain. No authority for such stipulation is forthcoming. It is also established that Hazrat Hasan abdicated without laying down any conditions. Amîr Muawiyah announced the succession of Yazid during his lifetime. If there had been any stipulation about the succession of Hazrat Husain this issue should have been raised at that stage. The truth of the matter appears to be that on the death of Hazrat Muawiyah the people of Kufah wanted to overthrow the Umayyads, so that the seat of government could once again be transferred to Kufah. The people of Kufah chose Hazrat Husain as their candidate. The issue was merely political and was due to Iraq-Syrian rivalry for power. According to some accounts this issue was the root cause of age-long rivalry between Umayyads and Hashmites which is doubted by a group of scholars.

Whatever the truth, when historical facts are analyzed it appears that Hazrat Husain was invited to Kufah and it was in
response to such invitation that he undertook the journey to Kufah. The revolt in this case was anti-Umayyad in character. The stand of Husain was that the Umayyads had converted the Khilafah into hereditary monarchy and that Yazid was not fit to be the Khalifah. Husain stood for the integrity of the Khilafah. His objection was against the transformation of the Khilafah into royalty. When Husain and his party were half way to Kufah he got the news that things had changed at Kufah. At that time the question before Husain was whether he should return to Makkah or proceed to Kufah. If Husain had not proceeded to Kufah, and had returned to Makkah or proceeded elsewhere, the tragedy would have been avoided. More to it, it may be recalled that, at Karbala, when surrounded by the hostile forces. Husain offered that he might be allowed to return to Makkah or to go to a frontier elsewhere or to meet Yazid at Damascus. The best option among these three seems to be the offer of allowing Husain to return to Makkah. This however, could not materialize and it resulted in an armed conflict at Karbala, leading to the martyrdom of Husain.

This thesis entitled "Tragedy of Karbala – An Analytical Study of Urdu Historical Writings During 19th – 20th Century" deals with the historical writings of Urdu scholars regarding the tragedy of Karbala. Sincere attempts have been made to have deep insight into the tragedy after a careful study of the available
literature pertaining to this research problem. This thesis is divided into eight main chapters. The first chapter deals with the nomination of Yazid and his eligibility for the assignment of the Khilafah. The historical complications of the Urdu scholars have been screened to provide a brief account of the opinion of pro and anti-Yazid writers. More to it an account of the role played by Mughirah bin Shubah (RA), a Companion of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is also given.

The second chapter discusses Husain's resentment to Yazid's Khilafah, his uprising and claim for Khilafah and his departure from Madinah to Makkah.

Chapter third tries to understand the overall situation i.e., the invitations of Kufans, Husain's assessment and decisions with reference to the advice of the notables based on their life long experiences. The repeated invitations and requests by the people of Kufah in the context of their support for Husain and later on their betrayal at the approach of Husain has a special mention for being the foundation of the whole tragedy.

The fourth chapter refers to Husain's journey from Makkah to Karbala. The strength of Husain's caravan, the people who joined it, the places of stay, delivering of sermons and developments on the way has been discussed to put forward a clear picture of the whole scenario.
Fifth chapter gives an account of the tragedy of Karbala, which includes the events/reports of happenings at Karbala. Negotiations, armed conflict and lastly the assassination of Husain have also been discussed in detail.

Sixth chapter deals with the post-Karbala developments. In this chapter reports regarding the family of Husain at Kufah, their treatment by Ibn Ziyad, burial place of Husain's head, family of Husain at Damascus and their treatment by Yazid, sending them to Madinah and finally the aftermath of the tragedy are discussed at length.

In the seventh chapter the Socio-Religious consequences of the tragedy of Karbala have been discussed. There is an account of the impact of the tragedy on the contemporary society and on the latter Muslims as well.

Finally eighth chapter, the resume, summarizes the approaches and viewpoints of the scholars, categorizing them on the basis of their writings into three groups (1) *Pro-Ahl-i-Bait*: They declare Husain's uprising genuine after drawing parallels between the two, (2) *Pro-Khilafah*: They favour Yazid's nomination and declare Muawiyah right in his judgement, (3) *Moderate*: The scholars of this school have adopted a midway in their approach to the tragedy of Karbala.
Notes and References


10. Infra, Chapter 6, pp. 128-129.

