

(.The Reaction after the Martyrdom of Imam Husain (A.S

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The martyrdom of Husayn was of great religious significance and had a deep heart-searching after-effect upon the Shi'is, giving a new turn to the mode and nature of the Shi'i movement. The tragic fate of the grandson of the Prophet stirred religious and moral sentiments, particularly among those of the Kufan followers of the House of the Prophet who had so zealously asked Husayn to come to Iraq to guide them on what they considered to be the path of God.

But when Husayn came to Iraq they did not or could not stand with him in the hour of trial. Soon afterwards, however, they realized that their inability, or rather weakness, had been the cause of the tragedy. A deep sense of repentance set in, provoking their religious conscience; and in order to expiate their negligence and obtain God's forgiveness, they thought they must make similar sacrifices. They believed that they could only prove their real repentance by exposing themselves to death while seeking vengeance for the blood of Husayn. Hence they named themselves the Tawwabun (penitents) and are known in Islamic history by this self-imposed title. This movement, as will be seen below, proved to be an important step forward in the consolidation of Shi'i Islam.

The movement began under the leadership of five of the oldest and most trusted associates of 'Ali, with a following of a hundred diehard and devoted Shi'is of Kufa, none of whom was below sixty years of age. This age factor should particularly be noted, as it indicates the maturity of their religious thinking and behaviour. The five leaders of the movement, Sulayman b. Surad al-Khuza'i, Al-Musayyab b. Najaba al-Fazari; 'Abd Allah b. Sa'd b. Nufayl al-Azdi, AbdAllah b. Walin at-Tami, and Rifa'a b. Shaddad al-Bajali; had always been in the forefront of all Shi'i activities in Kufa, and were highly respected by the Shi'a for their sincerity of purpose and unshaken devotion to the cause of the Ahl al-Bayt. Similarly, the other hundred who joined these leaders of the movement are described as "the most select from among the followers of 'Ali". Towards the end of 61/680 they held their first meeting in the house of Sulayman b. Surad. This was the first opportunity for them to come out from their hiding places and meet together, since the state of martial law imposed on Kufa before the massacre at Karbala had now been relaxed.

Detailed accounts of this first meeting and the passionate speeches made by these five leaders are preserved for us by the sources. The first to speak was Al-Musayyab b. Najaba al-

Fazari He said: "We invited the son of the daughter of our Prophet to come to Kufa to guide us on the right path, but when he responded to our call we became greedy for our own lives until he was killed in our midst. What excuse would we have before our Lord, and before our Prophet when we meet him on the Day of Resurrection, while his most beloved son, family, and progeny were massacred in our midst.

By God, there is no other way for us to expiate ourselves for the sin except to kill all his murderers and their associates or be killed. Perhaps by doing so our Lord may forgive our sin. You must, therefore, now select someone from among you as your leader, who can organize and mobilize you under his command and proceed with the plan of seeking God's forgiveness by taking the action which has been proposed."

Rifa'a b. Shaddad al-Bajali, another senior member of the five leaders, then spoke, appealing passionately to the religious sentiments of those present. After emphasizing further what Al-Musayyab had said, he proposed: "Let us give command of our affairs to Shaykh ash-Shi'a, the companion of the Prophet, possessor of priority in Islam, Sulayman b. Surad, the one praised for his intrepidity and for his religion and the one who has been dependable and reliable in his judiciousness and prudence (Hazm)."

The other three leaders named above spoke in the same vein and seconded the proposal to choose Sulayman as their leader on the same grounds as mentioned by Rifa'a. It is important to note that the qualifications for the leadership of the movement, which was indeed dedicated to the Shi'i cause, were companionship with the Prophet and priority or precedence in Islam (sabiqa).

This, like many other instances, means that the main emphasis of the Shi'is was to enforce the Islamic ideal, which they thought could only be achieved through the Ahl al-Bayt, the people nearest to the Prophet. Sulayman b. Surad, accepting the responsibility of leading the movement, made a forceful speech in which he laid down the severest standards required of those who wanted to participate and emphasized that they should be ready to sacrifice their lives for the noblest task ahead of them.

The response from all those present was equally enthusiastic. They pledged to seek God's pardon by fighting to the death the killers of the grandson of the Prophet. In order to prove the purity of their intentions many of them willed all of their properties and possessions, except for arms, as Sadaqat for the Muslims. Sulayman appointed 'Abd Allah b. Walin at-Taymi as the treasurer to collect the contributions made by the Shi'a and to use the money for the preparation of the mission.

With no loss of time Sulayman undertook the organization of the movement. He entered into

correspondence with Shi'i leaders in other cities, namely with Sa'd b. Hudhayfa al-Yaman in Al-Mada'in and Al-Muthanna b. Mukharriba al-'Abdi in Basra. The movement, however, went on secretly for about three years, increasing in numbers and strength and waiting for an appropriate time and opportunity.

Circumstances took a sudden turn in favour of the movement with the unexpected death of Yazid in 64/683, encouraging the Tawwabun to come out in the open. Some of the leading members urged Sulayman to rise publicly, Oust 'Amr b. Hurayth, deputy of 'Abd Allah b. Ziyad, from the city, pursue those responsible for the blood of Husayn, and call the people to support the Ahl al-Bayt Sulayman, however, opted for a more restrained policy, pointing out that the murderers of Husayn were in fact the ashraf al-qaba'il of Kufa, who would have to pay for his blood.

If the action were immediately directed against them, they would become very oppressive; and a revolt against them at this stage would achieve nothing but disaster or even the complete destruction of the Shi'is themselves. The purpose of avenging the blood of Husayn would be lost. It would therefore be advisable, at his stage, to intensify their propaganda campaign only among their own Shi'is and among others throughout Kufa, enlisting as much support as possible. He added that since Yazid was now dead the people would join them more readily and quickly. Sulayman's suggestion prevailed and the movement, so far a secret organization, came into the open with an intensified campaign on a large scale. A number of emissaries began ceaselessly working to invite people to join the movement.

Abu Mikhnaf has preserved for us a speech of one of these emissaries, 'Ubayd Allah al-Murri. It is reported from a man of Muzayna, who said he heard it so many times that he learned it by heart. The narrator further comments that he had never seen anyone in his time more eloquent than Al-Murri, and that the latter would never miss an opportunity to preach if he happened to see a group of people. He would begin by praising God and praying for His messenger. Then he would say: "God chose Muhammad from among all His creatures for His Prophethood; He singled him out for all of His bounties. God strengthened you by making you his followers and honoured you with having faith in him; through Muhammad, God saved you from the shedding of blood, and through him He made your dangerous paths safe and peaceful. 'You were on the brink of the pit of Fire and God saved you from it. Thus God makes His signs clear to you.

Perhaps you may be guided.' (Qur'an, III, 103).

Has God created anyone from the first to the last with greater right over this Umma than its Prophet? Has the offspring of anyone from among the Prophets or the Messengers or anyone else greater right over this Umma than the offspring of its own Prophet? No, by God, this has

never been the case, nor will it ever be. [O you people], you belong to God. Don't you see, don't you understand what a crime you have committed against the son of the daughter of your Prophet? Don't you see the people's violation of his sanctity, their slackness towards him while he was lonely and helpless, and their staining him with blood? They were pulling him violently on the ground, not thinking of God in regard of him nor his relationship to the Prophet. Eyes have never before seen the like of this. By God, Husayn b. 'Ali, what a betrayal of truth, forbearance, trust, nobility, and resolution: the son of the first Muslim in Islam and the son of the daughter of the Messenger of the Lord of the Worlds. Around him his defenders were few, and his attackers were in multitudes. His enemies killed him while his friends deserted him. Woe to the killers and reproaches to the deserters! God will accept no excuse from those who killed him, nor any argument from those who deserted him except that the latter should sincerely repent before God and fight against the killers and repudiate and eliminate the unjust and the corrupt. Only then, perhaps, God may accept our repentance and remove our guilt. We invite you to the Book of God and the Sunna of his Prophet, to vengeance for the blood of his [Prophet's] family and to war on the heretics and deviators from the true religion. If we are killed, there is nothing better for the pious than to be with their God; if we are successful, we will restore power to the Ahl al-Bayt of our Prophet."

In all the preceding chapters dealing with the developments from the time of the death of the Prophet till the death of Husayn, the Shi'i doctrinal stand and their religio-political aspirations have repeatedly been pointed out. If we recall the arguments put forward by the supporters of 'Ali on the occasions of the Saqifa and the Shura, the contents of the letters written by Hasan to Mu'awiya and that of Husayn to the Shi'is of Kufa and Basra, the pledges and statements made by the supporters of Husayn at Karbala, and the speeches delivered by the leaders of the Tawwabun in their first meeting, Al-Murri's exhortations can be seen as nothing other than an echoing of the same ideals.

It would suffice to say that throughout Al-Murri's speech the main emphasis is laid on Husayn's relationship with the Prophet through Fatima. The name of 'Ali appears only twice: the first time in Husayn's name as "Husayn b. 'Ali", which was a usual way of describing anyone, and the second when Husayn is mentioned as "the son of the first Muslim", but even in this his position as "the son of the daughter of our Prophet" is immediately referred to. (Even at the time of the Saqifa and the Shura the main emphasis was on 'Ali's nearness and close association and relationship with the Prophet.) Thus the Tawwabun put far more emphasis on the idea of succession to the Prophet by blood than to 'Ali by blood. The main

part of the speech, that to kill the murderers of Husayn in order to avenge his blood or be killed in order to expiate their failure in supporting Husayn, and thus to seek God's forgiveness, was a new dimension necessitated by the tragedy of Karbala. Finally, a call to the Book of God and the Sunna of the Prophet, as has been pointed out earlier, was an implicit rejection of the precedent of the first three caliphs and thereby gave 'Ali and other Imams of the family of the Prophet exclusive authority to interpret or reinterpret the Prophetic Sunna.

The campaign of the Tawwabun, however, succeeded in gaining the support of 16,000 Kufans, since the situation in Kufa was much more conducive to success now than ever before. The sudden death of Yazid greatly weakened Umayyad control of the province. The sickly son of Yazid, Mu'awiya II, succeeded his father only six months before his own death, and the old Marwan b. al-Hakam managed to become the new Umayyad caliph.

In Syria this led to a bloody conflict between the two rival tribal groups of Kalb and Qays, leaving the Umayyad capital in chaos and unable to maintain its firm control over neighbouring Iraq. In the Hijaz, 'Abd Allah b. az-Zubayr, who had already put forward his own claims to the caliphate and was taking advantage of Yazid's death and of Syrian confusion and weakness, organized and consolidated his power afresh and assumed the title of Amir al-Mu'minin. The Umayyad governor and the strong man, 'Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad, who resided in Basra as the governor of both Kufa and Basra, was expelled by a rebellion of the inhabitants of the latter city and fled to Marwan in Syria.

The Kufans, on their part, ousted 'Amr b. al-Hurayth, the deputy of Ibn Ziyad in Kufa. In the power vacuum, the ashraf of Kufa promptly wrote to 'Abd Allah b. az-Zubayr to take advantage of the situation and appoint his governor.

With the Shi'i groups emerging and the Syrian domination weakening, the tribal and clan leaders of Kufa found it in their interest to align themselves with Ibn az-Zubayr, who represented the old Meccan-Qurayshite hegemony. Ibn az-Zubayr immediately sent to Kufa 'Abd Allah b. Yazid al-Ansari as his governor in charge of military affairs, and Ibrahim b. Muhammad b. Talha in charge of the kharaj.

Now with the obstacles removed, Sulayman b. Surad started final preparations for action. He wrote to the Shi'i leaders in Al-Mada'in and Basra, calling them to be ready to rise to avenge the blood of Husayn and to put right the affairs which had gone wrong and had become unjust. He asked them to meet at Nukhayla, outside Kufa, on the first of Rabi' II of the next year, 65/684. The Shi'i leader in Al-Mada'in, Sa'd b. Hudhayfa b. al-Yaman, called in the Shi'a of that region and read the letter to them and received an enthusiastic response.

The Shi'i leader in Basra, Al-Muthanna b. Mukharriba al-'Abdi, also accepted the call and mobilized the Shi'is of that city. The long texts of these letters, which Abu Mikhnaf has meticulously preserved for us, make extremely useful and revealing reading for an understanding of the religious sentiments and feelings and the doctrinal stand of the Shi'a of this period. In essence these are much the same as the speeches of the Tawwabun and that of Al-Murri.

At this stage, Al-Mukhtar b. Abi 'Ubayda ath-Thaqafi, also a devoted follower of the Ahl al-Bayt, appeared in Kufa. His mission was the same as that of the Tawwabun insofar as the revenge for the blood of Husayn and establishing the rights of the Ahl al-Bayt were concerned, but differed in that he wanted to achieve political authority through a more organized military power. Mukhtar, therefore, tried to persuade the Tawwabun not to take any hasty action and to join him for a better chance of success.

The Tawwabun refused to join Mukhtar, as they had no wish to participate in any doubtful adventure or to deviate from their main purpose of atonement through sacrifice. They said that they would follow only Shaykh ash-Shia Sulayman b. Surad.

Two points in Mukhtar's arguments with the Tawwabun are worth noting here, since they reveal fundamental differences between them. Mukhtar said that firstly Sulayman did not know how to organize the military for warfare, nor did he have any knowledge of diplomacy or politics; secondly, Mukhtar had been appointed by the Mahdi, Muhammad b. al-Hanafiya, as his deputy, confidant, and minister to avenge the blood of Husayn. (Muhammad b. al-Hanafiya was 'Ali's third son from a Hanafite woman, and was not a descendant of the Prophet.)

The refusal of the Tawwabun to support Mukhtar on these grounds indicates that they were interested neither in purely military ventures nor in political affairs; nor were they ready to accept even the eldest surviving son of 'Ali as their Imam, as he was not the direct descendant of the Prophet through Fatima. Thus the disagreement over strategy or tactics was secondary to the disagreement over the Imam.

Though the Tawwabun did not openly proclaim any particular member of the Ahl al-Bayt as their Imam, there are strong indications that they believed that the rightful Imam was now Husayn's surviving son 'Ali, later known as Zayn al-'Abidin. There are many factors that support this view. Firstly, the very idea of the leadership based in the hereditary sanctity, which attracted the Arabs of Shi'i tendency, was still confined to the progeny of Muhammad through Fatima; it had been transferred from Hasan to Husayn and not to any other member of the Hashimite clan.

It has repeatedly been pointed out in what we have discussed so far that only rarely are Hasan

and Husayn described as the sons of 'Ali; they were much more frequently referred to as "the son of the daughter of our Prophet". Secondly, the name of Muhammad b. al-i;1anafllya had not been cited at the time when the Tawwabun first held their meeting soon after Karbala in 61/680; Mukhtar arrived in Kufa after the death of Yazid in 64/684 and began his campaign in the name of Ibn al-Hanafiya. Thus the name of Ibn al-Hanafiya appeared for the first time four years later, when the Tawwabun were almost ready for action. Thirdly, even Mukhtar, who was the main progenitor of Ibn al-Hanafiya's leadership, first approached 'Ali b. al-Husayn, as will be seen later, and only when the latter refused to involve himself in any public movement did Mukhtar turn to Ibn al-Hanafiya and ingratiate himself with his name.

Since 'Ali b. al-Husayn himself refused to make any public claims or to allow any claims to be made on his behalf, the Tawwabun refrained from mentioning his name. Nevertheless, since certain vague references made by the Tawwabun during their campaign, such as the verses composed by their poet, 'Abd Allah b. al-Ahmar, in which he speaks of "a caller who invited them to salvation", obviously refer to an Imam, and since the name of Ibn al-Hanafiya would not be associated with the imamate for another three years, the reference must have been to 'Ali b. al-Husayn.

This is based on the fact that the Shi'a of Kufa had already established a precedent when they proclaimed Hasan b. 'Ali, and not any other member of the Hashimite house, as the successor of his father. It seems also that the Tawwabun, after their sad experience vis-à-vis Husayn, decided not to put forward 'Ali b. al-Husayn's name for the leadership until they had been successful in throwing off Umayyad rule in Kufa or else sacrificing themselves in active repentance for their failure in carrying out their duties with regard to Husayn.

The main body of the Tawwabun, however, refused to join Mukhtar, though at least 2,000 of these who had registered their names with Sulayman did switch over to him, obviously in the hope of better political prospects.

As the time for action was approaching, Sulayman b. Surad and other leaders of the movement were putting more and more emphasis on disavowing any intention of political conquest and discouraged those who might have joined them for material benefits or worldly gains. According to their plan, in the beginning of Rabi' II, 65/November, 684, they raised their call for "revenge for the blood of Husayn (ya latha'rat al-Husayn)" and set out on their mission. They gathered at Nukhayla, a suburb of Kufa, from where they had to march against the forces of 'Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad, the Umayyad governor who had been responsible for the massacre at Karbala. The rigorous standards set by Sulayman b. Surad, however, proved to be too much for

the majority of the volunteers: of the 16,000 who had registered themselves, only 4,000 came to the rendezvous at Nukhayla.

The governor of Ibn al-Zubayr, 'Abd Allah b. Yazid, tried to dissuade them from carrying out their plans and suggested to Sulayman that he wait until the former could prepare an army to join them. They refused to change their plan or to accept his help, as it would have compromised their whole position. Their intention was to avenge the blood of Husayn, to establish the Shi'i imamate or to die.

They were prepared to die rather than to have 'Abd Allah b. Yazid's non-Shi'i support. If they had accepted it they would have merely been joining one political faction, the supporters of Ibn al-Zubayr, against another, the Umayyads. Now, with the Tawwabun volunteers reduced from 16,000 to 4,000, they could hardly hope for any success except in fighting to the death and seeking atonement and repentance. They were determined to carry out their pledges to themselves.

They spent three days in prayer and remembrance of God at Nukhayla. The Shi'a from Al-Mada'in and Basra had not yet arrived, and some of those at Nukhayla wanted to await their arrival, but Sulayman insisted that they should proceed without further delay. He told them: "There are two kinds of people. There are those who want the benefits of the hereafter, who hurry towards it and do not seek any worldly reward; and there are those whose acts are motivated by worldly gains. You are going for the benefits of the life hereafter: remember God in abundance in any situation and you will soon attain nearness to God and receive His best reward by fighting in His way and being patient in all calamities. Let us then proceed to our goal."

According to Baladhuri the people responded from all sides, "We are not seeking the world and we have not come out for it." But in the morning another 1,000 were missing from his army.

Sulayman was not discouraged and merely said that it was better that such people should go. From Nukhayla the Tawwabun first went to Karbala to the grave of Husayn, where they gave themselves up to wild and unprecedented expressions of grief, weeping and wailing for the suffering and tragic death of the grandson of the Prophet. Welihausen points out that this was the first incidence of the glorification of the grave of Husayn and was purely Arabian in its character and nature since the Arabs were used to glorifying the Black Stone fixed in the Kaaba. After spending a day and night in mourning they left the grave of Husayn.

When they reached the village of Qarqisiya, the fifth stage from Karbala on the road to the Syrian border, they were generously entertained by the chief of the village, Zufar b. al-Harith, who informed them that 'Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad, with a 30,000-man Syrian army, had reached

'Ayn al-Warda. The chieftain provided Sulayman with plenty of provisions and advised him further about 'Ubayd Allah's army and gave him the names of other leaders who were with him. Zufar also told Sulayman that he, along with his people, would fight the Syrians if the

Tawwabun would stay with him and use Qarqisiya as a base. But Sulayman did not agree. The Tawwabun ultimately reached 'Ayn al-Warda and engaged the Syrians fiercely, shouting, "Paradise! Paradise for the Turabites!" The battle lasted for three days, and the Tawwabun fought with unprecedented resolution, determination, and zeal. Even though greatly outnumbered, on the first day they inflicted heavy losses on the Syrians. On the second day, however, their own losses began to tell and their leaders fell one after the other. The first to be killed was Sulayman b. Surad himself, followed by Al-Musayyab b. Najaba, 'Abd Allah b. Sa'd b. Nufayl, and then 'Abd Allah b. Walin at-Taymi, each taking the leadership and the Tawwabun standard in succession one after the other.

By the end of the third day the majority of the Tawwabun had fulfilled their pledge to sacrifice their lives in the name of Husayn. The only surviving leader, Rifa'a b. Shaddad, advised the handful of survivors to return, and while on their way back they were met by the Shi'is of Al-

Mada'in and Basra, who had been coming to join them, but now turned back to Qarqisiya. In an attempt to analyse the Tawwabun movement, a few points are conspicuous. Firstly, all the 3,000 Tawwabun who fought in the battle were Arabs there were no mawali among them. It was Mukhtar who first mobilized the Persian mawali in active participation, thus giving the Shi'i movement a wider appeal. Secondly, among these 3,000 Tawwabun, though the majority were from South Arabian or Yemeni tribes, the northern and central Arabian tribes of Mudar and Rabi'a were by no means under-represented.

In fact, the second in command, Al-Musayyab b. Najaba, was from Mudar. Looking at the names of some of the Tawwabun as given by the sources, one finds that many of the chief tribes of the Arabs of both Yemenis and Nizaris were well represented. Thus Shi'i feelings were not confined to any single group of the Arabs. Thirdly, the penitent army included a very large number of the original qurra' of Kufa, all the five leaders being among them.

All of these facts, however, indicate two fundamental points. Firstly, the Shi'i movement till the time of the Tawwabun (65/684) was still purely Arabian in character and totally untouched by non-Arab elements, doctrinal or otherwise. And secondly, the movement of the Tawwabun was totally a religious affair. Husayn himself, when he met Yazid's army, was fully aware of his dignity as the grandson of the Prophet, as well as the son of 'Ali, and the Tawwabun by their action were certainly combining loyalty to 'Ali with loyalty to Muhammad himself, and thus were taking the matter strictly as a religious issue.

Finally, if we compare the feeling and the expressions of those of the Shi'a who gave up their lives with Husayn at Karbala, as explained in the previous chapter, with the speeches and expressions made by the Tawwabun, recorded earlier in this chapter, we find that the arguments and sentiments of both groups were based on the same religious principles. But there is a great difference between the two, however. At Karbala the presence of Husayn himself was a great personal obligation on the Shi'a who fought and were killed with him. In the case of the Tawwabun there was no personal binding force which could keep them zealous enough to make them die except a strong feeling of duty and a deep sense of religious obligation. Thus the Tawwabun pushed Shi'ism another step forward towards an independent .and self-sustaining existence