

On Imam Ali

Syed-Mohsin Naquvi

We are once again in the dates of the holy month of Ramadhan when we commemorate the life and times of Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (May Allah's peace and our salams be unto the holy souls). While speakers are presenting their opinions and research on Imam Ali's life and his services to Islam in various gatherings, the internet is also providing a service in this cause thus educating the younger Muslims about this illustrious soldier/statesman/philosopher/leader of early Islam.

On the other side, there is a small group within the Muslim community who are out to discredit the memory of Imam Ali. I do not really blame them for it, because they are actually following the lead of such authors as Ibn Taymiyya and Bukhari. Bukhari has 7,002 reports in his book of *hadith* which he ambitiously called the *Sahih*. Five thousand of those reports have been narrated by Abu Hurayra.



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There is a chapter in Bukhari's book titled Kitab-UI-Fazael. In this section all reports have been collected which are in praise of a *sahab* ("companion"), *ummul-momineen* (wife of the Prophet) or any other member of the family of the Prophet. Bukhari could find only four reports in praise of Imam Ali. We have discussed those four reports at length in our book on Imam Ali. However, there are a number of reports about Imam Ali which actually insult his memory and are clearly disparaging. Among them is the following report:

Imam Ali wanted to marry a daughter of Abu Jahl. When the Prophet heard of this he is reported to have said: 'Anyone who hurts Fatima, hurts me, and whoever hurts me has actually hurt Allah.' That kept Imam Ali from marrying another woman as long as Fatima Zahra was alive.

The fact that the Prophet had said about hurting Fatima Zahra is true. During the Umayyad rule and particularly during Mu'awiya time a large-scale effort was made to discredit Imam Ali. Indeed Mu'awiya had ordered all Friday prayer *khateeb*s (lecturers) to say bad things about Imam Ali in the Friday *khutba* (lecture). That had its lasting effect. When during Umar bin Abdul Azeez' rule, he ordered the official writing of *hadith*, that, and all other disparaging reports about Imam Ali, were brought into the mainline *hadith* corpus. Bukhari's only source from which he collected his book was all that material which had been corrupted during the Umayyad rule.

The Umayyad rule ended in the 132nd A.H. after the Abbasid revolution. Imam Abu Haneefa was active in his work in Kufa and Malik bin Anas was doing similar work in Medina. Abu Haneefa died in the 150th A.H., Malik in 179th year. Bukhari was born in that same year.

Bukhari must have begun his work sometime around the beginning of the third century AH. Bukhari has shown a very clear antipathy towards the family of the Prophet. That is why he is so greatly influenced by the enemies of the Ahlul-Bayt. It is therefore not surprising he would go out of his way to collect and include disparaging reports about Imam Ali in his collection and also mix up reports to get his point-of-view.

We all know very well in what context the Prophet of Islam had made the statement about hurting Fatima Zahra. And we also know the names of those personalities who were reminded of that *hadith* by Fatima Zahra herself in a face-to-face meeting.

Syed-Mohsin Naquvi

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Syed-Mohsin Naquvi

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Two years after the Hijra, Fatima Zahra was married to Imam Ali. One after the other, they had four children: (1) Hasan, (2) Husayn, (3) Zaynab the elder, and (4) Zaynab the younger, also known as Umm Kulthum. The Prophet of Islam passed away in the 11th A.H.. Fatima Zahra passed away six months later.

After the passing away of Fatima Zahra, Imam Ali married a woman named Khawla daughter of Jafar bin Qays al-Hanafi. From this union was born a son known to us as Muhammad al-Hanafiyya. (the term Hanafiyya points to his mother's original tribe).

He then married Umm Habib, daughter of Rabi'a. Two children were born from this union, a son named Umar and a daughter named Ruqayya.

Many years later, Imam Ali talked to his elder brother, Aqeel, and said: "Brother! I want to marry in a family who are known for their *shuja'a* (chivalry, soldiery and magnanimity)¹. Aqeel was an expert in the *ilm al-ansaab* (the science of genealogy). He knew not only who was related to whom in Arabia, but also about the attributes of each and every tribe. He selected a woman named Fatima daughter of Hizam bin Khalid bin Daarim. Four sons and a daughter were born from this union: (1) Al-Abbas, (2) Jafar, (3) Uthman, (4) Abd Allah.

These four sons grew up to be handsome chivalrous young men. Their mother came to be known in Arabia as Ummul Baneen (or, "the mother of sons", actually meaning the mother of many sons). All four fought bravely alongside Imam Husayn at Karbala and laid their lives with honour, dignity and after great soldiery. The daughter of Imam Ali from Ummul-Baneen was married to Muslim bin Aqeel.

¹ Kamal-ud-Deen Muhammad Abul Baqa bin Moosa bin Eesa Dimyari, was born in Egypt in 750 A.H. He died in 808 A.H. His book titled *Hayat-ul-Haywaan* is a treatise on animals. However, as he tells stories about various animals, he digresses into Islamic history of the early period. In the chapter of *Alif*, he lists many things. When he comes to *wazzah*, which is the word for duck, he goes into the story of the martyrdom of Imam Ali, how a domestic water-fowl tried to stop Imam Ali as he was leaving home in the middle of the night before the fatal attack on him. He then gives a short biography of the Prophet of Islam and goes on to describe the events leading to the Umayyad period. That is where this story is found.

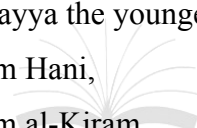
Imam Ali also married a woman named Layla, daughter of Mas'ood al-Daarimi. From this union two sons were born. They were (1) Muhammad the younger, also known as Abu Bakr, and (2) Ubayd Allah.

Both these brothers were martyred at Karbala alongside Imam Husayn.

He also married Umm Sa'eed daughter of Urwa bin Mas'ood Thaqafee, who bore him two daughters named Umm al-Hasan and Ramla.

We find reports about eleven other daughters of Imam Ali from different mothers. These daughters' names are listed below:

- (1) Nafeesa,
- (2) Zaynab the youngest,
- (3) Ruqayya the younger,
- (4) Umm Hani,
- (5) Umm al-Kiram,
- (6) Jumaana (Umm Ja'far),
- (7) Umaana,
- (8) Salma,
- (9) Maymoona,
- (10) Khadija,
- (11) Fatima.



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Some other biographers have listed another daughter and another son. That means, Imam Ali had eleven sons and seventeen daughters in all.

Imam Ali also married Asma daughter of Umays al-Khathami, who bore him a son named Yahya.

Asma was first married to Imam Ali's elder brother Jafar bin Abi Talib. Jafar was martyred at the battle of Muta in 9th A.H.. Abu Bakr had married his widow, Asma, daughter of Umayy. She and Jafar had two sons: Abdullah and Muhammad. Imam Ali's two daughters from Fatima Zahra were married to these two brothers. Abdullah bin Jafar lived a long life, his wife Zaynab is the famous sister of Imam Husayn who participated at Karbala. Umm Kulthum, the younger sister of Zaynab, was married to Muhammad, who died young and Umm Kulthum never married again.

Asma, daughter of Umayy bore a son and a daughter to Abu Bakr named Muhammad and Umm Kulthum. After the death of Abu Bakr in 14 A.H., Imam Ali married Asma daughter of Umayy and also adopted the orphans. Muhammad bin Abi Bakr was raised by Imam Ali as his own son and he loved him dearly. Muhammad bin Abi Bakr was brutally killed by the hired terrorists of Mu'awiya in Egypt.

Some historians have erroneously or deliberately tried to confuse the issue of Imam Ali's daughters, and have said that Umm Kulthum was married to Umar bin Khattab. But which Umm Kulthum was this? Some have pointed to the Umm Kulthum daughter of Asma and Abu Bakr. Some others have tried to say that it was Umm Kulthum daughter of Fatima Zahra and Imam Ali.

That, obviously, is wrong for three reasons, as follows:

(1) We cannot find any record of the marriage of Umm-e-Kulthum to Umar bin Khattab in any authentic source material. Most reports in this respect are written only by later authors with tendentious intent.

(2) In the second A.H., many companions of the Prophet approached him asking the hand of his daughter, Fatima Zahra, in marriage. Among them was Umar bin Khattab. According to *muhaddith* Nis'ai, the Prophet refused by saying that Fatima was still very young. However, when Imam Ali approached him for that same thing, the Prophet consented and they were married. The point is, if Fatima Zahra at age nine was too young for Umar bin Khattab in the

second A.H. when Umar was in his forties, how could Fatima Zahra's daughter, who then was only seven years old, be a match for Umar, who was now in his fifties?

Most of the details of the children of Imam Ali described above have been taken from Shaikh Mufeed's Kitab Al-Irshad, the most authentic biographies of the twelve Imams. Nowhere does Sheikh Mufeed mention the marriage of Umm-e-Kulthum, a daughter of Imam Ali, to Umar bin Khattab.

(2) The details of Umar's family found in authentic reports are as follows:

(a) He had two sons, Abdullah and Abdur-Rhman, their mother was Zaynab bint Mazoon,

(b) Aasim, whose mother was Jameela bint Aasim bin Thabit,

(c) Ubaydullah, whose mother was Maleeka al-Khuzaiyya, (these three reports are preserved in *Tareekh-e-Kamil* of Ibn Atheer Jazari, who died in 630 A.H., he also wrote *Usud-al-Ghaaba*)

(d) Ayaz, whose mother was Atika, preserved in *Tareekh-Khamees* by Husayn Diyar Bakari who died in 966 A.H..

(e) Zayd, whose mother was Umm Kulthum bint Jardal, preserved by Ibn Abdul Bar in his book named *Istee-Aab*, who died in 463 A.H. and also by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalaani in his *Isaabaa*.

This last one is the only Umm Kulthum found among the wives of Umar bin Khattab. Some historians, who were much too enthusiastic in showing that Umar bin Khattab and Imam Ali were friendly with each other, have tried to fudge the history by trying to assert that this was Umm Kulthum daughter of Imam Ali and Fatima Zahra.

We therefore conclude that the story of Umar marrying a daughter of Imam Ali named Umm Kulthum is totally false and has no basis in history.

As we said, this report about Umm Kulthum daughter of Ali and Fatima Zahra being married to Umar bin Khattab does not appear in any of the source books of history until the later centuries of A.H.. Obviously it was a later fabrication.

Muslims in the Indian subcontinent revived that fallacy in a big way. And now we have this false report being spread in European and American Muslim circles.

Even if we accept this report for the sake of argument that Umm Kulthum daughter of Ali and Fatima was married to Umar, then the question arises: Umm Kulthum travelled to Karbala with her brother in the 60th A.H.. She was taken prisoner by Yazid's forces after the massacre at Karbala in Muharram 61 A.H.. She was kept in a Damascus prison for some time with other members of Imam Husayn's family. What was Abdullah bin Umar doing in Medina towards trying to get his step-mother free from that prison? How could he bear to see his late father's widow in Yazid's prison with ignominy and *zulm*?

After the release from that imprisonment she returned to Medina and she recited a *marthiyya* which is preserved in books of history. Did Abdullah bin Umar come to greet and console her then after her tragic experience?

In fact, we have no report of Abdullah son of Umar meeting or even trying to meet Umm Kulthum, daughter of Ali and Fatima.

NOTE:

[1] Let the readers note that Imam Ali himself was a brave and brilliant soldier and an able commander as history has witnessed it time and time again. Here Imam Ali shows great insight into the science of genealogy and he highlights the fact that a man's DNA inherits as much from the mother's DNA as from the father's. In fact, modern research has shown that a child is influenced more from the mother's DNA than that of the father. And he also emphasizes the importance of the mother in a person's life. It is more the mother than the father that influences the making of the personality of a child.

The Persecution

By: Syed-Mohsin Naquvi

21st of Ramadan 1431/1st September 2010

It was very clear from the beginning that Imam Ali's attitude towards his religious convictions was very different from all others who were around the Prophet of Islam.

When he would go to the battlefield, his only target used to be to achieve the ultimate sacrifice, that is, *shahada*. Because of that, he would attack his enemy with all he had, without any regard to his own safety and survival. That naturally gave him a great commitment and an unusual force to attack. That was part of the secret of his victories. He never cared about the political considerations of a particular situation. That is why he never tried to build a personality cult around him.

He gave his full commitment to the cause of Islam, both at the battlefield as well as out of the battlefield. Needless to say, his commitment to Islam was strongly tied to his love and devotion to the person of the Prophet of Islam.

Shortly before his passing, while returning from Hajj, the Prophet announced the leadership of Imam Ali after him at Ghadir-e-Khum

There were those among his entourage who had alternate plans in the works. But they could not say anything against the prophetic edicts. However, as soon as the Prophet passed away, and before his last rites were performed and he was buried, politics came into play. In a hurriedly called meeting Abu Bakr was appointed the political leader of the Muslim community. That was all taking place while Imam Ali and other members of the family were still busy in washing the remains of the Prophet and shrouding him in preparation for his burial. That, once again, showed Imam Ali's personal devotion to the Prophet of Islam.

Obviously, Abu Bakr was not chosen as the leader of the community without any support. There was a large number of Muslims who had become a part and parcel of that politics. When

Imam Ali was done with the Prophet's burial, he and Fatima Zahra went from door to door in Medina reminding everyone and asking about how the whole community could just ignore the Prophetic edict of Ghadir-e-Khum and choose a leader of their choice. Everyone agreed with the couple but said that they were powerless in the situation of *fait accompli*.

Now, the ruling elite was not unaware of those activities. They decided to nip it in the bud. That was the beginning of the persecution— a fear of losing political power in the community.

The first event was when the ruling party approached Ali and insisted that he should acknowledge the leadership of Abu Bakr. Ali, instead of accepting that, questioned the legality of the whole thing. Umar bin Khattab, who was the spokesperson of the ruling elite, threatened Ali with death. Ali asked him: "Will you kill a person who is a servant of Allah and the brother of Muhammad Rasool Allah?" Umar replied: "Yes, we accept that you are a servant of Allah, but we do not accept that you are the brother of Rasool Allah."

That was the first indication to the Muslim community that all bets were off when it came to political power and that was the first act of persecution of the family of the Prophet for politics. A few days later, another party under the leadership of Umar bin Khattab arrived at the house of Fatima Zahra and threatened to burn the house down. Imam Ali was arrested while Fatima protested. Abu Bakr arrived on the scene and refused to continue with the action. Things cooled down for a while. Imam Ali refused to acknowledge Abu Bakr by his *bay'a* and Abu Bakr refused to insist. A few days later both Abu Bakr and Umar came to see Fatima Zahra at her house. In the beginning, she refused to see them, but on Imam Ali's persuasion they were allowed in. Fatima Zahra asked them the reason for their visit. They both said that they were wrong in what they did and they wanted to apologize. Fatima Zahra refused the apology but asked them: "If I remind you of a saying of my father, will you confirm it?" They said yes they would. She then said: "Do you remember that my father had said that Fatima is a part of me and anyone who angers Fatima actually angers me and anyone who angers me actually angers Allah." They both replied that they would confirm that. She then said to them that they had

angered her and that she would not accept their apology. Soon after that, Fatima Zahra passed away and she was buried in the darkness of the night.

Once again, Umar bin Khattab took another initiative. He approached Imam Ali and challenged him as to how he could bury the daughter of the Prophet in the darkness of night and not let other Muslims, at least, offer her funeral prayers. Imam Ali said in reply: It was Fatima's own *wasiyya* to bury her in the darkness of night and she had specifically prohibited that you (meaning Umar) and Abu Bakr would be allowed to be at her funeral. Umar was very angry and he said he would go to her grave, exhume the body and offer her funeral prayers and then bury her again. Hearing that, Imam Ali was outraged, he took his sword out and stood by Fatima's grave and said: I would see how anyone dares to dig this grave. That intimidated everyone and Umar had to back down.

Famous Urdu poet Meer Taqi Meer composed two couplets to register the story in his poetry:


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قتل کئے پر جھگڑا کیسا، لاش مری اٹھوانے دو ہم تو اپنی جان سے گئے ہیں آؤ تم بھی جانے دو
 خوب نہیں ہے شمع کی غیرت ساتھ رہیں پروانے دو کب سوئے فرمان پہ تیرے پہلو میں بیگانے دو

Trans: *Why fight after murdering me, let me be buried/I have lost my life, let it be/it is not good for the "Shama" to accompany two lovers/when did two strangers sleep by your side with your permission?*

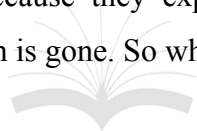
Twenty five years passed. After three-and-half years of Abu Bakr's rule, Umar took over the leadership. He ruled for ten years. Then Uthman came and he ruled for twelve years. Then things went bad— from bad to worse, and then chaotic. In the 36th A.H. Uthman was lynched by an angry mob of Muslims and they forced Ali to accept the leadership role. Immediately after that Ayesha (ra), one of the widows of the Prophet, collected an army and rebelled against Imam Ali. A battle took place at Basra in which Ayesha and her companions were routed but she was forgiven by Imam Ali.

Soon after, Mu'awiya rebelled and the Battle of Siffeen took place which lasted for three years. Siffeen broke up in a confused stalemate. At the end of that a part of Imam Ali's own party broke off from him and fought him. These were the *Kharijees*. They too were thoroughly defeated but some remained and ran off into far off areas of the desert. Eventually, it was one of them who actually assassinated Imam Ali in the Masjid of Kufa while he was doing a pre-dawn prayer. Imam Ali was attacked on the 19th of Ramadan. He succumbed to his injuries on the 21st of Ramadan. Today is that day and we are still in those days when lectures are held on Imam Ali's martyrdom anniversary.

Historians have unanimously agreed that Imam Ali was killed for his insistence on absolute justice without any compromise on basic principles. And history confirms that.

In between that day and this, our day, there is a long list of the persecution of the devotees of Imam Ali – for what reason?

Only because they express their love and devotion to Imam Ali. The politics is gone, the kingdom is gone. So why that attitude now?



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That question can only be answered by those who perpetrate that violence and still try to disparage the person of Imam Ali after all these years.

The Persecution (2)

By: Syed-Mohsin Naquvi

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Some specific incidents in history are given below which highlight that current of persecutions of those who professed devotion to the memory of Imam Ali.

(1) After the assassination of Imam Ali Mu'awiya established himself in Damascus more strongly. In Kufa, after the assassination of Imam Ali, an open election was held in which Hasan bin Ali, Imam Ali's eldest son was chosen *khalifa* of the Muslims. Of course, Mu'awiya refused to accept that election, even though both Makkah and Madinah had accepted that election.

There is a history of some correspondence between the two. When Mu'awiya realized that he was unable to convince Hasan bin Ali, he threatened him with war. Hasan bin Ali concluded a treaty with him. One of the conditions of the treaty was that the devotees of Imam Ali will not be persecuted in the kingdom and the memory of Imam Ali will not be violated in any way. Mu'awiya broke both promises blatantly. Followers and friends of Imam Ali were tortured and killed wherever they were found. Mu'awiya organized a terror-squad for that purpose under the command of Busr bin Artat and sent the squad around to find and eradicate any sympathy for Imam Ali in the kingdom. When Busr's squad arrived in the Yemen they found two young sons of Ubayd Allah bin Abbas in the care of a Bedouin tribal leader. Busr wanted to kill them both. The tribal leader protested. He too was killed and the two boys were killed by slitting their throats.

(2) There were extensive orders to all Friday prayer leaders to curse Imam Ali openly during the Khutba. Mu'awiya came to Madina and he was told that Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas would not allow that. Mu'awiya confronted Sa'ad and insisted that he (Sa'd) too should join in the cursing of Imam Ali but Sa'ad refused to do that. The practice was established in Madina nevertheless after the passing away of Sa'ad.

(3) In Kufa Ziyad was appointed governor by Mu'awiya who would openly curse Imam Ali. Hujr bin Udayy would stand up and confront Ziyad and try to shout him down. Ziyad complained to Mu'awiya about Hujr's resistance. Soon Hujr and his party were arrested and sent to Damascus. They were then slain on Mu'awiya's orders. It was not until the reign of Umar bin Abdul Azeez in 99 A.H. that the cursing of Imam Ali was stopped.

(4) In the month of Rajab of the 60 A.H. Mu'awiya died. But before his death he had appointed Yazid, his son, as the ruler of the kingdom. The first order that Yazid issued was to round up Husayn bin Ali, Abdullah bin Zubayr and Abdullah bin Umar and force them to do Bayat of Yazid. Abdullah bin Umar complied forthwith. Abdullah bin Zubayr left Madina and took refuge in Makka. Husayn bin Ali left Madina a few days later with his family members and traveled to Iraq. In the month of Muharram of 61 A.H., his entourage was intercepted at Karbala. All men were killed in a brief battle and the women and children were taken prisoners. The prisoners were then brought to Damascus. After a short meeting with Yazid, they were put into dungeons for a while. They were released when Yazid had made sure that they did not remain a threat to the Umayyad power.

(5) Yazid suddenly died in 65 A.H.. His son, named Mu'awiya, was appointed *khalifa* by the Umayyad kingmakers. The rest of the story is taken from Dimyari. Allama Dimyari writes in his *Hayat-ul-Haywaan* as follows²:

People of knowledge have written that Mu'awiya bin Yazid stayed in power for forty days, some have said five months. He then decided to abdicate. When he made that decision he went up to the pulpit and sat there (quietly) for a long time.

He then praised Allah and sent salawat unto the Prophet and then said as follows.

² Let the readers note that Imam Ali himself was a brave and brilliant soldier and an able commander as history has witnessed it time and time again. Here Imam Ali shows great insight into the science of genealogy and he highlights the fact that a man's DNA inherits as much from the mother's DNA as from the father's. In fact, modern research has shown that the child is influenced much more from the mother's DNA than that of the father. And he also emphasizes the importance of the mother in a person's life. It is more the mother than the father that influences the making of the personality of a child.


“O people, I do not covet power and control (over people), because this is an important responsibility and you people are not happy with me. We have tried each other many times, but what is destined must happen. My grandfather, Mu’awiya, transgressed in this matter of *khilafat* and he created trouble asking as to who was most deserving of this position. And with whom did he quarrel? The one who was the closest to the Prophet of Islam; who was the earliest in Islam, the most honoured among the great muhajirun, the most chivalrous and courageous, a man of knowledge and great *fadhilat*, first cousin of the Prophet and his son-in-law. The Prophet had chosen him for his younger daughter, Fatima. He was the best among the young men of this *ummah* and he was the father of Hasan and Husayn, the two leaders of the youth of paradise.

As you all know very well, my grandfather, Mu’awiya, fought with that kind of person and you people supported him in that, until he took over everything. However, when his time came, death overtook him and he ended up as a pawn to his own deeds. He went to his grave alone and he received the reward for what he had been doing in his life. *Khilafat*, then, came to my father, Yazid. His own debauchery, wasteful behaviour and his temptations overwhelmed him. (This was) all that, which was not befitting the position of *khilafat*. He indulged (openly) in sinful living. He became daring in disobedience to Allah. Anyone who showed respect and love for the Ahlul-Bayt was persecuted by him. Finally his time, too, came. He lived a short life. His influence vanished with him. He went to the other world with his own deeds and ended up in his own grave. He was surrounded by misdeeds and was buried under the weight of his own actions. He too received the

reward for all that he had done. He then became remorseful. But alas, the time of repentance was already past by then – we too became part of his remorse, sorrow and grief. O what a loss! Whatever he did and he said, is still talk of the town. I don't know whether he was rewarded or punished for what he did – all this is my imagination, it is my assumption. Finally his own remorse suffocated him.”

Mu'awiyya then wept and the audience wept with him. He then continued:

“Now I am your third ruler – a majority (of you) are angry with me. I cannot carry your load (the responsibility). Nor does Allah consider me deserving of your *khilafat*. The trust of your *khilafat* is important – protect it, and give it to anyone you consider more deserving. I have taken this necklace off my neck – I am abdicating. All praise is for Allah alone.”

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Mu'awiya bin Yazid came down from the pulpit. He was still weeping. People surrounded him and they turned to his teacher named Umar al-Maqsoos. They said to him that it was his teachings, which had taken the young prince to that state of mind and it was his teachings that brought the love of Ali and his family to his heart. The teacher protested and claimed his complete innocence from the accusation. But the people were overwhelmed with frustration and anger. They grabbed the teacher, beat him and then buried him alive against all his protestations. After a few days, Mu'awiya the son of Yazid too died.

Allama Dimyari has not elaborated upon it but other historians have claimed that the prince was actually poisoned to death by his own people, which is very likely.

(6) In 74 A.H. Abdul Malik bin Marwan appointed al-Hajjaj bin Yusuf as governor over Iraq. That would be remembered as the darkest days of Iraq. Hajjaj perpetrated an open and wide-spread persecution of the devotees and sympathizers of Imam Ali. The individual stories are too numerous to list here.

(7) In the year 76 A.H., Hisham bin Abdul Malik, the then heir apparent, came to Hajj. The *haram* was so crowded that Hisham was unable to reach the Black Stone. He went to a corner and waited with his party. Suddenly Ali Zayn-ul-Abideen, a grandson of Imam Ali, appeared and approached the Black Stone. The crowd parted respectfully and let him pass. One of the men from Syria was surprised and asked Hisham as to who that was who claimed more respect from the crowd than the crown prince. Hisham, out of jealousy and hatred, retorted: 'I do not know.' The famous poet Farazdaq was around and he immediately began reciting his famous *qasida* in praise of Ali Zayn-ul-Abideen. Hisham was greatly annoyed and angered by that and he ordered Farazdaq put in prison for that impertinence. Farazdaq's *qasida* is extant to this day and it is considered a masterpiece of Arabic poetry.

(8) The Umayyad rule was brought to an end by the Abbasid revolution in the 132nd A.H.. The political party changed, the system changed but the policy of the persecution of the devotees of Imam Ali continued all the same. The times of Bukhari and Muslim came, *hadith* collections were compiled – but the policy against Imam Ali continued. The story of Imam Nasa'i is an example of that phenomenon. Imam Nasa'i was born in Khurasan in 215 A.H. His full name is Abu Abdur-Rahman Ahmad bin Shu'ayb. His most famous work is his *Sunan*, which is a member of the *Sahah Sitta* (the six correct ones). Towards the end of his life he produced his book titled *Khasa'is Ali bin Abi Talib*. His contemporaries asked him about it – basically the question was: why did he ignore the two Shaykhs (Abu Bakr and Umar) and go ahead with a book about Imam Ali (who happened to be the fourth *khalifa* of Islam)? He replied that when he went to Damascus, he found an abundance of people who hated Imam Ali and used bad words for him. So he decided to write this book in the hope and expectation that those people would be guided by his writing. Imam Nasa'i is a younger contemporary of both Bukhari and Muslim Nayshapuri. He is considered to be one of the best scholars of *hadith*. His contemporaries had a lot of respect for his knowledge, erudition and most of all, his memory which was essential for learning the science of *hadith*. He lived in Egypt and his knowledge and learning came to be known to the larger Muslim world from Egypt.

Imam Nasa'i came to Damascus and saw that the place was overflowing with the enemies of Imam Ali. One Friday, he mounted the pulpit and began reading the text of his book. The crowd sat there quietly and listened to his discourse. When he had finished, some from the crowd asked him: 'That was all right, but what do you say about the glory of Mu'awiya?' Imam Nasa'i replied: 'I do not know anything about that except that the Prophet (pbuh) had said – 'May Allah never satiate his hunger.' Obviously, this was the heart of the Umayyad country where hatred of Imam Ali and the love and respect for Mu'awiya were fed to the population day and night and generations were raised on those two ingredients. People could not take that kind of truth. They grabbed the Imam by his legs, pulled him down from the pulpit and beat him to a pulp. He was left for dead. When the crowd had left, some of his sympathisers came in and took him home and tried to nurse his injuries. He was eventually taken to Mecca where he died of those wounds in 303 A.H. He was buried between the mounts of Safa and Marwa³.

Imam Darqutni has considered this a trial for Imam Nasa'i and has treated his death at the hands of the Damascene mob as martyrdom. It is very clear that during the period of the 3rd and 4th centuries, narrating the *fadhla'el* (virtues) of Imam Ali was a crime. A person like Imam Nasa'i, whose book is a member of the *Sahah Sitta*, was killed for that crime. One can imagine the life the devotees of Imam Ali had to endure in that time. This phenomenon, as we stated earlier, had begun with Mu'awiya. Not even members of his own family were spared from that kind of hateful behaviour and persecution if they displayed any sympathy for Imam Ali bin Abi Talib. The prime example of that is how Yazid's son, also known as Mu'awiya, came to the throne at Damascus and then he was killed by poisoning.

(9) Here is a quotation from M. Haykal's book on the biography of the Prophet of Islam. This is an extract from the preface of the book.

When the Banu Umayya firmly established themselves in power, their protagonists among the *hadith* narrators deprecated the prophetic traditions reported by the party of Ali bin Abi Talib (the Shi'a), and the latter defended those traditions and propagated them with all the

³ The story of Imam Nasa'i going to Damascus, reading his book from the pulpit and the mob lynching him, has been described in the introduction to his book, which has been published from Kuwait.

means at their disposal. Undoubtedly they also deprecated the traditions reported by Ayesha, Mother of the Faithful. A humorous piece of reportage was given us by Ibn Asakir who wrote: “Abu Sa’d Isma’eel bin Muthanna al-Istarabadi was giving a sermon one day in Damascus when a man stood up and asked him (as to) what he thought of the *hadith* of the Prophet: ‘I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate.’ Abu Sa’d pondered the question for a while and then replied: ‘Indeed! No one knows this *hadith* of the Prophet except those who lived in the first century of Islam. What the Prophet had said, he continued, was rather, ‘I am the city of knowledge; Abu Bakr is its foundation; Umar is its walls; Uthman its ceiling; and Ali its gate.’ The audience was quite pleased with his reply and asked him to furnish them with its chain of narrators. Abu Sa’d could not furnish any chain and was terribly embarrassed⁴.”

What Haykal is trying to show is that the question was asked in an open assembly in the city of Damascus- the hometown of Umayyad power. Abu S’ad either knew the original *hadith* but was afraid to confirm it for fear of retaliation from the crowd, or, he just fabricated a new *hadith* out of the blue to please the crowd. However, he was taken to task by the crowd on the matter of *isnad*, which he could not produce. Haykal’s point is: scholars, or the so-called scholars had become so daring in fabricating *hadith* for political purposes that they did not even think and foresee the consequences of their fabrications. The reason for all this was mainly political pressure and the fear of reprisal from an overwhelming anti-Ali and anti-Ahlul Bayt populace. The stupidity of this fabrication is apparent by the fact that even though one can think of a foundation and walls for a city, there is no ceiling on a city.

(10) The perpetration of the persecution of the devotees of Imam Ali continues to this our day, both by violent action as well as in writing. Anti-Ali writings and the cursing of Imam Ali’s devotees abound on the internet. So is the killing and torture of people. The new wave of violence has been taken over by the Taliban and their ilk, and in recent times by Al-Qaeda and now by ISIS. News is still fresh about several explosions in the street processions taken out in Lahore in commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Ali on the 21st day of Ramadan (1st of September 2010). Another explosion rocked the assembly of the devotees of Imam Ali as they sat doing their Iftar. Several people have died, hundreds have been wounded. But is there any

⁴ Haykal/Faruqi, page.lxxxiii-lxxxiv.

reduction in the fervor of the devotees of Imam Ali? No way. Even the flood victims in Pakistan who have lost all worldly possessions and are living in tents and many do not even have that, have gathered together and had sat under the sky in all night vigils reciting Qur'an and prayers in commemoration of Imam Ali's life and times. Who can defeat that spirit?



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