

Mashhad al Husain-Karbala:

Phases of Destruction & Restoration

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Revised Version Published in "Daily News", Pakistan, Weekly Magazine – on 27-01-2007 & in Abna, Iran

Short History of Karbala:

Karbala, a city in Iraq is located about 100 km southwest of Baghdad at 32.61°N and 44.08°E. It was at first a desolate place and did not witness any noteworthy activity, although it was rich in water and its soil was fertile. When Imam Husain arrived at Karbala and was surrounded by the forces of Ubaidullah bin Ziyad, he inquired about the name of the place. Someone replied it is Aqr- meaning 'harsh'. Imam Husain then said: we seek refuge with Allah from Al Aqr. He once again asked the name of the village. Then one of the attendants replied, its name is Karbala. Imam Husain spontaneously declared: land of Karb and Bal'a meaning (land of) "torture and trial". In the time of Imam Husain, the place was also known as al Ghadiriyah, Nainawa, and Shat ul Furat. Imam Husain bought a piece of land, after his arrival at Karbala from Bani Asad. He and his Ahl al Bait are buried in that portion, known by Hair, where the Shrines are presently located. The history of destruction and reconstruction of the Shrines of Karbala is long. Both the Shrines were greatly extended by successive Muslim rulers, but suffered repeated destruction from attacking armies. Karbala's development was strongly influenced by the Persians.

History has recorded the names of several rulers who shared the honour of extending, decorating and keeping the Shrines and its precincts in good condition. Among them is Fateh Ali Qajar, who in 1250 (A.H) ordered the construction of two Shrines, one over Imam Husain's grave and the other over the grave of his brother, Syedi Abul Fazal al Abbas. The first dome is 27 meters high and completely covered with gold. At the bottom, it is surrounded with 12 windows, each of which is about 1.25 m away from the other, from the inside, and 1.30 m from the outside. The Shrine has an area of 59 m / 75 m with ten gates, and about 65 rooms, well decorated from inside and outside, and used as class rooms for studying. As for the grave itself, which is in the middle of the precinct, it is called the Rawzah or garden and it has several doors. The most famous one is called al Qiblah or Bab al Zah'ab".

Significance of Ziyarah:

Following the 10th of Muharram 61 (A.H), after the Shahadat of Imam Husain, people from near and far visited Karbala for Ziyarah. Despite many attempts by successive rulers, such as Haroon Abbasi and Mutawakkil Abbasi, who declared a Ban on the Ziyarah, devotees continued to perform Ziyarah at Karbala in every age. History provides many examples, which showed that the devotees even sacrificed their lives, just to perform Ziyarah of Imam Husain's Rawzah. The conventional meaning of Ziyarah is an intention to visit some one, for his veneration or intimacy. It is said that the reason why

Ziyarah is referred to as visiting the saintly human beings, to draw away from the material routine of the corporeal world, and incline himself towards the world of spirit, while one is present in the corporeal environment and maintains his/her bodily form.

History gives us evidence that the practice of Ziyarah started soon after the Shahadat of Imam Husain, but in the succeeding era, the rulers attempted to remove the sign of the graves of Ahl al Bait. However, the Aqidah of devotees overwhelmingly signified the extraordinary reverence to these sacred places. It is a firm belief of the devotees that Ziyarah is the sure approach of achieving reward from their Rabb. Therefore, to visit the Mashahid means closer proximity with Allah and they consider Al Mashhad al Husain as the best rendezvous for the acceptance of their Dua. The reason as to why the Awliya recommended visiting the Mashahid lies in the fact that this act secures many spiritual and social advantages, and these can be enumerated as follows:

- (i) It establishes a profound relationship and attachment between the Ahl al Bait and the followers. Our hearts are filled with the high merits and piety of the Aale Mohammad. It reminds us of their spirit of Jih'ad for the sake of Allah.*
- (ii) As a result of great congregations at the Mashahid, people come closer to each other and come to know each other's problems. It cements cordial relations among the Zairin as a result of which they are drawn much nearer. In this way the spirit of obeying the Divine commands becomes common among all the Zairin.*
- (iii) Sal'am during the time of paying homage to the Mashhad of the Ahl al Bait confirms our abiding faith in Tawhid, the sanctity of the teaching of Islam and the Nubuwat.*

Rasulullah (S) instructed Syedna Jabir bin Abdullah al Ansari as follows:

"O Jabir! You must visit the grave of Husain – after his Shahadat in Karbala, as in his Ziyarah, Allah shall bestow you reward equaling 100 Haj and 100 Umrah.

It was Jabir who achieved the honour to become the first Zaeer of the grave of Imam Husain and recited his famous Sal'am on Arbain – 40th day After Aashurah. Imam Jafar Assadiq said:

"The one, who visits the grave of Imam Husain on the day of Aashurah, would be counted amongst those who were present on the day of Aashurah and were slaughtered with Imam Husain. [1]

Ziyarah holds a special position among the admirers, irrespective of Sunni or Shia. Ziyarah is equivalent to the announcement of affiliation and declaration of social and political attachment. Ziarat means to pay Sal'am or homage upon dignified spiritual guides. To visit the graves of Imam and recite Sal'am over there is, to commemorate and to strengthen one's Aqidah towards the 'Right Path'. Imam Sadiq has explained:

"Ziyarah at the grave of Imam Husain earns the Ajar of participation in the Jih'ad along with Rasulullah and Imam al Aadi. [2] Imam Sadiq has counted the Ajar of Ziyarah at the grave of Imam Husain, with the Ajar of the Suhad'a of the Ghazwah Badar. [3]

A man asked Imam Sadiq several questions about the Ziyarah of Imam Husain. He asked: [4]

If a person is killed during Ziyarah at the grave of Imam Husain, by the tyranny and torture of a ruler, what will be his Ajar?

Imam Sadiq replied:

“All his sins will be forgiven from the first drop of his blood.

He asked:

What is the Ajar for the person who is imprisoned in the cause of Ziyarah?

Imam replied:

Each day he spends in his prison will be changed into joy and happiness at the day of Qiyamat.

He again asked:

What is the Ajar for the person who has been hurt and tyrannized in prison during the Ziyarah journey?

Imam answered,

“He will get one good deed against every wound.

The question which clicks here in the mind of a person is why the Ziyarah to the grave of Imam Husain so much difficult and dangerous? Shaikh Abbas al Qummi has transmitted details as follows: [5]

“During the period of the Abbasid monarch, Haroon the tradition of the Ziyarah of Imam Husain was at its peak. Not only Shia but Sunni admirers from far and near visited the grave of Imam Husain, and the Mashhad was always filled with Zairin. This situation frightened the ruler, Haroon Abbasi, a staunch enemy of Ahl al Bait. He was afraid that this Ziyarah would provide an opportunity to the pilgrims to gather at one place. If they turned towards the progeny of Fatimah and supported them politically, naturally power would be shifted from Bani Abbas to Bani Fatemah. Therefore, Haroon Abbasi issued explicit instruction to his governor at Kufa, Musa bin Essa to raze the grave of Husain to the ground, plough the land and use it for cultivation. In compliance of the order, the governor removed all the signs of the grave of the Imam and turned the Mashhad into a field for cultivation.

This did not shake the Aqidah of the Zairin. After Haroon Abbasi, his successors also followed to eliminate the sign of Ziyarah at Karbala. Later on when Mutawakkil Abbasi came to the throne and learnt that devotees had been visiting the grave of Husain Ibn Ali more and more, he sent his troops to destroy the grave of Imam Husain yet again, but it could not deter the people from performing the Ziyarah. They continued the Ziyarah and paid homage to the grandson of Rasulullah(S). The ruler then started to kill them but still the people continued the Ziyarah and wanted to attain Shahadah in the name of Husain. They sacrificed their lives but were not deterred by the Zulm. They said: [6]

“If we all are slaughtered then our offspring will still not stop the Ziyarah of Imam Husain.”

Syedah Zainab confirmed in the evening of Aashurah to her nephew, Imam Sajjad, and when said: [7]

“In the land of Karbala, we will engrave a sign on the grave of your father Imam Husain, which will remain there till Qiyamat. The admirers and devotees of Ahl al Bait from all corners of the world will come for Ziyarah. The rulers and their offspring will struggle a

lot to destroy and to deter the people from the Ziyarah of Husain every time. But the love for Imam Husain will blossom more and more and the Ziyarah will attain highest peak.”

Phases of Demolition & Reconstruction:

A.H. 61 - C.E. 1st Oct., 680

Imam Husain reached at Karbala on the 2nd of Muharram, 61 (A.H). He contacted members of the tribe of Bani Asad, native of the area and presented his wish to buy the land, if they allow. They agreed and sold it to Husain ibn Ali in 65,000 Darhams. After receiving the possession of the land of Karbala in his hand, Imam Husain gifted the land back to Bani Asad and requested them to promise him three things:

(1) He instructed them that there would be a short encounter there in a few days in which his group would all be slaughtered. He asked Bani Asad to come when the Yazidian forces leave Karbala and bury the dead bodies of the Shuhadah.

(2) The Imam asked them not to cultivate the land where the graves would be erected.

(3) He also informed them that Zairin come here to pay tribute, so they help them to arrange food and shelter for them.

Imam Husain was buried at Karbala. It was Bani Asad who, after the departure of Ahl al Bait, assembled at the grave of Imam Husain and performed Ziyarah. Historical accounts provide little light on the first builder of the Shrine. It is assumed that Bani Asad were also the first, who erected a tent upon the grave of Imam Husain. A Shaikh of Bani Asad lighted the Chiragh at the grave of the Imam and planted a Berry Tree a few feet away from the side of the head of the grave, to indicate the grave of Husain.

A.H. 65 - C.E. 18th Aug., 684

Mukhtar bin Abu Ubaidah al Saqafi built an enclosure around the grave and erected a dome over it. Over the dome he fixed a green flag. At that time there were two entrances to this Mashhad. He also settled several families around Al Mashhad al Husaini.

A.H. 132 - C.E. 12th Aug., 749

A roof was built over the part of the Masjid and two entrances were added during the reign of al Saffah.

A.H. 140 - C.E. 31st Mar., 763

Al Mashhad al Husaini was demolished by the order of the Abbasid ruler, Mansoor.

A.H. 158 - C.E. 11th Nov., 774

During the reign of Abbasid ruler, Mahdi, the roof over the grave was reconstructed.

A.H. 171 - C.E. 22nd June, 787

Under the instruction of Abbasid monarch, Haroon Abbasi the Mashhad was demolished and the Berry Tree, which indicated the sign of the grave of Imam Husain, was cut down. Even then people kept visiting the grave of Imam Husain, guided by the traces of the

'Tree of the Berry', which covered the grave. Haroon al Rashid Abbasi could not tolerate this, and ordered the tree to be totally cut off from the roots, with the intention to wipe out the sign of the grave of Husain and stop the practice of Ziyarah. At that time, the learned understood the meaning of the following Hadith. Rasulallah(S) clearly recited Lanat thrice upon the Cutter of the Tree of the Berry as follow: [8]

"L'aan Allah Qati as Sidrah"-Lanah of Allah upon the Cutter of the Berry".

A.H. 193 - C.E. 25th Oct., 808

During the reign of Amin Abbasi, al Mashhad al Husain was reconstructed.

A.H. 232

However, 40 years later, Mutawakkil Abbasi attempted several times to destroy the Shrine. Historical accounts have provided details. He committed four attempts, for its destruction, but in vain. In 233 (A.H), his lady court singer visited for Ziyarah. According to Al Tabari, the second attempt was made in 236 (A.H), Mutawakkil Abbasi demolished Al Mashhad al Husain and ordered that the land of the grave should be ploughed. He also issued instructions to dig a canal, through the river Fur'at, which would eliminate the signs of the grave, but he could not accomplish his nasty and evil plan. The 3rd attempt was made in 237 (A.H) and the last in 247 (A.H), but to no avail. In his malicious attempt he used bulls to drag the burial place of Husain ibn Ali, and remove the sign of the grave of Imam Husain, but the Bull would not step forward into the premises of the grave, although the soldiers brutally tortured the Bulls.

Whenever the forces of Bani Abbas wished to perform this operation, the devotees of Ahl al Bait stood before them. Abbasi forces fired arrows to kill the devotees, who created obstacles, but by the will of Allah, the situation turned, and hue and cry was created, whereby a number of Abbasi solders became target of their own arrows, shot by them, resulting in heavy losses to them. Mutawakkil Abbasi also used abusive language against Syedah Fatemah. The masses hated him, but due to fear of swords they were helpless. People used to write couplets on the walls of Masajid, against Bani Abbas and in praise of Ahl al Bait. In these verses, recorded in "Bih'aar al Anw'aar" a poet has expressed his burning feelings and condemned the act of the Bani Abbas in following words:

- *Wallah! Bani Umayyah had killed the grandson of Rasulallah (S), while he was sinless and Mazlum*
- *And today offspring of Abbas, uncle of the Nabi(S) are also committing an equal Zulm*
- *This grave of Husain is uncovered, Bani Abbas feels restlessness as why they did not contribute in the slaughter of Husain, with Yazid and Ibn Ziyad*
- *And why they were deprived with this honour, through which they could have helped the Bani Umayyah*
- *Know they compensate their loss through digging the grave of Husain.*

There is an event worth mentioning, which was narrated by Zaid, who visited al Mashhad in the times of Mutawakkil. He hailed from Buhlul Danishmand. In that period

many calamities were faced by the people, due to the harassment, torture and cruelties upon the pilgrims who visited the grave of Imam Husain. Zaid says:

One day I saw a huge procession of mourners, wearing black dresses. They were accompanying a coffin. I thought that may be Mutawakkil had expired. When I asked, they replied that Rehana, the beloved concubine of Mutawakkil had died. Musk and Anbar were placed in the grave of Mutawakkil's charming darling and a tomb was built on it.

Seeing this, Zaid lamented:

"Alas _____ a concubine deserves sorrow and lamentation, but the grandson of Rasulullah (S) was killed and nobody realized it, none lamented, nor any ruler built a Shrine, but attempts were always made to eliminate the signs of the grave".

After this incident Mutawakkil Abbasi was killed by his Turkish slaves, under instructions of his own son. Mutawakkil's son, Muntasir, had warned his father time and again, but he did not pay attention to his son's explicit warning, under Muntasir's instruction, his father Mutawakkil was executed. After he took over the charge, Muntasir Abbasi removed the check post, and stopped the nasty practice of harassment of the Zairin. He instructed his functionaries to rebuild Al Mashhad al Husain.

A.H. 247 - C.E. 17th Mar., 861

Al Muntasir Abbasi instructed his courtiers to build a roof over the grave and set up an iron pillar near it, to serve as a landmark for the Zairin, but the official builder was hostile to the faith; therefore, he used low quality material. Under instruction of Al Muntasir, new houses were built around the Shrines.

A.H. 273 - C.E. 8th June, 886

The roof was demolished, due to low quality material. The major portion of Al Mashhad was destroyed. Unlimited numbers of Zairin perished. Reason discovered was, unfit material of construction.

A.H. 280 - C.E. 23rd Mar., 893

One Alavi Nobel dignitary built a dome in the center, with two roofs, on both side and an enclosure with two entrances. He settled in the city with his sons. His name was Syed Ibrahim al Mujab al Dhareer al Kufi.

A.H. 283

After ten years of the destruction of the roof, Mohammad bin Zaid, ruler of Tiberistan built al Mashhad for the forth time. He used best quality material and built the Shrine as a master piece of superb architecture. This work of art of the Muslim civilization, flourished in the central Asian region, and it represented that era.

A.H. 307 - C.E. 19th Aug., 977

Buweyhi Amir rebuilt Al Mashhad al Husain, and constructed a Maqsurah-grill of teakwood around the sepulcher. He also constructed houses around the Rauzat and

erected a boundary wall to secure Karbala. At the same time Imran Ibn Shahin built a Masjid adjacent to the Rauzat.

A.H. 369

After half a century, a notorious looter, Zabba bin Asdi looted the Khazanah of the Ruzat al Imam, when he was Amir of Aynu Tamr. Buweyhi Amir, Azadud'dulah punished him severely. The fourth construction was completed by Amir Azadud'dulah. Amir Moizud'dulah and Amir Azaduddulah were fortunate; they achieved the honour to decorate magnificently the interior and exterior of the Mashhad. Azadud'dulah built a trade center and residential area around the Mashhad. For safety from bandits, he built a strong concrete wall around the city and made Karbala safe like a fort. For the facility of the Zairin, he provided water and lighting. He visited Karbala every year for Ziyarah and examined the facilities provided for Zairin personally.

A.H. 371

Azadud'dulah distributed hundred of thousands of Darahim among the relatives of the Ahl al Bait, not as a Sadaqah but as a gift. Famous historian, Ibn Aseer, mentioned that in the year 371 (A.H), Buweyhi Amir, Azadud'daulah was prominent among those who contributed huge amounts for the construction and decoration of Al Mashhad al Husain generously.

During the period of the Ottoman Empire, under the instruction of Emperor Murad IV, several money generating strong trusts, which were exclusive property of Al Mashhad al Husain were confiscated, and unlawfully spent on the renovation of the burial place of Shaikh Abd al Qadir Jilani.

A.H. 372

The first enclosure of Hair was built in year 372 (A.H), and its area is estimated as 2400 meters square.

A.H. 407 - C.E. 10th June, 1016

Due to the conspiracy of the State Caretaker of the Shrine, a fire broke out at midnight. Apparently two big chandeliers, which had fallen down were the cause of fire. Buweyhi Umara was still in power. Thus the enemies of Ahl al Bait were not in the position to sabotage Al Mashhad al Husain openly. Under the malicious instruction of Abbasid monarch, Qadir, a secret plan was prepared to burn Al Mashhad al Husain. This fire burnt the priceless treasure of Al Mashhad al Husain but ultimately burnt the entire Abbasi Empire. Fearing retaliation of the public, on the destruction of Al Mashhad al Husain, Qadir Abbasi appointed Ibn Sahl'an and instructed him to handle the situation. Ibn Sahl'an paid full attention towards the Al Mashhad al Husain. He reconstructed al Mashhad, thus it was the sixth construction of the Shrine.

A.H. 412

The Wazir, Al Hasan bin al Fazal bin Sahlan built the second fence of the city in year 412 (A.H)., and fixed four iron doors at its sides.

A.H. 479

Khafajah also attacked Karbala in the year 479 (A.H), during the time of Amir Saifud'daulah.

A.H. 526

Mustarshid Abbasi confiscated the valuable Khazanah of Al Mashhad al Husain. He distributed the Khazanah among his nearest and dearest courtiers.

A.H. 575

When Nasir took over the charge, he paid full attention and due respect to the Shrines of Karbala and Najaf. Even if any criminal or any insurgent took refuge over there, as per the instruction of the ruler, the authorities used to overlook them. During the pervious tyrannical period only a limited number of Zairin visited Karbala and Najaf, but during the period of Nasir, who provided ample facilities to the Zairin, unlimited number of devotees started to visit regularly. His established institutions were carried out till 727 (A.H).

The famous historian, Ibn Batutah discussed Karbala at length. Although in that period, the bloody swords of Mongols coloured the lands of Iraq and Iran with human blood, but Al Mashhad al Husain remained safe. It is noteworthy that Ghaza Khan and Khuda Bund Khan had performed great services for the Shrines. It is enough to know that the Tatars became ardent devotees of Ahl al Bait and children of Halaku Khan openly followed them from the time of Ghazan Khan.

A.H. 620 - C.E. 4th Feb., 1223

Nasir reconstructed the Maqsurah _ grill around the grave.

A.H. 757 - C.E. 18th Sept., 1365

Sultan Owais Ibn Hasan Jalairi remodeled the dome and raised the walls of the enclosure.

A.H. 780- C.E. 24th Feb., 1384

Ahmad Ibn Owais erected two Minarat covered with gold and extended the courtyard.

A.H. 795

When some tribes started looting in Karbala, Emperor Amir Taimur punished them and recovered the looted property and returned the valuables to their owners.

A.H. 796

Emperor Amir Taimur himself visited Karbala for Ziyarah and ordered expansion of the building of Al Mashhad al Husain.

A.H. 858

Al Musha occupied Karbala and plundered the Shrine of Imam Husain and killed the people and captured the rest of them and imprisoned them in his castle in Basrah.

A.H. 920 - C.E. 26th Feb., 1514

60 Years later, when Emperor Ismail Safavi visited Al Mashhad al Husain, he built a beautiful dome, decorated with inlaid glass-work. During the period of Shah Ismail Safavi, especial arrangements were made, for the welfare of the natives, for the progress of the city and for the renovation of Al Mushad, his contribution is unforgettable. Valuables were presented to Al Mashhad al Husain, chandeliers of crystal glass; gold trees and cut glass work on the walls were done by him. Precious gifts were also bestowed to the Caretaker. When he came back to his capital, he called the best of master craftsmen and designed an engraved covering of the graves. These replaced the old ones. He did not forget Ahl al Bait in the lust of empire.

A.H. 941

When the Ottoman Emperor, 'Sulayyman the Magnificent' ascended the throne, he did not follow the footsteps of Emperor Salim, who was biased by nature. Salim had engineered an operation clean up against his own citizens, who did not follow his school of thought and declared a religious war against Iran,. In this sectarian operation he brutally assassinated a major population of Shia Muslims. Where ever he found any influence of Ahl al Bait he destroyed them. He also attacked Iraq in the name of religion, and many wars were fought. Sulayyman the magnificent entered Baghdad on 18th Jamadil Awwal 941 (A.H). He visited Najaf and Karbala and offered Dua over there, for help. When he reached Najaf and saw the glimpse of the Ruzat, of Ali ibn Abi Talib from far, he descended from his horse in reverence. When his noble attendants asked the reason of this action, he replied that on seeing the Ruzat, a cold shiver ran through his body.

Someone said that Najaf is still half a mile away and you cannot go by foot. He replied: I will do according to the guidance of the Faal. Qur'an was opened for guidance and this Ayat appeared first on the beginning line. In the Ayat instruction was given to Musa Nabi to remove his shoes before entering in to the "Wadil Muqaddas Tuwa". Emperor Sulayyman the magnificent not only performed Ziyarah but he also looked after the affairs regarding maintenance of al Mashahid. Sometimes Flood used to enter the city, thus he built dams, which controlled the floods. He renovated the famous lake Husainiyah and presented several valuables for the Shrines. This event shows the gratitude of Sulayyman the magnificent & denial is not needed because Muslims at large love Ahl al Bait. He donated several valuables to the Mashahid.

The role played by Safavid Emperors is unforgettable, with especial reference to the care and welfare of the Shrines. Shah Ismail Al Safavi visited Karbala in year 941 (A.H), and dug a deep canal, renovated it and constructed Imam Husain's Shrine as well. After Emperor Ismail Safwi, Emperor Tehmasap paid great attention to the renovation of Al Mashhad al Husain. He extended the courtyard of the Shrines, and rebuilt the building. Beatification work was done under his care in the interior side of the Shrines. He extended the Masjid, adjacent to Al Mashhad al Husain, and renovated the Ew'an.

A.H., 1013

The Mahnasid tribe attacked Karbala, under the command of Nasir bin Mahna, and ruled Karbala for 40 years.

A.H. 1032 - C.E. 5th Nov., 1622

Emperor Abbas Safavi conquered Baghdad in 1032 (A.H), and performed Ziyarah. He constructed the Maqsurah-grill of brass and bronze and decorated the dome with Kashi tiles.

A.H. 1048 - C.E. 15th May. 1638

When Ottoman Emperor Murad IV visited Al Mashhad al Husain, he ordered for the dome to be washed.

A.H. 1155 - C.E. 8th Mar., 1742

Legendry emperor of Iran, Nadir Shah Durrani visited Al Mashhad al Husain. He decorated it and offered valuable presents to the Khazanah of the Shrines.

A.H. 1207

Qajar Emperors also contributed for the development of the Shrines. Sultan Agha Mohammad Khan, who was the 1st Qajari Emperor, decorated the dome with gold. He also decorated the Min'ar and gold plated it. After a few years, the gold plated work became dull. Emperor Fathe Ali Shah Qajar permanently fixed gold covering, instead of gold plating.

A.H. 1211 - C.E. 7th July 1796

Emperor Muhammad Shah Qajar covered the dome of al Mashhad al Husain with gold.

18th Zil Hijjah A.H. 1216 - C.E. 22nd April 1801

A powerful Wahabi Salaf force consisted of 24000 solders attacked Karbala. The forces entered in to the city through the hole in the wall and opened the door of the city. It was a horrible day, in the history of Karbala. Mufti Mohammad Abdulqayyum Qadri has provided painful details as follows: [9]

“Masood Aalam Nadvi says: The natives tried unsuccessfully to hide and protect themselves, but in vain. The invaders seized the Shrines and confiscated all the valuables. Precious gems, 20 swords of different emperors, utensils of gold, 2000 swords of silver, guns, beautiful crystal-jars, the super fine silken carpets, chandeliers- decorated with gold ornaments, doors, prepared by gold decorated with gems, in short, uncounted numbers of treasure of several generations of the well known Empires were looted by them.

The force never stayed there long and returned to their region. At that time Iraq was under the Ottoman Empire. Karbala- place of homage was plundered brutally. 500 innocent Zairin were alone killed inside the Shrines. Fire was opened on it; all those who were inside were executed immediately. The invaders molested women, and escaped successfully, by the time the Ottoman forces arrived there. Historians noted that it was

the largest military expedition on the land of Karbala, after the attack of Yazidi forces. [10]

A.H. 1221/C.E. 1806

Five years later, a powerful Wahabi Salafi Force again launched an attack against Karbala, but the inhabitants countered the attack.

19 A.D.

When one noted Nawab of Awadh visited the Karbala, he was shocked to see the destruction wrought by the Najadi force. He re-built the markets, re-established the affected ones, erected concrete walls around the city, especially built watch towers, fixed heavy artillery for defense, and made all possible arrangements, which could provide protection from any looters. Major credit goes to the Nawabs of Awadh, who took great interest in the development of Al Mashhad al Husain. Nawab Mohammad Ali Shah of Awadh got the honour to build the Shrine of Hurr. It was Nawab Amjad Ali Shah, ruler of Lucknow, who got the honour to build the Shrines of Syedna Muslim and Hani, at Kufah.

A.H. 1232 - C.E. 21st Nov., 1817

Emperor Fateh Ali Shah Qajar renovated the Maqsur'at (grills covering the graves) and plated them with silver. He also gold plated the center of the main portico, and repaired the damage done by the Najadis. The Emperor took revenge of this massacre from them at Najad and at Musqat. His son and Governor of Kirman, Mirza Mohammad Ali personally took great interest to build new establishments and in the beautification of the Shrines. Queen of the Emperor, Fateh Ali Shah Qajar, gold plated the Min'ar.

A.H. 1276

Emperor Nasiruddin Shah Qajar gold plated the dome of Al Mashhad al Husain and extended the Ew'an. The Emperor also sent Shaikh Abdulhusain Tehrani to re-coat gold over the domes and to build the beautiful designs of famous Kashi work. He re-built the wooden box over the grave, which was burnt by the Najadi forces. The floor was also re-built and extended the portion, near the head side of the grave.

A.H. 1283 - C.E. 16th May, 1866

Emperor Nasiruddin Shah Qajar extended the courtyard of Al Mashhad al Husain.

A.H. 1353 = 1934 A.D.

Vicegerent of the Fatemi Imam, Sultan al Bohra, Dr. Syedna Taher Saifuddin visited Karbala to perform Ziyarah. He strongly disapproved a portrait-painting of the Imam, hung over the Maqsurah. My learned teacher, at Al Hawzah, Najaf, Ayatullah Muhammad Behr al Ulum informed me as follows: [11]

“Sultan al Bohra” contacted the authorities concerned, and also approached prominent Shia scholars and requested them to remove the painting. The Ulama appreciated his efforts and seconded his cause to remove the Bid'ah”

Syedna Taher Saifuddin also noticed that the condition of the Maqsurah on the grave of Imam Husain has become dilapidated and required to be replaced. He decided to fix a new Maqsurah on the grave.

When he returned to Mumbai, he gave instructions to fabricate a new Maqsurah, in a place known as "Al Qasr al Husaini" (this place was selected as final resting place of this great Dai. Maqsurah of Imam Husain and Amir al Muminin Ali were prepared here. It is known around the global village as "Rawzat Tahera"- a wonder of the world, as entire Qur'an is inscribed on the inner walls of the Shrine). Master Indian craftsmen showed their utmost ability with devotion in its construction. The Maqsurah is made of 500 gold coins (each coin consisted 12 grams weight) and 200 thousand coins of silver, beautified with most precious gems.

A.H. 1354

Under the instruction of the government of Iraq, the famous third Minarat, which was built by Marj'an, slave of Emperor Awees Jalaery, was demolished. Those 600 years old famous and beautiful Minarat was one of the wonders, which also increased the exterior beauty of al Mashhad. The major motive behind the destruction was to misappropriate the funds of the trusts, which were fixed and donated exclusively for the maintenance of that Minarat. Finally that trusts were utilized completely for the Sunni establishments.

A.H. 1358 - C.E. 21st Feb., 1939

Al Dai al Fatemi, Sultan al Bohra, Dr. Syedna Taher Saifuddin offered a set of beautiful unique Maqsurah of solid silver and gold, which was fixed in the Rawzah. This Maqsurah is a combination of Fatemi and Indian art.

A.H. 1360 - C.E. 29th Jan., 1941

51st Al Dai al Mutlaq, vicegerent of the Fatemi Imam, Dr. Syedna Taher Saifuddin, rebuilt the western Minarah. He spent a huge amount generously for the purpose of gold plating all the Min'ar. From top to bottom, pure gold was installed. In the history of devotion, he achieved this honour after the munificent contribution of the Emperor of Tibristan, Mohammad bin al Hasan al Hasni, who served in the year 283 A.H.

A.H. 1367- C.E. 20th Dec., 1948

Syed Abd al Rasul Khalsi, Administrator of Karbala acquired the houses in the neighborhood of the courtyard according to the price fixed by the government, to build a road around the Mashhad and to extend the courtyard.

O Zairin-e-Kir'am!

May Allah grant you Afzal Jaza, kindly remember my parents & family in your Mubarak Dua at Atabat A'aliyyah that soon Allah grant us opportunity of Ziyarah. May Allah fulfill our Haj'at, grant us Shifa and Sadaat, A'amin.

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