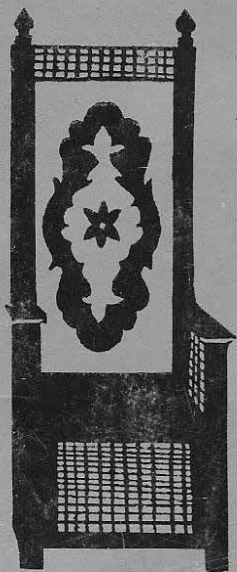




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TRIUMPHANT
VICTORIOUS
LOYAL
HUSNIYA
POWERFUL
DEVOUT
ELOQUENT



HUSNIYA

Title Designed By:

KHADIJA INAYATULLAH

Composed by:

TALIB HUSSAIN ZAIDI

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Title Designed by
KHADIJA INAYATULLAH

Composed on Macintosh by
TALIB HUSSAIN ZAIDI

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PREFACE

‘Husniyah’ a slave-girl derived her religious knowledge from the “Harem” of Imam Ja‘far-e-Sadiq (a.s.). She planned to get rid of the woeful condition of her master by offering herself for a debate over religious issues against the reputed scholars of the entire empire of the Abbaside Caliph - Haroon-ur-Rasheed.

‘Husniyah’ is therefore a book on polemic discussion initiated at the instance of the slave-girl in the court of Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed in Baghdad. The book under reference is originally an Arabic book later translated into Persian and then into Urdu.

When every one of the local erudite was dumb-founded by her cogent reasoning and impressive delivery of the words, the Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed summoned a Basrite erudite – Ibrahim bin Khalid who besides being a reputed scholar taught four hundred scholars at the religious academy of Basra.

She promptly replied to his eighty queries, disproved his beliefs to the entire satisfaction of the audience and rendering him speechless by the soundness of her arguments and citations.

He then asked her a few more questions after she was allowed to ask.

The subjects dealt with in their discussion were:

Successor, Caliph, Infallibility of Allah's messengers, physical appearance and visibility of Allah by the physical eyes, confiscation of Fadak, Predestination, Muta, Truth about *Ahadith*, Sacrifice of the lamb on tenth Zilhaj and bloody havoc at Karbala, Preaching of Surah Baraat, Philosophy of Pseudo-Ulema and other allied issues.

In the end we thank the translator for having translated the Urdu-book in sweet and simple English at the same time retaining the originality of the book.

INTRODUCTION

This is a moving and powerful narrative of the indomitable religiosity of a slave-girl, Husniyah a matchless beauty during the exotic times of Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed Abbasi. Enriched with knowledge par excellence, gained in the spiritual atmosphere of Imam Ja'far-e-Sadiq (a.s.) harem, her religious exposition before the Caliph invoked an inexpressible admiration both for her beauty of expression as well as for the depth of her knowledge.

Reported by Allama Shaikh Abul Fatuh Razi Makki - a renowned research Scholar, this historical episode is essentially an enlightening golden leaf taken from the annals of Islamic history.

RICH MERCHANT OF BAGHDAD BECOMES POOR

There lived once a wealthy merchant during the Caliphate of Haroon-ur-Rasheed. One of the best known personalities of Baghdad at the time, this merchant was noted for his devotional attachment to the Ahlul Bait (a.s.), spending most of his time in the company of Hazrat Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) and Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.). When Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.) was martyred, this merchant lost everything he possessed as a result of religious animosities that followed, so much so that he now faced virtual starvation. As stated earlier, he had nothing left now except a slave-girl whom he had purchased when she was five years of age. After some basic education and training at a *maktaba* (primary school), she was introduced into the harem of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) at the age of ten; and from then on till the ripe age of twenty, she occupied herself devotedly to acquiring sound knowledge in the sphere of religion as well as in Arts and Sciences. Endowed with a matchless beauty of feminine form, she was rightly named as 'HUSNIYAH' - aptly personifying the womanly charm with which she was so profusely blessed.

PLAN TO GET OUT OF THE WOEFUL CONDITION

One day when he was hard-pressed by his pecuniary circumstances, the merchant expressed his woeful situation to Husniyah.

“Husniyah”! He addressed her, “you are no less than a son to me; and there is none except you on whom I could fall upon. It was solely for you that I took all the trouble of educating and training; and it is as a result of this education and training that today you stand possessed of a high standard of proficiency in literary and religious attainments. Now when I am placed in adverse circumstances, I want you to be helpful to me with your sagacity by planning in such a manner that I get rid of the miseries of poverty and starvation with which I am faced presently.”

“May my life be sacrificed for you, O Khwaja.” replied Husniyah, “I have a humble suggestion to make, if you permit me to do so.”

“Let me know what it is”, said Khwaja, the Merchant.

“I would request you to take me before Haroon-ur-Rasheed”, spoke Husniyah, “and tell him that you want to sell me off. And when he asks you about my price, tell him it would be one lakh *dinars* of gold. When the Caliph enquires as to what special qualities I possess in me, tell him that I am capable of dominating and winning over all the reputed scholars of his empire put together against me in a debate over religious matters and interpretation of the divinely revealed laws. Challenge him that I cannot be defeated in such a public discussion.”

“No!” Intercepted Khwaja, “By Allah, I will never do such a thing. I am afraid the Caliph, dazzled with your

womanly charms, will snatch you away from me for ever. No I cannot have the heart to lose you.”

“Don’t get so apprehensive”, reassured the girl with cool confidence, adding: “Believe me, Sir, as long as I live, my devotion to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s Ahlul Bait (a.s.) will ensure that no power on earth snatches me away from you. So, arise. Have trust in Allah; everything will turn out well.”

MASTER OF HUSNIYAH AGREES TO HER OFFER

And so, with such a self-confidence and deep love on the part of Husniyah, the Merchant had no choice but to agree to her offer.

Consequently the Merchant contacted Yahya Ibne Khalid Barmaki, the Vizir of Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed, and discussed Husniyah’s offer of challenge with him. Interested in this unique and unusual proposal, the Vizir asked Khwaja to produce the girl before him.

Though hesitant to do so, Khwaja complied and ushered Husniyah before the Vizir as a preliminary step. The sheer beauty of face, coupled with a noble demeanor and masterly eloquence of speech, were enough to surprise Yahya beyond his expectations. She was indeed an enviable and desirable prize!

And so, with enthusiasm building in him over the

prospects of procuring such a gem he rushed to the caliph and related to him the whole matter. Tickled by the version of his Vizir, Haroon-ur-Rasheed ordered that the slave-girl be brought before him. Accordingly, Husniyah was produced in Royal presence.

HUSNIYAH PRESENTED BEFORE HAROON-UR-RASHEED

Clad in a Hijab, and fully veiled, Husniyah stepped forth before Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed; executed her salutations in courtly manners; and recited a few poetic verses in her soft and sweet voice in his praise. The Caliph, impressed deeply by her manner and expression, reacted eagerly by asking her to unveil her face.

And Husniyah complied.

There she stood now – face unveiled, radiating the splendor of her feminine beauty in all its glory. Aroused emotionally by the majesty of Husniyah’s stately womanhood, the caliph rose to his feet and ordered Khwaja, the Merchant to be brought before him. The courtiers lost no time to do so.

“How much money do you want as the price for this slave-girl of yours?” Asked Haroon-ur-Rasheed. “And what is her name?”

“Husniyah is her name”, replied the Merchant, adding: “And one lakh gold *dinars* is the price I want.”

Surprised at this fantastic quotation, the Caliph enquired, “Why do you ask for such a high price? What is so unique about her?”

“The unique thing about this girl”, explained Khwaja “is that if all the contemporary religious scholars and literators of your time are together matched against her in a debate on religious issues, she will still be the winner.”

“And if she succumbs and is defeated, I will have you beheaded at the guillotine”, threatened the Caliph, adding further, “And I will have the possession of her”.

“And what if my assertion turns out to be true?” the Merchant asked confidently.

“I will award you one lakh *dinars* in that case; and you can have the girl, too, to yourself.” Assured Haroon-ur-Rasheed, equally confident of the prospects.

The Merchant was slightly nervous now, but said, “Alright, but give me some time to consult her on the matter once again”. The Caliph had no objection to this.

HUSNIYAH APPRISED OF THE DEAL

Accordingly, the merchant moved over to the girl and apprised her of the deal arrived at with the Caliph.

“Don’t you worry about anything, Khwaja”, the girl

reassured him in a confident manner. “By the grace of my devotion to Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and his progeny, I will never be out-classed in my discourse.”

And so the Merchant went back to Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed and confirmed the terms of agreement arrived at earlier.

VIZIR’S ADVICE

And then followed an exchange of questions and answers in an atmosphere of expectancy and keen audience,

HAROON: What is your religion, and what scriptural precepts are you guided by in the conduct of life.

HUSNIYAH: My religion is the manifest religion as delivered by Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.); and in the conduct of life, I am guided by the precepts established by the Ahlul Bait (a.s.).

HAROON: Who was the successor - Caliph of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)?

HUSNIYAH: First get all your contemporary scholars together, O Caliph. I will then, in their presence, say what all I may have to say. And if anyone of them has anything questioning the veracity of my religious beliefs, I will convince him with my answers.

It was now that Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed realized that Husniyah followed in the footsteps of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) (i.e. that she was a *Shia*). So, he addressed his Vizir, saying: “This slave-girl is not of our religious denomination. If you agree, I will have her executed.”

“No”, advised the Vizir. “This girl has claimed something unique. So, if our *Ulema* (religious authorities) can surely subdue her with their learned arguments; and if she is rendered unable to prove the bonafides of her religious claims, then of course she should be sentenced to death. And in case our own *Ulema* are out-classed by her superiority of knowledge and wisdom, then it would become incumbent upon you, as a Caliph, to protect and guarantee safety to her. This is so because a slave-girl, who can excel over all the religious scholars with her argumentative superiority, rightly deserves it. To put to death such a prodigy of knowledge and learning does not behoove one who is in the position of Caliph.”

Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed was greatly pleased with the soundness of his Vizir’s advice, and instructed him to issue an order requiring all the *Ulema* of Baghdad to present themselves at the court for the purpose.

SCHOLARS ASSEMBLED AT THE ROYAL COURT

In the period of time to which this historic event relates, Abu Yusuf was the most outstanding religious scholar in Baghdad. Another one, Shafei was also in Baghdad at the

time; and both of them were actually antagonistic to each other.

However, a full team of *Ulema* finally assembled at the Caliph's court; and Husniyah, clad in her *hijab*, came and seated herself amidst these scholastic luminaries of the age. The first question they asked her was about her religious affinity. To this she replied that she was a devoted follower of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.).

And then followed a discourse in which she very capably and fearlessly expounded her arguments. So cogent was her reasoning, and so impressive her delivery of words, that everyone of the gathering found himself too dumb-founded to stand up to her scholastic onslaughts. As for Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed, he was simply stupefied and vexed by the masterly manner in which Husniyah quoted authentic Quranic references, their interpretations, and citations from the traditions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). She was simply marvelous.

IBRAHIM BIN KHALID AWFI A BASRITE ERUDITE

At last when he realized the fact that none of these scholars could face the excellence of the slave-girl's superiority of knowledge, the Caliph beckoned a Bedouin and handed him a letter, and directed him to proceed to Basra and fetch out Ibrahim bin Khalid Awfi - a reputed scholar who taught 400 pupil-scholars at the religious academy at Basra.

When the Bedouin messenger saw the administrator of Basra, and the latter had apprised himself with the contents of the letter, he immediately sent for Ibrahim bin Khalid, and dispatched him posthaste to Baghdad on the fastest camel available.

With the arrival of Ibrahim bin Khalid in Baghdad, Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed summoned a session of all the local Scholars. Government officials, dignitaries of the State, and monarchs from outside were all invited to the royal court to watch and listen to the proceedings of ensuing debate under the Chairmanship of Ibrahim bin Khalid, who was seated in a chair covered all over with gold foil, thereby focusing his literary importance and greatness.

Then, with Ibrahim bin Khalid thus seated in the lavishly decorated presidential chair, Husniyah was called in. The seat reserved for her was among the rows where other slaves and menials were seated. But as she entered the hall, she with the permission of the Caliph, said the customary salutations and formal greetings; and before anyone asked to seat herself at the place reserved for her, she on her own went straight to where Ibrahim was sitting pompously and sat by his side!

POLEMIC DISCUSSION STARTS

The Caliph looked towards Husniyah, and with a swift gesture of his eye, he indicated her to commence the debate. Grasping wisely the meaning of the Caliph's furtive eye-flick, she commenced the proceedings,

choosing none other than Ibrahim himself for her initial attack!

“Now look, O Ibrahim”, she commenced, “I know you as the author of a hundred books which are quite popular with the *Ulema*. And I also know you as the one who prides himself on being known as an enemy of Ali ibne Abi Talib (a.s.)”

Ibrahim could hardly control his temper at the impoliteness of Husniyah’s words. Her attack was so sudden.

“You are deriding me”, he said. Then turning to the audience, he said, “It is futile to have a discussion with this slave-girl. It would be useless to do so. In fact, to talk to her would be below my dignity, and an insult to scholars.”

Yahya Barmaki, the Caliph’s Vizir, who laughed at this feigned reaction of Ibrahim remarked, “It is an adage of the sages and religious authorities that one must pay attention to *what* is being said, rather than to the *person* who says it. It does not behoove learned persons to get so excited.”

“God willing”, continued Husniyah unaffected, “I will make you vacate your presidential chair”. Saying this she wanted to commence her discourse.

“Wait!” Protested Ibrahim, “I will start first with asking questions from you, as it is I who have come from afar.”

Ibrahim knew that the girl wanted to take the initiative of converting Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed to the faith of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.).

“Alright”, acquiesced Husniyah, “You start then. Ask me anything you choose”.

HUSNIYAH’S PROMPT REPLIES TO EIGHTY QUERIES

So, Ibrahim started the proceedings with his question; and Husniyah kept satisfying him with her prompt replies in a polished and fluent manner to some eighty queries. It would not be congenial to reproduce here these questions and answers; for, to do so would require pages, and also, it is likely that some readers may be offended, too. Suffice it to say that Husniyah replied to each and every question of Ibrahim, and she disproved his contentions in their letter and spirit.

The audience was wonder-struck at the beauty and eloquence of Husniyah’s delivery of arguments. She had by now charmed them with her beau-ideal excellence of knowledge and learning, and she won their hearts.

At the end of the lengthy exchange of questions and answers, she said, “Now, O Ibrahim, our discussion has lasted for quite a long time. I am afraid the Caliph may be annoyed at this lengthy duration. So, now if you permit, let me ask you some questions.”

“Not yet”, insisted Ibrahim, “I have three more issues to thrash out, if you can satisfy me over them, I will retire and give you a chance.”

“Alright. I accede. Ask me,” replied the girl so confidently.

CALIPH’S SUCCESSOR

“Who is the Caliph to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)?” Enquired Ibrahim.

“The one who accepted and embraced Islam before anyone else did,” said Husniyah, quite casually.

“And who is that one?” Put in Ibrahim.

“The one who is the son-in-law and cousin of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.),” asserted the girl calmly, like saying that two-plus-two-make four.

Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed, who was listening attentively to the wordy duel, was conspicuously angered with Husniyah’s cool and emphatic assertion. Noticing the angered facial expressions of the Caliph, Ibrahim was encouraged and asked:

“What evidence do you have to prove that Ali was the first to accept and embrace Islam? I maintain that it was Abu Bakr Siddique who was the first; and I say that because Abu Bakr was a matured man of 40 when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) announced invitation to Islam, while Ali (a.s.) was still a kid then; and the convictions and conduct of a minor, with all the faults that go with being so cannot be reckoned as valid or reliable.”

EPISODE OF PROPHET MUSA AND HAZRAT KHIZIR (A.S.)

“Now listen, O Ibrahim,” responded Husniyah, “Will you accept and recognize the sanctity of the Imamate of Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibne Abi Talib (a.s.) and his heir-apparancy to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), if I prove that a child is entitled to be reckoned as cognizable for reward or retribution, as the case may be?”

“Agreed”, offered Ibrahim, adding. “I will recognize that, provided you convince me with cogent reasons and proofs.”

“Alright,” proceeded the girl, “what do you say about the episode of Prophet Musa and Hazrat Khizr in which the latter killed a certain boy? This is what the Holy Quran says clearly about the incident:

Both of them then went ahead. Ultimately, they met a boy whom Hazrat Khizr killed right away. Upon this, Prophet Musa said: ‘What! You have killed an innocent boy; and that too not in lieu of anyone’s blood. Indeed you have done a strange thing..... [18:74]

“Later, when Musa objected to the killing of the boy, asking Khizr why he had done so, and the latter explained:

Both the mother and father of the boy whom, I have killed are true and faithful Muslims. I had an apprehension that when the boy grows older, he would entangle his parents in disobedience and infidelity of Faith. [18:80]

“Now, tell me, O Ibrahim: was it right on the part of Hazrat Khizr to have killed the boy, or was Hazrat Khizr himself a tyrant? If you say that Khizr was a tyrant, then it is not proper that Allah should praise and approve tyrants. But Allah has praised Khizr in the Holy Quran. And you will agree that Khizr is a great Messenger sent by Allah. Won’t you?”

Ibrahim could only blink and bow down his head in silence. He was clearly beaten by the logic of her analogy.

“Come on, Ibrahim,” pursued Husniyah victoriously, “Why are you silent? Why don’t you speak up instead of lowering your head. Your silence means that you know nothing except how to be prejudicial and malicious.”

She paused for a while, and then took another shot at her foe. The attack had now started in right earnest!

“In the name of Allah, the Lord of the Universe, tell me truthfully, O Ibrahim, if you have read the tradition of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) which I will narrate now. Tell me whether you have or have not, heard of this tradition from accepted authorities on the subject.”

HOLY PROPHET (S.A.W.A.) TRADITION

Then, turning to the group of the *Ulemas* in the audience, she added: “I ask for the attention and testimony of the learned ones over what I am going to say.”

“Alright, Husniyah, tell us about that tradition and how it goes,” said Ibrahim.

“It is narrated,” Husniyah started, “by Mujahid who heard it from Abu Imran, who in turn, heard it from Abu Saeed Khudri who related as follows:

One when we were sitting in the company of Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), Salman-e-Farsi, Abu Zar Ghaffari, Miqdad bin Aswad, Ammar bin Yaseer, Huzaifa Yamani and Abu Tufail Amri came in. Grief and annoyance was writ large on their faces.

They told the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.): ‘We heard such things about your cousin from certain malicious persons that grieve us greatly.’

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) asked what thing was that they had heard about his cousin, Ali Ibne Abi Talib (a.s.).

They replied: ‘They ask what claims to distinction of greatness does your Guide and leader have as compared to others in the matter of being the first one to embrace Islam, when in fact he was only a child at the time.’

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) replied: ‘I will remove the cause of your grief, and gladden your hearts. Upon the oath of Allah who commissioned me with His Apostleship, I will relate to you an incident which Allah revealed to me, and which you must have probably read in the earlier Scriptures. When Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) was born, he was exiled from the Kingdom along with his mother by Namrood.

At about the time of sun-set, the mother put a bark of a tree round him and taking the child, Ibrahim, to the bank of a river, she left him there. No sooner had she left him, than Ibrahim stood up and wiped his face and head with his hands. He then recited the Kalima and cleaned his face and hands with the cloth in which his mother had wrapped him. When the mother saw these astonishing phenomena, she was really alarmed. Consequently in this context, Allah in His Book has said:

And thus have We been apprising Ibrahim with the working of the Heavenly and Earthly spheres, so that he becomes one of those who believe in My Oneness. Then, when night came, the infant Ibrahim saw a star, and suddenly exclaimed: 'Ah! This is my Allah?' And when the star disappeared, he observed: 'No. I do not want to make my Allah something that disappears.' Then when he saw the shining Moon, he said, 'Yes, this is my Allah. And when the Moon too, disappeared with the onset of dawn, he said, 'Ah! This is He. If Allah had not guided me, I surely would have gone astray.' Then he saw the Sun in all its shining glory, and said: 'Ah! this is the biggest of all I have seen. This definitely is my Allah.'" But when the Sun also went down at the end of the say, he said: 'O my People! I am disgusted with all those things with which you have associated Allah. These things can never be the Allah (Note the Conviction of this infant).' [6:75-79]

Hazrat Isa started talking to his mother, and

when he was three days old, she quoted so argumentatively from the Holy Quran that this is what the Sacred Book says about him. When people confronted Mary with the question as to how she conceived a child without a husband:

But she pointed out unto him. They said, "How can we speak to one who is (yet) a child in the cradle". He (Isa miraculously) said, "Verily. I am a servant of Allah; He has given me a Book (Injil) and made me a Prophet!" And He has made me blessed wherever I be and He has enjoined on me prayer and poor-rate so long as I live!" [19:29-31]

Thus, Allah blessed Jesus Christ with Prophethip and book when he was still an infant, and commanded him to establish prayer and give charity. And Jesus was only 3 days old when he could speak.

O my Companions, know it for certain that Allah created me and Ali out of one and the same Divine Splendor. And even as the unborn offspring's of Adam, we used to be chanting the praise of the Lord till eventually He transmitted us as Adam's offspring's via pure seeds and pure wombs; and the praises of the Lord which we used to recite throughout all the phases of our physical manifestation in the loons of our fathers and in the wombs of our mothers were distinctly audible to the ears of the fathers and mothers who generated us through the ages. This process of transmission

continued till Our Divine Light Split into two channels from the seed of Abdul Muttallib, one half being shared by Abdullah, and the other half by Abu Talib. The grandeur of 'being' would radiate from both these sources when they used to be among other common people. And finally we were conceived by our respective mothers.

When Ali (a.s.) was conceived, Hazrat Jibrail, came to me with a Divine message, saying: 'O Beloved of the Lord! Allah sends His blessings to you, and has felicitated you on the conception of Ali; and Allah hereby informs you that the time to proclaim your Prophetship, and to receive Divine revelations has now arrived, and that He has reinforced you with the power and strength of your brother and Deputy, Ali Ibne Abi Talib (a.s.), who will add honour of strength, stability and permanence to your name and perpetuate your line of generation.'

When Ali (a.s.) was born, his mother, Fatima binte Asad, placed him in my arms, and I hugged him to my breast. The babe Ali, at this moment, placed the forefinger of his hand against his ear and confessed the sanctity of my Prophetship, and asked me my permission to recite something. Then by Allah, Ali started reciting the verses revealed by Allah, starting from Hazrat Adam and ending with Prophet Seth (a.s.) (Shees). He recited these verses right from the beginning to end so thoroughly and correctly that had Adam and Shees been present on

the occasion, they would have conceded that Ali's memory was sharper than theirs.

Ali (a.s.) then recited the Pentateuch of Musa, the Gospel of Jesus and Psalms of Dawud so elegantly that if this Prophets, to whom these Scriptures were revealed, were alive, they would justifiably have confessed that Ali (a.s.) had more knowledge than all of them put together.

Finally, Ali (a.s.) recited the Holy Quran which Allah revealed to me; and his recitation and memorizing of it was as authentic as is mine.

After this there was a conversation between me and Ali (a.s.) in the manner the previous Prophets had with their successors. The dialogue got over, Ali (a.s.) then reverted to the nature of infancy and I handed him over to his mother.'

Finishing the recapitulation of the incident as retold by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), Husniyah told her spellbound audience at the end that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), turning to his Companions who were so perturbed and grieved over the loose talk about Ali (a.s.) by certain malicious persons, said:

“My dear friends, the utterances of my enemies should not cause grief to you. What the infidels and disbelievers say is of no consequence..... I am the most exalted Prophet of all Prophets of Allah; and my Successor, Ali, similarly is the most exalted of all such successors”.

“Hearing the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) speak thus,” Husniyah continued with the narrative, “Salman-e-Farsi and the other Companions felt relieved and happy, and rose up to depart with invocations of Allah’s blessings upon Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and his progeny. And while departing, they observed among themselves; “Indeed, it is we who are the successful and fortunate ones”,

“The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) heard this, and said: ‘Verily, you people are righteous. The Paradise is for (people such as) you; and the Hell for your enemies and for the adversaries of Ali-the Maula of all’.”

At this stage of the speech delivered eloquently by Husniyah, Caliph Haroon and a majority of the *Ulema* present were visibly moved, and were virtually weeping with irrepressible emotion. And Ibrahim bin Khalid - the great Scholar sat tongue-tied, noticing his hopeless silence, the slave-girl turned to the audience, and addressing in particular the *Ulema* and Shafei and other notables by their names, she said:

“In the name of Allah I appeal to you to speak the truth without any fabrication. Now, tell me honestly if you have also read this authentic narrative that has just been quoted. Tell me if it is true or false.”

NAFS-E-RASOOL (S.A.W.A.)

A majority of the learned gathering present there agreed to the veracity of the narrative, saying: “Yes indeed. This is a tradition and none can deny its authenticity.”

“Are you also convinced, O Ibrahim,” she asked, turning to him, “that Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) is the most exalted of all the Prophets sent by Allah?”

“Yes. I am convinced”, replied he.

“Then, she said, “You are committed to agree that Allah has termed Ameerul Momineen Ali (a.s.) as the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s “Nafs”. This is indicated in the following verse of the Holy Quran:

Say! (O Our Prophet Muhammad!) (them) “come you let us summon our sons, and (you summon) your sons, and (we summon) our women and (you) your women, and (we summon) ourselves and (you) yourselves and then let us invoke and lay the curse of Allah on the liars”. [3:61]

“If you have any point of objection in the verse I have quoted,” continued Husniyah, “You might as well say it now, so that I can satisfy you in the presence of all the Commentators of Holy Quran and the traditionalists present here.”

“God forbid,” replied Ibrahim, “How can I deny what has been said in the Holy Quran!”

“Then,” reacted the girl sharply, “O enemy of Allah and Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)! unjustifiable antagonist of religion! O malicious adversary of the sanctified family of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). With all your beliefs in the authenticity of the Holy Quran and the traditions which establish that Ali Murtaza is the ‘Nafs’ as well as the brother of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) who is the most

exalted of all the Prophets, why don't you agree that Ameerul Momineen Ali (a.s.) is the one who embraced Islam before anyone else did? Why don't you concede that he is the most outstanding of all the successors of the previous Prophets, like Ibrahim, his ancestor; and Isa who conversed and proclaimed their belief in the unity of Allah even as new born? Why can't you agree that Ali (a.s.) possessed complete faith in Allah right from the moment of his birth? Why don't you agree that he declared his faith in Islam as early as his birth? Why don't you accept him as such, despite your knowledge that he was brother of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), a son of his uncle. It was, as you know, due to Ali's role that Islam gained strength and stability. You also know that Allah has referred to Ali with the title of *wali* (Deputy). You also know that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) has described Ali's one single blow at the encounter at the Battle of Ahzab (the Ditch) was greater in value than the worship of and obedience of mankind and genii put together. Moreover, the tradition which I quote now originates from the scholars of your own school of thought, and is quoted in your own books of reference. This is what it says:

'Anyone who wishes to witness the knowledge and wisdom of Adam; the piety of Noah; the wisdom and forbearance of Ibrahim; the awe and dignity of Musa; and devotion and prayerfulness of Isa, should look at Ali for the purpose.'

"When that is so," continued Husniyah, addressing Ibrahim, "and in view of the fact, which you also subscribe to, that Ali (a.s.) excels all Prophets and

Apostles except Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and and that next to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), Ali is the most exalted one, then how and why do you say that profession of Faith by a minor cannot be reckoned as reliable? Why can't you accept the truth that Ali was the first to accept Islam, having been bestowed with Imamah and successorship to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as early as at his boyhood? And what more? The Pentateuch, the Bible, the Psalms of Davud, and the Holy Quran were all already committed to his memory right at his birth! Besides this, all Muslims, irrespective of factional differences, believe in the truth of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s saying: 'Not even once did Ali commit any act of infidelity to Allah.'

"And Abu Bakr?" proceeded the girl in the same strain of masterly oration, "He discontinued his worship of the idols, Lat and Uza and switched over to Islam at the age of forty. But even then, he did not wholly subscribe to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), and disobeyed him every time. Yet, with all these shortcomings on the part of Abu Bakr, you reckon him as a true believer of Islam! On the contrary, you disbelieve in Ali whose purity of character and descent Allah Himself testifies? What a mean and malicious exhibition of animosity to the family members of the Holy House of Holy Prophethood."

Ibrahim bin Khalid was completely flabbergasted by the force and excellence of Husniyah's masterly dissertation.

"I concede I have lost my case", he murmured, his head hanging low with the weight of the defeat inflicted by Husniyah, the slave girl.

DISPUTE OF ABBAS WITH ALI (A.S.)

“But,” he put in after a pause, “I have this question to put to you: What do you have to say about the dispute of Abbas (an uncle of Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.)) with Ali. Both of them claimed the right of being an inheritor to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), each saying that he had a better right to that position. They, therefore, referred their dispute to Abu Bakr for a decision. Now, it is common knowledge that when there are two parties to claim, one must necessarily be right, and the other wrong.”

This was a shrewd strategy that Ibrahim devised. He had calculated that if Husniyah said that Abbas was wrong in his claim for successorship to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), she would be straightaway condemned to death by Caliph Haroon, for Haroon himself was the fifth of the caliphs of the Abbasid line of generations! If on the other hand, she said that Ali was wrong in his claim, this would be a degradation of her religious beliefs and reflect adversely on the very basis of her religious affiliations. She would thus fail to achieve the object she had placed at such a high stake!

O that is what Ibrahim thought.

“The answer to your question,” responded Husniyah, unperturbed by Ibrahim’s tactical question, “Can be found in the Holy Quran itself.”

“What and where in the Holy Quran?” asked he, excitedly. “Listen”, lectured the girl to Ibrahim. “This is what Allah says to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in the Holy Quran.

And has the story of the litigants come to you? When they climbed the wall into the prayer room? When entered they upon Dawud and he was frightened of them, said they: Fear (you) not, (we are) two litigants, one of us has exceeded against the other, so decide in between us with justice and act not unjustly, and guide us to the right way. Verily this my brother; he has ninety-nine ewe and for me is but a single ewe; but said he: Make me owner of that (also), and has prevailed over me in arguing. [38:21-23]

“According to the commentaries on Holy Quran the two persons who approached Dawud with their dispute, were none other than the angels, Jibrail and Mikail sent by Allah.”

Pausing a while for breath, and addressing Ibrahim squarely she asked: “Now tell me, O Ibrahim, who was on the right Jibrail or Mikail?”

“Both Jibrail and Mikail,” ventured Ibrahim, adding: “Since Dawud was at fault, both Jibrail and Mikail had gone to him for apprising and warning him.”

“Allah is Great!” explained Husniyah, “Ali and Abbas, likewise were both right; and Abu Bakr was at fault. Like the angels in the episode, these two had also gone to Abu Bakr for apprising of his fault by insisting upon their individual claims. Abbas insisted that the right of

inheriting the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was his, by virtue of the fact that he was the Uncle of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Similarly, Ali too was persistent in his claim to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s successorship, for, he was the son of his uncle as well as his son-in-law, besides being a brother - a claim strengthened all the more in view of the fact that Fatima (s.a.), the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s daughter, was his wife living under his roof; and Hasan and Husain (a.s.), the forerunners of youth to paradise were his sons. Further, Ali substantiated his claim by quoting a verse of the Holy Quran wherein Allah has described Ali as the part and parcel (*Nafs*) of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). And note it, O Ibrahim, when Abu Bakr heard Ali say all this, he said:

‘Verily, I have heard the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) say that Ali was his Heir and Deputy and the best judge of my religion.’

“When Abbas heard this confession of Abu Bakr,” she continued, “he got excited and asked Abu Bakr why, when he had personally heard the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) say that Ali was his Deputy, he had opposed Ali and grabbed the Caliphate chair, thereby usurping the latter’s lawful right and displeasing Allah and His Messenger.

“When Abu Bakr heard this from Abbas, he realized that these two, that is Ali and Abbas, had come there to insinuate him, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s inheritance being the pretext for that purpose:

‘It is I with whom you have come to quarrel, said Abu Bakr, irritated like one who is caught between two stools.’

“And then, after murmuring a few more words of indignant nature, Abu Bakr went away.”

Husniyah thus concluded her discourse on the point, and turned to Ibrahim for his countermove, if he had any to make. But the soundness of her arguments and citations had rendered him speechless. There was nothing useful he could say in the matter, except give in by saying: “I concede this point also to you.”

“But,” he added quickly, “Tell me, who is greater of the two namely Abbas and Ali”?

“You might as well ask if Hamza (another uncle of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)) was more exalted than Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.)”, retorted the girl. “Why are you harping upon Abbas and Ali? I see no point in it. If Abbas was greater in his standing, it was all the more to the credit of Ali to have had such an exalted Uncle; conversely, if Ali was greater, then it adds to the pride of Abbas to have had a nephew as exalted as Ali was.”

This eloquence of speech, coupled with an unsurpassable ingenuity of reasoning, with which Husniyah the slave-girl poured out her arguments, was simply astounding. Caliph Haroon was not only astonished at the polished manner of delivery of her arguments, but he actually felt his assembly of renowned scholars spell bound by Husniyah’s enviable intellect and store of knowledge.

“I am surprised,” said the Caliph, looking scornfully

at Ibrahim, “I am really surprised at your intellectual inadequacy, despite the reputation you enjoy as a renowned academic scholar!”

“I have replied, O Caliph,” interposed the slave-girl, “to eighty-three questions now. If you please permit me, may I now ask about one certain matter? If Ibrahim can satisfy me over it, I will even now, concede victory to him.”

The Caliph readily permitted her to ask anything she preferred.

DID THE HOLY PROPHET (S.A.W.A.) NAME THE SUCCESSOR?

“Now, tell me O Ibrahim,” she said, “tell me whether the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had, or had not, named his successor at the time of his death.”

“No! He did not”, answered Ibrahim categorically.

“Then, was this a fault on the part of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), or was it a rectitude - calculated and deliberate?” Husniyah shot out this question with the quickness of a lioness leaping at her prey.

“Also tell me,” she added, “were the deliberations with respect to Caliphate at the hide-out at Saqeefa bonafide? or were they malafide? who was erroneous in this instance? was it the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)? or was it his companions?”

Ibrahim was in a fix, true and proper! Husniyah had cornered him flat out!

For, if Ibrahim said that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had erred, then the whole Structure of Islamic Code would be rendered defective. Alternatively, if he said that the Caliphs had acted wrongly, then he would be proving the very point contended by Husniyah, thereby degrading his own religious beliefs, and consequently be penalized to death by the Caliph.

Thus Ibrahim sat silently brooding and speculating about the consequences of his defeat at the hand of this extraordinary slave-girl. The entire audience was now convinced that Ibrahim, the learned Scholar, stood utterly beaten by Husniyah. They all started taunting and laughing scornfully at him, saying that a mature scholar like him was beaten hollow by a mere girl, and a purchasable one, too.

Noticing the embarrassing situation Ibrahim was shoved in by Husniyah, and realizing that the reputation of a renowned scholar of his State was precariously at stake, Haroon turned round to his Vizir, Yahya Barmaki and called him by his side.

“There has been, I am told, an age-long controversy,” he whispered to his Vizir, “between the scholars of Baghdad and certain *Ulema* of the Bani Hashims and other recognized jurists over the matter of predestination as related to the good and evil conduct of human beings

in their behavior. Ask Ibrahim if he can tackle this subject. Poor man! He has been subdued, nice and proper, by this slave-girl in other matters of religion. Maybe, this topic that I suggest, may retrieve him from the ignoble position he has been put in by Husniyah.”

Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed himself was keenly interested in this topic of Divine predestination and retribution or reward, as the case may be for the individual behaviour of man. Despite what all the authorities on the subject told him about this matter, he remained as unsatisfied as ever. As such, his real object in choosing this particular topic was to satisfy his own self. He was, therefore, eager to know what this remarkable girl, Husniyah, with her exhaustive knowledge had to say on the subject.

In compliance, therefor, of Caliph Haroon’s bidding, Yahya Barmaki, the Vizir, asked Ibrahim as to what he thought about the proposition.

“What do you have to say,” he asked Ibrahim, “about the matter of good and evil; profitable and harmful acts committed by human beings, and the sinful and tyrannical aspects that are inherent in them. Do you attribute wrong and sinful acts to the predestined will of Allah, or do you believe them to be a result of man’s free will? The Bani Hashims and their followers believe that the pious and obedient ones are entitled to Divine reward, and the evil-doers to retribution. Now, tell us, what is your own belief in this matter?”

ACTS PREDESTINED BY ALLAH MAY NOT NECESSARILY HAVE HIS APPROVAL

“I believe”, replied Ibrahim, “that all human acts, good or evil, beneficial or harmful, are in conformity with what has been predestined by Allah for individuals. But this does not mean that all acts have the approval of Allah. To illustrate, Adam and the Devil were both created by Allah, though one is virtually the antonym of the other. Allah is also the Creator of water, land and fire. Diverse factors like life and death; Heaven and Hell; health and sickness; beliefs: religious and atheistic; abstemiousness and sinfulness love and hatred all these have been at the instance of Allah’s absolute power of Creation. Prophet Ibrahim was a creature of Allah, but so was his tormentor Namrood. Musa, too, was created by Allah; but then Allah was also the Creator of Musa’s arch enemy Firoun and his Vizir, Hamaan. Likewise, Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and his life-time foe, Abu Jahal, were both the creatures of Allah alone. The atheists as well as the Muslims are both the creations of Allah. All these creations of a conflicting nature are the consequence of Divine predestination....”

PREDESTINATION WITHOUT HIS APPROVAL IS PSEUDO-PHILOSOPHY

When Husniyah heard this rather preposterous and meaningless high talk, she could not help reacting sharply to this nonsense.

“You should be ashamed of yourself, O Ibrahim,” She broke in with a fire in her voice, “fear Him, and do not involve all Muslims in your loose talk that stinks of atheism. Fear Allah, O Ibrahim, for you are extenuating the Devil and his mission. Come to your senses. Listen, it is not really very difficult to convince you and others who precede you in such foolish beliefs. In fact, it is quite an easy job.”

Pausing for breath, Husniyah continued: “First of all you say that the good and evil acts one does is the resultant of one’s being predestined by Allah to it. And then you also say that Allah does not approve of all acts done by individuals. Now, these two statements are contradictory in that both the propositions cannot be operative at one and the same time. How can one sanction something, and yet not approve of it in practice? This is simply absurd, unless of course, the one who gives the sanction does so under duress or fear, or for the purpose of cheating. Needless to say that Allah Almighty is free of such debased attributes as compulsion, fear or deception. What you have said, O Ibrahim, is sheer nonsense. The fact is that such theories have been coined by vested interests so that the questionable conduct of their forefathers could be conveniently covered up or extenuated by such pseudo-philosophic theorizations. I am really surprised at your religious conviction which attributed good as well as evil to the Will of Allah. You really ought to be ashamed of professing such a foolish notion as an article of Faith.”

Ibrahim, who was listening attentively to her words, interrupted Husniyah at this point.

“Husniyah,” he said, “You are disbelieving the word of Allah when you say what all you have said.”

PREDESTINATION AND THE SACRED BOOK

“No!” Rejected she, “On the other hand, I emphasize that I am wedded to the veracity of everything Allah has said in the Holy Quran. I have thoroughly studied the contents of this Sacred Book along with authentic notes and explanations of its intricate points; and in this task my tutors were none other than those exalted persons whose ancestors were themselves the recipients of the Word of Allah...”

“Alright”, put in Ibrahim, “what then have you to say about the Quranic verse wherein Allah says:

(O Prophet) say: All things are ordained by Allah, He is the creator of everything.

“Similarly, in another verse, Allah says:

He leads astray whom He chooses; and guides whom He chooses on the right path.

“In another verse, Allah says:

If I choose to do so, I can guide all on to the right path.

“In yet another verse, Allah says:

Allah has sealed their hearts and their ears; and their eyes are curtained; thus they cannot become true believers.

“Now, tell me, Husniyah, what convictions do you hold on these Divine verses?”

“Listen, O Ibrahim,” replied the girl in her confident tone, “The last verse, beginning with *Allah have sealed their hearts* and ending with *true believers* which you have quoted in support of your contention, is a figurative expression like most other verses in the Holy Quran, and as such, its meaning has to be defined in a manner acceptable to common-sense. In the case of the first verse you quoted, saying *All things are ordained by Allah....* if you go by the literal meaning of the words, it would plainly mean that all things and all actions emanate at the instance of Allah, and that this religion of ours is the work of the Devil. You must understand that the words ‘all’ and ‘everything’, as occur in the Holy Quran, mean ‘certain’. Take for instance this verse:

...And then place each of the pieces on every mountain.

“It would be absurd to construe the adjective ‘every’ as meaning to convey that the ‘pieces of animals meat,’ referred to in the text, should be scattered over every mountain in the world. Clearly, what the word ‘every’ means here is ‘certain mountains.’ Needless to say that every sane-thinking person knows it for certain that mounts Alwin and Caucasus did not happen to be situated at the place which the verse refers to!”

The girl had scored her point.

“Similarly,” she continued, “In the verse entitled ‘Qissa-e-Bilqees’, Allah says:

.....*And he was bestowed with everything on earth; and he was given a grand throne....*

“Here, too, ‘everything’ does not mean to include everything in the world. It pertains to only ‘certain’ or ‘some’ of the things. If one takes the meaning of the word ‘everything’ in the text in a literal sense, it would mean that the person referred to owned the whole of the vegetable world. And all persons in their right senses know that brinjals and turnips did not grow where the verse refers to! Thus, the sense conveyed by the words ‘all’ and ‘everything’, is that those things which are inherently of an undesirable or defective character cannot be deemed to be what Allah intended us to identify Him with. All good emanate from Him, beautiful and true. Grand and splendid things like the sky; the Earth; the Divine empyrean and the Divine Throne; the Divine tablet and pen with which Divine decrees are written; man and angels, the phenomena of cause and effect; and all blissful things – of all these He is the emanator. And evil things like waywardness, tyranny, sinfulness etc. cannot be attributed to Allah.”

Pausing for a while reflectively, Husniyah continued: “I now take up another verse you quoted, and which says: *He leads astray whom He chooses; and guides whom He likes on the right path.* Now, you must understand that every single verse is interpretable in numerous ways; but basically, there are only two grammatical complexes contained therein. One is the guidance element, and the other the grace element. These are the two facets of

message relevant for all, whether a believer or an atheist. So, know it, O Ibrahim, all directives of guidance and assurances of grace that Allah has ordained for the Muslims, also hold good equally for the non-Muslims too. Allah's commissioning of Prophets for guidance of mankind, and His endowment of physical features, faculty of thinking, and power of reasoning to the human species - all this is something which is meant for all, Muslims or atheists. Had it not been so, the non-believers and atheists could absolve themselves on the Day of Judgment by saying: 'O Allah, what fault is it if we had sinned in life, for it was you Yourself who had sealed our hearts, eyes and ears; and it was You who denied us the faculty of perceiving truth and of being guided by it.' Thus the evil doers would have a very sound and valid argument against Allah. But Allah has cleared the position when He says:

...So that people have no excuse after Prophets have been sent to them (for guidance.)

"In yet another place, Allah says:

Then Allah's (alone) is the argument decisive...

"Thus, you will notice, O Ibrahim, that wherever the word 'guidance' has been used in the Holy Quran, it is conditioned with certain provisions; and this word is used in the sense of 'Divine grace' or 'benevolence', so that it does not become incumbent upon Allah to guide the evil doers upon the path leading to Paradise. But if it pleases Allah to do so, He can waive aside their sins, and favour them as a matter of grace with His guidance which can lead the evil doers to Heaven."

There was not a point which Husniyah missed in her masterly dissertation on the Quranic arguments brought forward by Ibrahim. One by one, she shattered to pieces the erroneous interpretations delivered by her adversary.

Turning now to another verse quoted by Ibrahim in support of his contention on the matter of Divine predestination, she continued:

“You must know, my dear Ibrahim, that the word ‘Izlal’ as used in the verse you refer to, and meaning ‘to lead astray’, carries more than one sense; and is used in different places in different sense. This word actually means ‘destruction’ and when this word is associated with Allah, it means ‘destruction’ and ‘retribution’. Take for instance the verse wherein it is said:

Allah will punish with His retribution the tyrants and oppressors for having been led astray.’

“Now’ if one were to take the word ‘Izlal’ as meaning ‘to lead astray,’ or to misguide, it does not make any sense at all to say: Allah will mislead the tyrants and oppressors for having been led astray.’ That would be sheer nonsense, for, the tyrants and oppressors cannot be persons other than those who have already strayed away from the path of good.”

“And know it, O Ibrahim that the word ‘misguide’ which you associate with Allah is used by Allah Himself as referring to the Devil (The Satan). For example, this verse:

Satan, the condemned one will misguide a majority of you!

“This word - ‘Misguide’ - has also been used in reference to Firoun in the verse which says:

Firoun misguided his people.....

“So, if it is Allah who misleads or misguides His creatures, why would He have described others as the ones who lead people astray? Your contention, therefore, O Ibrahim, that Allah misleads the non-believers is wholly untenable. In fact, it is a deliberate lie and an insinuation against Allah, amounting to open atheism; for this is what Allah says about those who forge lies:

Only those who do not believe in Allah, such are the ones who forge the lies.

“Thus it is essential,” proceeded Husniyah with her astounding mastery over the subject, “that one must interpret such verses as: ‘Allah misguides whom He chooses in a positive manner, associating Allah with the correct import of message contained in the words, and when the Divine grace element is lacking, and when Allah attributes the straying of man to man himself, it must be understood to mean that man is reattributed with Allah’s non-guidance for going astray in his conduct by himself. Thus, you see that ‘misguidance’ is a product of man’s own doing, and is not associated with Allah by any means.”

Then, referring to another verse quoted by Ibrahim, she explained:

“The verse: *Allah has sealed their hearts...* etc., which you have quoted so enthusiastically, is actually an allegory and means that those who, despite their hearts, eyes and ears

being open, remained adamant in their disbelief in Allah, are like those who have rendered themselves incapable of following the right path. Mere physical stamping or blocking of vision cannot be a deterring fact. If it were so, then Allah would not have said:

No! Allah has set a seal upon them for their disbelief, so they believe not but a little.”

Then, dealing with Ibrahim’s contention in a purely logical way, Husniyah told him:

“Listen, O Ibrahim. Your belief in the matter of predestination renders the missions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) despicable and shameful. According to your belief, Allah should have foretold His Messenger: ‘Do not beckon such and such people to embrace Islam, for, they will never do so, as I do not wish that they should tread the right path; and I have sealed their hearts and ears so that your invitation to them falls on deaf ears!’ That is what your belief implies.”

“But the fact, O Ibrahim”, proceeded the girl, “is that Allah Almighty has extended His Guidance to Muslims as well as to the non-Muslims in equal measure. Hence, it is an undeniable fact, and the Holy Quran corroborates it in these words:

.... We guided him also (i.e. the disbeliever) on to the right path. It is now for him to be thankful or ungrateful.

“So, when Allah Himself says so, how can anyone possibly contend that Allah does not guide the disbelievers?”

Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed had been listening to Husniyah's discourse with rapt attention. As has been pointed out earlier, the Caliph was personally interested in the subject of predestination which up till now was not wholly comprehensible to him. He was, therefore, extremely impressed by the slave-girl's expounding of the subject, and marveled at the elegant and logical manner in which she dwelt upon the subject. Though he belonged to a school of thought that was opposed to Husniyah's, he could not help admiring the sheer beauty and force and soundness of the girl's handling of the subject. The expression of delight and appreciation on the Caliph's face was obviously noticeable to the audience who seemed to be spell-bound by Husniyah's classic oratory.

Ibrahim was thinking desperately of how to counter her.

"What have you to say," he managed to say at last, "About what Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) Ibrahim told to the infidels? This is how it occurs in the Holy Quran:

Said Ibrahim, What a pity that you worship one whom you yourselves carve out of stone, although Allah is the Creator of all that you make."

Husniyah burst into uncontrolled laughter at this citation by her adversary.

"By Allah!" She said, controlling herself, "It seems you don't believe faithfully in the Word of Allah (Holy Quran). You are distorting its contents to suit your own ends and convenience..."

“But”, intercepted Ibrahim, “a majority of authorities on Holy Quran, including the followers of the companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) have opined - and their opinion cannot be refuted - that ‘Allah Has created you, and all your actions are of his making’.”

“But, my dear Ibrahim,” explained Husniyah calmly, “Your statement is belied by the work of Allah wherein He says: ‘Worship you the thing that you yourself make out of that which Allah created? And He created you as well as that material out of which you carve the idols?’

“So, if it was meant that it was Allah, their Creator, who influenced their actions also, then this verse would mean to justify the conduct of the disbelievers, and Allah would thus overlook their misdeeds. But such an interpretation would be contradictory to the import of the Divine message, for, that would render the first part of the verse incompatible with the latter part of it. In truth, what the verse purports to convey is that the people referred to were idol-worshippers. And they were the idol-makers also. And Allah clearly says that both of these, that is, the idol-worshippers as well as the material out of which the idols were made by them were His Creations. Therefore, while the act of creation of the substance was Allah’s, the act of carving out idols from the substance was that of the disbelievers. If Allah had created the idols, He would not have associated man with the physical action of manufacturing them. But since Allah is associating man with the action of producing a product (idol), it follows that it is man, and not Allah, who is acting on his own;

for, both from the religious as well as logical point of view, physical action is invariably associated with a person who commits it. And in this case, it were the disbelieving men who indulged themselves in the physical action of producing idols.”

HEAVENLY BOOKS, GUIDANCE, REWARD AND PUNISHMENT - ALL MEANINGLESS?

Husniyah was forging ahead with her biting arguments. Untiring and relentless, she was blowing to pieces her adversary’s eclectic theories.

“And, O Ibrahim,” she proceeded, “by what you believe about predestination you imply that Allah wants the disbelievers to indulge in sin, and that He does not want them to be obedient to Him! By the evil nature of such a belief, you stand charged with self-indictment in that you thereby believe Allah as committing ungraceful acts! You also say that irreligious acts, sinfulness and mischiefs that take place in the world are all predestined by Allah to occur. This would amount to saying that Allah is the most tyrants of all, because He will punish the disbelievers for their disbelief in Him - disbelief which, according to you, Allah Himself destined for them! That is, the disbelief of Allah instilled by Allah in the heart of a disbeliever who has not been given the power of rectifying it will be penalized with Allah’s wrath for its failure to correct itself into a state other than its original one! For instance, a Negro would be punished by Allah for possessing a

black complexion! A tall person would be taken to task for being tall! A dwarf for being a dwarf! Or retribute a boy for wetting his clothes with water after having plunged him into water, hands tied! This indeed be a naked oppression!”

“And listen, O Ibrahim, if Allah had created disbelief in the infidels; Sin in the sinners; and tyranny in the tyrants, then the finality of all that was preached by the whole line of Prophets and Apostles becomes questionable, for, if a Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) exhorted an infidel, saying:

‘I beckon you to establish Faith in the Unity of Allah, for; He has sent me to reform the people and to lead them to the path of righteousness’.

“He would answer:

‘If Allah has sent you to show the path of righteousness, then create Faith in me, or infuse me with the capacity to establish that Faith. I cannot establish Faith because I do not have the power to do so. I have been created as an infidel.’

“Thus, the purpose of Prophets sent by Allah will cease to have any meaning at all. There could be nothing for the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) to say to such a response of the infidel! Don’t you see, O Ibrahim, that it would be humanly impossible for an infidel to establish Faith in Allah if He expects him to do so after He Himself having instilled his heart with disbelief? It would by all reasons and sanction, amount to a condemnable expectation. To illustrate the point, if you ask someone to fly in the air,

he will quite obviously not be able to do so. As said in the Holy Quran, *No one is subjected to anything which is beyond his endurance to bear.* At another place in the Holy Quran Allah says:

Allah desires to lighten your burden, and man has been created weak.

“And yet at another place, Allah says:

Allah desires ease for you and He desires not for you hardship.

“And listen, O Ibrahim, it is absolutely untenable that Allah, having Himself created disbelief in the hearts of disbeliever, should ask the disbeliever to explain how and why he continues to be a disbeliever! It is equally preposterous that Allah being the Creator of good and evil, should ask the evil doer, as we find in Holy Quran, as to who diverted him from the path of righteousness on to the path of evil. Thus abandoning such a man, it makes no sense that Allah should call such a one to Himself and ask: *How can you disbelieve?*

“It is therefore plain that if Allah had instilled the heart of a disbeliever with disbelief of Him then such a person will be deemed to be a very obedient devotee of Allah, because, according to your belief, since Allah is the Creator of disbelief, He must necessarily be a patron of it. Thus, on the basis of your logic, a person who disbelieves in Allah becomes His obedient devotee; and a Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) becomes an evil person and a sinner because a Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) exhorts the

disbelievers to shun their disbelief and invites them to the right path. And also note, O Ibrahim, that according to your belief on the subject of predestination, the entire code of religious laws is rendered inoperative and useless because indulgences in vices like adultery, sodomy, theft, and addiction to wine, murder, gambling and other games of chance - all these are the consequences of predestination. Hence the Head of the State and the dispensers of religious laws have no right to curb or penalize persons who indulge in such vices, for that is what Allah has predestined for them! It also follows from your belief on the subject that Allah is an admirer of violators of moral codes because that is what He wills and has pre-ordained Himself; and as such, he should Himself be the jurist.”

Husniyah paused at this stage, as if endeavoring to recapitulate a point of interest; and it did not take her long to do so.

“Let me illustrate my point here, “She resumed, addressing Ibrahim, “It is related by Abul Mash’ashqar that a certain thief was brought before Abdullah bin Abbas who ordered one of his hands to be chopped off for the offence committed by him. One of the men present in the court protested against the verdict of the Caliph saying: ‘May Allah protect! I reckon this as a wrong judgment.’ This protest of the man infuriated Abdullah bin Abbas.

‘If my judgment is wrong ‘reprimanded Abdullah then your statement is worse than it.’

“As a result, the man who protested was driven out of the court and was ordered to be flogged and made to repent for what he said.”

Husniyah had, indeed, chosen a very apt instance to press her point, for, Abdullah bin Abbas was one of the ancestors of Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed! Her citation, therefore, pleased and impressed Haroon-ur-Rasheed immensely. The slave-girl thus scored another point, and very efficiently, too!

“And now listen, O Ibrahim,” she pursued her discourse “and listen carefully, that if factors like disobedience to Allah and sinfulness are at the instance of Allah, as you believe it to be so, then there should be no differentiation between you and the person who has been good to us (the devotees of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.)) all his life and the person who during his whole life, has been tyrant committing all sorts of excesses over us. On this basis, therefore, it is no good being thankful to the one who was good to us. It would in fact, not be a virtue to praise such a one; while on the other hand, it would be improper to condemn the evil person, for, when the doer of good or evil has no choice of his own in the matter of his own conduct, good or bad, then quite naturally, he cannot be praised or condemned – as the case may be – for the nature of his conduct. You will agree, one cannot praise Peter for the acts of Pan. Therefore, since ‘good’ or ‘evil’ - which are qualitative actions centered in us, it follows that the driving force of all our actions also inherently lies in us. On the basis of this presumptive theory, the entire line of Prophets

sent by Allah, the Scriptures revealed to them, the provision of Heaven and Hell - all these Divine acts become meaningless.”

PREDESTINATION IS SATANIC RESEARCH

At this stage of piloting her scholarly arguments, Husniyah warmed up a little, and in a voice indicative of indignation, she told Ibrahim.

“Listen, O Ibrahim! It was Satan the Devil who expressed the nature of his belief in the presence of Allah in these words:

O Lord! You have Yourself, strayed me off the Right Path.

“And you? ... Since you belong to that class of people who can be termed as ‘aggressors,’ you are advocating the cause of the Devil, and are aligning yourself with beliefs propagated by the Bani Umayyas and their followers under their pay, the latter drawing inspiration from the Devil in order to barter religion for the sake of worldly gains. You are also dogging their footsteps in a like manner!”

The sting in these words of Husniyah was too acute. Ibrahim and the *Ulema* of Baghdad reacted to her scathing expressions by creating a uproar in the assembly, protesting loudly to her saying: “How long, O You slave-girl, are you going to continue taunting about Islam?” They were so much infuriated that they

unanimously voted to Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed that Husniyah be beheaded forthwith.

But Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed thought otherwise!

Noticing their furious and disorderly behaviour, the Caliph became angry.

“You should be ashamed of yourself, O Ibrahim,” he told the reputed scholar, “You should really be ashamed that you have been silenced to defeat by the cogent arguments of this slave-girl. You have nothing to say by way of countering her. You have been convinced by her discourse, and yet, you want to be harsh to her? You wish to have her beheaded despite your hollow defeat?”

“If it does not displease the Caliph,” asserted Husniyah, “I can keep going with my arguments and discourse even for one week.”

“You are at liberty to do so,” declared Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed, adding, “Go ahead. Don’t be afraid of anything.”

With this royal assurance and encouragement, Husniyah resumed her oration.

“My dear Ibrahim,” she proceeded, “if man is not free to act, that is, if man has no free will of his own, then all conscious and intentional human actions like moving about, eating, drinking and all such bodily actions

become involuntary actions like the beating of the pulse - an action which is not controlled by will. The difference between voluntary and involuntary actions is thus clear. Any person in right senses will tell you that we can control our conscious or voluntary actions; but we certainly cannot fly into the sky. This point of intentional and unintentional actions was very ably stressed by Shaikh Bahlol in a debate in which he nicely convinced his opponent. Shaikh Bahlol told him, who believed that man has no free will, that according to his theory a donkey was wiser than him! Bahlol explained this sarcasm by illustrating that if a donkey is taken to a stream and whipped in order to make him cross it, his first reaction will that be of refusal. But, if whipped again, he will cross it. But if a donkey is taken to a wide river which the animal is physically incapable of crossing, he will on no account step into the river; not even if he is beaten to death. Shaikh Bahlol thus emphasized that whereas even a donkey knows the difference between what he can and what he cannot be capable of doing, the opponent, though being a man bestowed with a higher degree of intelligence, did not know where he can and where he cannot exercise his discretion of will!"

Caliph Haroon and his Vizir, yahya, as well as the State Officials burst out into spontaneous laughter at this humorous scholasticism of Husniyah. And Ibrahim, ashamed, hung his head down at the truth contained in the girl's witticism.

That was the best he could do under the circumstance!

However, resuming once again her speech, Husniyah continued with her arguments.

“Listen, O Ibrahim,” she asserted, “If man is not free to act, and if all actions are attributable to Allah, then punishment for what one does becomes meaningless; for as you say, Allah is also Merciful and a Forgiver of sins. Now listen carefully: It sometimes happens that man sins against the Merciful and the Forgiver, thereby rendering himself liable to retribution and punishment. Therefore, Allah should let him go scot free! For, as per your theory, when an evil act of man is not of man’s own doing but that of Allah, how can the Merciful Allah then punish man for an act committed at His own instance? This is all absurd!”

ACT AS REASON SAGACITY DICTATE

“The essence of religion, O Ibrahim, is that man must conduct his life in a manner consonant with reason and sagacity, so that he entitles himself to appreciation in this world, while at the same time ensuring his salvation in the Hereafter. If Allah wanted to give an absolute power of discretion to man, He could have done so; but Allah wants that man, with the amount of free will given to him, should exercise that discretion of His true believer and obedient creature, shunning disbelief in Him and avoiding wrongful conduct. However, if man, despite the choice of good or evil given to him, does not inculcate faith in Allah, then Allah certainly is not the loser.”

ARGUMENTS BASED ON PROPHETIC TRADITIONS

“And O Ibrahim, if you wish I can produce still more arguments of purely logical nature. But these may annoy the audience who may not find them very palatable. I will, however, cite a few arguments based on those authentic traditions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) which competent authorities - from both yours as well as our schools of thought - have quoted.

(i) Abdullah bin Umar has quoted the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as having said:

‘Qadria, these are certain Magians among my followers. Do not, therefore, call on them when they are sick; do not offer funeral prayers for them when they die; and do not greet them with Salutations when you happen to meet them.’

When the people enquired as to who were these Magians, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) replied:

‘These are those people who commit evil acts, and attribute their evil actions to the will of Allah, saying that they did what they were predestined by Allah to do!’

(ii) Abdullah bin Abbas quotes the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as having said:

‘No one will stand so much condemned on the Day of Judgment as the one who associates Allah with the evil he does, saying that he did what he was predestined by Allah to do.’

(iii) Anas bin Maalek relates that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said:

‘There will emerge a class of people who will tread the path of evil. Hence, when this comes about, you must condemn them.’

(The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) repeated the words “you must condemn them” thrice).”

MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS DEEDS

Husniyah paused here for a while, as if to drive her citations home. Then, resuming her address, she said:

“And listen, O Ibrahim. You base your atheistic beliefs in the matter of predestination on certain seemingly obscure Quranic verses whose real meaning has been twisted to suit specific exigencies. Moreover, you are not taking into account those numerous verses wherein Allah has clearly declared man as being responsible for his deeds, and wherein Allah condemns those who say that they are infidels merely because Allah desires them to be so. To quote, that what Allah says:

Those who are polytheists will say: Had Allah wished we would not have associated (aught with Him) nor our fathers, nor would we have forbidden (to ourselves) anything. [6:148]

“O Ibrahim, though these words are in condemnation of the disbelievers, they apply equally to you as well, because you and the disbelievers are both alike in the belief concerning predestination!” this was a direct hit, but the girl went on undauntedly.

“At another place in the Holy Quran,” She continued.

“Allah says:

Whoever does evil shall be recompensed. [4:123]

“Again says He:

This day shall every soul be recompensed for what it has earned. [40:17]

“And again:

And deals not your Lord unjustly with any one. [18:49]

“And then again:

And we did them not any injustice but they were to their own selves unjust. [16:118]

“And again:

And that there is not for man (aught) save what he strives. [53:39]

“Again:

Therefore Woe to those who disbelieve. [19:37]

“And yet Again:

Enter you the Garden, for what you were doing. [16:32]

“And once again:

Whosoever comes with a good (deed) for him shall be recompensed with ten like it; and whosoever comes with an evil (deed) he shall be recompensed not but with the like of it, and they shall not be dealt with unjustly. [6:160]

“Yet again:

... for it shall be (the good) what he had acquired and against it (shall be) (the evil) he has wrought. [2:286]

“And again:

Every Soul, for what it earned is held in pledge! [74:38]

“And again:

Whosoever does good, it is for his own self and whosoever does evil, it is against it. [41:46; 45:15]

“Then again:

Verily Allah does not do injustice (even) to the weight of an atom. [4:40]

“Yet again:

And your Lord is not unjust to the servants. [41:46]

“And again:

And He likes not ingratitude in His servants. [39:7]

“And again:

Whatever good befalls you (O Man!) it is from Allah and whatever evil befalls you, it is from yourself. [4:79]

“Thus, it stands proved from these and other verses of the Holy Quran that Allah can be associated only with good, evil being attributed to man himself, or to the Devil who himself confessed this fact when he told Allah:

I will lead astray all your creatures, except those who are truly devoted to you. [15:39-40]

“Thus, if Allah was associated with evil, it would be very improper of Him to have cursed the Devil, as He in these words:

You (Satan) will remain cursed till the Day of Judgment. [38:78]

“And, O Ibrahim, just see how Adam attributed his First Sin to himself, when he told Allah:

Said they O Our Lord! unjust have we been to ourselves, and if You forgive us not and deal (not) with mercy to us (then), we will certainly be of the losers. [4:23]

“And look what Musa said:

Said (Musa): “O my Lord! verily I have hurt mine own self so grant You refuge to me. [28:16]

And this is how Prophet Yunus implores Allah:

There is not god but You (O, my Lord!) Glory, be to you, verily I was of the unjust ones. [21:87]

Husniyah the slave-girl with matchless feminine beauty, was demonstrating her equally matchless excellence of oratory and advocacy. The audience, spell-bound by her eloquence and power of arguments, gazed in wonder at this female figure amongst them, battering the image of a scholar who was reputed to be the best in the realm of Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed.

NOTHING BUT GOOD EMANATES FROM HIM

“And, you must realize, my dear Ibrahim,” She told him, “that even all the Prophets confessed the fact that whatever their errors were, were attributable to their own selves; while all the good they did, was attributable to Allah. So, now, my dear Ibrahim, this matter of good and evil, stands cleared.”

Ibrahim the Scholar would not relent. Realizing that the words used by Husniyah in respect of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and their ‘confessions’ could be advantageously exploited shrewdly, he jumped at the opportunity.

“There you are, Husniyah!” He exclaimed, as if he caught her red-handed, “You have by your words, proved the falsehood of your own religious beliefs! For according to your religious convictions, all Prophets are innocence personified. Prey tell me why these Prophets had to repent for their misdeeds when according to your Faith, they are believed to be infallible.”

Ibrahim thought that he had said something very clever and wise! But he realized the truth the very next instant when Yahya, the Caliph’s Vizir burst out into laughter.

“Now that you have lost your first round of the debate”, he observed, laughing, “You are trying to shield yourself by starting another controversy - that of the personal virtues of the Prophets!”

Almost all those present in the Court, joined the Vizir in this jocular censure of Ibrahim the Scholar.

Husniyah, a polished debater that she was, tolerated the irrelevance of Ibrahim's question with patience. She realized that Ibrahim was now totally frustrated, and like all frustrated persons, he was searching for fresh avenues of escape.

JABARIA SECT REVIVED

“My dear Ibrahim”, she said, her tone betraying her suppressed irritation. “The point you have raised is against the ethics of academic discussion, and not opportune at this stage. I, however, assure you that I will satisfy your curiosity in this matter; but that would be after I have finished with the topic of pre-destination. So now, coming back to it, I must tell you that the entire lot of the Quraish infidels originally belonged to the Jabaria sect - a sect who believes that man has no free will, and that in whatever one does, good or bad, he has no choice of his own. With the advent of Islam, this sect became extinct, only to emerge again after Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and after Ameerul Momineen Ali (a.s.) was martyred. Later, after the death of Muawiya and Yazeed, the rest of the Caliphs from their dynasty revived the doctrine believed in by the Jabaria Sect; and quite a number of Muslims subscribed to its concepts. And now, you people too are following in their footsteps... In this connection, let me quote Umar bin Khattab:

“During the course of sermon, he said: ‘No one can guide the person whom you (Allah) guide not; and so one can mislead the person whom you (Allah) have guided.’ A Maglian who was present there, refuted Umar, saying... ‘Allah is most just to mislead a person?’

“This angered Umar, who replied: ‘I would have cut out your throat, if it was not committed to you under certain agreement between us’.

“Thus, while you claim to abide by the Divine Word, you are in effect, acting against the dictates of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). I can say on the oath of Allah that neither the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), nor any of his Ahlul Bait (a.s.) and the companions believed in the doctrine of predestination.”

Hardly had Husniyah finished these words when there followed a loud and tempestuous acclaim by the audience. Every one of them was admiring the forceful eloquence and deep knowledge which this charming slave-girl demonstrated in so convincing a manner.

And Ibrahim, who stood belittled, again this time, was speechless.

“My dear Husniyah,” he endeavored to say, “All that you have said on the basis of Quranic teachings is, no doubt, true. I accept their veracity. However, I will still say that since a majority of the venerable Followers of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) held the belief that man had no

free will of his own, how can one be charged with being polytheistic or infidelity to Islam for such a belief?”

“How can the charge of polytheism or infidelity be leveled?” Intercepted Husniyah promptly, “Allah can, of course, reattribute one with His wrath for one’s negation of Divine Entity; but that is not the point. To understand it, let me draw an analogy. Suppose a King appoints a certain person as the Governor over a city; and this Governor behaves in an oppressive manner, killing Muslims and plundering their homes. If the King who has the powers to take back all that the Governor had looted from his subjects, does so, and puts the Governor to death, how can it be said that the Governor’s conduct was in any manner suggestive of disbelief in the entity of the King? No, my dear Ibrahim! By saying that certain followers of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) subscribed to the doctrine of the predestination you are clearly violating both the sanctity of Divine commandments as well as the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s traditions.....! And you have the impertinence to question the infallibility of the Prophets?”

INFALLIBILITY OF ALLAH’S MESSENGERS

The flicker in her voice was expressive of indignation at Ibrahim’s allusion to Prophets and their infallibility. It was a matter that ignited her powers of expression. But like a true devotee of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and his family members, this slave-girl with exceptional intellectual members, kept her head cool, and pursued her subject with still sharper oratorical tenacity.

“I adhere firmly,” she continued, “to my belief that all Prophets are infallible and free from all susceptibilities to evil. In fact, it is essential for the Prophets and their successors to be so right from their births to the end of their missionary lives. This is so because they are the Trustees of Divine secrets and mysteries. How far is it proper to say that a Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) or his heir is dictated by the Devil; for, as you know, the Devil has no influence over the Prophets and their successors. If it were not so, then the entire edifice of Prophetship, aiming at inculcating obedience and subservience to Allah, is rendered defective and malafide.

“And it is necessary for the Prophets and his successors to excel their followers in all respects. It is also essential that they be free from all types of sins, apparent or otherwise. Their ancestral and parental antecedents have got to be absolutely unquestionable, so that their offspring’s do not have to face any embarrassments in respect of their genealogical purity. And one must also bear in mind that Muslims in general have different views over the matter of cognition of Prophets and their successors by their nominees. Some of the Muslims, by virtue of their inherent qualities, do not require the media of miracles for the purpose. But, for the general bulk of the masses, miracles are essential, for it is only when they witness miracles that they recognize the bonafides of Prophets and their successors, and abide as their followers. Miracles in this context mean such acts and demonstrations by the Prophets which are beyond all other humans’ ingenuity to perform, and which conform

to the claims of Holy Prophethood. And know it, O Ibrahim that it is Allah, and He alone, who possesses all knowledge about his human creatures - their origin, purpose and destination right from the beginning of time to eternity. And man, who is by nature an inquisitive creature, seeks to satisfy his curiosity about Allah's Creations in the light of his own reasoning power aided by written evidences. But, despite all his human faculties of reason and understanding, man fails to achieve full knowledge of the future world to come, except what he finds in the written Scriptures. But these, too, do not help him much because of their interpretational diversities, unless there is some specific person who can explain these in their true context and import. Divine Providence, therefore, ordained that there be one such infallible one whose words and deeds man could confidently rely upon, so that the Divine purpose could be properly conveyed and propagated by the one who is commissioned to do so himself, and after him, by one deputed by him."

TRUTHFUL ONES

Through the media of Logic and assimilation of acceptable religious data from the Scriptures, Husniyah was gradually moving ahead towards conclusions she was aiming at. She paused for a while at this stage, as if to gauge the impact she was making on the audience. Then, turning herself to Ibrahim, she resumed gracefully again on the subject on 'infallibility' of the Prophets and what it actually connotes.

“You will agree, my dear Ibrahim,” she told him “that it is but natural for fallible human beings to err. Therefore, if Prophets and Apostles of Allah were also to be fallible like the ordinary human beings, they too would be liable to sins. And since telling lies is also a sin, they are apt to indulge in it, too, and thereby render themselves unreliable. The followers of such Prophets will thus have no confidence in their precepts and guidance. As such, the moral chastity and infallibility of an Imam (one deputed by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)) is preconditioned with certain inborn virtues. For instance, an Imam’s parents have to be of a pure genealogical origin; they should not be from parents of low social status, like that of the barbers or the sweepers. A Prophet or an Imam must necessarily be free from such human weaknesses as ignorance, jealousy, negligence, mental imbalance, greed, etc. they should not be persons given to telling lies and indulging in moral deviations. And telling lies, you must realize, my dear Ibrahim, is a highly condemnable thing. This is what Allah says about it in the Holy Quran:

O You who believe! Fear you Allah and be you (always) with the truthful ones. [9:119]

Husniyah was piloting herself through her masterly discourse in the manner of a Professor lecturing to his class. Every point she raised; every explanation she gave; every instance she quoted; every idea she expounded; infact, everything she was saying was laden with the weight of logic reinforced with Scriptural references. And why not? She had drunk deep the cup of knowledge and wisdom at the threshold of no less a personage than

Imam-e-Natiq, at whose harem her girlish supple talents had blossomed into unbending convictions in the realm of religion. At this stage of her maiden life, when she was confronting a host of learned but unfriendly scholars, in the court of Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed, she had to defend two very high stakes: one was the defense and projection of the religious bonafides of her devotion to the Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) and all that it means in Islam - a mission as dear to her as her life. The other prize at stake was her own personal honour, her own undefiled virgin chastity, which, if she failed in the task she undertook, could be purchased, sold or ravished by the highest bidder. Her task, therefore, was both extremely difficult as well as delicate. But like a believing-woman that she was, she went about it with a seasoned confidence in the righteousness of her beliefs. The point that she was now discussing, i.e. infallibility and the requisite virtues of an Imam constituted the very backbone or nucleus of Imamate. Husniyah was, therefore, more inspired than ever, the subject touching the very chords of her conscience. Thus, after quoting the Quranic verse concerning liars, and pausing for formulation of words, she resumed her speech.

MORAL AND PHYSICAL IDENTITY OF THE DEPUTY WITH THE PROPHET

“And you will agree, my dear Ibrahim,” she said, “that a Deputy of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) must essentially be one like the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) himself, excelling all others in knowledge and wisdom, in piety,

in abstemiousness, in virtuous conduct, in generosity, in courage - both moral and physical. In short, he must tower above all the rest of human creations. And, my dear Ibrahim, you must also understand that an Imam (Deputy of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)) who can be chosen and ushered into office and later, ousted from his position by the masses can never truly be described as being capable of this exalted office. An Imam - a true Imam - is one who is chosen and appointed as such by Allah so that he commands obedience and devotional faithfulness from the people, and guides them on right lines. Therefore, you see, an Imam has got to be infallible; and if he is a fallible person like the rest of the mankind, he is likely to be as transgressing as the others, which you will agree, does not serve the Divine purpose. And you know as well as I do what Allah says about His vicegerancy and transgressors:

My covenant reaches not the unjust. [2:124]

These words pertaining to man's transgression *vis-à-vis* Divine vicegerancy were like a shot from the blue. The audience was dazed with the frank boldness of Husniyah the slave-girl. The impact of these words on Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed was noticeably perturbing; and the truth of Husniyah's cool, logic, validated all the more by the Quranic verse on the subject, made the Caliph react to it with perceptible silent emotions, portraying a deep remorse at the applicability of the Quranic injunction to himself. For, in the context of this Divine ruling, clearly defining one of the pre-requisites for Caliphate (Divine vicegerancy), Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed realized to his consternation that he was manning the Muslim Caliphate

without having any lawful right to do so, because, he was continuing as a link in the chain of Caliphs who possessed neither any Divine mandate nor any morally decent authorization of any worthwhile socio-politic doctrinal nature. He was quick to realize the unpalatable truth that he did not possess even a single one of those virtues of a true Caliph as laid down in the Holy Quran.

Yahya bin Khalid, the Vizir, too, was greatly agitated, though not in the same sense as his master.

“What is the matter with you, Ibrahim?” He asked the scholar, “Are you dead? Why don’t you come down from your chair and convert yourself to Husniyah’s religious beliefs? that would be an honorable way of accepting defeat!”

When Ibrahim heard what the Vizir said, and when he realized that he was being censured from all sides of the court, he made another effort to extricate himself from the disgraceful position he was in.

ADAM AND EVE

“Just wait,” he pleaded, and staring squarely into Husniyah’s eyes, he asked, “How will you explain the conduct of Adam and Eve after Allah had clearly told them:

O Adam, live with your wife in the Paradise, and move about freely; and eat and drink anything you prefer therein, but go not near the tree, otherwise you will be loser. [2:35]

“And, Husniyah, we all know for certain that Adam disregarded Divine orders and ate the fruit from the prohibited tree. Thus, Adam became a transgressor.”

Husniyah, far from being dislodged by this significant question posed by her adversary, took it easy. She had anticipated it, in fact.

“Now, look here, Ibrahim,” she replied, “you must understand that what Allah told Adam in this verse was not in the nature of a prohibitive command. It was merely a precautionary advice. A prohibition, my dear Ibrahim, is something which, if violated, renders one liable to be condemned to hell in the Hereafter. A precautionary advice entails no such consequence. So, if Adam had refrained from eating the fruit of the specified tree, he would have entitled himself all the more to Allah’s grace; but since he did happen to eat the said fruit, his action does not amount to disobedience of a command, for, it was merely an advice of a precautionary nature that he ignored. As such, he himself was the loser of extra Divine grace, but by no means a Sinner or a transgressor.”

“If that was the case”, intercepted Ibrahim, “Adam cannot be a transgressor, but Allah clearly says that he ‘he became of one those who are transgressor’, as is evident from the text of the verse.”

“You do not seem to understand what ‘transgression’ really connotes,” asserted the girl, “Transgression means the placement of an object outside the orbit where it

belongs to. Conversely, not placing an object within its right place, also amounts to 'transgression'. Applied to actions, it means doing something where it should not be done, and not doing it where it should be done. Thus, the word actually means 'inopportune conduct'. Hence, to do something that is not desirable at a given place, or not refraining from doing so, also is 'transgression' as meant in the verse of the Holy Quran which says:

And failed not aught in it. [18:33]

“And so, my dear Ibrahim that is the real meaning of the Quranic words ‘he became one of those who are transgressors.’ In other words, it means that Adam, for the sake of gratifying his selfish desire, forfeited his chance of being entitled to an extra or additional grace of Allah. There is no element of ‘disobedience’ here.....”

“Why then,” intruded Ibrahim impatiently, “did both Adam and Eve confess their guilt by saying:

O Our Lord! unjust have we been to ourselves, and if You forgive us not and deal (not) with mercy to us (then), we will certainly be of the losers. [4:23]

“Now, Husniyah, what do you say about that? Were these words of Adam and Eve not a confession of their sinful conduct?”

“Why don't you understand?” replied Husniyah, some what initiated at the adamence of Ibrahim, “Listen, my dear Ibrahim, what Adam and Eve said was a confession to the effect that they had wronged themselves. Their

invocation to Allah for His forgiveness and mercy is in no way indicative of their having sinned; for, ‘transgression’ as used here, is in the sense of having suffered a loss to themselves – that of gaining the additional grace of Allah. Moreover, beseeching Allah the Almighty for His mercy and forgiveness is by itself a form of prayer that entail benediction. As such, you cannot employ Adam’s and Eve’s invocations for Divine mercy as an argument to prove that they had sinned against Allah. No, Sir, Not by any means. Just see what the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) says about himself:

‘I repent and implore to Allah for His mercy Seventy times in a day’.

“Now, does that (God protect) mean that Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) used to commit seventy sins in a day? And another thing that you must bear in mind is that all Prophets and their Deputies evaluated their worship as inadequate, despite the fact that their worship of Allah was almost constant and continuous. Not one religious obligation did they miss. In fact, these personages regarded it as a sin to miss them. Though they were infallible and committed no sin, yet they regarded themselves as ‘guilty’. That was so purely out of humility; and not because they were really so. Therefore, their imploring’s and beseeching’s to Allah for His mercy cannot be construed as confessions of sinful conduct.....”

“If that be so,” put in Ibrahim,” then Adam cannot be described as a ‘sinner’; but Allah has clearly termed him as such, as is evident from this verse:

And Adam disobeyed his Lord..... [20:121]

“Thus, Adam deviated from the righteous path.....”

“Now look,” intervened Husniyah, “You are going astray yourself, my dear Ibrahim! Most of the verses in the Holy Quran are equivocal in their wording, as described so by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as well as the Imams. As such, these verses should not be taken at the face-value of their wording which carry an inner import. The root-word *isyan* which you take to mean ‘disobedience’, does not really mean that, what it actually implies is ‘repugnance to something desirable’. So, while there can be some ‘repugnance to obligatory acts’ there are other acts of lesser binding, to which also one may be repugnant; and in the latter case, repugnance does not entail condemnation or retribution. Further, the Arabic word *faghwa* in the said verse, derived from the root-word *ghawa-i-yat*, has not been used in its literal sense, meaning: ‘led astray’, What it really purports to convey is: ‘misfortune at foregoing some extra reward’. In other words, what is meant is that Adam and Eve were repugnant to what they were advised, thereby forfeiting the prospects of being rewarded extra-specially. This word, *ghawa-i-yat* is quite commonly found in Arabic poetry with similar connotations.”

Husniyah – a girl who had hardly crossed her teens was gallantly exhibiting her intellectual mettle in so lucid and fluent a manner that anyone could understand what she was trying to drive home. But not so Ibrahim! Like a stick-in-the-mud scholar, he would not relent. Not yet, at least.

“Tell me, ‘O Husniyah”, he interpolated, “If the way Adam and Eve behaved was not really sinful, why was it that they were stripped naked and ousted from their heavenly abode in the Paradise? Why were they thrown down on the Earth?”

“Listen,” said Husniyah, “the purpose of Adam’s creation was to establish Allah’s vicegerency on this planet, Earth. This is evident from Allah’s own words: *Verily I am going to create My Vicegerent on Earth.* Thus, even if Adam had not committed the folly of eating the fruit of the specified tree, Allah would have sent him down to Earth nonetheless. Adam’s eating of the fruit only hastened what was inevitable; otherwise he might possibly have stayed longer in the Paradise and enjoyed its bounties for some time more. But this advantage Adam lost by not minding the Divine precaution sounded earlier. Nevertheless, there was no element of retribution or punishment in his being consigned to Earth by Allah. If Adam had been sinful even to the slightest degree, Allah would not have chosen him, a ‘sinful’ man, to act as His vicegerent in the world, particularly so when the angels with all their sacred greatness had vehemently protested before Allah against man being commissioned as His vicegerant. But Allah had rejected their plea, and preferred Adam over the angels who are infallible. It thus follows that the human entity of Adam was greater in significance than the supernatural entity of the angels.

“Now, coming to the matter of Adam’s and Eve’s quittance from Paradise, and their nude ousting, let me assure you,

my dear Ibrahim, that this was not in consequence of any sin having been committed by the two. Rather, it was a case of Divine expedience - like Allah's subjecting of man to poverty and illness with set objects. One cannot term such subjections as punitive actions”.

Ibrahim would still not give in “How do you account then for Prophet Noah's invoking of Allah's wrath upon his followers? You know he prayed to Allah for the destruction of his nation, and his prayers were responded, resulting in the annihilation of his people by mass drowning. But when this was accomplished, Noah repented for his action. So acute was his repentance that he lamented for five hundred years, so much so that he came to be called by the name of Noah which literally means ‘the lamentor’.”

When Husniyah heard this version of Ibrahim, she laughed out right at its twisted nature.

“My dear Ibrahim,” She said, “your version is not quite in consonance with the authentic one in Holy Quran. This is what the Holy Quran says:

O Noah! Indeed you have disputed with us and you have prolonged the dispute with us. Now bring to us what you have threatened us with, if you are of the truthful ones. [11:32]

“Thus you see that the retribution or punishment was one that the people themselves asked for; and it was five centuries after this incident that Prophet Noah (a.s.) came

to be called as such. As for the matter of his repentance, there are two factors which cannot be lost sight of. One: if the followers of Noah were Muslims, and he had prayed for their mass-drowning, this act of his, by itself would be an anti-religious conduct in as much as a great Prophet like him should condescend to pray to Allah to drown the world, thereby killing thousand of Muslims. Two: if the followers of Noah were not Muslims (believers), the question of his repentance for the destruction of non-believers who were antagonists towards Allah, does not arise. Look, what the Holy Quran says about Noah and Adam:

Verily Allah has exalted Adam and Noah; and the offspring's of Ibrahim and Ale Imran above all other enlightened ones. [3:33]

“This distinction is a clear proof of the infallibility of Noah, and it also proves that the Messenger of Allah is not liable to commit even the most insignificant error.”

RELIGIOUS IGNORANCE OF UMAYYAD CALIPHS

“And, my dear Ibrahim,” continued Husniyah, changing her tone to one of extra emphasis on what she was about to say. “The reality of religion cannot be established by indulging in jugglery of words which sound seemingly true. I have heard many such literary ambiguities from persons other than you also. The Bani Umayyad’s and their Supporters for instance. These people and their predecessors who despite the fact that they were not

entitled to the Caliphate and Imamate, grabbed this office by sheer physical force. More often than not, these persons acted in a tyrannical and un-Islamic manner. They were ignorant of religious matters and lacked miserably in the understanding of Quranic injunctions. One can imagine their turpitude when some of these persons used to lead congregational prayers in a state of drunkenness. There have been frequent instances when these men, leading the morning prayers under intoxication, used to offer four Rakats, instead of the ordained two. If I were to recount such debased actions of these gentlemen, I am afraid I may offend the feelings of the audience here. I must, however, add that these perverted actions were despite the advice and condemnation by the members of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s family, as also by certain other dignitaries among the Companions.

INNOVATION TO SHIELD MISCONDUCT

“Thus, it were these people, who in order to shield their own as well as their followers’ misconducts, innovated the misconceived theory that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and other Prophets were as fallible as the rest of the human beings; which theory, as I have already demonstrated by Quranic references, is contrary to fact. These people believed in the Holy Quran, but only in a superficial way. Further, in order to make their interpretations of Quranic contents appear authentic, they recourse to fabrications and coinings of fictitious traditions. Those people, who in that period were not educated and intellectual enough

to argue on the subject, therefore, believed in whatever was said and followed them. Being unenlightened, these people could not possibly differentiate between temperamental factors like greed on one hand, and human reason and Divine will on the other. And there were yet others who preferred gainful positions and temporary worldly authority to everlasting prosperity in the hereafter. Thus, it were such people as these who conceived and propagated novel religious beliefs in total disregard of the original right one, thereby following virtually in the footsteps of their ancestors, as described in the Holy Quran in these words:

Verily we found our fathers on a creed and verily by their footprints are we guided. [43:22]

“And, my dear Ibrahim, this is how Allah replies to them, and it applies equally to you, too:

Indeed you and your fathers had been in error manifest. [21:54]

“And there were still others who contended themselves with what their tutors taught them, rather than seeking the truth themselves in a right and just manner. They ignored the importance of paying heed as to what religious beliefs their tutors professed in principle and how they conducted themselves in practice. Such a personal scrutiny could have helped them to adopt the right religious concept. Everyone of them claimed ‘we are on the right’; but Allah says:

But they have rent the unity among themselves into sects; each party rejoices in that which is with them.
[30:22]

“Now, my dear Ibrahim, out of these numerous beliefs there can be only one right one. There cannot be more than one. I might as well quote Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) in this connection: Said the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) by way of a prophesy:

‘My followers (Muslims) will eventually be split up into 73 factions; but only one faction out of these will find their salvation, and the rest will be doomed to extinction’.

One of the groups of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s Companions present on the occasion asked him as to which was that one faction which would find salvation.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) replied, ‘That salvation - destined group is the one which I and my Ahlul Bait (a.s.) belong to, as also those who are its followers.’

“The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) also said on this occasion:

‘My Ahlul Bait (a.s.) are like Noah’s boat. All those sailing in it are bound to achieve their salvation; and those inimical to it (i.e. to the Ahlul Bait (a.s.)), will drown themselves to extinction.’

“And please note, my dear Ibrahim, that both the traditions that I have quoted are authentic in the estimation of the entire Muslim fraternity. In fact, there can be no doubt what the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said about the sect that follows his precepts achieving their salvation. The reason is simple enough. There are so many

differences on the basic matters of religion of these sects or factions that none of them can truly claim as being the one destined for salvation, except the one who follows in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and his Ahlul Bait (a.s.).”

Husniyah was visibly moved as she expressed herself on this point, for, what she said next was purely on a personal note.

“I am not at all afraid of death at your instance; nor do I care for this transitory life. As a matter of fact, I always pray to Allah for death in His cause. I will, therefore, be quite frank in what I say, so that the present Caliph may know the truth.”

Husniyah was now in the thick of it!

“Now listen, O Ibrahim”, she continued in the same strain of candidness. “You say, as did your past Preceptors, that all good and evil emanate from Allah, as predestined by Him; and that man has no choice whatsoever in it. Under the plea of this preposterous doctrine you seek to conceal the outrageous tyranny the authors of this perpetuated on the Ahlul Bait (a.s.). The oppressive excesses committed on them are too numerous to mention here, but I will recall only a few of these atrocities. Here they are:

The usurpation of Imamate and Caliphate;
The confiscation of Bagh-e-Fidak, a personal
property endowed to Syed Fatimah Zahra

(s.a.) by her father, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.);
 Physical violence towards the Holy Prophet
 (s.a.w.a.)’s daughter and certain prominent
 companions;
 The poisoning of Imam Hasan (a.s.) the beloved
 grandson of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and son
 of Ali (a.s.);
 The murder of Imam Husain (a.s.) the Martyr
 at Karbala along with his seventy-two comrades;
 The denial of one fifth of State revenue to the
 descendants of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.);
 The waging of war against Ali (a.s.) the cousin,
 son-in-law and successor of the Holy Prophet
 (s.a.w.a.);
 The exile of Abu Zar Ghaffari;
 The Physical torturing of Abdulla bin Masood and
 burning of the Holy Quran which he preserved
 The killing of Ammar Yassir and certain other
 Companions;
 The Stoning of the sacred Ka’aba;
 The massacre of Muslims at Medina;
 The killings of numerous descendants of the
 Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

“The list can go on to till pages. There is no end to these atrocities and innovations. It was in view of this heinous wickedness that certain companions, devotees of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) and certain devoted persons freed of their slavery by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), used to condemn them openly as well as secretly cursing their vicious conducts. These people would remind these oppressors

of Allah's commands, Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s directives and of the Reckoning on the Day of Judgment. But those erring ones, in order to escape from their public condemnation, and with a view to conceal the debased nature of the conduct of the Sheikhs (i.e. the first two Caliphs; Abu Bakr, and Umar) as also of the rest of the caliphs from the Bani Umayyad clan, resorted to fabricating of such innovations as predestination, stipulating that man is not the doer of his own actions: They gave out to believe that all actions emanate through the will of Allah, and that He has preordained every action of man. It is on the basis of this ill-conceived theory that they attribute fallibility in respect of Prophets and impute them with falsities in a mean manner.

“And you, O Ibrahim, are also a follower of the misguided group and are acting as its agent to spread it further. If I, or anyone else says that infallibility is a pre-requisite of Holy Prophethood or Imamate, it is so because there are valid reasons for it, logical as well as Scriptural. Look what Allah says on the subject:

And remember when his Lord tried Ibrahim with certain words then he fulfilled them; He said, “Verily I make you Imam for mankind;” (Ibrahim) said, “And of my offspring”? He said “My covenant reaches not the unjust.” [2:124]

“Thus you see that Allah has disqualified a tyrant (or an evil doer) in respect of Imamate. And remember, there are two types of evil doers: One, those who do wrong to themselves; and the other, those who do wrong to others,

and those who belong to neither of these two classes are infallible. Infallibility, therefore, is a pre-condition for imamate. And Allah also says:

Verily, infidelity (apostasy) is a major sin. [31:13]

“Hence, one who is liable to be an apostate and a repent can never be a fit person for the office of an Imam. yet, you condemn those who believe in these Quranic teachings as *Rafizis* and deem it essential to prosecute and kill them, thereby following in the footsteps of Muawiya. Though you profess to abide by the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and call yourselves Sunni (adherer of Sunnah - Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.)’s practice). You have the conscience to include Prophets among the infidels and evil doers. And those who do not subscribe to your beliefs, you call them disbelievers!”

Husniyah’s voice as she spoke these words was choked with emotions emanating from her devotional attachment to the Ahlul Bait (a.s.). She was now speaking at the peak of her oratorical fluency, attacking the anti-religious elements, and establishing by sheer force of arguments the infallibility and greatness of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.). Her valid reasoning, combined with the mastery of diction and delivery, compelled the Caliph and his officials to ponder silently with their heads hung down at the image of their true picture which the girl had so boldly drawn. No one in the learned gathering had anything to say by way of a reply to the girl.

EXCELLENCES OF ABU BAKR

It was the redoubtable Ibrahim who broke the silence.

“You have indeed spoken in a masterly way.” he said, adding, and you have derided, too, the greatness of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s companions and their followers to your heart’s content by making scathing references to them. you must understand that we all realize that devotional regard for the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and respect for his Ahlul Bait (a.s.) is a must for all Muslims. We do not differ with you on this point. But you must also realize that love and respect for the companions, and for the Caliphs who were his successors, is also incumbent upon all of us; for the sanctity of the Caliphate enjoys the consensus of opinion of the religious authorities of the majority of Muslims. Particularly, so in respect of Abu Bakr, whom Allah had reckoned as a true friend of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in the verse relating to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s refuge in the cave during his migration to Medina from Mecca. This is what the verse *Aya-e-Ghar* says:

If you help not him (The Prophet) (It matters not) for indeed Allah helped him when expelled him those who disbelieved, he was the second of the two, when they both were in the cave, when he said to his companion: “Fear you not, verily Allah is with us. So Allah sent down tranquility upon him and strengthened him with hosts (of angels) you saw them not. [9:40]

“Now, tell me, dear Husniyah, if this verse proves the excellence of Abu Bakr or not.”

“Certainly not,” answered the girl, “The verse referred to does not confer any greatness on Abu Bakr. On the contrary it disproves his lack of faith in the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). However, tell me, my dear Ibrahim, about his greatness you are talking about.”

“The sacred Quran vouchsafes the fact,” replied Ibrahim, “This is what it says in verse No. 9:40 quoted above.

“Firstly, Abu Bakr’s comradeship with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) itself speaks for my contention. If there was anyone else who could be regarded as the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s true friend, the latter would have taken him along with himself on the occasion. Secondly, Allah has referred to Abu Bakr as the ‘friend of the Apostle.’ Thirdly, both Allah and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) ensured that he was not harmed or grieved. In fact, Allah pacified him by His words ‘Do not be grieved’. Fourthly, the words ‘Allah is with us’ are significant, as is evident from the pronoun ‘us’, denoting a plural sense. Thus, my dear Husniyah, you see how this Quranic verse establishes the distinctive greatness of Abu Bakr. Now that I have explained the matter, I am sure you will have no doubt left in your mind to be skeptical about Abu Bakr’s excellence.”

ORDER FROM ALMIGHTY ALLAH

Husniyah simply laughed at the way Ibrahim was taking things for granted.

“Now listen to what I have to say about it,” she told Ibrahim “This verse is no indication of any greatness as such. No one in his right mind can be led to believe it to be so. The words used in the verse under reference do not prove greatness of anyone in fact. You are wrong in your first claim that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) preferred to take Abu Bakr along with him because the latter was the better of the former’s friends. I say categorically; that anyone who harbours such a belief is guilty of doing something that is not right.

“Now, let me explain the whole episode in its true perspective. The facts are that Hazrat Jibrail came to Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and revealed:

‘certain infidels would be coming to you with the intention of murdering you. Therefore, warn your companions not to leave their homes and go out tonight. It is Allah’s command that you should ask your brother Ali, to sleep on your bed. The one person who loves you more than his own life is Ali Ibne Abi Talib. Having done this, you must proceed to a particular cave with a few stipulations.’

“When night fell, the Prophet called his companions and told them:

‘No one from among my companions and well-wishers should get out of their homes tonight. There is a Divine expedience in this caution.’

Hearing this all the Companions went away to their homes.”

ALI (A.S.) ON THE NIGHT OF HOLY PROPHET (S.A.W.A.)’S MIGRATION

“The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) then turned to Ali and said:
‘I have been commanded by Allah to have you sleep in my bed in my place so that I can leave Mecca and go to a specified cave, safely from the dangers posed by the infidels.’

“When Ali heard these words, he was very happy. In a very loving manner he told the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) that he was prepared to sacrifice his life for him and Allah even if he had a thousand lives to live. Despite his young age, he was not at all perturbed about the risks involved.

“The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was deeply moved by Ali’s response and embraced him lovingly; and caressing him with tears in his eyes, bid him farewell saying: ‘I entrust you to the protection of Allah. May He be guard over you.’

ABU BAKR DISOBEYS

“Having thus said good-bye to Ali (a.s.), the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) made him sleep in his place on the bed and left. Hardly had he proceeded on the way when he felt someone dogging his footsteps. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), therefore, stopped short in the darkness of the night. When the figure following him advanced nearer to him he recognized it to be Abu Bakr.

‘Don’t you know the command of Allah, forbidding everyone to leave their homes? Why have you

disobeyed this command?’ Reprimanded the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

‘I was concerned about the safety of your life,’ replied Abu Bakr. ‘I could not possible abandon you to danger, and remain in the safety of my home myself.’

“The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was now really worried, for he was not commanded by Allah to go to the cave accompanied by anyone. Just when he was thinking as to what he should do, Hazrat Jibrail came to him and said:

‘By Allah, O Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)! If you leave this man (Abu Bakr) alone here, the infidels will surely grab and put him to death.’

“Thus the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), under force of circumstances, had to take Abu Bakr along with him to the cave. It will, therefore, be clear to you, my dear Ibrahim, that in accompanying the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) to the cave, Abu Bakr had acted against what Allah had ordained. What I say is confirmed by the consensus of opinion on the matter among the enlightened Muslims. That is, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had to take Abu Bakr with him under force of circumstances, lest the latter be killed by the infidels; and this, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) did not want to happen.”

ABU BAKR ACCOMPANIES THE HOLY PROPHET (S.A.W.A.) WHY?

“And bear in mind, O Ibrahim, that Allah had already

apprised the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) about the role Abu Bakr and his associates were to play in the future after he was no more. Moreover, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) himself had no confidence in Abu Bakr. Therefore, in view of the latter's unreliability, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) deemed it expedient to keep him along with him. In this, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was guided by the Quranic verse which says:

.....They speak with their lips what is not in their heart.
[3:167]

COMPANIONSHIP EXPLAINED

“And my dear Ibrahim, this is not the only verse foretelling of future disunity. There are several. So you see, my dear Sir, Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) was not really in any need of any comrade or associate. He was one who was himself befriended by Allah; and as for his comradeship, Hazrat Jibrail himself was his ever-accompanying friend. This is proved by this verse:

.....And strengthened him with hosts (of angels) you saw them not..... [9:40]

“And as for your statement that Allah has described Abu Bakr as ‘Saheb-e-Rasool’, you must understand that this word, ‘Saheb’ has no special significance or distinction about it in the Arabic language. At best it means ‘a companion’ and Abu Bakr’s lone company with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) does not confer any personal greatness upon him, particularly so because his mere being with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) did not

prevent any harm from befalling the latter. Abu Bakr neither fought against the enemies of Islam nor co-operated with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) against them. If he had done so, it would have been mentioned in history, just as the efforts of others have been mentioned. But we find no such feat of Abu Bakr recorded in the pages of history. I might also tell you, my dear Ibrahim that even a non-believer has been referred to as ‘Saheb-e-Momin’ in the Holy Quran. This verse for instance:

Said to him his companion while talking to him: What! disbelieve you in Him who created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop, then He fashioned you (to) a complete man. [18:37]

“And in this verse also the word ‘Saheb’ occurs:

Then ponder you your companion (our Prophet Muhammad) is not Possessed, he is none but a warner (sent) to you before a severe chastisement. [34:46]

“At yet another place, you will find this:

What reflect they not that their companion (our Prophet Muhammad) is not seized with madness. he is but only a plain Warner. [7:184]

“Similarly, in the episode relating to Prophet Yusuf, it is mentioned that when two infidels were leaving the prison in which Prophet Yusuf was also interned, the latter addressed them as: *O my prison companions*. There are several other Quranic verses wherein the word ‘Saheb’ is used as meaning nothing more than a companion.

“I am, therefore, surprised, my dear Ibrahim, that you should base your argument on such a paltry word like ‘Saheb’. If this word really had any distinctive greatness about it, then the infidel jail companions, who were with Prophet Yusuf in the prison, should also be cited as great dignitaries. And, a dog had also accompanied the Companions of the Prophet at a cave (on a different occasion), Prophet Noah’s mate was an infidel woman, and he had to bear her company. Similarly, Prophet Lot had an infidel woman as his wife who enjoyed the distinction on being with a Prophet. And listen, even a donkey is also referred to as ‘Saheb’ (companion), as is evident from the popular Arabic saying which runs thus:

“In view of these facts, what greatness or distinction can anyone attribute to Abu Bakr?”

Husniyah was shattering all the arguments advanced by Ibrahim, one by one. Whatever she did was vouchsafed by Historical facts as well as by Quranic Verses.

NERVOUSNESS OF ABU BAKR IN THE CAVE

“Now I come to your third argument,” said Husniyah. “You say that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was very much concerned about some ‘grief’ or ‘harm’ that faced Hazrat Abu Bakr, and that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) pacified him by consoling him on that point. Now listen, my dear Ibrahim, the agitated state of Abu Bakr in the company of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was a result

of his nervousness and cowardice. Now, I ask: was this nervousness of Abu Bakr an act of devotion? or, was it wrong on his part to be afraid of danger in the company of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)?”.

Ibrahim did not utter a word in reply to the girl. He was himself afraid at the nature of the question she had posed to him.

“Look, O Ibrahim”, continued Husniyah, “if the nervous state of Abu Bakr was an act of expression of devotion to Allah, then you must remember that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had reprimanded him by saying: ‘We seek refuge with Allah from such belief.’ How can any Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) refrain anyone from devotion to Allah? On the other hand, if it was wrong on the part of Abu Bakr to be apprehensive in the company of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), then you must concede that Abu Bakr’s tears were due to his lack of confidence in his Faith. As such, how can his weakness and susceptibility to physical harm be construed as any act of distinction. Besides, that, you must also concede that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was a promoter and encourager of obedience and devotion to Allah. He was not the one to encourage, much less appreciate, anything wrong. He could not possibly refrain anyone from being devoted to Allah.

“Let me also tell you, my dear Ibrahim, that this apprehensiveness of Abu Bakr demonstrates his lack of patience. It also proves that he did not subscribe

to doctrinal beliefs of predestination. It is also clearly established that he had no confidence in what the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had told him. This is evident from the fact that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had already indicated to him the direction and the place he was heading for when he had told him that he was going to a certain cave as commanded by Allah, and that they would be entirely safe from all the dangers there. What, I ask, is the sense in your saying that Abu Bakr was 'near and dear' to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) simply because he happened to be with him in the cave, When Abu Bakr in fact started getting nervous and impatient, knowing fully well that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had gone to the said cave on the command of Allah, and that he was, therefore, safe from danger from the enemy? Abu Bakr's agitated behaviour and loud mutterings might well have cost the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) dearly. Obviously, Abu Bakr's conduct in the cave was calculated to apprise the infidels of his whereabouts. But Allah ordained it otherwise. Allah was the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s protector. Please understand, my dear Ibrahim, if Abu Bakr had complete faith in the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), Allah would not have had him bitten by a snake in the cave. Rather, Allah would have protected him, as he protected the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) from the infidel enemies, despite the fact that a large search-party had traversed round this cave, and had even located the foot-prints of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) on the ground in the vicinity, leading right upto the mouth of the cave.

ALLAH (S.W.T.) IS ALSO WITH INFIDELS

“Another ‘distinction’ with which you credit Abu Bakr is that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) told him: ‘Allah is with us’ implying that the pronoun us included both the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and Abu Bakr, though it was not really so. However, even granting that Abu bakr was included in the import of these words, what significant greatness does it confer upon him? Being merely counted as a figure does not mean a thing, as is clear from this Quranic verse:

No where take place any secret counsel between three (persons) but He is fourth of them, nor between five but He is the sixth, nor (between) less than that, nor (between) more but He is with’ them... [58:7]

“This verse applies equally to all, including the infidels, the Jews, the true Muslims and the apostates as well. Hence, what particular distinction can Abu Bakr claim in view of this? No, my dear Ibrahim. Let me draw an analogy of a mosque - a place which is a thousand times more sacred than a cave. People of all descriptions assemble in a mosque, including Muslims, apostates, and even the non-believers. What particular distinction does anyone of these persons get by merely being together in a mosque?

“Let me explain it to you more explicitly. Take for example a man having with him animals like horses, camels and donkey. Afraid of being waylaid and robbed, he seeks refuge in some place or in some valley along with his beasts; and says: ‘Allah is with us and will protect us

here.’ How do the beasts in his company thereby gain any distinction for themselves?”

Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed was visibly impressed by the easy and entertaining manner in which Husniyah was tackling his adversary. He actually burst into laughter at the frivolity of the girl’s cold logic, despite the fact he was a prejudiced man in as far as the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) were concerned. In fact, his feelings towards them were acutely inimical. But Allah had softened his heart so much towards Husniyah the slave-girl that had it not been for the fear of public censure, he would have hurried out of his royal chair and kissed the girl’s hand and feet in admiration of her intellectual excellence and charming oratory.

TRANQUILITY NOT FOR ABU BAKR

“And this is not all there is to it”, resumed Husniyah, “I ask for your attention to still more of Quranic verses relating to the cave wherein Abu Bakr has been censured. The most damning verse, proving him to be a Faithless man is the following verse:

... So Allah sent down tranquility upon him and strengthened him with hosts (of angels) you saw them not.... [9:40]

“Thus, you will note that since receiving of a Divine revelation of a consolatory nature was itself a great distinction, the pronoun used in the verse is in a singular form directed primarily towards Holy Prophet

Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). As against this, the pronoun ‘us’ used in the previous verse is in a plural form, for there this pronoun does not carry any import of a distinctive nature. But in the verse, I have just quoted, the singular form of pronoun establishes the fact it is not Abu Bakr for whom it is meant. If it was so, the verse would have been worded thus: *So Allah sent down tranquility upon them.*

TRANQUILITY FOR THE TRUE BELIEVERS

“The form of address would thus have been of a plural nature instead of the singular one used in the wording. And also remember, my dear Ibrahim that Allah in His Book has mentioned that He revealed such consolatory verses to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) on only two occasions. One was this verse relating to the cave episode, and the other was on the occasion of the Battle of Hunain when the Muslim army was defeated, as a result of which Abu Bakr, Umar, Osman and a majority of the companions had fled for their lives, deserting the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) who was then surrounded by the infidel enemies. All these gentlemen had taken to their heels, except Ameerul Momineen Ali (a.s.) and seventy-three other true believers. It was this handful of people who remained steadfast to their posts with courage, and continued resisting the enemy at the cost of their lives. It was on this occasion that Allah revealed this consolatory verse to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.):

Most certainly did Allah help you in many (battle) fields, and on the day of Hunain, when made you vain your great numbers, but they availed you

nothing, and was straitened the earth against you with all its extensiveness, then you turned back in retreat. Then did send down Allah His tranquility upon His Messenger and upon the believers. [9:26-26]

“In view of this verse, it is clear that Divine consolations are meant only for the Momins (the believers), and for none else. You are forgetting, my Ibrahim, that this consolatory verse was revealed in respect of those true ones who remained steadfast by the side of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) on the day of the Battle of Hunain; whereas in case of the verse at the cave, there was no true believer with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), except the person of Abu Bakr. Therefore, what was said in the verse was plainly this:

So Allah sent down tranquility upon him.

“There was no mention of Abu Bakr whatsoever. If he was included in the import of the Divine message, the verse would have ended with *alaihama* on them connoting a plural form. Thus, you will note that this *Ayat-e-Ghaar*, verse of cave, does not benefit Abu Bakr in any manner.

VERSE IN HONOR OF ALI (A.S.) ON THE NIGHT OF HOLY PROPHET (S.A.W.A.)’S MIGRATION

“And my dear Ibrahim, you are singing such praises of Abu Bakr as tend to disprove his Faith itself. Your other appreciative expressions and descriptions, attributing great virtues to questionable characters, glorify even

the infidels and their antecedents; but you ignore Hazrat Ali who staked his life for the sake of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) by sleeping in the latter's bed on the eventful night of his migration to Medina. Even Allah was much pleased with this self-sacrificing gesture of Ali that He addressed the angels, saying:

‘My angels! I have made you brothers unto each other. Is there anyone among you who is prepared to sacrifice his life for one of his brothers?’

“None of the angels replied to this question of Allah. It was then that He asked them to go forth and see for themselves how Ali Ibne Abi Talib was laying his life down for the sake of his brother (the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)). Accordingly, the angels started descending down upon Earth in groups, where they gained the honour of watching Ali and offering their salutations and Allah's blessings upon him. Jibrail and Mikail - the two well-known Angels were deputed by Allah to stand watch over Ali, one standing at the head of the bedstead, and the other at his feet.

“It has been said by Abdullah bin Abbas that Hazrat Ismael had agreed willingly to be slaughtered at the hands of Ibrahim, despite the fact he was a Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) himself. Hazrat Ismael also knew that he had committed no sin to deserve being slaughtered. Similarly, Ameerul Momineen Ali, too, was willing to stake his life against the infidels, who were persons professing no Faith, and who were always seeking the opportunity to do harm to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Also, they were

the arch-enemies of Hazrat Ali. It was under such grave circumstances that Ali supported the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) at the risk of his own life. And this verse was revealed to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in respect of Ali on the night of the former's migration:

And among men there is one who sells his self (soul) seeking the pleasure of Allah; and verily, Allah is affectionate to His (faithful) servants. [2:207]

“All these things are recorded in books accepted as authentic by your own school of thought, my dear Ibrahim. Why don't you then acknowledge these facts? All history books speak the same thing about this night of migration of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). They all tell us how Ali occupied the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s bed that night in order to help him at the risk to his own life; of how he deputized in place of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) on the bed; of how he acted as his Deputy over his household after the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had gone away to Medina; of how he managed to take along the womenfolk and other household effects with him from Mecca to Medina; of how the enemies intercepted him on the journey with murderous intention; of how these enemies dared not do them any harm; and of how he finally escorted everyone safely into the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s presence. If ever any person can truly be described as a *Mojahir*, he is one who should have all the virtues I have recounted just now. As such, when Hazrat Ali deputized for Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) on the bed, and also acted as his Deputy in the conveying of Sura Bara'at, why then can't Ali be the Caliph and the

Deputy of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) after him? You must realize, my dear Ibrahim, that Abu bakr was with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in the cave, and it was with him that he had gone to Medina safely. He had not followed after the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). You cannot truly call such a person a Muhajir, for this is what Allah says about a true *Muhajir*:

..... And whoever goes forth from his house migrating unto Allah and His Prophet (Muhammad) and then (before he reaches the destination) death overtakes him, indeed has become his recompense incumbent upon Allah [4:100]”

Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed who was listening to Husniyah’s discourse with rapt attention, was by this time thoroughly convinced of the cogency of the girl’s arguments. Infact, he could not help being thus impressed. He called aside his Vizir, Yahya, and said, “This girl has left no stone unturned in establishing the bonafides of the Imamate of Ali Ibne Abi Talib. How I wish she were belonging to our sect! I could then have been pleased to take her as my own wife.” “Whatever sect she belongs to,” replied yahya, “She no doubt deserves appreciation and reward.”

IS WORD OF ALLAH ETERNAL?

The Caliph then turning to Ibrahim, said: “I have now fully learnt the truth about predestination and the verse relating to cave. Now I ask what you have to say about the Holy Quran. Is it a later manifestation or did it exist

eternally? I ask this because I want to put myself at rest with enlightenment on this matter.”

Ibrahim was sitting, dejectedly hanging his head down, due to the humiliating defeat which the slave-girl had squarely inflicted on him.

“Why don’t you speak up,” said Yahya,, noticing the prolonged silence on the part of Ibrahim.

“Well,” started Ibrahim at length, “My belief is that the Holy Quran has existed from time immemorial, for, it was revealed without printed words and without being heard (except by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)). Speech is an attribute of Allah that has always been with Him, and Divine attributes are eternal. The nature of the wording of Holy Quran is a testimony to its being the Word of Allah. We, therefore, believe that Allah had the Holy Quran ready even before other living organisms were created.”

These words of Ibrahim did not impress the Caliph in the least. Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed in fact turned his face away from Ibrahim in sheer disgust, which gesture, quite naturally was not palatable to the Scholar.

“And what do you have to say about the matter, Husniyah?” asked the Caliph, addressing the girl.

Husniyah, ever ready for all questions, gestured in an addressing manner towards Ibrahim, and started her version on the issue.

“As you may be knowing, my dear Ibrahim,” she said, “Christians have maintained three pre-existent elements, which Allah of course condemns in these words:

Surely they disbelieve who say; ‘surely Allah is the third of the three and there is no Allah but the one Allah. [5:73]

“The doctrine of Trinity, as it is called, comprises three entities - that of Father, Son and the Holy Ghost. These represent Allah, Jesus and hazrat Jibrail respectively. The Christians say that if these three are not accepted as eternal, then the very concept of Allah is rendered malafide. And you followers of Ash’ari maintain that there are nine fundamental bases, namely:

1. Entity (Essence).
2. Creative force.
3. Will.
4. Comprehension.
5. Speech.
6. Hearing.
7. Seeing.
8. Wisdom.
9. Life.

“You regard all these as pre-creation existents. Your beliefs have thrice been proved as atheistic by Quranic explanations; and you excel over the Christians by six degrees in your misbeliefs. And my dear Ibrahim; how can Allah be an antiquated entity? I say this because in the opinion of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) and all other learned persons, the words written in books are but compositions.

We believe that Allah is Omnipotent, and he can cause the written letter or vocal expressions to ensue from the person of anyone of the people. It is with this belief that Allah is also referred to as the Speaker. It is also universally believed that Speech is a compound product of words and sounds, beginning and ending with certain words. And anything that has a beginning and an end is but a later manifestation. Moreover, all sanctions, prohibitions and ordinances are subsequent developments, for it is not possible to sanction or prohibit things that did not have a prior existence. One cannot approve of or detest something that never exists. As for the Holy Quran, it is a miracle of Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), he being its harbinger. So how can this miracle of his, which he achieved in his life-time, be a prior thing? This is what Allah means when He says:

Let them then bring a discourse like it, if they be truthful. [52:34]

“Here, the word *Hadith* discourse in the Arabic text means - a later manifestation; and anything that manifests subsequently cannot be pre-existent. *Hadith* is an antonym of *Qadeem* meaning eternal. At another place, similarly, Allah has said:

(There) comes not to them a reminder from their Lord, anew, save they hear it and they get busy in sport. [21:2]

“Here, what the Arabic word *Zikr* means in Holy Quran, is clear from this verse:

Verily we have sent down the reminder (the Qur’an)

and verily We (ourselves) to it will certainly be the Guardian. [15:9]

“As I have been saying, the two states of being, i.e. original and manifest is antonyms to each other, and as much cannot co-exist at one and the same time. If the Holy Quran is considered as pre-existent, then the whole lines of Prophets, saints and other virtuous persons, as also all the evildoers and infidels and apostates mentioned in the Holy Quran, automatically become pre-existent.”

Husniyah paused here for a little while as if to recollect something that Ibrahim had said.

“And, yes”, she started again, remembering the point, “you have said that Allah intended laying down His sanctions and prohibitions even before he had created living matter. How then will you explain these verses wherein Allah says:

O you who believe!

O you people who guard.....

O our Prophet Fear your, Allah.....

O you who believe and enter you not in the houses of the Prophet

“Let me illustrate this for you, my dear Ibrahim. If someone, sitting alone in his home starts shouting: O Salem and O Ghanem stand; and you, O Qabil and Maqbool, sits down; and some body asks this man as to whom he is addressing and conversing with, and the man answers: ‘I intend to purchase a few slaves after thirty

years. I will name them as Salem, Ghanem, Qabil and Maqbool. I will then call them by these names to attend to me!’ Now, anyone in his right senses will say that such a person can only be either an idiot or lunatic. So, my dear Ibrahim, how can you or anyone attribute the misdeeds of foolish and insane persons to Allah?”

Husniyah, with her clear-cut similes and illustrations had again scored a bull’s eye - this time so marvelously that Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed ordered his courtiers to bring a tray full of gold pieces and strew them over this phenomenal girl as an expression of his admiration for her intellectual excellence. Everyone present there, including the elite and peers of the State, was heaping their appreciations upon Husniyah. Most of the Kings and rulers of adjoining States, who had come to Baghdad expressly for the purpose of listening to this debate, were the admirers of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.). But, being afraid of Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed who belonged to the Bani Abbas dynasty, they could not reveal their real religious affiliations. In their heart of hearts, however, they were praying for the glorious outcome of Husniyah’s challenge. Everyone in the assembly was wonderstruck at the sweet, yet forceful, and eloquent mastery of the girl.

As for the scholars of the other school of thought, almost all of them now sat with their heads lowered down in humiliation of their defeat, particularly so Ibrahim who sat on the golden Presidential chair with ignominy of defeat writ large on his face.

“My dear Ibrahim”, she re-opened, “you are the most outstanding scholar of the present age; and I am a mere slave-girl, helpless and alone, who was captured and kidnapped by the infidels and purchased for a petty sum by my master, Khwaja, who is present in this gathering. He it is who after purchasing me educated and enlightened me on true Islamic lines. That is how I was fortunate to find the honour of embracing Islam in its true sense, and of recognizing Allah and understanding the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and my Imam. I, however, still have certain issues on mind on which I seek enlightenment from you not by way of teasing you or testing you, but purely for self-appraisal. So, please satisfy my curiosity so that I may hold you high in my esteem, and subsequently live my life in your employ. So please tell me, dear Ibrahim, what you think about this: When a child is born, he or she is neither a Jew nor a Zoroastrian; neither a Muslim nor an infidel; neither a Shia nor a Sunni. So, it is the parents who educate and mold their children to be Muslims or atheists or Jews or Zoroastrians. And you must also know that a person whose faith is false cannot avoid these two alternative positions: i.e. he imagines his Faith to be the right one and sticks to it in a steadfast manner. Secondly, knowing his faith to be a false one, he conceals its falsity by trickery and influences other people to subscribe to his faith in a devoted manner. The place destined for both such persons is Hell. So, today I am going to ask you a few questions, and you must reply to them without fear or favour. And also please bear in mind that by the grace of Allah I have full faith in the religion of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and

the Imams, as I have already said earlier. I understand fully what *Sirat* (a bridge crossing over Hell, its breadth being less than the breadth of hair, and its sharpness more swiftly than sword), *Houz-e-Kausar* (a spring in paradise), *Bihisht* and *Dozakh* (Heaven and Hell) mean. I also thoroughly understand what is meant by 'righteous persons' and infidels. I am, however, perplexed about certain matters over which opinions differ. I therefore seek to know the truth about these matters. I have replied successfully and satisfactorily to no less than eighty questions from your side. I hope you will be good enough to clear certain doubts that I have, so that I can come to some conclusion over them.

TRUTH ABOUT AHADITH

“As you know, my dear Ibrahim, next to cognition of Allah, His Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and Imam (a.s.), *Namaz* (ordained prayers); *Roza* (fasting); *Khums* and *Zakat* (one fifth tax on revenue and wealth tax); *Haj* (pilgrimage to Mecca); *Jihad* (Struggling, armed or otherwise in the cause of Allah) *Amr bil Ma'aruf* (propagation of good conduct) constitute the fundamentals of Islam. Accordingly I pray and keep fasts as best as I can. And I hope for the favorable attention of the Caliph of the time to be able to pay the prescribed amounts of charity to the deserving ones. After that, by the grace of Allah, I may discharge the obligation of pilgrimage to Mecca. And *Jihad* which is one of the prescribed worships is now incumbent upon me. If someone intends to insult my religious beliefs, I must confront him. You must know that *Jihad*, as

meaning fighting the foe with arms and ammunition, is not applicable to me as a woman. I don't have to wield the sword or the dagger for that purpose. The tongue with its power of speech is sufficient for the purpose of struggling for truth. I want to tell you, my dear Ibrahim, that I have willingly accepted the incumbency upon me of all these difficult tasks like travelling all the way to Mecca for Haj; giving charity to the poor; observing fasts during the trying and hot summers; performing ablutions with water in icy winters; and praying punctually five times everyday. I have taken all these upon myself willingly as a matter of duty; and all this for the sake of knowing the truth about Allah's vicegerancy and religion. What I do not know, however, is how and by what methods I can abide with obedience. I am not learned enough to distinguish between what is true and what is not. I am not personally aware of the House of Allah. I also do not know personally if the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) received Divine revelations. I am also not quite sure about the purity of character and truthfulness of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). I therefore feel that it is futile to take all these troubles of prayers, fasting, paying cash, travelling to Arabia etc., etc. What charm can I feel in these injunctions when the plain fact is that those people who after the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) violated the sanctity of Caliphate as indicated by him, killing thousands of men, woman and children, usurping their properties and subjecting the family members of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s household to all sorts of excesses with impunity in the process, also at the same time claimed to be the professors of Islam, and are respected as such by the generality of Muslims. Not only that, they are even

regarded as the deputies of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) today. I do not know a thing about these differences and beliefs. Therefore, beware that it is the learned one like yourself whom Allah will take to task for not having enlightened His creatures about these important matters. You are today the most distinguished scholar in the estimation of others belonging to the Sunni School of thought, and you are the religious leader and guide of the people. Now therefore please tell me if you are one of those who for the sake of worldly gains of monetary and social nature recourse to prejudices, malice and animosities and acted against the dictates of Allah and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) for the attainment of their selfish motives?”

Ibrahim, the famed religious scholar of the time was speechless at these frank and fearless words of the girl. He sat there in his Presidential chair with his head bent down in disgrace. The audience, too, were taken so aback that they all were staring stupidly at Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed, who also was sitting in a speculative posture.

“Reply me”, demanded Husniyah in insistent tones, “Tell me if someone seeks to find out the truth about *Ahadith* (traditions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)), is the search for truth motivated by a desire to gain enlightenment and Allah’s pleasure or is it inspired for monetary gains and securing a followership for one’s own self. Or, is it for both these purposes?”

Ibrahim could find no words to say by way of a reply to these bold questions from the girl. He was so frightened

at the latent implications of Husniyah's questions that he thought it wise to keep mum. But the girl was relentless.

She insisted. "Tell me, O Ibrahim", she coaxed him again, "If I have certain difficulties and misgivings about religion, where should I go, and to whom should I approach for enlightening me? I see today that there are quite a number of learned and reputed scholars present in this gathering. Some of them have come here from distant places like Iraq, Syria, Mecca and Yethreb. But I regret to say that none of these dignitaries is coming forward to reply to my questions."

Yet none made any move; and the pin-drop silence that ensued created an atmosphere of dramatic suspense in the auditorium. It was Abu Yusuf, the learned Qazi of Baghdad, who ventured to break the silence at length.

"My dear Husniyah," he spoke, "your questions are not motivated by any desire for enlightenment. Rather, they are pregnant with sarcasm and criticism. However, ask me what you want to know."

"Thank you," gestured Husniyah, and went on with what she had to say: "I have heard numerous traditions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.); I have studied the commentaries on Holy Quran, the sources of which are attributed to Ameerul Momineen Ali, Imam Hasan, Imam Husain (a.s.), Salman Abu Zar, Miqdad and Ammar Yaseer. There are certain authorities who speak against these persons. You too, are opposed to them

and attribute falsities to them. You condemn as impious those who abide by their teachings. The bulk of traditions quoted by your school of thought are reported by persons like Muawiya, Omar Aas, Anas bin Malik, and Ayesha and such others. Now, as you know, ordinary human beings are a mixture of all types. Some are truthful, some not so; some are liars, some are extraordinary; some of average intelligence, some possess multiple personalities. Some have good memory; and some are skeptics. The diversity of the nature of these two categories of persons (i.e. one headed by Ali and other headed by Muawiya etc.) is conspicuous to one and all. It needs no comment. So now, in the light of this, please tell me which of these two groups indulged in lies and slandered the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)? Who postulated the traditions and gave currency to them? Who interpreted Quranic contents according to these postulates? The answer is not far to seek, for Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) has observed:

CATEGORIES OF NARRATORS

‘My traditions are conveyed to you by four types of persons. There is not fifth category.’ Upon this, people asked the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as to which those four categories were, and he replied, saying:

FIRST GROUP

‘The first is represented by that pretentious person who feigns faith in Islam and parades himself as a Muslim, but in fact cares a naught about Allah; he has not the slightest

scruples in slandering Allah and his Messenger. Hence, if such a person stands exposed before the Muslims; and if he intentionally imputes me, he should never be trusted.’

“But some people maintain that such a person, as referred to above, had the honour of being personally in the company of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). He had seen the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and had heard the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) say certain things. So, they say that what he says should be accepted and relied upon, completely ignoring his factual background. They seem to be ignorant of the pretentious character of this man, his characteristics, as described in Holy Quran in respect of *Munafiqeen*:

When you see them, marvel you their bodies; and if they speak, you listen to their speech..... [63:4]

“Thus, you will note that even the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) could not recognize pretenders of religion. How then can anyone else do so? So, my dear Ibrahim, the position is that people accepted what he said, without knowing him for what he truly was. He is respected as the ruler of the Muslims, and people are loyal to such a person as they would be to a proper King. But the ones whom Allah protects will never accept him as such or be obedient to him.

SECOND GROUP

“However, this is one of the four classes of men mentioned above. The second type of traditionists is the persons who heard the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) say a certain thing and

memorized it. Subsequently, he erred in reproducing it or forgot a part or whole of it; for, everyone except the infallibles are liable to forgetfulness and errors. Such a person does not deliberately mis-relate the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s tradition. He only relates it from memory in a faulty way. If such a person goes about telling people about this tradition which he does not correctly remember, and boasts that he had heard it from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) personally, and also acts upon it, the Muslims when they come to know that this tradition has been narrated wrongly, should not believe it to be true. Even other writers, when they know a certain tradition to be wrong, should not cite it.

THIRD CATEGORY

“And now, my dear Ibrahim, listen to the third category. This class is illustrable by a person who personally heard the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) prohibiting certain things. So far so good. But the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) subsequently sanctioned what he had disapproved; and this man was not present there when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) reversed his order. That is, this person heard the negative part of the tradition, and missed that part of the same subject which reversed the previous order. Thus, if this person knew about the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s cancellation of his previous directive, he would not have related the tradition at all. Hence, if the Muslims come to know that the said tradition stands cancelled, they should not accept it.

FOURTH CATEGORY

“And in the fourth category comes the person who does

not mis-state a tradition out of fear of Allah and due to his reverence for His Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). He does not err in or forget about any part of the tradition he is relating. He relates it in exactly the same words and manner in which he had heard the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) say it. He neither subtracts from nor adds anything to it of his own. He is one who discriminates between what is permissible and what is not, for there are certain ambiguities in the Holy Quran about which Allah says:

And whatever gives you the Messenger, you accept it, and from whatever prevents he, you be away (from it).... [59:7]

“As such, tell me, my dear Ibrahim, as to what one should do if he is in doubt about the true meaning of certain Divine Commandments and directives of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)? Tell me now as to which category one should abide by? Whose veracity of interpretation should one accept as authentic? Should one follow those persons whose purity of descent and character Allah Himself vouchsafes in these words:

..... Verily Allah intend but to keep off from you (every kind of) uncleanness O you the people of the House, and purify you (with) a thorough purification. [33:33]

“and abide by the guidance of one who was by the side of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) since the very beginning of his Mission to the last of his breath?

or,

is it better to follow what the other common persons say?”

Husniyah had embarked upon a very judicious line of argument. Raising her voice to emphasize what she was about to say, she resumed her version:

“You must know, my dear Ibrahim, that none of the Companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had the courage to interject the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) with searching questions. They could not bring themselves to be inquisitive about each and everything because Allah had prohibited them from doing so for reasons which are evident in this verse:

O you who believe! Ask you not about things which if declared to you will (only) pain you; [5:101]

“After the revelation of this verse, the Companions had stopped putting inquisitive questions to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), though in their heart of hearts they wished that some desert dweller may come and pose these questions to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) so that they could hear his replies and satisfy their curiosity thereby.

“It is narrated by my Lord and Master, Imam Ja‘far-e-Sadiq (a.s.) who heard it from his ancestor, Ali bin al-Husain (a.s.) who heard it from his father, Abu Abdullah al-Husain (a.s.), who heard it from his father that Ameerul Momineen Ali Ibne Abi Talib (a.s.) told Salman Farsi:

ALI (A.S.) KNEW THAT WAS REVEALED TO THE HOLY PROPHET (S.A.W.A.)

O Salman, I used to be with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) alone once every night, when I used to talk

about secret matters with him and know secrets from him. Also once everyday I would be with him alone, when I used to reply to whatever he used to ask. All the Companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) knew about these private meetings, and they also knew that no one except me could meet him like that. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) too regarded no one else as his confidant except me; and no one other than me had the courage to share the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s solitude, which more often than not would be at my house. When I used to go to him on occasions when he was at one of his houses, he used to ask his wives to leave us alone with no one being near about. On such occasions I used to ask questions which none except the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was capable of replying too; and he would answer my questions in a very affectionate and gracious manner. Hazrat Jibrail used to speak to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in my presence; and there was nothing that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) withheld from me. I would listen to all that he would say. This was a privilege which no Companion ever had. I was the sole one to have had this honour. When I had exhausted all my questions, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) would, of his own, start something fresh. Therefore, there was not a single revelation the secret of which was not known to me, nor was the secrets of any nature which I was not aware of. Accordingly, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) apprised me of all sanctions and prohibitions, good and evil, virtues and vices and everything there was or would be in the future. He

enlightened me with, and made me write down, every single thing he knew. This I preserved in writing. He also enlightened me with the detailed explanations and classification of all that he revealed to me, and divulged their superficial as well as latent implications. I memorized these permanently.”

So deep and salutary was the effect of these words of Husniyah that the audience, including the Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed, was moved to tears. Everyone of the audience expressed the veracity of her citation; and as for Ibrahim, there was nothing he could do except acknowledging his humiliation with a bowed head.

BELIEFS OF THE TWO GROUPS

“Now, my dear Ibrahim,” resumed Husniyah again, “now that I have said enough about the subject of traditions and the antecedents of their authors, I might as well tell you something about the religious beliefs of the two groups that I have described, so that it may be known as to which group is right and which group is wrong. To start with, you must know that Ahlul Bait (a.s.) and their devotees (i.e. the Shias) believe that Allah is Omniscient, Absolute, Just and Pure. They believe that Allah is the Creator of the cosmic and the Earthly universes and of every single thing in and in between these realms. The original creation of man from clot of earth; the sexual process of procreation of human race endowed with dynamism of life and soul, bodies and limbs; and provisions of food, drinks, clothing and institution of marriages, all of which are

essential items of life and economic well being; the blissful endowment of intellect and physical strength necessary for the cognizance of Allah and the discharge of obedience and worship to Him; the cognition of the commissionings of Prophets, their infallibility, their Deputies and successors; the revelation of sacred scriptures; the ordaining of religious laws, the definitions of good and evil; benedictions of prayers and obedience; enlightenments of Heaven and Hell, rewards and retributions; and appraisals of eternal life in the Hereafter - all these manifestations of the creative force of Allah, to mention only a few. The Shias also believe that Allah is not a tyrant, and that He does not subject anyone to any pain that is beyond one's endurance. Pain is something that lies in one's power to avoid; it is not forced upon anyone, except by willful tyrants. They believe also that Allah rewards good deeds, and punishes the evil doers; and that His sanctions and prohibitions are subsequent promulgations, for, it is absurd that there could be regulations about something that does not exist at all. And He has powers over those things on which man has none.

“The Shias also believe that Allah does not approve of man's infidelity to and disobedience to Him. Man's infidelity and wrongful conduct is not the resultant of Allah's will; he does not recourse to oppression in the least. If someone is truly and sincerely obedient to Him, He compensates the man with a measure more than his obedience deserves. They also believe that no human eye can see Allah in a physical form; they regard such perception as impossibility. The Shias also believe that

all Prophets are infallible, and free from all vices, major and minor; and that they have unfailing memories. They also adhere to the belief that all Prophets and their successors are chosen and appointed by Allah; and that no Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) ever nominated his Successor without the Divine sanction. Nor did any nation of any religious denomination ever select a Successor to their respective Prophets. They also believe that no Prophet died without having nominated his heir as commanded by Allah. They also hold religiously the following beliefs:

- that all Successors of Prophets were infallible and free from human faults;
- that our Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) was the Greatest and the most exalted of all the Prophets;
- that his Divinely appointed Successor is Ali Murtaza. Quranic verses testify this fact. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had declared Ali Ibne Abi Talib (a.s.) as the Caliph and Imam after him, as commanded by Allah to do so at Ghadir Khum, securing the concurrence of all his followers;
- That there are twelve (Caliphs) Successors of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), all of whom are infallible and free of human weaknesses, as testified in the Holy Quran;
- that all these Imams performed miracles, and were the addressees of Quranic verses, and as such their wisdom and knowledge is of a Divinely inspired nature, encompassing the realms of all arts and sciences;
- that no one, whether their opponent or devotee, can gainsay their (Imam's) purity of character and descent, knowledge and wisdom, generosity and benevolence,

- courage and miraculous achievements, piety and kinship with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.); and their shrines are the centers of benevolence for the needy;
- that the devotees of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) are righteous and assured of their salvation, as vouchsafed by Allah;
 - that their opponents are accused and mean infidels;
 - that an Imam is one who is absolutely infallible and declared as such by Allah. Scores of books have been written on this subject, based on pure logic as well as on Scriptural data;
 - That any interpretation of Quranic contents that militates against the spirit of Quranic injunctions is invalid and unreliable as such;
 - that the Shias do not accept the Quranic interpretations given by persons disobedient to Allah and who are wicked;
 - that they always maintain cleanness of their bodies and do not perform ablutions or take cleansing baths without an express intention for the purpose.”

Having said this, Husniyah turned her attention towards Abu Yusuf who was a reputed pupil and disciple of the renowned Sunni Scholar, Abu Hanifa Kufi.

“We do not perform ablutions with unclean water,” she addressed him, “and also, we do not wash our faces with both hands, for the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) (a.s.) has clearly said that the right hand is meant for cleansing face and hand, and the left hand is meant for the purpose of washing the private portions of the body. We do not go through the symbolic gesture of washing the neck

and ears during ablutions (*Masah*). We regard this as an innovation, and against what the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) practiced. We do not wash our feet at the end of ablutions, and do not recognize the sanctity of prayers without an express intention for the same; we do not leave out the opening words ‘*Bismillah.....*’ before reciting Sura Fateha (opening verse of the compiled Holy Quran). And we do not recite the translation of the Sura-e-Fateha in Persian and for repetition of recitation, we do not say “Ditto” (as before).

“We go through other bodily gestures like *Sujood* (prostrations), *Rukoo* (bowing), *Qayaam* (Standing) and *Qa’ood* (Sitting) in the manner established by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), his Ahlul Bait and other prominent Companions.

“And listen, my dear Ibrahim,” resumed the girl when the laughter had subsided, “we do not regard the eating of Rabbit’s meat as permissible because it menstruates. Nor do we regard the skin of dogs and all other secreting organs as being free from uncleanness. We regard wine as prohibited; as also all such games of chance like Chess and other forms of gambling, as is expressly ordained so by Divine commands as well as by the directives of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). So is homosexuality forbidden, both the culprits in the act being liable to death penalty. So is music from any musical instrument. We do not perform our prayers under the lead of a person whose conduct is indicative of disobedience to Allah; we do not recognize such a person as being entitled to lead congregational

prayers. We follow behind a just and proper person for this purpose. We do not discard the sanctity of *Muta'atul Haj* and *Muta'a-un-Nisa* simply because 'one man' disapproved of it (the reference here is to Umar who invalidated this Divine sanction)".

Husniyah now turned in the direction of Shafei's and said: "We do not recognize the sanctity of marriage with one's own daughter born out of wedlock, nor do we subscribe to the theory that a child remains in the womb of the mother for as long as four years."

Shafei was simply aghast at these bold statements of Husniyah, for, according to his school of thought all these indulgences were quite permissible.

"And", continued Husniyah, "Shia juris consults do not sanctify the act of a man marrying his mother or sister, for to do so is punishable. They do not say that it is quite permissible for one to cover his penis with a piece of cloth and have sexual intercourse with his mother or sister while on the journey to the Ka'aba. Nor do they believe that homosexuality is not punishable. And, also, they do not act on analogical conjectures (*Qiyas*), for they maintain that the first one to do so was the Satan who said:

Said he: "I am better than him, Me you have created of fire while you did create him (Adam) of clay. [7:12]

"And another person to act on such conjectures was Abu Hanifa, and you yourself, too, my dear Abu Yusuf: We

do not believe that our salvation, and that of our Imams, is governed by Allah's will. On the contrary, we believe that our Sect is already assured of its salvation. We firmly believe that our Imams are pure in all respects and that they are absolutely infallible, and will intercede in favour of those sincere to them. As commanded by Allah and directed by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), we regard our opponents as wicked and accursed persons. We do not believe in the propriety of shedding other's blood or usurping other's property for selfish motives. We wear rings on the fingers of our right hand, as was the practice of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.); and we do not give up acting in accordance with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s precepts just because of the animosity of others in this respect. And we send our prayerful salutations to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the Imams! and we do not say that to do so in respect of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) is wrong. We do not follow in footsteps of Muawiya and Yazid. We believe in the veracity of the Divine words which say this about sending prayerful salutations to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.):

He it is who confers upon you His blessing, and (like-wise do) the angels..... [33:43]

TITLE OF HAZRAT ALI (A.S.)

“We mention Ali Ibne Talib as *Ameerul Momineen*; and as ordained by Allah and directed by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), we reserve this title specifically and solely for Ali (a.s.), this being the title by which every one in the life-time of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) used in respect of Ali Ibne Abi Talib (a.s.). No one used to refer to anyone

else with this title. We also believe firmly in this verse of the Holy Quran which says:

Verily, Verily, your guardian is (none else but) Allah and His Prophet (s.a.w.a.) (Muhammad) and those who believe, those who establish prayers and pay the poor-rate while they be (even) bowing down (in prayers). [5:55]

“In the days of Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), all people used to refer Imam Ali as *Wali Ullah* and *Wali al-Momineen* and used to chant prayerful salutations in reverence to him; curse his enemies both secretly as well as openly. We also believe that the entire community of Muslims is unanimous in their considered opinion (*ijma*) about the infallibility and purity of descent and character of our Imams. And no one has found any defect whatsoever in them. The discriminate class of people in the community holds the considered opinion that the opponents of our Imams are infidels, for, it is their opponents who usurped the rights of our Imams. We also assert that we follow in practice the precepts of Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and his Ahlul Bait (a.s.); and we believe that most of the religious observations and customs indulged in by our opponents are merely desirable acts, but falsely attributed as *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). These are deliberate and false imputations, particularly those practices which gained currency during the regimes of the first three Caliphs. The Taravih etc. (additional night prayers during the month of Ramazan), for instance.”

These sharp and scathing expressions of Husniyah greatly agitated the feelings of the *Ulema* of Baghdad who started shouting loud protests. Shafei in particular was so much angered at the pinching factual taunts of the girl that he picked up the ink-pot that happened to be near at hand and flung it furiously at her. The audience and Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed, however, just laughed at this uncivil behaviour of Shafei.

“Now, mind you, O Shafei, said the Caliph, “she is a slave girl. I have permitted her to say and do what she likes. If you have the requisite ability to do so, you can retaliate by convincing arguments based on Holy Quran and traditions”.

These words of Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed had an encouraging effect upon Husniyah, and she started her tirade once again.

“Listen, Shafei,” she opened up, “you do not deserve the honour of sitting in the midst of learned persons! You are destined to ignominy, for you remained in your mother’s womb for four years according to your own assertion; and were born four years after the death of your father! And you have the impudence to deliver judgment on that issue! If that is the nature of your descent, it is no wonder that you are inimical towards the Ahlul Bait (a.s.). And know it, O Shafei, it is clear to all that you are an apostate. I say so because you originally belonged to the Ahlul Bait (a.s.)’s school of thought, and counted yourself amongst their humble followers. In those days you used to write

Satires against Abu Hanifa for the reason that he was an opponent of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.). Your poetic compositions written during that period were expressive of satirical and sarcastic comments upon his errors of interpretation and analogical reasoning. The majority of this gathering knows these facts. And now, just for the sake of personal pomp and temporary material gains, you have sold yourself and taken to career-hunting in the re-interpretation of Islamic laws. You aspire to become a religious leader over the people; and for this purpose you have joined hands with your erstwhile adversary, Abu Hanifa. You must know, my dear Shafei that Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) with all his Divine distinctions; Prophet Musa (a.s.) despite his honour of conversing with Allah; Prophet Zulqarnain (a.s.) and Sulayman (a.s.) with all their majesty over vast empires; Prophet Dawud (a.s.) with all his pomp and power, and Prophet Isa (a.s.) despite his exalted and distinctive status - all these eminent Prophets are subservient to our Holy Prophet, Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), and look to him as their ideal expressed in these words:

O Allah make me one of the Ummat (people) of Muhammad (s.a.w.a.).

EXCELLENCES OF AHLUL BAIT (A.S.)

“Allah says about their being infallibles:

Verily Allah intends but to keep off from you (every kind of) uncleanness O you the people of the House, and purify you (with) a thorough purification. [33:33]

“And about them as the Appointees of Allah:

O you who believe! obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you.....
[4:59]

“About their being the Sadiqs (Truthful ones):

O you who believe! Fear you Allah and be you (always) with the truthful ones. [9:119]

“About their devotion:

Verily Allah has purchased from the faithful there selves and their properties [9:111]

“About their provident natures:

And they give away food out of love for Him, to the poor and the orphan and the captive. [76:8]

“A truly nobleman is one with respect to him the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) has said:

One who wishes to see Adam in his knowledge? Noah in his restraint, Ibrahim in his forbearance, Musa in his awe and Massiah in his service, then he should look at Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.)

“Hence, when the cousin brother of our Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) is a person whom the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) has placed on the same footing as all other Prophets who established Islam progressively, I wonder my dear Shafei, as to what made you a turncoat to discard them and take to the ways of the misguided ones.”

Shafei sat humiliated and dejected as Husniyah went on

slashing him with her biting true statements. He had not the power of speech to say anything by way of a reply to her. Husniyah, therefore, turned her attention back to Ibrahim.

“My dear Ibrahim”, She addressed him, “Since the day Abu Bakr usurped the right of Caliphate, all the prominent Companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), except Hazrat Ali, with their cogent arguments convinced and condemned him for his usurpation and proved him to be unworthy of confidence. He used to be thus humiliated; and would not utter a word by way of defense. From those days to the present times, no devotee of Islam has had the courage to stand up and expose the truth about our religion or accuse the enemies of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s progeny because of the numerical strength of the enemies of Truth. None of the true devotees had the guts or the opportunity to do so in a manner which I am privileged today by the kind favour of the present Caliph.”

The entire audience sat silent and pensive, staring vacantly at the floor. In their heart of hearts, they were feeling condemned and humiliated at the debased nature of the conduct of their respective religious guides, as described frankly by Husniyah.

“Tell me, my dear Ibrahim,” continued the girl, “whether it is necessary or not to have someone as an Imam (Guide) when a Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) departs from the world, this Imam being a person endowed with spiritual affinities of the out-going Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), who could

carry on the latter's mission till the arrival of the next? Otherwise, there would be a void in the institution of Divine Apostleship, and the process of Divine guidance would come to a halt. I appeal to you in the name of Allah, my dear Ibrahim, to reply to this: There have been 1,24,000 Prophets, including the four Apostles. Did all these Prophets and Apostles of Allah died without naming their successors?"

"No," replied Ibrahim, "all of them named their respective Successors."

"Good. Now tell me, was their nomination of Successors in accordance with Allah's Commands, or did these Prophets do so of their own choice?"

"The nominations were in consequence with Divine Commands," answered Ibrahim.

"Then, my dear Ibrahim, what valid reasons do you have to believe that in the case of our Holy Prophet, Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), Allah did not do so in order to ensure the Survival of his mission? How is it possible that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), who preached the importance of expressing, wills to his followers could have himself departed from the world without nominating his own Successors for the preservation of his mission? What strange type of idols you people are!

"I ask you, Ibrahim: should not a Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) be a person who could endure the burden and responsibility

of the task entrusted divinely to him, whom no other creation in the universe could successfully undertake? Should he not be one as defined in this Quranic verse?

Verily we offered the trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains but they refused to bear it and were afraid thereof, and man undertook it. [33:72]

“Or should he be one who could be fallible, apt to err, and addicted to vile talks? Should he be one who speaks lies and indulges himself in romantic occupations? Should he be one who causes harm to others in the satisfaction of his own personal ends, and justifies this misdeed? Should he be one who perforce causes others to stand testimony for the justification of his selfish actions, permitting them to do what they like after achieving his object?

IMAMATE

“Tell me, Ibrahim, what is Imamate actually? What is its significance? What was the meaning of that ‘Imamate’ which Ibrahim was carrying out when He said: *I am going to make you Imam over the people?* [2:124] On another occasion, he said: *And appoint as Imam of the pious ones* [25:74] and then added: *And made we them Imam who invite to fire* [28:41]. So, know it, my dear Ibrahim, that Imamate has dual meaning. One pertains to the leadership of the virtuous, and the other to the leading of those condemned to Hell. Now, how is the Imam of the virtuous one to be recognized? What are his qualities? Is Imamate and Holy Prophethood analogous? Does Imamate originate from Allah or not? Is it necessary

or not that the successor of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and Imam should be one from the genealogical line of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.)? Obviously, such an Imam's parentage has to be unquestionably honorable. He must be one whose forefathers were never idolatrous. He must have been born free from impurities of biological nature. He has to be one who remains steadfast in matters of Faith, and is enlightened with such qualities as: all-comprehensive wisdom, self-control, knowledge of Divine secrets and of religious laws.

He must be one who is endowed with moral excellence and possesses the knowledge of this world as well as that of the next.

He must also have mastery on the political plans as well.

He must have the quality of forbearance under the most trying circumstances, and possess a clement nature.

He must rely upon his own strength of personality and piety, and shun suspicions.

He must be compassionate, generous and courageous, and possess an unquestionable moral character, wisdom and abstemiousness.

He must conduct himself with true believers and virtuous persons in a gentle and amicable manner. Whatever he spends for attaining Divine pleasure must be out of what he actually possesses as his own personal property.

He must also possess a thorough insight into the knowledge of Quranic injunctions and their implications.

He must have a soft corner in his heart for the indigent and the needy.

He must have a comprehensive knowledge of the past as well as of the future, so that he apprises the people accordingly.

He must have pure love for Allah and his Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

An Imam must be a person in whose honour should have been revealed several verses in the Holy Quran.

He must be one who has been praised by Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), such praises being subscribed to by all schools of thought and contained in the scriptures of dissidents, too.

He must be one who has vanquished reputed stalwarts on the battle-fields in the numerous wars that were fought during the life-time of Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), and whose one single blow on the battle-fields has been described by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as being equivalent in value to all the virtuous acts of men and angels put together.

He must be one whom the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) called 'the apple of my eyes'.

Thus, tell me O Ibrahim, if it is this type of individual who is essentially entitled to Imamate, or one who gave up idolatry at the age of 40 years, having worshipped idols made from stones? Should he be one who became helpless on the pulpit when he was left on his own and could only say in reply: ‘Every one of you is more learned than I even the ladies in their houses’ and as reported by all factions, kept on repeating the word ‘Depose me’? Should he be one for whom Umar Khattab, Abu Obaida Jarrah, Salem, the slave owned by Abu Hanifa, Asad bin Khuzaira, Bashir bin Sa’ad, Khalid bin Waleed and a few others managed to secure Caliphate’s allegiance? Should he be one who spent most of his time breeding camels, selling cloth and doing tailoring; and who along with his father used to summon people everyday to Abdullah bin Jaza’an’s kitchen so that they should eat at the place and leave the left-over meals for him and his father to eat? Should he be one who, even while a Caliph carried on his vocation as a tailor whom most men used to despise? I ask you, O Ibrahim, is it proper to prefer such a person to infallible person of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s family? Is it decent to call such a man the Deputy of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), just because a few persons thought that he was a good Caliph whom Allah had supposedly appointed as such, though the fact is that he did not possess the ability and other requisites for the office?”

Husniyah paused for a few moments for breath. She had been speaking for quite some time now, holding the audience enthralled with the force of her arguments and sheer beauty of her eloquence.

“So, tell me, my dear Ibrahim”. She resumed, looking squarely at him, “tell me who out of the two categories of person I have described, is entitled to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s Deputyship and succession?”

GHADEER-E-KHUM

“Now listen, my dear Husniyah,” replied Ibrahim, “we do not question the greatness of the members of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s family. We accept as true all that you have said in respect of the exalted status and greatness of Ali. We would even say to be, and that human wisdom can never comprehend the consensus of opinion of the Muslim community in his favour; and you must not ignore that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had said that the consensus of opinion of his followers cannot be wrong. In other words, whatever issue is subscribed to by the *ijma* (consensus of opinion) of his *Ummah* (Muslims community) cannot be malafide.”

“Now wait a minute”, the girl put in, “I beseech you in the name of your Creator to tell me the truth if it is not a fact that your books have recorded the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as having revealed on the occasion of his last pilgrimage, when he had halted at Ghadeer Khum as commanded by Allah, the following verse of the Holy Quran:

O Our Messenger! Deliver you what has been sent down to you from the Lord, if you do it not, then (it will be as if) you have not delivered His Message (at all). [5:67]

“And when over-awed by this Divine revelation, was not the verse, *And surely Allah will protect you from the mischief of man* revealed to him? did you not the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) then lift Ali on the pulpit made from camel saddles and declare:

“Ali (a.s.) is the Lord of the person who’s Lord I am”

“Was it not after the declaration of this verse that this final verse of the Holy Quran was revealed?:

This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour on you and chosen for you (Islam) to be the religion. [5:3]

“Now tell me, my dear Ibrahim, tell me truthfully under the oath of Allah whether you know these Quranic facts.”

Ibrahim found himself now in a fix, and not knowing what to say in reply, he looked at once at Shafei, Abu Yusuf and other esteemed scholars who also had nothing to help him with. He, therefore, thought it wise to lower his head for the umpteenth time as a gesture of his defeat.

Husniyah, calm and collected in her triumph turned gracefully towards the learned scholars.

“Now, gentlemen”, she addressed them, “I must request you to be truthful to your conscience, to your Allah and His Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), to the sanctity of the authority of your own Caliph, and say what you have to say about what you have just heard from me”.

Moved at the challenge to his Caliph's image, Abu Yusuf said, "you are right, O Husniyah. The verse you have quoted is accepted by a majority of authorities on Holy Quran as having been revealed in exaltation of Hazrat Ali Ibne Abi Talib (a.s.). And I must also say that the declaration of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) to the effect 'Of whomsoever I am the Maula, Ali is his Maula,' too, is also a widely accepted tradition and that none of the authorities have gainsaid the relevant event at Ghadeer Khum".

ALI (A.S.) IS WALI

Nodding in acknowledgement, Husniyah then turned to Abu Yusuf who sat in a speculative posture.

"You, my dear Abu Yusuf". She posed at him, "what do you have to say about this Quranic verse:

Verily, verily your guardian is (none else but) Allah and His Messenger and those who believe, those who establish prayer and pay the poor-rate, while they be (even) bowing down (in prayer). [5:55]

"Tell me under oath, in whose honour has this verse been revealed?"

"According to the consensus of opinion, this verse is in honour of Ali Ibne Abi Talib", replied Abu Yusuf.

"And what do you have to say about the *aya-e-Mubahila* (A Quranic verse) which says:

Say! (O Our Messenger!) (to them) come you Let us

summon our sons and your sons and our women and your women and ourselves and yourselves and then let us invoke and lay the curse of Allah on the liars. [3:61]

“And mind you, my dear Abu Yusuf, the curse and wrath of Allah be upon you if you try to conceal the truth that these were none other than Ali, Hasan and Husain from among men; and Fatimah (the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s daughter) from among women who accompanied the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) on the occasion referred to in the verse. Is this not a fact?”

“Indeed, it is”, replied Abu Yusuf, “these were the only four who accompanied the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)”

“And you will also agree that Allah has referred to Ali as the *Nafs* (part and parcel) of His Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) - and this honour none but Ali enjoys”, posed the girl.

“There are no two opinions on this”, conceded Abu Yusuf, adding, “None can deny this”.

It was now the Caliph’s turn. She turned round to Haroon-ur-Rasheed and addressing him, said: “In the name of Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) be a witness to all that these learned scholars have deposed in your Court”.

Then, turning round once again to the group of scholars, she told them: “I ask one more question, and I request you to be honest in your reply. As you know, the Holy

Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in his last moments of life addressed to the Companions then present and asked them to provide him with paper and pen, saying: ‘Give me paper and ink so that I may write out a will in order that you may not go astray after I am no more’. Now, tell me, who was that person who came in the way of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s dictating his will by instigating the other companions by preventing them from providing paper and pen?”

“This is one of the well-known episodes in history”, commented Abu Yusuf, “It was Umar bin Khattab who prevented paper and pen from being provided to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.); but he did so on the apprehension that providing these at a stage when his condition was precarious would cause an exertion for him which could prove harmful. He, therefore, instead of providing the writing material said sufficient for us is the book of Allah.”

Husniyah let out a shrill burst of laughter at this reply.

“Now listen, O Ibrahim and Abu Yusuf”, she told them, “you negate Divine injunctions’ you have invalidated the episode and Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s declaration at Ghadeer; and you attribute a thing like delirium to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). This clearly means that you do not honestly believe in the word of Allah which says:

And nor he speaks of (his own) inclination. It is naught but a revelation revealed (to him). [53:3-4]

“And, my dear Ibrahim, you must also know these words of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.): ‘I have more concern

and affection for you (i.e. the Muslims) than parents has for their offspring's.' His affection and concern for his *Ummah* were so thorough that he educated his followers with details of how even to cleanse oneself after urinating. Can anyone imagine that one who has such a deep concern for his devotees could have left out an important issue like that of his succession? Anyone who believes so will definitely forfeit the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s intercession. How unfortunate it is that you, my dear Ibrahim, do not reckon this lapse on your part, and maintain that Abu Bakr, as a Caliph, was the product of the consensus of opinion of the community. Tell me please. Can any opinion (even if it is consensual), which militates against clear Quranic injunctions, be considered valid?"

"No", replied Ibrahim.

"Then how is it that you believe religiously in the fallacy of human opinion?" posed Husniyah.

Caliph Haroon could not help laughing at the helpless silence of Ibrahim at this question.

"Alright, Ibrahim", continued the girl. "I allow you to forget for the time being the clear Quranic injunctions and even what the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said in this context. Speaking purely in terms of secular logic, tell me honestly if the consensus of opinion regarding Abu Bakr was that of the entire community, or was this consensus limited to only a selected few."

Husniyah had again cornered him. He was as it were caught between the Devil and the deep sea for, if he said that Abu Bakr was installed as the Caliph as a result of consensus of the whole community, it would belie historical facts in as much as this ‘consensus’ was limited not only to all the citizens of Mecca, but only to a few from certain localities of the city, and those too who were publicly known as the enemies of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s family.

“Well...” tried Ibrahim to extricate himself “It was a class of enlightened and dignified persons who had unanimously agreed that Abu Bakr was the best of the companions suited for the Caliphate.”

“Is that so?” Queried the girl, “I ask you Ibrahim and you Abu Yusuf, and Shafei and all of you learned ones of Baghdad, to be honest and tell me who was the most exalted one among the Companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)? In whose honour and greatness did the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) say the most glorifying things? Who is he from among the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) and the Bani Hashims whose personal status excels that of the companions... indeed of all others?”

“Murtaza Ali, Abbas, Hasan, Husain, Talha, Abdullah ibn Masood, Salman Farsi, Abu Zar Ghaffari, Miqdad ibn Aswad, Ammar Yasser, Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari and others” they replied.

“Thank you”, acknowledged Husniyah gracefully, and

turning to Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed, she said, “O Caliph of the realm, I beseech you in the sanctity of the high office you hold. Pray ask these learned scholars in your court to tell us whether or not Ali or Abbas or any dignitary from among the Bani Hashims had sworn their allegiance to Abu Bakr as the Caliph.”

Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed accordingly posed the question to them. And all of them could do nothing by way of replying except hanging down their heads in silence. But Shafei, however, raised his head and exclaimed, “Why are you all bewildered? why do not you speak out what you know in the light of Holy Quran and the traditions?”

“What appears is that there was a conflict of ideas between the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) (Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s family members) and the Companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.).....” said Abu Yusuf, taking the cue from Shafei.

EVENTFUL HAPPENING AT THE DEPARTURE OF THE HOLY PROPHET (S.A.W.A.)

“I know what really happened”, asserted Husniyah in her confident tone. “If you can believe me, I will prove what I say on the basis of your own religious writings and traditions quoted by the scholars and commentators from among your own school of thought.”

“Please proceed”, ordered the Caliph.

“Now, listen”, proceeded the girl, “While Ali bin Abi Talib, Fazal bin Abbas along with a group of men from the clan of Bani Hashims and certain other Companions were busy in the funeral rites of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), a majority of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s Companions chose to be absent at the funeral of their Master, and assembled at Saqeefa Bani Sa’ada. There these gentlemen started quarrelling among themselves as to who now would become the Caliph. When the Ansars came to know of this assembly, they too reached the spot and joined the fued that was taking place there. They then asked Abu Bakr to stretch out his hand so that they could take the oath of allegiance to him as the Caliph. Then revising their decision they at one time asked Salem Ghulam Abu Hozaiifa to accept the Caliphate, and at another, they pressed Abu Obaida to do so. As a result of these quick indecisions, the situation became tense. When the Ansars noticed the increasing tempo of seriousness, they proposed that there be two Caliphs – one from among themselves and the other from the other party. Accordingly, they proposed to Sa’ad bin Ibada that since he was the eldest among them (i.e. the Ansars), he should accept the office. Sa’ad, however, declined the offer; but when they insisted on his acceptance, he obliged them. At this juncture Qeis bin Sa’ad (the son of Sa’ad bin Ibada), noticing that his father had accepted the Caliphate, unsheathed his sword and confronted him by challenging him to justify his action of accepting the Caliphate, overriding the right of Ali to it. He reminded his father

of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s divinely commanded public declaration at Ghadeer when Ali was instituted as the Imam (Caliph) personally by the former, lifting the latter by the hand on the improvised dias before a mammoth gathering. He also reminded his father that the latter had accepted the investiture of Ali, and that all others, too, had done so, and even felicitated him. Qeis then censured his father, Sa’ad bin Ibada for going back now on his word so soon after the demise of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Qeis even threatened to kill his father if he accepted the Caliphate. Sa’ad bin Ibada was moved by this rightful condemnation of him by his son and changed his mind. After that, no one else from among the Ansars came forward.

“However, Umar was present at the scene. He stood up, saying that just as two swords cannot be sheathed in one scabbard, likewise there cannot be two Caliphs. Saying this, he unsheathed his sword and held it over Abu Bakr’s head as a symbolic gesture of Caliphate investiture. At this Abu Obaida stepped forth and swore allegiance to Abu Bakr. Then followed other Companions in ones and twos, doing the same till the number of Companions went up to 20, and stopped at that. Noticing this, Umar Khattab, brandishing his sword at necks of the other companions who had kept aloof, dragged them one by one and forced them to take the oath of fealty to Abu Bakr. This operation continued for three days.

“On the fourth day, Abu Bakr went to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s grave with the intention of exhuming his body

so as to offer prayer over it. When Ali came to know of his move, he rushed to the spot with a wooden piece of staff with iron studs at both its ends, and stood guard over the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). He then swore that he would either kill the person who attempted to exhume the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s body or be killed himself. However, Muawiya intervened to pacify. He told Abu Bakr that he (Muawiya) was foretold by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) that 'when you see my brother (i.e. Ali) in a red turban and carrying a stick with iron studs at its ends, no one should confront him; for even if all men from East and West were to combine against him, they will not be able to overcome him. On the contrary, he will kill them all.'

“When Abu Bakr heard Muawiya thus quoting the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), he started trembling in awe and gave up the idea of exhuming the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s body. He then returned from the spot and went inside the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s mosque where he deliberated for quite a long time with Ali and certain prominent Companions and a large body of Bani Hashim. Ali, trying to convince the gathering with his cogent reasoning on the issue of the Caliphate. He censured them for not caring to be present at the funeral rite of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.); and also not even offering funeral prayers over the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s body; and instead assembling at Saqeefa and started quarrelling with each other over the matter of successorship to the Caliphate, which according to Divine Command conveyed by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), was his right; and that Abu Bakr was ushered in as the Caliph by just a few persons.

“When Ali was speaking, Osman bin Affan, accompanied by Abdur Rehman bin Auf and a party of Banu Omaiyyas came to the spot. At this Umar and Abu Obaida stoop up and beckoned the Bani Omaiyya and Bani Zehra clansmen to come forth and swear their fealty to Abu Bakr. These tribesmen obliged him. This was the group of men who even during the life-time of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) were known for their hatred and enmity towards Ali (a.s.).

Thus Umar brought a big group of men and lined up before Ali and the Bin Hashims, and started calling these people to come forward and swear their allegiance to Abu Bakr as the Caliph. A majority of these men did. At this stage, Zubair sprang to his feet, and challenged the gathering with his drawn out sword, and condemned Umar for ignoring the presence of Ali who was the brother of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). He censured him for tempting Abbas, Abdullah, the dignitaries of the Bani Hashim clan and the prominent companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) to side with Ibne Qahafa. Zubair asked Umar as to what right he had to interfere in the matter when the relatives of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) were present there and possessed the entire requisite essential for Imamate and Caliphate. Zubair wanted at this point to strike with his sword at Umar’s head and finish him off once and for all. But Umar started shouting for help and muttering desperate pleas for safety.”

ADDRESS OF HAZRAT ALI (A.S.)

“Salman bin Salem came from behind and snatched away

the sword from Zubair's hand; and Umar seizing it, broke it off. At this juncture, the Bani Hashim unsheathed their swords and got ready to fight it out. But Ameerul Momineen checked them, calming them by saying in a gentle manner that 'Allah does not will it so put back your swords in your scabbards. We have no choice but to exercise patience and forbearance'. When Ameerul Momineen noticed some *Munafiqeen* (apostates) offering their allegiance willingly, and some by force, he addressed himself to Abu Bakr and the gathering and spoke thus:

'O you people! You have disobeyed the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and acted against the commands of Allah. I was by right more entitled to this office than Abu Bakr, for I precede him in seniority of acceptance and faith. I am the successor and the Deputy of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), and I have more knowledge of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s *Sunnah* than all of you. I am the bravest, the most exalted, the most learned and the most pious of you all put together. Caliphate is mine by right. Fear Allah and have due regard for the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), and let me have my right

"At this Umar stood up and declared! 'O Ali! Even at the risk of my being killed I will not be subservient to you; and will not let you go unless you swear your allegiance to the Caliph, whether you do so willingly or unwillingly or by force'. To this Ameerul Momineen replied thus:

'Tell yourself and your friends that they are all on the wrong track. I care for none. And you, O Umar, I regard you as good as a body of a dead person.

Since I am bound by Divine commands not to use my sword except to strike at three types of persons, namely the unjust, the apostates and those who go back on their promises, I swear by Allah that I would not have left alive a single disbeliever (Kafir) on the face of the earth. Neither would I have spared any enemy of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) nor would I have spared any of those who deny my successorship of Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). As it is, I can only complain to Allah about my sorrows. And O Umar, had it not been for this Divine restriction on me, I say on the oath of Allah that I would have killed you all presently on the spot and finished all of you all once and for all’

“Abu Bakr and Abu Obaida then stood up and said: ‘O brother of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)! We are not unmindful of your consanguinity with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.); but then you are too young’. And then Abu Obaida added, ‘O Ali! Abu Bakr is older and as such, he can shoulder the responsibilities. When by the grace of Allah you too grow up to be old enough, you can then take back the Caliphate. For the present, keep quiet and do not create any trouble; and also, you must realize that the Arabs do not think well of you’.

“To this Ameerul Momineen replied by saying: ‘O Muhajireen and Ansars! Have fear of Allah in your hearts; and do not forget and go back on your commitment which you made with your Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in respect of successorship. Do not usurp the rights of the family of

the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). By Allah, you know we are the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s Ahlul Bait (a.s.) and rightly entitled to the Caliphate. Allah has reserved this office specifically for us.’

“At this, Bashir bin Sa’ad Ansari said: ‘O Ali! If the Ansars had listened to these words of yours before they swore their allegiance to Abu Bakr, no one would have done so against you.’

‘By Allah I knew that none would do so’, replied Ali, adding: ‘Now, I do not know what you all will have to say to Allah by way of explaining your conduct in this matter. I ask in the name of Allah him who heard the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) say at the Ghadeer:

‘Of whomsoever I am the Maula, Ali (a.s.) is his Maula too. O Allah! Befriend him who befriends him Ali (a.s.) and be alien to him who is alien to him Ali (a.s.)’

To stand up and say if this is true or not?’

“In this connection, it is narrated by Zaid bin Arqam, who was one of the adversaries of Ameerul Momineen that the twelve companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) stood up, as required by Ali; and all these twelve were those who had just sworn their allegiance to Abu Bakr. Noticing this Umar got perturbed and started rebuking the gathering, lest all the men switch over their allegiance in favour of Ali. As a result of Umar’s rebuking, the assembly broke up, and everyone went home.

PLAN TO DEPOSE ABU BAKR

“The next day, these twelve companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) met together and mutually decided that when Abu Bakr occupies the Caliph’s pulpit, they would drag him down. But a few of these Companions advised that they should not do any such thing without first consulting Ameerul Momineen Ali (a.s.) in the matter. They therefore went to him and asked why he had given up his right to the Caliphate.

“In reply Ali quoted the well-known saying of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.): Ali (a.s.) is in the company of truth, and truth is in his company.

“They then disclosed to him their plan of dragging down Abu Bakr when he occupies the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s seat, and asked his views about it. These twelve Companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) were:

Muhajireen

1. Salman-e-Farsi.
2. Khalid bin Sa’ad bin al Aas.
3. Abu Zar Ghaffari.
4. Miqdad Aswad.
5. Amaar-e-Yasser.
6. Bureida Aslam.

Ansars

7. Abul Hashm Taihan.
8. Sohal bin Haneef.
9. Osman bin Haneef.

10. Khazaima bin Sabit.
11. Obai bin Ka'b.
12. Abu Ayub Ansari.

“When these Companions told Ali of their plan, the latter said: ‘If you do what you have planned to do, I can assure you that they will go out after your blood; and even the Bani Hashims will not support you in this. In that case I will myself have to take action; but the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had advised me to exercise patience. He had even foretold me that after his death his followers would become treacherous to me, and that they would disrespect the promise of allegiance they made to me as his successor. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had also told me that I was to him like what Harun was to Musa. Just as the Israelis had turned away from Aaron and started worshipping the Calf, so would, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had predicted, his followers behave with me and divert their allegiance to some other person. At this I asked the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) to advise me as to what I should do if such a thing happened. In reply, he advised me to remain patient and not to resort to arms; as such an action would prove disastrous for Islam. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) advised me to control myself and bear it out patiently, for that was what Allah had ordained till we meet each other in the Hereafter. And when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) departed from this world, I got busy with his funeral rites till I buried him. And when I had finished with these engagements, I saw the community involved in this dispute of succession; and I did all I could to convince the Muhajireen and the Ansars of my bonafides. You may

now, therefore, go back and tell Abu Bakr and his men what you heard the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) to have said.’

“Having heard Ameerul Momineen, these twelve Companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) went to the mosque and seated themselves around the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s pulpit. It was Friday; and when Abu Bakr mounted on the pulpit for his sermon, these twelve persons who were staunchly devoted to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and Ameerul Momineen Hazrat Ali (a.s.) started eulogizing the former and the latter through their eloquent praises in respect of their greatness and exaltedness, which action belittled and embarrassed Abu Bakr considerably. These men then instilled fear of Allah in Abu Bakr who, when he heard their arguments, became speechless. He could say nothing by way of a reply except murmuring, ‘You people have made me the Caliph; and I am not any better than you are....’.

‘Get down from the pulpit,’ shouted Umar when he heard Abu Bakr say these words, ‘you cannot even reply them properly’. Hearing this, Abu Bakr walked away silently to his house; and for three days he did not come out.

“On the fourth day, Khalid bin Waleed and Salem the Slave of Abu Hudaifa, entered Medina with armed bands of 300 men under each of them. Thus the hypocrites of Arabia gradually went on collecting in Medina, their hearts beating with hatred and enmity towards Ali. These (*Munafiqeen*) were the people who had pretended to have embraced Islam and that too at the point of sword. The gradual collection finally took the form of a big army.

“Thus mobilized they advanced towards the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s mosque with swords drawn out for attack, led by Umar. Ameerul Momineen Ali was at this time inside the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s mosque, sitting there along with his close associates.

‘By Allah,’ shouted Umar the moment he stepped into the mosque. ‘If today anyone (Ali) and his associates dare to say anything, I will cut off the head of that person’.

‘O you son of a Negro clown’ shouted back Khalid bin Sa’ad at Umar, ‘are you threatening us with your armed might? Are you trying to impress us with the large number of men in your army? By Allah, our swords are far keener than yours. Though we are few in numbers, we are more than sufficient for you, for Ali Ibne Abi Talib, the Authority of Allah is with us. We are silent now because obedience to our Imam requires us to be so, otherwise our swords could have taken good care of you by exhibiting their mettle

“Noticing the quickening tempo of Khalid bin Sa’ad’s mounting anger, Ali ordered him to cool down. He therefore resumed his seat.

“Salman-e-Farsi then stood up and swore eloquently that he had personally heard the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) say:

“There will come a time when a band of dogs condemned to Hell will attack my brother and son of my uncle while he is sitting in my mosque with the intention of killing his friends there.’ I therefore

have no doubt now the dogs condemned to Hell are none but you people’.

“This enraged Umar Khattab so much that he drew his sword out and wanted to kill Salman. But Ali sprang from his seat, and catching Umar by the collar, jerked him towards himself. Umar was instantly floored and the sword dropped down from his grip. His cap also flew off from his head in the process; and he lay on the ground, shameful and feeling awkward at thus being subdued in the presence of all. Abu Bakr and his friends, however, helped him to his feet. When he was thus seated, Ali addressed him with these words:

‘O Son of Negro! Had there be no Command from Allah (s.w.t.) and my pact with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), you would have seen our weak very billions though less in number.

“Ameerul Momineen then rose and blessed his companions for their sincere devotion”.

Husniyah paused at this stage for a little respite. She had been speaking continuously for all this time, undulating and controlling her decision and tone in the manner of a master orator. The audience, who had been spell-bound by her oratory and reasoning, were now staring at the person of this young girl who was as magically charming with her intellect as with her looks and feminine grace.

“Yes, I was saying”, resumed Husniyah after she had rested her lungs with a few deep breaths, “that it was

a distinguishing practice of Umar to roam in the city of Medina, with his band of armed men. And when he found anyone avoiding allegiance to Abu Bakr, he would compel him to do so. People used to hide themselves in their homes at his sight, but he would chase them out and force them to avow their fealty to Abu Bakr. He even killed those who defied his despotism.”

MISBEHAVIOR TOWARDS JANAB-E-SAYYEDA (S.A.)

“This indulgence in compulsions and show of force continued for three months, and finally one day he went to fetch Ameerul Momineen. What happened then is well-known in history. Everyone knows about the violent manner in which Umar conducted himself with Sayyadat-un-Nisa, Fatimah Zahra (s.a.) at her house. We all know of how she was subjected to physical violence. It is also an established fact that Sa’ad bin Ibada with his 10,000 men of Bani Khasraj tribe; Qeis bin Sa’ad and Malik bin Nuweira with another 10,000 men did not subscribe themselves to the allegiance to Abu Bakr. We also know of how Khalid bin Waleed was sent with an army against these, and how he murdered Malik bin Nuweira while in prayers; and how he plundered the latter’s personal property and captured the children and womenfolk.”

Husniyah then looked pointedly at Ibrahim, and continued: “Now tell me, O Ibrahim, how anyone can say that Abu Bakr’s investiture as the Caliph was in

consequence of consensus of opinion of the distinguished classes in favour of him? For Allah's sake, have some fear of Him and give up your wrong notions with which you impute Allah and His Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.).”

“If for the sake of argument we concede that the consensus of opinion was in favour of Abu Bakr, then we must also concede the same principle of recognition to Yazid and the rest of the Omayyad rulers; for, in numerical terms, the number of men who swore their allegiance to Yazid and his successors exceeds that of Abu Bakr's by a cent percent margin. But then no one can believe such person to be true Muslims, who regard Yazid and others as their Imam, for these were the ones who severed the head of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s grandson, captured his family members, paraded them in the streets on bare camel-backs, and continued being disrespectful to the Ahlul Bait (a.s.).”

“And tell me, O Ibrahim, why this same consensus of opinion is not reckoned by Muslims with the same respect in the matter of Hazrat Osman's assassination, which was what all the sections of the population then desired? Muslims from all the cities had written numerous letters, persuading people to do away with Osman. As many as 5,000 men came from Egypt with complaints against the Caliph's excesses. Their opinion was unanimous and spontaneous when they murdered Osman in an awful manner and hauled him in the streets of Medina for days, binding his feet with rope and dragging him like a dead animal. Whole groups of Muslims used to surround him

and strike blows at his head, recounting simultaneously the cruelties he had perpetuated against them... Tell me honestly, my dear Ibrahim, should we not call as 'Khalifatullah' and 'Khalifatur Rasool' the person whom Allah ordains as the Caliph, and in whose respect there are numerous clear Quranic injunctions and traditions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)? It is really surprising that you should say in your religious writings that Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) had not named his successor. While the fact is that Abu Bakr was made the Caliph by Umar, you say with impunity that Abu Bakr was a 'Caliph' appointed as such by Allah. However the fact is that Abu Bakr can rightly be described as 'Umar's Caliph'. Since Umar bin Khattab, Khalid bin Waleed and other *Munafiqeen* (apostates) of Bani Omaiyya clan bore enmity towards Ali, they created all this mischief and murdered thousand of Momins (true believers in Islam) and led astray thousands of men to the path leading to infernal depths of Hell.

“O Ibrahim, can you give any instance of such cruelties (As directed towards Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.)'s Ahlul Bait (a.s.)) in any of the other nations where the family members of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) were subjected to wanton tortures and death? Can you cite a single instance in history of such confounding acts like appointing Sa'ad bin Ibada as the Caliph at one moment, replacing him at another with Abu Bakr; and the manner in which Hazrat Osman became the Caliph, just for the sake of satisfying personal ambitions? Principles had no meaning for these men. They did as they pleased them to do and whatever suited them best.

There are two groups which all Muslims know were at daggers drawn against each other. One is:

Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.); Imam Hasan (a.s.); Imam Husain (a.s.); Sayyadat-un-Nisa Fatimah Zahra (s.a.); Salman-e-Farsi; Abbas; Abdullah bin Masood; Abu Zar Ghafari; Miqdad Aswad; Ammar-e-Yaseer; Osman bin Mata'on; Muhammad bin Abu Bakr; Hozaifa Yemani; Obai bin Ka'ab; Khalid bin Saeed Al-Aas; Jabbir bin Abdullah Ansari; Abu Dajjana Ansari; Saeed bin Ibada Ansari; Qeis bin Sa'ad Ansari; Abu Ababa; Abul Hisheem; Maisam-e-Tammar; Malik Ashtar Nakhai; Fazal bin Abbas; Abul Waleed; Abu Sa'eed Khudri; Suleman bin Nasr; Sahl bin Hanaeef and Adi bin Hatim.

“These are those persons who had remained faithful all the while to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) since the inception of Islam, and remained attached to him till their last breaths. They remained explicitly obedient to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) to the last, and knew and understood the words and deeds of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) better than anyone else. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), too, had praised these men in his utterances and even included some of them as his household members, calling them as the ‘apples of my eyes’. And Allah commands all such persons to be loved and respected, who come within the definition of Ahlul Bait (a.s.)”

“And now”, continued Husniyah after a short pause. “I draw your attention to this Quranic verse:

Say O Our Messenger! I do not demand of you any recompense for the toils of preaching save love towards (my) relative. [42:23]

“Accordingly, O Ibrahim, you must know that as ordained by Allah, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s utterances are Divinely true, clear and final. Thus whatever these persons whom I named a while ago, have said about the precepts of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in matters of compulsory acts of worship abidance, optional observances and other incumbent practices are things to be followed since it is religiously essential to do so. Allah trusts more the validity and bonafides of the certifications of these persons than He does in respect of those by Abu Bakr; Umar; Osman; Ayesha, Hafsa, Anas bin Malik; Sa’ad bin Saeed; Amr Aas; Abu Huraira; Abu Obaida, Barir bin Ghalib; Khalid bin Waleed; Salem, the slave of Abu Hozaifa, Sa’ad bin Abi Waqas; Talha bin Abdullah bin Aamir; Muawiya; Yazid; Umar Sa’ad; Obaidullah bin Ziyad; Marvan; and Hakam etc.

“These and the others from the Banu Omaiyya clan are the persons whom you follow. Now, tell me honestly, my dear Ibrahim, which of the two groups deserve to be followed? Which of the two is more trustworthy: The one I named earlier or, the one I have just mentioned? I ask you now to say which of the two categories of persons you think were right and who were wrong in the light of the fact that ever since the death of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) these two groups had been all along inimical to one another - a fact which is known to each and every Muslim.”

Ibrahim was now in a dilemma. He was absolutely stunned. The girl had cornered him once again. Noticing the confounded mental state Ibrahim was in; Caliph

Haroon-ur-Rasheed became impatient with annoyance at the scholar's speechlessness.

“Why don't you answer?” asked the Caliph in suppressed anger. “Your silence indicates that you were never truly abiding with the religion preached by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Today you regard yourself as a great scholar of Islam; and the fact is that you cannot even reply befittingly to what a slave-girl has challenged you to. This is in spite of the fact that you have here numerous distinguished men of learning who think in the same terms as you do, and are available for any help that you may need from them.”

Ibrahim was really in the soup. If he said that the path followed by the Ahlul bait was malafide, he would be proving his own disbelief in Islam; for to say would amount to a negation of Quranic injunctions and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s traditions. Also, he was afraid that if he did such a thing, the audience attending the debate in the court hall of Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed would straight-away put him to death. If on the other hand he said that the path followed by Abu Bakr and Umar, and their followers, was wrong, he would be saying a thing that militates against the beliefs held by him, thereby falsifying the bonafides of the faith professed by himself in which case also he was likely to be killed.

HUSNIYAH'S EDUCATION

When Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed realized this helpless

state of Ibrahim, he turned towards Husniyah with a mixed look of wonder and appreciation.

“Who is your tutor, my dear Husniyah”, he asked the girl, “from where did you amass all this store of knowledge?”

“You must know, O Caliph,” replied the girl, “that I was a little girl of five years of age when my Owner-master, Khwaja, purchased me. It was he who sent me to Imam Ja‘far Sadiq (a.s.)’s *harem*, so that as a humble servant of the Imam I could learn the elementaries of physical and moral purification and true worship under his roof. In due course of time, I learnt the essentials of self-purification and prayers and fasting; and thus passed years of my life there. One day it so happened that Imam Ja‘far Sadiq (a.s.) walked into the *harem* and asked for water for the purpose of ablutions. By chance, the servant, whose routine it was to attend to this job, was not at the moment present there. I emboldened myself, and hurried to him with water. It was then that the Imam saw me for the first time.

‘Who are you?’ asked the Imam.

‘I am the slave-girl of certain. Khwaja’, I submitted, adding that I had been serving in his academy for the last so many years.

‘Do you offer your prayers?’ He asked.

‘Yes Sir, I do’, I replied.

‘Are you acquainted with the essentials of ablution and personal cleanliness?’ He enquired.

‘Yes, Sir’, I told the Imam.

“Thus I kept on answering his questions; and the holy Imam was highly pleased with my replies.

“He then asked for some details from the in charge of the Academy about me; and sent for my master, Khwaja (who is present here), to appear before him. When the Khwaja came, the Imam told him that he was deeply impressed by my mental qualities. The Imam even desired that the Khwaja should sell me to him. The Khwaja responded humbly by saying that he himself was a humble servant of him and that I would continue to be in his (Imam’s) service. From that day onwards I had the honour of being a servant in personal attendance to the Imam; and I reached my age of maturity in his service, accumulating knowledge and wisdom through his tuitions.

“From then on, I was so deeply awed by his pervading eminence that I had not the courage to ask questions directly to him; but I was able to derive enlightenment through his son who too was unmatched in his intellectual perfection. It was through his undivided attention that I developed a longing for reading and study; and to satisfy this thirst for knowledge. I started reading and digesting books of commentaries on the Holy Quran and traditions of Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). I used to consult the Imam and ask for his enlightenment on various complicated matters that even the *Ulema* of Islam were unable to explain. Thus I reached a stage where I could regard myself as being in a position to express exerted opinion on intricate matters. It is with this background that I have discoursed unbeatably before

this assembly in your court today on the factual realities relating to the Imam of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.).”

Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed was listening to Husniyah very attentively.

DOES VISION PERCEIVE ALLAH?

“Tell me”, said the Caliph, “what knowledge have you gathered from Imam Ja‘far-e-Sadiq (a.s.) on the issue of the physical appearance of form of Allah?”

“I can tell you that”, replied the girl, as confident as ever. “This is what Allah says on the matter, as per my eminent tutor’s knowledge:

Vision perceives Him not, He perceives (all) vision. He is the Subtle, the All Aware. [6:103]

“If Allah does not exist in physical form, how is that an eminent Prophet like Musa should have beseeched Allah to appear before him?” Asked Ibrahim, who had now recovered somewhat from the stunned silence to which Husniyah had put him a while ago? “Tell us”, he added, “was this request of Musa out of ignorance, or was it a wrongful thing for him to ask? And mind you, both ignorance and fallibility on the part of Prophets have no room in your school of thought.”

Ibrahim thought that with this rather difficult question, he had at last cornered the girl who had been pinning him down all along; but Husniyah was invincible.

“Listen”, she told him, “Prophet Musa’s invocation for Divine appearance was neither out of his ignorance nor was it a wrong thing on his part to have invoked Allah as he did. The fact was that Musa was so vexed and forced upon to do so by certain people that he had to invoke Allah for their direct satisfaction. Since you have asked me this question, I might as well relate the episode in its proper context.

“Once when Musa went out to Mount Sinai for his usual meditation there, he took along with him seventy selected men, as reported in the Holy Quran in this verse:

And chose, Musa of his people seventy men for Our appointment. [7:155]

“These men asked Musa to pray to Allah - the Seer and the Hearer - that he may speak something which they could directly hear in His voice. Thus challenged, Musa prayed to Allah, beseeching Him to convey His words so that the men could themselves hear them with their own ears. Allah responded to his invocation and voiced His words at the men. After his communion, Musa asked the men if they were satisfied with having heard Allah’s Voice. They agreed that they had heard the Voice, but contended they were not sure whether the Voice was that of Allah or the Devil. They insisted that they would not believe it unless they saw Allah Himself with their own eyes, saying:

And when you said, O Musa! Never will we believe in you until we see Allah manifestly, “The Thunder seized you while you looked on. [2:55]

“And then followed a lightning streak from the sky, which burnt to ashes these men. This was by way of punishment for these men for their excessive insolence in demanding Allah to appear physically before them. Then, as told in the Holy Quran, Musa said:

Would you destroy as far what have done the fools among us. [7:155]

“Thus, my dear Ibrahim, you see that if the people were right, Allah’s physical appearance would have materialized; and they would not have been destroyed by lightning, as they were. If Musa was in any way personally interested in the people’s demand for Allah’s appearance in physical form, or if he believed in Allah as a physical entity, or if he himself had desired to see Him in physical form, he himself also would have been struck by the lightning which fell upon the men.”

“Just a minute”, interrupted Ibrahim, “you say that Musa had invoked Allah to appear physically because he was pressed by his people to do so. If that was so, why did he say: ‘I turn to you repentant,’ after the people had perished as a result of lightning?”

“I will tell you why”, answered the girl in her sweet and sure tones, “Musa had invoked Allah before obtaining permission. Though it was neither a major sin nor a minor sin, for his not having obtained previous permission he felt that it would have been better if he had done so. That is why, in keeping with apostolic etiquette, he asked for Divine forgiveness despite the fact that he had not erred.

The question of erring does not arise, because, all Prophets are infallible and exalted as such by Allah. You must also know, my dear Ibrahim, that Allah had told Musa, that he could never see Him (*Lun Tarani* - you will never see me), the word ‘never’ (*Lun*) being indicative of a negative in definitude in terms of time and space. Thus, when even a Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) with all his intimacy and conversation with and nearness of Allah, could not see Allah, the question of any other person seeing Allah does not at all arise.

“You must also understand, my dear Ibrahim, that there are three essentials that go with optical perception. These are:

- (i) An object must have the qualities of being seen;
- (ii) An object must have a definite material form;
- (iii) There should be no obstruction of any nature between the perceiver and the object to be perceived.

“And at Mount Sinai, all these three essentials were at play. If Allah was an object with image forming radiations, he could have been perceived by the eye; and since He could not be visually perceived, it means that He does not exist in a definite material form. Allah would have been visually perceivable if He possessed a physical form or spatial material dimensions in length, breadth, height or width; and these states are created states, not eternal. And Allah, O Ibrahim, is eternal.

“One can see an object if it exists in some kind of a state;

and states of existence is subsequent creations. It is also necessary that an object that is sought to be seen must essentially be before the eye of a person, and it must also possess spatial dimensions; but Allah, who is self-existent, is not confined to spatial dimension in a definite form. Therefore, to perceive any physical image of Him is impossibility.....”

“Then tell me”, argued Ibrahim, “how will you explain this verse of the Holy Quran, which clearly says:

To their Lord (they will be) seeing (attentive). [75:23]

“Listen”, replied she, “this is a possessive case of grammar, where the possessive quality of the related noun has been omitted. There are several examples of such grammatical usage in the Holy Quran. Thus, ‘turning’ the eyes towards something means looking at something that is physically present there in concrete form; and this cannot possibly be applied to mean looking at the ‘person’ of Allah, which of course is absurd; for, He is not a physical entity. Moreover, ‘turning’ eyes towards something does not necessarily mean actually seeing it. For example, an Arab speaking in Arabic says: ‘I turned my eyes towards the moon; I did not see the moon’. If ‘turning’ the eyes in any direction means ‘seeing’, then the expression so worded will become contradictory to the sense it seeks to convey”.

“Alright”, submitted Ibrahim,” but what do you say about this verse:

Whosoever desires to meet his Lord. [18;110]

“Quite simple”, replied Husniyah, “you must understand that the word *Liqā* in the Arabic text means a ‘sight, glorious, magnificent, grand’ in front; whereas you take it as meaning as ‘perceiving an object in front’, and this is not applicable to Allah. If a ‘glorious, magnificent and grand sight’ meant a ‘personal interview’, then Allah would have used the latter word to convey the former sense, which is not the case. What is meant here is that glory and grandeur of Allah is perceivable. Not His form; for there is none. It is this Divine grandeur (*Liqā*) which Allah cites as a positive proof of His existence for the disbelievers, as in this verse:

So in consequence has He affected hypocrisy in their hearts till the day when they shall meet Him. [9:77]

“Thus whenever the word *Liqā* occurs in the Holy Quran, it is in the sense of Divine grandeur, Divine magnificence, and Divine grace; not ‘Divine personal interview. All religious denominations believe that disbelievers will not attain this Divine Grace. Wherever the word *Liqā* is used in respect of Momins (true believers), it means Divine grace; while when the same word is used in connection with disbeliever, it means Divine wrath and retribution, as is clear from the verse:

And verily most of the people in the meeting of their Lord, disbelieve. [30:8]

“Here, the word *Liqā* means Divine wrath. This is corroborated in the verse which says:

And to those who disbelieved and belied our signs and the meeting of the hereafter, these shall be brought over to the chastisement. [30:16]

“Here, *Liqā* means retribution in the Hereafter for the disbelievers. Thus, my dear Ibrahim, if it was that Allah could not possibly be seen in this World, but in the next, then Allah would have told Musa so. The wording is totally negative in character, meaning: ‘You shall not see Me; and you will never be able to see Me’.

MUTA

Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed, who was listening attentively to the prompt and efficient replies of Husniyah, suddenly cut short the topic and switched over to another.

“Tell me, Husniyah”, he said, “on what grounds has your Master, Imam Ja‘far bin Muhammad (a.s.) deemed *Muta* (temporary marriage) as being permissible?”

“He has deemed it permissible on the authoritative sanction as contained in the Holy Quran”, replied Husniyah promptly and quoted the Verse which says:

And as such of them you had ‘Muta’ with them give them their dowries [4:24]

“The Caliph should know”, added she, “that all commentators and experts of Islamic jurisprudence are unanimous in their agreement that by wedlock is meant *Muta*.”

“But this verse had been revoked”, argued Ibrahim, “And there is a difference of opinion on this among the Sunni sect. Some maintain that *Muta* was permissible for some

time during the early phase of Islam, after which it was made unlawful, and there are some who say it was revoked soon after the conquest of Mecca.”

“You say that now because of your prejudiced thinking”, stated Husniyah, “I say this because the scholars of your school of thought are themselves divided on the issue and have given conflicting opinions. Two speculative thoughts cannot both be right on one point at one and the same time; and the fact that there is a difference denotes that truth lies somewhere else. Now, listen my dear Ibrahim, consequent verses revoking previous verses are to be found in Holy Quran. For example, verse X cancelled verse Y; then the cancelling verse i.e. verse Y has to be there in Holy Quran. Otherwise, it cannot be proved that verse Y stands cancelled so, if someone asks you which is the verse sanctioning *Muta*, what will you say? Can you cite the verse cancelling the previous one which gave the sanction?”

Ibrahim was now once again confounded. He had no valid thing to say by way of a reply. Yet he had to say something, for he had been silenced quite a number of times by this girl.

“For us”, he said, “Umar’s invalidation of this verse is authoritative enough, because, he would not have rescinded it if it had not been revoked by Allah.”

“That’s it,” snapped Husniyah, “Umar’s personal prohibition of *Muta* clearly establishes its legality and

validity, because, if at all *Muta* was revoked by Allah through the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), he could have on the day of prohibiting cited the Quranic verse invalidating temporary marriages. He could thus have substantiated his cancellation by saying that such and such verse had been revealed by Allah in invalidation; or he could have quoted the tradition of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), if there was any, which invalidated *Muta*. But he did not do any such thing. What he did was to say: "There were two *Mutas* which were current and valid during the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s time - *Muta' Haj* and *Muta Nisa*; and I hereby prohibit both; and I will punish those who recourse to it.' The wordings of his order clearly show that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had not invalidated *Muta* at any time. As such, we are at liberty to practice it, for there are no authentic orders (i.e. Quranic or traditional) invalidating it. No traditionalist has cited any instance when *Muta* was rescinded. In fact, we regard practicing *Muta* as a great blessing. There are numerous traditions narrated by the devotees of Ahlul Bait (a.s.) which sanctify it, among them being this saying of Hazrat Ameerul Momineen:

"None would have indulged in adultery, save the wretched one if *Muta* had not been forbidden."

"And in order to satisfy you, I will quote now a few reference on the authenticity of *Muta* mentioned by traditionists belonging to your own school of thought:

Umar Ibne Haseen: 'The verse permitting *Muta* was divinely revealed and was valid upto the time of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s death. There has been no other verse which cancels this; and the Holy Prophet

(s.a.w.a.) never prohibited us from practicing it as long as he lived.’

Abdullah bin Masood: We were with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) during the holy wars. Our wives were not with us. We therefore asked the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) if we could call our wives to be with us; but he refused this. Instead, he permitted us to contract temporary marriages (*Muta*) for specific period of time in return for pieces of cloth as a dowry for women so taken in marriage’.

Abdullah bin Umar: Once a man from Syria asked Abdullah bin Umar whether *Muta* (temporary marriage) was permissible or not. Abdullah bin Umar told him that *Muta* was permissible. At this, Syrian told Abdullah bin Umar that his father (i.e. Umar) had prohibited it. To this Abdullah bin Umar replied by saying that if his father (Umar) had prohibited it, while Allah and His Prophet had ruled it as permissible, he would not by with his father’s ruling, and that he would practice it’.

“So, my dear Ibrahim,” continued Husniyah in her cool and measured tones. “In fact, everything is permissible as long as there are no subsequent revoking’s; and revoking’s have to have substantial evidence to that effect. But where there is no evidence of Divine or Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) rescission to the contrary, all practices remain status quo. If you say that Umar rescinded the validity of *Muta*, there are two factors which must necessarily be taken into

consideration. One the rescission must be backed with authentic evidence from the Holy Quran or the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s pronouncements. Two, there must be a consensus of exerted opinion on such a rescission. I will concede if there is any authentic evidence; but obviously, there is none, direct or deduced. But I cannot accept the validity of the rescission on grounds of consensus of opinion, because, any consensus of opinion that is not in accordance with Divine injunction or the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s traditions can only be malafide. Another evidence for the validity of *Muta* is the saying of the Ameerul Momineen which I quoted a while ago, whose verdict is the last word in Islamic jurisprudence, for he is infallible. Besides that, the agreed opinion of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) and Abdullah bin Abbas, Abdullah bin Masood bin Jobair and Jabir bin Abdullah, is a clear proof of the validity of the practice of *Muta*.

“And listen, to what Abi Riyah, reputed theologians among the followers of the Companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), has narrated in this connection. He reports on the authority of Safwan bin Ma'ali, who in turn reported it on the authority of his father, that he i.e. Safwan's father said that the reason why, Umar prohibited women from contracting temporary marriages was that once when Umar bin Harees had contracted a short time marriage with a certain woman, Umar asked him as to who were present on the occasion when he had married the woman. Harees replied that both his mother as well as the woman's mother was present on the spot. On this, Umar said: 'I hereby prohibit *Muta* for I fear there might be trouble in this practice.'

“There is another narrative which says that once when Umar went to his sister’s house, he noticed that she was taking a bath. He asked her how it was she was bathing when she had neither a husband nor was she having her menstrual period. She told Umar that she had contracted a temporary marriage (*Muta*). At this, he said: ‘From now on *Muta* stands prohibited, and no one should indulge in it.’”

“Now, I ask you, my dear Ibrahim, what sort of ‘fear’ is it that prompts a man to invalidate something which he is not authorized to do; and that too on a mere personal assumption that a divinely sanctioned practice would lead to ‘troubles’, and that it should be practiced in private - something that religious laws do not permit? This sort of ‘fear’ is likely to inject the possibility of mischief in religious laws. And what a pity, my dear Ibrahim; you regard as an innovation if someone practices something sanctioned by Allah and His Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in disregard to Umar’s self-imposed restriction! You call such a person a *Rafizi*, call him a *Kafir*, and even kill him, what malice! What prejudice! What wrongfulness!

“And now listen, my dear Ibrahim, to this narrative recorded in Sahiha: Once Abdullah bin Abbas was on his way to a certain place. When he reached near masjid ul-haram, he saw Abdullah bin Zubair sitting at the door of the mosque along with many persons. This was during the period when Abdullah bin Zubair was claiming the right to caliphate in Mecca, and Abdullah bin Abbas had eventually become blind. When Abdullah bin Zubair saw

him, he said: ‘Here comes the blind man; may Allah keep him blind’, by way of teasing Abdullah bin Abbas adding: ‘may Allah condemn his heart also for he regards *Muta* as permissible, though it is nothing but adultery.’

“When Ibne Abbas heard this, he sat down there; and after everyone paid their respects to him, he said: ‘Allah has taken away sight from my eyes and power of thinking from your brains... I swear on the oath of Allah that *Muta* is divinely sanctioned and was in practice during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), neither Allah rescinded it nor the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) himself. There has been no Prophet after Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) who could revoke it. Even according to Umar’s words: ‘There were two *Muta*’s during the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s time. I prohibit both, and I will punish those who indulge in it.’ As such, on Umar’s own evidence, *Muta* was valid; and I accept it as such: But we do not recognize its rescission by Umar. And O Abdullah bin Zubair, you must know that you yourself are a product of a temporary marriage (*Muta*). Go and ask your mother about the incident of two pieces of stripped cloth and a person named Ausejah.’ When Zubair heard these words, he was greatly embarrassed and went home. There, with a naked sword in hand, and trembling with rage, he came upon his mother and asked her to give him the details about the man, Ausejah and the cloth. The mother complied, saying: Once when your father was in the company of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), a certain man by the name of Ausejah came to him with two pieces of cloth as a gift from Yemen. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)

gave these away to your father; and your father then contracted *Muta* with me with these two pieces of cloth as my dowry. It was thus that I conceived you. Verily, you are an offspring from *Muta*’.”

When Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed heard this interesting revelation from Husniyah, he was immensely pleased with the disclosure.

For Abdullah bin Abbas was his grandfather!

Next, the Caliph beckoned his Prime Minister, Yahya bin Khalid and declared loudly: “We were so far till today prevented from *Muta*; but now I hereby command you to issue a declaration that from today onwards people are free to contract *Muta* marriages.”

Thus it was that *Muta* marriages were resorted with their Divine sanction during the last period of Caliph Haroon’s Caliphate; and these marriages remained valid and in vogue for a long time without being rescinded valid even during Mamoon ur-Rasheed’s regime. It was only when Musta’sim became the Caliph that it was once again rescinded.

FATIMAH (S.A.) PART AND PARCEL OF THE HOLY PROPHET (S.A.W.A.)

“So now”, resumed Husniyah, “since my discourse has taken a long time, during which I am afraid I may have offended the Caliph and his State officials, may I my dear

Ibrahim, ask you one question? this debate will then conclude with your reply. I beseech you to be truthful and say whether or not this tradition of our Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) is authentic as per you and your school of thought:

‘Fatimah is part and parcel of my being. Whoever annoys her, annoys me, too; and whoever annoys me, annoys Allah’.

“Yes”, agreed Ibrahim. “The tradition is true and authentic. The entire Muslim community is agreed on its veracity as the saying of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). No one can deny it.”

CONFISCATION OF FADAK

“Thank you”, acknowledged Husniyah, “now, tell me on oath of Allah, the creator of universe, whether or not Abu Bakr and Umar confiscated her property at Fadak by force or with oppressive measures?”

“Yes”, replied Ibrahim, “They took over her property in accordance with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s tradition, which as narrated by Abu Bakr says:

‘We are from among the class of Prophets. For us there is no inheritance; and whatever we leave behind, is an endowment for charity’.

“Now, listen O Ibrahim”, asserted Husniyah, “Abu Saeed Khudri, who is an eminent and recognized traditionalist of your school of thought, narrates that when the verse,

Then give to the near kin it due [17:26] was revealed, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) called Hazrat Fatimah to his side and said: “My dear Fatimah, Allah knows that your father does not possess any worldly Property except the land of Fadak.’ that very day, he endowed Bagh-e-Fadak to her so that no other person could lay claim to it. For three years, Hazrat Fatimah remained its rightful owner during the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s life-time; and the proceeds from it were received by her.

“And when Hazrat Fatimah protested and claimed back her property, Abu Bakr asked her to produce witnesses in support of endowment. Yet, when Ameerul Momineen Ali, Imam Hasan and Imam Husain (a.s.) deposed their testimony saying that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had endowed Fadak to his daughter, Fatimah Zahra (a.s.), Abu Bakr said: ‘Ali is your husband and has deposed in your favour for his own personal benefit. As such, his testimony cannot be relied upon. Similarly, the testimony of Imam Hasan and Husain (a.s.) cannot be regarded as reliable for the same reason’, although the saying of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.): ‘Ali is with right; right is with Ali,’ is recognized as an authentic declaration of Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). Despite this, Ali’s testimony was not accepted on the ground that whatever he had said, in order to gain personal benefits, though it was Abu Bakr himself who had coined the false tradition about Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s inheritance. This was an intentional oppression that Abu Bakr meted out to the members of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s family. He rejected the testimony of Umme Aiman, saying that

they could not accept the evidence of a woman. Thus he confiscated the gardens, including Fadak and houses left behind by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and used them in the manner he liked, on the plea that Fadak was a *Waqf* that was used in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) for the sake of Fatimah's personal expenses.

“Tell me, my dear Ibrahim, how far is it proper or moral for one who claims to be a Muslim to have confiscated a thing that was a source of income to the beloved daughter of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), who according to Abu Bakr himself, had endowed it in favour of Fatimah for her personal expenses during his life-time? I might as well say a word or two about this false tradition relating to inheritance by successors of all Prophets. There is not one single person, except Abu Bakr and his daughter, Ayesha, who ever heard the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) saying that there was no inheritance for Prophets. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had not told any one in the whole of Arabia about this supposed tradition, including his intimate Companions and even his family members, too, that his Ahlul Bait (a.s.) were not entitled to inherit what he left behind! My dear Ibrahim it is sheer common-sense to say that it was natural and essential that family members and Companions should have known about such a statement; and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) himself could have told them that whatever he left behind was to be a charitable endowment, so that his Ahlul Bait (a.s.) should not lay claim to his Property meant for charity, for it is an universally agreed fact that Bani Hashim are forbidden to partake of charities. On the basis of Abu Bakr's fabricated

tradition it means that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s Ahlul Bait (a.s.) had laid claims to something that was forbidden and thereby imply that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had failed to do justice to his mission; and also that the Quranic verse that says: *Today I have perfected your religion* was inapt! In fact, if for the sake of argument one believes Abu Bakr, it would mean that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had erred badly in as much as he failed to tell his Ahlul Bait (a.s.) that they had no rights on his property and that whatever he left behind was a charity trust which was prohibited to them. My dear Ibrahim, how can you justify this irreligious belief which you harbour just for the sake of lending truth to what Abu Bakr said in the matter of inheritance of Prophets? How can you attribute injustice and faulty decisions to Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) whom you believe as your Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) who excels over everything else in the Universe? Granting for a moment that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) told his Ahlul Bait (a.s.) that they were not entitled to inherit his property and despite his instructions they laid claim over, then such a conduct on the part of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) would clearly mean that they had acted erroneously and irreligiously. But the fact is that Allah Himself has certified and vouchsafed their infallibility and purity of conduct in the verse which says:

Verily Allah intends not but to remove every kind of uncleanness from you, O the people of the House and purify you a thorough purification. [33:33]

“Scholars of all schools of thought are unanimous in believing that the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) are the residents of

paradise; and according to your own beliefs, they are the Saqi-e-Kausar (Water suppliers at the spring in Paradise). Thus, it stands proved that Abu Bakr had fabricated the said tradition and thereby imputed falsities to Allah and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), and this amounts to apostasy in the estimation of all Muslims. Similarly, it is also apostasy to reject the testimony given by Fatimah Zahra, Ali, Hasan and Husain (a.s.). Anyone with even the meanest intelligence will say that it is open apostasy and injustice to attribute such wrongful conducts to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s Ahlul Bait (a.s.).”

The audience sat spell bound with the fiery eloquence and weight of Husniyah’s arguments and fluency of oration. In particular, Ibrahim, Abu Yusuf, Shafie and other *Ulema* were completely stunned and sat speechless. Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed, too, was feeling ashamed at his base conduct.

“Tell me, O Ibrahim”, Husniyah kept the attack on, “Tell me whether Abu Bakr had acted according to *Sharia* (religious laws) or acted in defiance of *Sharia* when he asked for testimony from Fatimah Zahra for her claim that Fadak, which he had confiscated, was gifted to her by her father, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), during his life time?”

Ibrahim preferred to remain silent, lest he said something frivolous and deplorable.

“You must know”, pursued the girl further “that Fatimah Zahra was the rightful owner of the Holy

Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s property, and was in actual possession of it; and Abu Bakr was an accuser, according to ‘We are from among the class of Prophets. For us there is no inheritance and whatever, we leave behind is an endowment for charity.’ It was obligatory on Abu Bakr to produce evidence in support of this tradition. As such tell me, my dear Ibrahim, for the sake of Allah, whether Abu Bakr’s act of requiring testimony from Hazrat Fatimah, who was the rightful beneficiary, was based on ignorance or was it based on injustice. Reply me now, or vacate the ornamented chair you are occupying now.”

This direct and open challenge from Husniyah was a final blow to all the *Ulema*, for luminaries like Ibrahim, Shafie and Abu Yusuf sat stone dead. They would have preferred the silence of death to their speechlessness, if they could help it. The spectators were all laughing at their pitiable state, though none could say anything for fear of annoying Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed.

According to historians, Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed had a cousin-brother named Khalid bin Isa. This young man was strikingly handsome, and was known widely for his love and devotion to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s Ahlul Bait (a.s.) (Family members). He never resorted to subterfuges; and Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed knew this. The Caliph also had a deep affection for Khalid, whom he never questioned about his conduct. Khalid was free to do what he liked and how he liked.

It is reported that this handsome young man, Khalid, was

sitting by Husniyah's side during this historical debate; and whenever the girl scored a point over Ibrahim and other scholars, he would strew a handful of gold coins (dinars) over her head in appreciation of her scholastic excellence, and applause her superiority. He would laugh and jeer at Ibrahim at his incompetence in facing the girl. Khalid sat there with his one hand on his sword, so as to protect the girl in case someone tried to harm her physically. With appreciative gestures and promptings, he would encourage the girl in her oratory and argumentative discourses.

Presently, Husniyah turned towards Caliph Haroon -ur-Rasheed and the *Ulema* and addressed them, resuming the matter on Fadak's confiscation.

“The day when Hazrat Ameerul Momineen Ali (a.s.) deposed his evidence in the matter of Fadak and Abu Bakr had rejected his testimony, the former had said: ‘Suppose two persons come to you with a dispute, both claiming their right of ownership of a certain property, and each saying that it belongs to him, for he had the possession of it; and that the other person was wrongly exercising his ownership of the property. Can you, before the wrongful conduct of the respondent is established and you are convinced about it, that the respondent is an usurper, and confiscate his property and give it away to the complainant?’ To this Abu Bakr said that he would not do such a thing. Ameerul Momineen then asked if he would ask for testimony from the complainant or from the respondent. Abu Bakr replied that he would ask for

evidence from the plaintiff, for, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had said: It is the responsibility of the claimant to produce the evidence. Ameerul Momineen then asked: 'Then why do you act against the ruling of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in respect of the same position involving Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s daughter and sons?' At this Abu Bakr asked Ameerul Momineen how was it? Ameerul Momineen replied: 'Because, Fatimah Zahra is the respondent in this factual case, and she is rightly in physical possession of her property. The person who claims that there is no inheritance for Prophets must restore the ownership of Fadak to Fatimah Zahra and the successors of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in the same state as it was during the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s life till such time as the plaintiff's right is duly established by proving the veracity of the contention that Prophets have no inheritance. And for this, there has to be a witness from amongst those for whom it is prohibited to accept charities; and such a person can come only from among the Bani Hashim for they are forbidden from accepting any share in charities, while the rest of the Muslim community can partake of charities. Therefore, such persons as are permitted to partake of charities cannot testify in the matter of Fadak. Only the Bani Hashim can depose their testimony in this case. Thus, whoever claims Fadak as his property, but cannot produce such a witness, must be contended with the conclusive nature of oath which Fatimah Zahra had impressed on her statement that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had endowed Fadak to her as his personal property. You must realize, O Abu Bakr, that Allah has declared Fatimah as *Masooma* (Infallible). How

can then it be possible for her to commit a serious sin by claiming something that does not rightly belong to her?’

INHERITANCE OF PROPHETS

“Abu Bakr could not utter a word in reply. He was speechless and hung down his head in shame, just as, my dear Ibrahim you are doing at the moment. You can neither answer my question nor acknowledge the wrongfulness of your beliefs. Please know it for certain, my dear Ibrahim, that the tradition quoted by Abu Bakr, negating the inheritance of Prophets, is false, invalid and fabricated, because the Holy Quran clearly says:

“Allah enjoins you about, your issues; the male shall have the equal of the shares of two females. [4:11]

“Allah has addressed this word to Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and they are universally applicable. Besides this, there are several other verses in the Holy Quran wherein it is clearly ordained that Prophets are entitled to endow their properties through inheritance. For example this verse:

And Sulayman inherited Dawud. [27:16]

“Similarly, it is related in the Holy Quran that Prophet Zakaria (a.s.) prayed to Allah for a son that he could inherit his and Prophet Yaqub (a.s.)’s properties. This is the verse I am referring to:

So grant me from yourself an heir who shall inherit me and inherit from the family of Yakub and make him O My Lord with whom you are pleased. [19:5-6]

It is thus clear that Prophets are entitled to endow their properties to their inheritors. It is also thereby proved that tradition cited as saying that Prophets have no inheritance is against what the Holy Quran ordains positively. It is apparent that the person who invented this tradition and attributed it to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was incapable of understanding the Holy Quran and its contents. If he really understood Holy Quran, he could never have said what he said. If Abu Bakr had worded his self-coined tradition thus.... ‘I am from among Prophets no body will inherit me whatever I will leave behind will be a charity for Muslims.’ then his falsity of version would not have sounded fabricated in the light of Holy Quran. But as it is, Allah had blinded his senses so that truth-seeking persons should become aware of the falsehood of the author of this fabrication.”

At this stage, one of the *Ulema* from Baghdad who was a pupil and disciple of Abu Hanifa, rose to counter-argue with Husniyah on the point, because, as before, Ibrahim was unable to do so himself.

“You must know, O Husniyah” he said, “what Prophet Sulayman (a.s.) got from Prophet Dawud (a.s.) by way of inheritance was wisdom and knowledge, and Prophetship. He did not inherit any material wealth or landed property.”

“I am not surprised”, commented Husniyah, “you are repeating the same old nonsense which others before you had exhibited. What you have said is based entirely

on ignorance and prejudice. Why do you forget that Sulayman had become a Prophet while Dawud was still alive. This is evident from the verse which says:

And Dawud and Sulayman when they were judging about the cornfield when the sheep of the people pastured in it by night and We to their judgment were among the witnesses. Then we made Sulayman to understand it and to each one gave We wisdom and knowledge. [21:78-79]

“You must know, my dear Sir, inheritance becomes operative in respect of things after the death of the owner, so that what the deceased leaves behind could be distributed among the heirs. If Prophethood was inheritance, the entire genetic line of Prophet Adam (a.s.) would have been Prophets, which is not the case. From among Adam’s generations, it was only Shees (Seth) who was commissioned by Allah as Prophet. Thus, you see that Prophethood is not something that can be inherited by a son from his father as a matter of right. Prophethood, you must understand, is a matter that Allah alone dispenses with at His will through Divine revelations. If you say that what Prophet Zakariya (a.s.) prayed to Allah for was for an heir to his Holy Prophethood, you are thereby defiling the sanctity of his Prophethood. It is even tantamount to apostasy on your part if you say such a thing.”

“How do you say that”? Interjected Ibrahim,

“Because”, replied the girl with her usual promptness,

“what Prophet Zakariya (a.s.) said in his prayer to Allah was this:

And verily I fear my kindred (cousins) after me and my wife is barren, so grant me from yourself an heir who shall inherit me and inherit from the family of Yakub and make him, O my Lord! one with whom you are well pleased. [19:5-6]

“In plain language, what Prophet Zakariya (a.s.)’s invocation was, was this:

‘I am afraid that after I am dead, my successors may harm the religion I have preached. My wife is barren. Therefore bless me, my Lord, with a son who can inherit the Properties of mine, as well as Yaqub’s generations; and bless him, O Lord, with your choicest blessings.’

“It is an agreed belief of all authorities on Holy Quran, that the Arabic word *Mawali* in the text means ‘brother’s sons’ here. If it was for an heir to his Prophethood that Zakariya prayed for, he would have said: ‘Bless me, O Lord, with a son who could succeed me as the inheritor of my Prophethood so that my brother’s sons may not become Prophets after me.’ But then such a thing would mean that Prophet Zakariya (a.s.) was not satisfied with the state Allah had placed him in, and that he was jealous of brother’s sons. And such a thing would render Zakariya a sinful person, and Allah forbid, even an apostate.

“So, my dear Ibrahim, according to pure logic, as well as on scriptural evidence, it stands proved that Prophets do

have the right of endowments of their properties to their heirs. Thus, the ‘tradition’ quoted by Abu Bakr, saying that Prophets have no inheritance rights, is clearly a fabricated piece of literature that militates against the Holy Quran itself. When the verse saying: *Verily you shall die and they shall die* [39:30] was revealed, the Prophet climbed up the pulpit and said:

‘O people; after I am no more some of my companions will wrongly attribute statements to me and use them for their selfish ends. They will fabricate traditions and attribute their authenticity to me to suit their own purposes. Therefore beware, and do not act on the basis of such traditions as militate against Quranic injunctions. Follow only such traditions which are in consonance with Quranic teachings.’

“You must also know, my dear Ibrahim, that after the death of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), Hazrat Ameerul Momineen Ali (a.s.) had been using the former’s personal effects like mule, sword, camel, turban, etc. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s armor was mortgaged; and it was Ali who got it redeemed and utilized it personally. All these items were a part of the personal belongings the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had left behind. No one disputed Ali’s right from using them. All this is mentioned in your books as well. Not one person came forward and told Ali that he had no right to possess them on the ground that Prophets do not leave inheritances.’ According to the ‘tradition’ related by Abu Bakr, these things also should have been taken away from Ali. If you say that they had asked Ali to return these

things, and he refused to do so; and that they got tired of keeping on asking him to return these. I will swear that Ali was not the person to use for himself something that religious laws prohibit, or even think of doing a thing that is prohibited. And if you say that it is not true that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had gifted away these things to Ali during his life-time you will be negating the universally agreed tradition which affirms that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had entrusted the ownership of these items to Ali while the former was still alive. It is thus proved beyond doubt that Ali had inherited these things from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) as his successor...”

Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed, who was following attentively what Husniyah was saying, saw that the whole panel of scholars invited to participate in the debate were pensive and sat with their chins lowered. He now realized at length that the *Ulema* stood beaten thoroughly by the girl’s superior knowledge of Truth. They had failed on successive occasions to counter Husniyah’s arguments in proving the malafide nature of their religious beliefs.

“O Ibrahim”, declared Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed, and “O you scholars, you all are utterly beaten. There is not a word you can say in defense. Husniyah has exploded the myth of your religious sectarian beliefs. Your subdued silence is a testimony of your defeat at the hands of this girl. Rather than blinking stupidly in silence, why don’t you all covet Husniyah’s school of thought?”

Husniyah’s was quick to seize the moment to drive home her convictions further.

“Listen”, She rang out her voice, “Listen, my dear Ibrahim and my dear *ulema* all your authentic books of history say, and the entire Muslim nation believes it to be true, that when Abu Bakr rejected the evidence deposed by Hazrat Fatimah’s witnesses, she told the Caliph that if he could inherit his father’s property, what was wrong if she did the same in respect of her own father’s property. Thus, she accused Abu Bakr of usurpation of her legal rights and proved her contention conclusively. She then returned home, weeping and anguished; and swore by Allah that she would complain on the day of Resurrection to her father, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), of Abu Bakr’s deliberate injustice. Finally, when she died, she wished in her will that she should be buried during the night, and that Abu Bakr, Umar and their yes-men should not be allowed to join in the funeral prayers over her body. This will of Fatimah Zahra (a.s.) was duly respected and carried out by Ameerul Momineen Ali (a.s.). She was buried at night at a spot near the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s pulpit, as per this tradition:

‘Between my pulpit and my resting place (grave) is a garden from the gardens of Heaven.’

“All traces of her grave were wiped off, so that no one could locate its exact place. The next day, a group comprising Abu Bakr, Umar, Awan and a few Ansars came to Ali at his residence and offered their condolence in a formal manner. They also enquired about the details of Fatimah’s funeral rites and burial; and Ali told them that he had buried her quietly at night. Ali then explained to them that it was what the infallible lady had desired

in her will and that he could not have acted contrary to her wishes, for such in action grieves the soul of the departed. He then recapitulated the saying of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) that ‘Fatimah is part and parcel of my being; anyone who grieves her grieves me; and anyone who annoys me, annoys Allah, too.’ As such, Ali told them, he could not possibly have annoyed the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and incurred Divine wrath. Umar was greatly ashamed on hearing this and said that he would go to her grave, exhume her body, and offer his prayers on it. However, despite all efforts, he could not locate the grave.”

DISGRACEFUL CHASTISEMENTS FOR THOSE WHO ANNOY ALLAH AND HIS MESSENGER

“And my dear Ibrahim”, continued Husniyah after pausing for breath, “I do not have to repeat to you that the entire Muslim community is agreed on the veracity of the version that I have just given. There is not a person who has gain said its validity. Thus, the fact that the Muhajireen and Ansars had to forfeet the honour of participating in her funeral indicates the extent to which Fatimah Zahra was grieved at the conduct meted out to her by not accepting the depositions of her husband, Ali, and of her sons, Hazrat Imam Hasan and Husain (a.s.) as her witnesses in the matter of Fadak. Therefore, in accordance with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s saying: ‘Allah is wrathful at your being aggrieved; and pleased at your being pleased.’ Fatimah’s wrath is Allah’s wrath. And this is what Allah says about aggressors:

Verily those who annoy Allah and His Messenger, Allah has cursed them in this world and the hereafter and He has prepared for them a chastisement disgraceful. [33:57]

“And know it, O Ibrahim, that there can be no doubt that the enemies of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) are confirmed aggressors on whom befall the curses of the angels and the wrath of Allah.”

DERISIVE REPRIMAND OF THE CALIPH AT THE ATTEMPT TO KILL HUSNIYAH

These impassioned words and expressions of Husniyah fell like a blast of fire from the muzzle of cannon on Ibrahim, Abu Yusuf, Shafei and the other *Ulema*. Agitated and angered by the bitter and biting truth of Husniyah’s words they sprang upon her in an attempt to kill her on the spot. The girl, taken aback by the suddenness of their assault on her, defended herself by catching hold of Ibrahim’s flowing beard; and her grip on the beard was too strong to be shaken off.

Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed was watching the scene with concern. Noticing the seriousness of the situation, his Prime Minister, Yahya bin Khalid, hurried to the Caliph’s side.

“O Caliph”, he said, “You are today officiating in the place of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Husniyah is but a slave-girl,

but one who has silenced the vociferous tongues of the entire lot of *Ulema* reputed for their knowledge in your regime. You see before you how aggressively they are behaving with the girl with deadly intentions right under your nose.”

All other court officials, too, complained to Haroon-ur-Rasheed at the physical show of force towards a girl. Caliph Haroon-Ur-Rasheed, who had now regained his composure, cried a halt to the commotion and severely reprimanded the culprits for their unbecoming conduct.

And then a figure walked up. With a naked sword in hand!

This was Khalid bin Isa, Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed’s cousin-brother, who, it will be recalled was a reputed devotee of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) Muhammad’s Ahlul Bait (a.s.). Raising the sword aloft in his hand he headed towards Ibrahim and threatened him to behave himself.

Taking the ferocious hint, everyone resumed his seat.

“You should be ashamed of yourself”, he rebuked Ibrahim, “You pose yourself as a great scholar of the age; yet you have been squarely beaten by a mere slave-girl. Don’t you feel ashamed at being laughed at by everyone here? Far from feeling shameful, you have the audacity to attempt at killing her?”

This derisive reprimand of the Caliph encouraged everyone else to have a dig at Ibrahim and the other

Ulema with censoring remarks about their pseudo intellectual reputation.

As for Husniyah, she maintained her calm and sedate dignity despite the great odds she was facing. It was not in her salts to get frightened and stop saying her say.

“O *Pseudo-Ulema*, you from the generations of the strayed” she pursued them. “And O you enemies of the progeny of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) Fear Allah..... Remember that there is to be a Day of Reckoning.... Do not go in for transitory material gains by being antagonistic towards Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and his Ahlul Bait (a.s.)..... Abstain yourselves from resorting to abusive language..... stop saying that so-and-so became the Caliph with the concurrence of so-and-so..... or that so-and-so became an Ameer through so-and-so’s source.... Keep aloof from uttering such preposterous nonsense in respect of issues like Holy Prophethood, Imamate, Infallibility and purity of Prophets and their Divinely appointed successors. Why are you people not cognizant of what is to happen on the Day of Resurrection when everything you say or do will be certainly reckoned into account?

“Why have you people lost the fear of Allah? Why don’t you realize that you have disabled others from being cognizant of Allah, His Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and His Imams (a.s.), You even excel at ignorance as compared to certain others. The bulk of your scriptures and most of the fabricated traditions you subscribe to in

relation to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s Ahlul Bait (a.s.) derive their source from those inimical to the latter, and from those who were apostates, including even women and children. These fictions are like mere tell-tales, which women and children enjoy, and later, boost them up and give currency to them by propagating that they gathered them from so-and-so high-ranking person or so-and-so reputed traditionist or so-and-so authority on the Holy Quran, or so-and-so saint and spiritual personage who dreamt about such-and-such thing being said by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) while asleep! The ignorant people judge the things that your class of *Ulema*, dish out to them purely on the basis of superstition and speculation. So deep-rooted have the notions of people become that it is difficult to shake them back to sanity. You have thus created the evils of fault-finding and abusing others in the minds of the masses; and this operation ignorance, has been going on for ages, thereby producing a generation of prodigies of ignorance and superstition. Some even regard it as their inherited privilege to be inimical towards the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s Ahlul Bait (a.s.) and their devotees, the Shias. They feel as if it was their inherited right to oppose, and keep opposing, the Shias and their school of thought. In the misguided estimation of this strayed class of people, even aggressors, tyrants, debauchees and those who spend their lives drinking wine and worshipping idols supersede the family members of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and their generations. Even the class of people like the weavers and the butchers quote each other as reference source! And now, things have come to such a

pass that these misguided people do not recognize and accept the narratives given out by even such exalted personages as Ameerul Momineen Ali, Imam Hasan, Imam Husain and the rest of the Imam's (a.s.), whose Infallibility and sanctity is unquestionable. Instead, they rely upon the narrations by Ayesha, Anas bin Malik, Abu Huraira, Amar Aas, Muawiya and such others. What these *Pseudo-Ulemas* glorified and publicized were the adventures and combats of Rustam and Isfandyar, their intention being to draw a curtain over the valiant and brave deeds of Ali, and thus gradually lead the people to forget his unrivalled achievements. And yet they claim that they love and respect the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s Ahlul Bait (a.s.)! Tell me, O Ibrahim; and O Shafei what greatness is there in your Siddiq-e-Akbar (Abu Bakr) and Farooq-e-Azam (Umar)? Please tell me about their trumpeted truthfulness, righteousness, personal greatness, piety, worshipfulness, charity, affability and courage. Please tell me where and in which battles these two dignitaries fought; whom did they defeat, what difficult issues they solved through their wisdom and sagacity. And please also tell me what miracles they performed.

PERSONAL GREATNESS

“And O Ibrahim, please define personal greatness. What is it that constitutes greatness? What does the verse *A reward from Allah* [3:195] mean? How is this Divine grace attainable? O Ibrahim, and O learned ones of Baghdad, please have fear of Allah and give up your absurdities;

and know that your religious beliefs are based on the foundations of prejudice, injustice and tyranny right from the time of the investiture of your first Caliph at Saqeefa. You never gave any chance to the descendants of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) or exponents of true religious path and the Shia *Ulema* and Momins to discuss and project Islam in its true form at any stage, though it is these persons who are the faithful and devoted followers of the path shown by Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and his Ahlul Bait (a.s.). On the contrary, you ordered them to be killed, and incited the masses also to kill them. Just because you were afraid that these truthful people would condemn you, establish the falsity of your beliefs and expose the tyranny and debauchery of your religious guides you branded them as *Kafirs* (disbelievers in Islam) and put them to death in the most ignoble manner. Know it, O Ibrahim, that everyone knows fully well that you people are the enemies of the Ahlul Bait (a.s.), and that your Imams are the murderers of Ahlul Bait (a.s.), and enemies of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). You people used to profess affection for him, while in your heart of hearts you hated him, which fact was, however, revealed to him by Allah. Nevertheless you took vengeance from his Ahlul Bait (a.s.) after he was no more. Now, even today you are following in the footsteps of your predecessors. You have exterminated the generations of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), and his and his Ahlul Bait (a.s.)'s devotees. And yet, it is indeed surprising that despite this undeniable record of atrocities, you claim to be Muslims, abiding faithfully by religious precepts of Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). By Allah, I assure you that the Holy

Prophet (s.a.w.a.) is thoroughly disgusted with you people
.....”

“We too”, interjected the *Ulema* in one voice, as Husniyah finished, “We too are disgusted and hateful towards those inimical to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s Ahlul Bait (a.s.)”

“That’s a lie”, retorted Husniyah, “I say on oath that you are telling a lie. In fact, your hearts are filled to the full with hatred and animosity towards the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s Ahlul Bait (a.s.) and their devotees; and I will prove this right now before the Caliph.”

Husniyah paused a while, as if to recapitulate a starting point for commencing her substantiations. It was a serious charge that she had brought up against the *Ulema* and their followers in general. The atmosphere in the hall was electrified with suspense. All ears were screwed to what she was going to say next.

WEEPING AND WAILING BY PSEUDO-ULEMA ON THE TENTH OF ZILHAJ OF LAMB’S SACRIFICE

“Firstly”, resumed Husniyah in her masterly diction, breaking the pin-drop silence, “Let me cite the ritual practice that you people indulge in on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha. On this day, everyone of your sect, including your *Ulema*, patriarchs, intellectuals and other distinguished classes, gather beneath a pulpit. The preacher at the congregation then ascends the pulpit

and delivers his Eid sermon, recounting the episode of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) leading his son, Ismail, to sacrifice the latter as commanded by Allah in a dream. As the preacher recreates the scene with dramatic gestures and choice words, you people start weeping and wailing aloud at his verbal reconstructions. And when the preacher touches the climax by telling how Ibrahim held and lifted the knife in his hand to sever the head of his son, Ismail, you lament audibly and toss your headgears to the ground, as if in real anguish. Tears start flowing from your eyes, so much so that your eyes become red with sobbing, though the fact, as everyone knows it, is that not a drop of Ismail's blood was shed, not a wound was inflicted, and he suffered no physical pain whatsoever in the entire proceedings. What was eventually slaughtered was a lamb, after all.

“From that day on, upto this day, thousands and thousands of lambs are slaughtered sacrificially every year in all parts of the Muslim world; and all this lamentation, it must be understood, is just for one lamb that was slaughtered symbolically as a sacrifice about 4000 years ago. Yet no one derides you for shedding tears over a lamb's memory.

DERISION OF MUSLIM ON HIS LAMENTING OF THE BLOODY HAVOC AT KARBALA

“But what happens when Shias and devotees of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and his Ahlul Bait (a.s.) do the same

thing in respect of the memory of the martyrdom of Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.)’s beloved grandsons, apple of Ameerul Momineen’s eyes and Fatimah’s darling sons Imam Hasan and Imam Husain (a.s.), who was brutally martyred, on the field of Karbala? We weep on the episode of the 10th of Muharram, not for a lamb, but for the sacred human blood that was shed of Imam Husain (a.s.) who is incomparably unique in all respects, whose grandfather and ancestors are incomparable; whose father, too, is unique, whose mother is unmatched, whose brother, too, has no equal, and whose son also had no equal. A brutal group of oppressors had waged a war against him, and severed his sacred head and raised it on the point of spear. These tyrants then captured his womenfolk. They virtually slaughtered 72 of his faithful adherents, and abandoned their dead bodies at the mercy of wild animals.

“Yet, when a true Muslim weeps and laments over this bloody havoc, you people deride him by branding him as a *Rafizi*! Tell me, my dear Ibrahim, what is the philosophy behind the enigma? You weep over the slaughter of a lamb that took place about 4000 years ago, and no one criticizes it. But when others lament over the wanton slaughter of sacred human beings that occurred hardly 200 years ago you disapprove it, despite the fact that the slaughtered entities were not lambs but blood and bones of Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and his near and dear ones”?

Saying this, Husniyah, who was now brimming with devotional emotionalism, struck her own head with

the palm of her head. Highly strung with devotional feelings seeking a vent, she threw off her headwear and commenced proper lamentations. As she lamented with a gush of tears streaming forth spontaneously from her eyes and her hands gesturing the depths of her feelings, she reconstructed in her feminine manner the innocent pranks which the infant Imam Husain (a.s.) used to have with his grandfather, Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.); of how the little one used to kick lovingly at the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), sitting astride the latter's shoulders and goading him to crawl faster; of how elated and delighted Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) used to feel at his grandson's commands during this infantile phantasy depicting a rider and his horse, of how the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) used to applaud the riding skill of his little grandson; of how endearingly the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) would kiss the little one; of how this same sacred throat of his was later cut open brutally; and of how his dead body was caused to be trampled by horses.

Recounting these thought currents to her audience, and looking accusingly at Ibrahim, she said. "All these atrocities against the Ahlul Bait (a.s.) were perpetuated by none other than your religious predecessors." In her fit of devotional feelings, Husniyah, as she recounted the tragic events, kept beating her head with her palms. Everyone in the hall was weeping now, including Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed himself too. The entire hall was echoing with sobs.

Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed was quick to realize the

potentialities of the situation as it was at the moment. So, as a precautionary measure, he acted promptly. He ordered a robe of Honour and costly jewels of gold and diamonds to be presented to Husniyah, as the finale of this historic and marathon debate.

APPOINTMENT OF HAZRAT ALI (A.S.) AS AMEER

But the girl, Husniyah, wanted to have one more fling!

“Excuse me”, she said, addressing herself to Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed, “Before we call it a day, I would request you the Caliph to permit me to pose just one more question. Please give me a little more time, so that I can wind up the proceedings with it. Please, Sir, may I”?

“Yes, you may”, allowed the Caliph.

“I ask you”, said Husniyah turning in the direction of the *Ulema*’s circle, “O Ibrahim; and you, O Shafei; and you, O Abu Yusuf; and you, all other *Ulema*, tell me on oath if you have even read in any book that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) even raised anyone’s status over that of Hazrat Ali during his life-time or that he even appointed any one else other than Ali as the Ameer”?

“No, he did not”, they all affirmed.

PREACHING OF SURAH BARAT

“Then how do you justify anyone else’s appointment as *Ameer* from among the common people, superseding Ali? You must all remember, my dear gentlemen, that when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had dispatched Abu Bakr with Surah Barat to Mecca for conveying it to the people there, Allah had revealed to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) that Abu Bakr be recalled, and instead, Ali should be commissioned to convey the contents of the said revelation to the people at Mecca. This is the relevant verse:

So when the sacred months are past then slay the idolaters wherever you find them and seize them and besiege them. [9:5]

“Accordingly, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had to send out Ali (a.s.) with instructions to intercept him and take over the task of conveying the said Surah to Mecca himself, and ask Abu Bakr to return back to Medina with the small force he had taken along with him. At this, Abu Bakr was so highly embarrassed that he had not the face to return to Medina so ignobly. He therefore, requested Ali to manage to get leave sanctioned by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) to enable him to perform the Haj. Thus, it was that Ali (a.s.) had gone all alone with the Surah to Mecca, where he conveyed its contents to the people.

“There were other similar conditions and injunctions in this Surah which Ali conveyed to the Meccans. And bear in mind, my dear Sirs, that there is no difference of opinion among the various schools of thought over this

factual incident. I, therefore, ask you all: how one could expect such a person to be fit enough to be a Caliph and successor to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) when he was considered unfit by Allah Himself, and had to be intercepted midway for not having the requisite standard of intellect to deliver the Divine message and explain it to the Meccans. There is a subtle point which one must discern in this context. And that is, when Hazrat Jibrail, conveyed this revelation (Surah Barat) to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), the former did not indicate as to who was to carry it to Mecca and read and explain it to the people there. It was Divine expedience that Allah had purposely withheld identification of the person who was to convey it to the Meccans, in the first instance. Allah obviously wanted the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) to send Abu Bakr on this errand of great importance, so that by subsequently substituting Ali for Abu Bakr, the inefficiency and incapability of Abu Bakr could be stressed. Thus did Allah will to expose Abu Bakr's incompetence? Thus the disgrace which he had to face, as willed by Allah, is a conclusive evidence of his malafides of successorship to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.). So acute was his self-consciousness of his own unimportance and incompetence for the task that he never returned to Medina after this Divine belittlement. Now, my dear Ibrahim, tell me truthfully whether or not this is mentioned in the books to which you subscribe your convictions?"

"Yes", answered Ibrahim helplessly, "No one can deny it."
"Thank you", acknowledged the girl, "Now, there is

just one more thing. You will recall that when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) had given the command of his army to Usama bin Zaid at a time when the former was on his death-bed, he had said: ‘Accused by Allah are those who resent the appointment of Usama bin Zaid as the army commander and abstain from accompanying him on the expedition with his army.’ But Umar and Abu Bakr paid no heed to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s stern warning despite the fact that Ali (a.s.), Fazal bin Abbas, and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) himself reminded them repeatedly of this severe warning. Why? They were both afraid that if they complied with the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s directive and went away with the Usama’s army, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), who was already on his death-bed would make Ali his successor and Caliph during their absence. Usama bin Zaid, on the instructions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), sent his men several times to call these two gentlemen; but they would not join. Instead, they responded to such calls in an insolent manner; and continued with their deliberate disobedience till eventually the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) breathed his last. But even the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)’s death did not deter them from their ignoble conduct. Instead of participating in the funeral rites of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), these two men hurried to Saaqeefa on the suburbs of Medina, where they started vying with different tribes for grabbing the Caliphate. When Usama bin Zaid, the army commander newly appointed by the late Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), got intelligence of Abu Bakr’s and Umar’s presence at Saaqeefa, he sent a messenger to them saying that since they were his subordinates, they should not be there, dabbling in power politics, for, army

personnel had nothing to do with the matter of ascendance to the Caliphate throne. It is, as you all know, an agreed fact that after the death of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.), these two, as all others too, were under Usama for all administrative purposes. If these two dignitaries really possessed the qualities necessary for the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s successor, the position would have been the other way around i.e. Usama bin Zaid would have been in a subordinate position to them. This combined with the fact that they disobeyed the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s directive requiring them to proceed on the stipulated army expedition under Usama's command, and their subsequent disregard of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s censure and curseful warnings... Which is on record in all your books...? Definitely renders them condemned to Divine wrath for all times ...”

The way this phenomenal girl was clothing her arguments to the point of conviction left no room for the *Ulema* to challenge the veracity of her factual depositions. There was nothing that Ibrahim or the other scholars reputed for their learning and sagacity could say by way of a reply. Their wisdom now lay in sitting silent and baffled at the Truth that Husniyah had publicly exposed in a manner that was as elegant and forceful as it was convincing.

In, the silence that prevailed, Husniyah stood, graceful, dominating, respectful, sedate and majestic in her feminine composure:

She had won!

She had delivered the TRUTH!

She was victorious!

Yet, like all other noble-hearted victors, she was humble in her success. Her youthful and glowing face reflected meekness in victory.

Thus she stood now, surveying the assembly of the scholastic luminaries of the time. She had humbled them all with her oratory, with her comprehensive knowledge, with her command over the Scripture; and above all, with her deep and inner convictions which lay in her breast nourished by her explicit devotion to the Message conveyed by Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) and his Ahlul Bait (a.s.).

Noticing now that there was nothing forthcoming from any quarter of the learned circle who sat in the hall pensively with their heads hung down, she decided that it was time now to wind up her exposition. Accordingly, she glanced confidently at Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed.

“Praised be Allah, the Provident One”. She broke the silence. “I am thankful to Him for having the honour of being so graciously given the opportunity through the kind permission of the Caliph to express myself. I am indeed grateful to the Caliph for having afforded this chance to a humble girl like me to pin-point the sanctity and the Divinely exalted greatness of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.)’s Ahlul Bait (a.s.). I feel obliged

towards the Caliph for having provided this occasion for me to expose the wrong beliefs and prejudices which the enemies of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s Ahlul Bait (a.s.) harbour in their hearts, and which I have exposed conclusively with substantive facts, figures and universally accepted references and sources of references. As a matter of fact, I can even rightfully boast that none of the devotees of Ahlul Bait had so far been provided with such an opportunity of free and fair expression of Truth. By Allah, I say that had it not been for my feeling that it would cause inconvenience to the Caliph, I could have continued further with advancing still more effective arguments to establish the righteousness and sacred greatness of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s progeny. I can recount innumerable references in support of the Ahlul Bait's exalted status....."

Yahya bin Khalid, the Caliph's Prime Minister, who had been watching the entire proceedings critically now stood up, casting a frowning look at Ibrahim.

"Well done, Husniyah!" He told her, looking with sparkling appreciation at the girl's person. "You have very successfully and fearlessly established the bonafides of your religious beliefs. You have, indeed, exposed Religion in its true and untainted form."

Finally, the kings, peers and dignitaries who had come from distant places expressly to attend this historic debate rose to their feet as a mark of respect and appreciation for this charming girl, Husniyah's victorious emergence.

Every one of them praised her and prayed movingly for her well being.

And their appreciation was not merely verbal. It was practical; for, as many as 400 of these distinguished persons declared their conversion to Husniyah's school of religious beliefs! It was not a delayed action.

It was Prompt!

It was on the spot!!

Even Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed was so deeply moved by the inherent Truth, so convincingly focused by Husniyah, that he resolved then and there that he would never annoy the Sa'adat (Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.)'s descendant) in his life.

And he remained faithful to his resolution!

The Caliph then ordered another Robe of Honour to be presented to Husniyah; and as was agreed at the commencement of the debate, he paid one lakh *Mishqals* (gold coins) to her master, the Khwaja, in addition to a Robe of Honour.

Caliph Haroon-ur-Rasheed then called Husniyah endearingly to his side; and secretly whispered into her ears that in her own interest she should leave Baghdad and move over to some other place of her choice, for, he apprehended that the defeated and belittled elements may try to harm her, or, even thirst for her blood.

Accordingly, Husniyah and her master, the Khwaja kissed the feet of the Caliph and left the palace court, highly pleased at their achievements.

Khalid bin Isa, the Caliph's cousin brother, who was a devout adherent of the Ahlul Bait and scores of other such devotees also expressed their delight at the laurels Husniyah had won. They presented their spontaneous felicitations to her in the form of praises as well as in cash gifts.

Ibrahim, defeated and humiliated, rose up remorsefully from the momental presidential chair he had occupied during the debate, and came out of the court accompanied by his contemporaries, Abu Yusuf and Shafei. They cut a sorry figure, with everyone making a laughing stock of them. The taunts and ridiculing remarks of the Caliph's cousin, Khalid, made things still worse for them.

Eventually, Husniyah and her master, the Khwaja, accompanied by several of her admirers, left for the city of Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) where they dedicated themselves to the cause of the Holy Imams (a.s.) and the descendants of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.)'s Ahlul Bait (a.s.) and lived happily thereafter.

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