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BIOGRAPHY
OF
AMIR MUKHTAR
BIN
ABU UBAYDA



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BY:

SHAMIM ABBAS JESSA

Composed by:

TALIB HUSSAIN ZAIDI

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by
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PREFACE

Amir Mukhtar was born on the day the Holy Prophet went to Tabuk with his men to stop the expected march of Heraculius towards Madina in the middle of 9 hijra.

Abu Ubayda bin Musud, a Thaqafi, was his father. Hilya was his mother.

Hilya, in her pregnancy, heard a voice, saying:
“Take care of your child. He is the friend of Ahl ul Bayt. He shall kill many a foe of the holy family.”

Abu Ubayda Thaqafi was killed in the battle of Marwaha in 13 hijra. Hilya and her brother-in-law brought up 4 years old orphan Mukhtar with utmost love and care, taught him the holy Quran and trained him in martial arts. He did not take part in usual pastime normal boys of his age would enjoy. Riding and swimming were his favourite sports.

One day, after the departure of Imam Ali, Imam Hasan paid a call upon him. As soon as Mukhtar saw the Imam on his door he bowed down before him and from that day on he lived in his company as his devoted disciple.

Abu Ubayda's daughter, Mukhtar's sister, was married to Abdullah bin Umar, the son of the second caliph; his other sister was the wife of Umar bin Saad, the commander of the army which killed Imam Husayn, his relatives and friends in Karbala. Strange it is that Abu Ubayda was a staunch

adherent of Umar, but Mukhtar made a choice to go into the camp of the sons of Sayyida Fatima Zahra. He gave his daughter in marriage to Imam Ali bin Husayn Zayn al Abidin.

Mukhtar played a pivotal role in the movement launched against the Umayyads in order to give just and due punishment to the killers of Imam Husayn, his relatives and friends in Karbala.

Mukhtar was killed in Ramazan 67 hijra by the army of Masab bin Zubayr. After his death the arch enemies of the Ahl ul Bayt, the Umayyad, fabricated a number of baseless stories to malign him because of his sublime love for the Ahl ul Bayt and the just punishment he meted out to the prime culprits from among the killers of the Ahl ul Bayt.

In Ziyarat Ashura we say: “Peace be on you (Imam Husayn) whose blood claimer is Allah”; so He, through Mukhtar punished the killers of Imam Husayn in this world and will condemn them with eternal damnation in the hereafter. Mukhtar arrested many culprits, tried them before a large number of witnesses, and when they confessed their sins, punished them according to Islamic laws. Among the killers brought to book, were Shimr, Sinan bin Anas, Umar bin Saad, Kholi and Hakam et al.

In fact he was a brave warrior, general, politician, just administrator, and above all a true and devoted friend of the Ahl ul Bayt.

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**THE BIOGRAPHY
OF
AMIR MUKHTAR
(AVENGER OF IMAM HUSAYN'S BLOOD)**

INTRODUCTION

Amir Mukhtar was a dynamic personality who played a heroic role in taking the revenge of the martyrs of Karbala. He belonged to the noble Thaqafi tribe. His father's name was Abu Ubayda bin Masood Thaqafi and his mother's name was Hilya. Abu Ubayda was the brave commander of the Muslim army which invaded Iran during the rule of the second caliph Umar. One of Ubayda's daughter was married to Abdullah bin Umar, the son of the second caliph. Another daughter of his was married to Umar bin Saad, the murderer of Imam Husayn (a.s.)

Ironically, while Abu Ubayda, the father, was an ardent adherent of Umar, Amir Mukhtar, the son was deeply inclined towards the Ahl ul Bayt. He gave one of his daughters in marriage to Imam Zayn ul Abidin (a.s.).

Amir Mukhtar was a supreme personality who towered over the vast multitude of humanity. He was a distinguished general, a great tactician and strategist, a just and generous ruler and above all a true adherent of the family of the Holy Prophet.

About five years after the tragedy of Karbala in Rabi-ul-awwal 66 A.H., Amir Mukhtar rose in revolt against the Umayyads to avenge the blood of the martyrs of Karbala and within a short period of about one and a half year, he had killed nearly eighteen thousand Yazidites who had taken part in killing Imam Husayn (a.s.) and his companions.

This spectacular campaign of Amir Mukhtar was like a shooting star, brief but dazzlingly bright. In this mammoth endeavor his tactical grandeur and strategic acumen guided him over myriad obstacles while his profound and sincere faith in God Almighty and his mission, sustained him through the long and arduous march to his goal. During this campaign the awe inspiring name of Amir Mukhtar became a nightmare for the Umayyads.

CHILDHOOD

Amir Mukhtar was born on the day when the Holy Prophet started for the battle of ‘Tabook.’ The mother of Mukhtar is reported to have said that during her pregnancy she heard a mysterious voice cautioning her to protect the child in her womb, who was a great friend of the Prophet’s family and would one day exterminate many foes of the Holy family.

Mukhtar’s father died when he was about three years old. He was brought up by his mother and his uncle. Parallel to the Holy Quran and religious knowledge, he acquired mastery in horsemanship, archery, wrestling, swimming and allied

martial arts. Mukhtar never reveled in childish games being sombre and serious by nature. He continued his studies till the martyrdom of Hazrat Ali (a.s.). Thereafter, one day a man brought Imam Hasan (a.s.) to his house. Mukhtar was on the terrace of his house. As he saw the divine leader approaching, he raced downstairs and bowed his head at the Imam's feet and remained in his revered company until he was poisoned by the enemies.

HEART BREAKING TRAGEDY OF KARBALA

The rise of the tyrant Yazid to power seemed a catastrophe to the faithfuls on account of his limitless licentiousness. As soon as it was known that Imam Husayn (a.s.) had refused to pay homage to Yazid, the Kufis invited him to become their leader. The divine leader was forced by circumstance's to leave Madina. In reply to this invitation he sent his cousin Muslim bin Aqil to Kufa. The people of Kufa welcomed Muslim with great enthusiasm but soon displayed their proverbial disloyalty - a heinous trait. Due to their fickle and wayward behaviour, the noble envoy of Imam Husayn (a.s.) was isolated and brutally murdered by the troops of Abdallah bin Ziyad.

Amir Mukhtar was out of town at that time and he heard the tragic news on his return in Kufa. On the instigation of some mischief mongers, Ibn Ziyad arrested Mukhtar and threw him in prison.

In course of time, on the 10th of Muharram Imam Husayn

(a.s) and his beloved family members were ruthlessly slaughtered on the burning plains of Karbala. The scorching sun, oblivious of the horrendous spectacle had remained overhead all day. Even when it set a blistering, motionless heat hung and then sank deep into the blood soaked sand. The dull silence of the night was shattered by the wails and cries as frantic mothers searched for their offspring amidst the burning tents. Pain was manifested all around as they sat huddled together on the desolate sand. Their silent groans and cries vibrated through the air.

Then the grief stricken, helpless women and children of the family of the Holy Prophet were enchained and brought to Kufa.

Umar bin Saad, the commander in chief of the Yazidi army, presented the heads of the martyrs to the governor of Kufa - Abdullah Ibn Ziyad with great pomp and pageantry. The despotic tyrant ordered the guards to bring Mukhtar to the court. As Amir Mukhtar was ushered into the court an eerie silence descended. The helpless captive, bound in chains and fetters looked at the decapitated heads of his beloved Imam and his family members and then his eyes moved on to the prisoners huddled together in shackles with head bent low. A flash flood of pain surged through Amir Mukhtar's body. It broke down every defense and ripped his heart. He wept hysterically while Ibn Ziyad gloated in sadistic pleasure and chided "Weep! O Mukhtar weep!"

The whole court reverberated in silent harmony with

the anguish of Sayyida Zaynab and Ummi Kulsum, the daughters of Imam Ali (a.s.). Thereafter the prisoners were sent to Syria and Mukhtar languished in the jail of Kufa reliving the massive tragedy over and over again.

THE TEACHER OF HAMDAN

After the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.), the governor of Kufa issued a proclamation strictly warning the citizens that remembrance of the names of Ali (a.s.) and his family was a federal offense which would result in total destruction of life and property. A reign of terror was unleashed and the friends of the Ahl ul Bayt fled to far flung areas to save themselves from persecution and torture.

During this tragic period, there lived a good and pious man with friendly disposition towards the Ahl ul Bayt - a teacher of Hamdan tribe who taught the Quran to the children of the chiefs of Kufa. This great teacher Kaseer bin Amir had been a companion of Imam Ali (a.s.) in the battle of Siffin.

One day, as the teacher was sitting with his students, a water carrier passed by. The teacher bought a bowl of water, but instantly the sight of water revived the misery that lay embedded in his heart - the poignant memory of the thirst of his beloved Imam and his young and aged companions. He invoked curse on the enemies of Imam Hussain (a.s.) and put the bowl down, untouched. Unfortunately, the son of Sinan bin Anas was present there. He taunted the teacher, "Don't you know it was my father who imposed the

water restriction upon Imam Hussain (a.s.). He was the brave commander who accomplished this feat on the order of Ibn Ziyad. Don't you fear the wrath of the governor?" The teacher, Kaseer bin Amir Hamdani immediately realized his mistake and tried to camouflage his misadventurous move but it was too late.

The callous, wicked boy ran to his father with his trumped up version and the matter was reported to the governor who at once summoned Kaseer Hamdani to court.

When the trembling, awe stricken teacher reached the court he was severely reprimanded by the governor, "O recusant! Aren't you satisfied with the peace and security in the rule of Yazid that you curse him? Tell me, do you curse us only for that we murdered Husayn?" Then turning to the guards he thundered, "Lead this foul teacher to the dungeon of the Abids."

The teacher was chained in fetters and was flung into a dark gloomy cell. He found solace in the remembrance of Allah. As he peered into the darkness he discerned a young man, dishevelled, bound in heavy chains from head to toe, sitting on the ground, murmuring "YA MUHAMMAD, YA ALI"

The teacher offered salutation and whispered, "What gruesome crime have you committed to deserve such harsh punishment?"

The prisoner ruefully replied, "This is be punishment

for being friendly towards the family of Imam Ali (a.s.)” Kaseer bin Amir was bereft with grief, he anxiously inquired, “Who are you? To which family do you belong?” The prisoner replied “I am Mukhtar, son of Abu Ubayda Thaqaqi.”

The teacher sprang up and started kissing on the head and eyes of Mukhtar in a gesture of true reverence. Mukhtar was perplexed and asked the identity of his companion. “My name is Kaseer, son of Amir Hamdani. I am an ardent adherent of the family of Ali (a.s.). O Mukhtar - Don't be disheartened. I have personally heard the prediction from Imam Ali (a.s.) himself about you. You will avenge the death of the grandson of the Holy Prophet, who laid down his life to fight tyranny and oppressions and uphold the principles of Islam.” This strange encounter led to a deep friendship and eventually to the release of Amir Mukhtar from captivity.

It so happened that Kaseer bin Amir had a niece who worked for the governor of Kufa. When she heard of her uncle's imprisonment she ran weeping to her mistress and begged her to intercede for him. When Ibn Ziyad came home his wife pleaded, “The teacher whom you have imprisoned is innocent. so please release him.” Abdullah Ibn Ziyad in a whimsical gesture of humor ordered the release of the teacher.

As soon as Kaseer was free, he started planning for the release of Amir Mukhtar. First he smuggled pen and paper

to Mukhtar who wrote a letter to his elder brother-in-law (husband of his sister, Safiya) Abdullah bin Umar. He requested him to intercede with Yazid so that the Syrian leader might order the governor of Kufa to free him. Kaseer personally travelled to Madina and delivered the letter. When Safiya heard about the pathetic condition of her brother, she tore her veil and began to wail. Abdullah at once wrote a letter to Yazid in which he plainly stated, “O Yazid bin Muawiyah! You know that Mukhtar is my wife’s brother and the governor of Kufa has put him in prison without any valid reason. This happening has distressed my wife and the peace of my domestic life is shattered. I wish you to order Ibn Ziyad to free Mukhtar as a gesture of kindness to me.”

Kaseer look the letter from Abdullah bin Umar, at once mounted his camel and without any delay started towards Damascus, the capital of Syria.

KASEER CONVEYS THE LETTER

In Damascus Kaseer lodged with a grocer. Every day he would visit the palace but the guards would deny him entry. Eighteen days passed in vain, futile attempts. One day as he was sitting totally dejected the grocer asked him the cause of his sorrow. The teacher was hesitant to confide in him. The grocer avowed, “I swear by the martyr of Karbala that I shall leave no stone unturned to help you.” Encouraged by his words Kaseer told him about the failure of his efforts in conveying his letter to Yazid. The grocer inquired “Who is

Mukhtar?” Kaseer replied “He is a staunch adherent of the Ahl ul Bayt. He will not let the enemies of the Holy family remain at ease, once he gets free he will avenge the blood of Imam Husayn (a.s.)”

The grocer asked “How are you so sure?” Kaiser convinced him that he had heard these words from the revered lips of Imam Ali (a.s.) himself. The grocer immediately volunteered his whole hearted support and instructed Kaseer “After the morning prayer, wear the finest clothing you can afford and go to the palace. Don’t ask permission from the guards, just walk in fearlessly. You will enter a magnificent hall decorated with splendour. On the chairs you will see chiefs of great rank but go on walking without even saluting them. Then you will enter a more opulent hall bedecked in Roman grandeur, this is the house of Lords, you should not salute them, just walk on till you reach a lawn where you will see slaves with pearly turbans and gold waist bands. These slaves are called ‘Tashtiyas’ (tray-bearers) because they had presented the severed head of Imam Husayn (a.s.) to Yazid in a tray. Go straight till you reach the fifth entrance. This is Yazid’s private chamber. This hall will be fully carpeted with luxuriant velvet carpets. Don’t advance a step further, just sit down. You will see a very handsome slave in red fineries with elaborate embroidery. He will go towards the bathroom. Behind him will be another slave wearing a black velvet robe and a black turban. Day and night this slave remains remorseful and sheds tears at the tragic fate of Imam Husayn (a.s.). Yazid is well aware that this slave is a friend at the Ahl ul Bayt but he

does not harm him because he loves the slave very much. This slave observes fast during the day and in the evening breaks his fast with vinegar and barley bread. He does not eat food provided by Yazid but earns through labour making girdles. When you see this slave you give him the letter. He will convey it to Yazid and get you the reply.”

Kaseer thanked the grocer and the next morning donned his finest attire and went to the palace. When he saw the Roman slave wearing the black mantle, he stood up and saluted him. The slave greeted him with enthusiasm and said, “O Kaseer Hamdani! May God bless you and remove your troubles. Why this delay? I have been waiting for you for eighteen days.” The teacher was overwhelmed with fear and wonder. He was dumbfounded and could not utter a word. The slave repeated his query. Then Kaseer hesitantly asked: “I ask you in the name of Imam Husayn (a.s.) tell me how did you know my name?” With a sob the slave declared, “From the day you arrived in Damascus, every night I see the divine leader in my dream. He has informed me that a friend named Kaseer bin Amir Hamdani is now in the capital. He has a letter, so assist him for my sake and convey my greetings to him.” Tears sprang to Kasser’s eyes at the honor bestowed on him. Just then Yazid entered. He was tall, ugly and repulsive. He had a scar on his forehead which made him awesome. The Roman slave approached him, kissed his hand and requested: “You have promised to fulfill my one wish a day, but as you are aware, I have not asked for anything ever since the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a.s.)” Yazid nodded in assent: “You are right and I

am ready to meet your demand whatever it is. Just tell me.” The slave put the letter in his hand and said, “Please read this letter and grant us the request of the writer.”

The Syrian ruler read the letter, contemplated for a while then sought pen and paper from the slave and wrote an order to Ibn Ziyad: “This is an order from Yazid bin Muawiyah bin Abu Sufyan to Abdullah bin Ziyad that as soon as you get my letter release Amir Mukhtar bin Abu Ubayda from the dungeon and treat him with kindness and convey him to his brother-in-law Abdullah bin Umar whom I respect greatly”!

Then turning to the slave and putting the letter in his hand he declared: “This letter grieves me more than the loss of a million dinars because Mukhtar is a staunch Abid. I wrote it to please you Abdullah bin Umar.” Kaseer thanked God for the success of his mission. He expressed his gratitude to the slave and the grocer and hurried back to Kufa.

In Kufa, he presented the letter from Yazid to Abdullah bin Ziyad who immediately ordered the guards to release Mukhtar from the dungeon, bathe him and give him a sumptuous meal. Mukhtar declined to eat the food of the sinners who murdered the Divine leader. Soon, Mukhtar and Kaseer departed from Kufa. Amir Mukhtar immediately left for Makka to see Muhammad-e-Hanafia to ask permission to avenge the innocent blood of the martyrs of Karbala.

YAZID'S DEATH

Yazid felt elated when he received the severed heads of the martyr of Karbala but his joy and elation were short lived and the cause of his doom. He was soon inflicted with a psychological malady which drove him to distraction. He lost his peace of mind and the severity of the disease increased with medication. His condition deteriorated to such an extent that others in his attendance could not sleep.

At last the services of a Persian physician who had studied Greek medicine were sought. He diagnosed the illness as melancholia and hypochondria and advised Yazid to go on a hunting trip he enjoyed this sport very much. This would help in alleviating the symptoms. The Syrian tyrant liked the suggestion and immediately ordered the guards to prepare for the hunting trip.

In the forest Yazid saw a beautiful deer and started chasing the fleeing creature. He soon disappeared in the forest much to the horror of his loyal guards who searched frantically for their lost monarch. As they scanned the forest they heard a voice, "Fie on you O guards! Yazid, the accursed son of Muawiyah is imprisoned in the domain of hell which is full of fire, serpents and scorpions." The distraught servants dismounted from their steeds, tore their clothes and mourned the death of their master. Later they returned weeping to Damascus.

Some writers are of the opinion that Yazid's mental ailment

worsened, his face turned black, his tongue gushed out of his mouth as he kept asking for water, which he could not drink to quench his thirst. He ultimately died a most wretched and agonizing death.

Hearing the news of Yazid's death the adherents of the Ahl ul Bayt heaved a sigh of relief and thanked the Almighty Allah.

After the death of Yazid, the Syrians expressed a desire to pay homage to Muawiyah, the son of Yazid. Muawiyah was a good man given to pious ways and inclined towards religion. When he delivered a speech condemning his ancestors for committing the most despicable crime in history, the Umayyad clique was outraged. The Umayyad influential chiefs decided to get rid of him through intrigue and ultimately he was poisoned. After his death unrest ensued in Damascus.

REIGN OF TERROR

As soon as Ibn Ziyad had tidings that Mukhtar intended to lead an insurgece, he began to round up the adherents of the Ahl ul Bayt and sentenced them to rigorous imprisonment in Kufa. Thousands of innocent men were put in chains and thrown in prison. Ibn Ziyad, then left his son Umar in charge of Kufa and proceeded to Basra. On reaching Basra he received news of the death of Yazid and the rebellious tendencies in Damascus, he immediately wrote a letter to his son Umar asking him to bring his family

and the entire treasury to Basra as soon as possible. While preparation for the departure was in full swing as the slaves were loading the state wealth on the horses and mounting the women and children on the horses, news of Yazid's death spread like wild fire and the general public took to the streets and opened the gates of the dungeon setting free the desperate prisoners. Amidst cries of "YA AALI SIRATUL HUSAYN" the prisoners rushed to the governor's palace and killed the entire family of Ibn Ziyad. Within a short time over a thousand enemies of Imam Husayn were killed. Unfortunately Umar bin Ziyad and some other rogues like Umar bin Saad, Shimr and Sinan bin Anas managed to escape.

THE EXPLOITS OF SULAYMAN BIN SURD

At this time, five old veterans, who were strong adherents of the Ahl ul Bayt and had fought besides Imam Ali at Siffin, got together and held a meeting. These five gallant companions of the Holy Prophet had taken oath of allegiance to Muslim bin Aqil. They were Sulayman bin Surd, Musayyab bin Nukhab, Abdullah bin Va-il, Shaddad bin Akram and Abdullah bin Nafil Azadi.

The five chiefs wept and lamented: "We wrote letters to Imam Husayn and invited him to come. We promised that we would sacrifice our lives for him and fight the armies of Yazid. Unfortunately, we couldn't do anything when needed. Ibn Ziyad had blockaded the roads and few of us were in jail. We were helpless at that time, but thank God today, we

are strong, so let us wield our mighty swords and destroy those who look part in the murder of Imam Husayn (a.s.).” They elected Sulayman bin Surd al Khizai as their chief. Sulayman was renowned for his generosity benevolence, bravery and military skills.

Under the leadership of Sulayman, these veteran chiefs of Kufa assembled their armed men and marched on foot to Karbala to apologize before the Divine leader and seek permission to wage battle against the enemies.

As the parched plains of Karbala came in sight, they all began to weep. Sulayman approached the grave, tore his dress and throwing dust upon himself wailed and lamented. Now pain and anguish was manifested all around. It broke down every defense and overruled all rational thought. “Ya Husayn, O martyred leader” echoed over the silent plain as the ardent adherents offered salutation to their great leader. That night Sulayman bin Surd saw Imam Husayn (a.s.) who addressed the gallant warrior, “O Sulayman! May God recompense you for your sorrow. Your intention is true as I am aware of it. You know fully well about the ill-treatment I received from the followers of my grandfather. Their chief is now in hell in the company of Pharaoh and Shaddad. O Sulayman! Remain firm in your resolve and be prepared to avenge, my blood. God and the Holy Prophet will be pleased by your endeavor.”

Sulayman awoke with tears in his eyes, performed ablution and after offering prayers supplicated “O God! Help me

score victory over Ibn Ziyad.” Then he gathered his army and narrated his dream to them. Spurred on by the great vision, the valiant soldiers marched ahead, their morale sky high.

Sulayman received information that two divisions commanded by Umar bin Saad and were heading towards Kufa. He summoned Musayyab bin Nukhab the commander of the vanguard division to decide their future strategy. It was decided that Musayyab would advance and launch a surprise attack.

MUSAYYAB’S BRAVERY

According to plan, gallant Musayyab with his two thousand soldiers advanced towards the formidable armies of the enemies. Soon the armies of Shimr and Umar bin Saad came in view. Musayyab divided his army into four divisions and positioned them. He then assumed the central position and launched a fierce attack. The Syrian armies were caught off guard and started faltering. Umar bin Saad shouted “O killers of the son of Abu Turab! Keep on fighting. You will attain martyrdom if you die.”

Suddenly Sulayman bin Surd arrived from the rear and shouted “O soldiers of Imam Husayn! Let no enemy flee from your clutches.” The Syrians took to flight and ran helter skelter as they heard of Sulayman’s arrival. Umar bin Saad continued to fight, but Shimr’s courage faltered. He came up to Umar and cautioned “O chief! Sulayman has arrived lets move from here.”

Umar bin Saad paid no heed but Shimr took to flight. Musayyab's army pursued the fleeing enemies till the walls of Kufa.

The old chief Sulayman then inspected the battle field which was strewn with thousands of Syrian corpses. As he advanced he found the strands of Umar bin Saad and Shimr lying on the dust. This sight evoked loud cries of 'Allahu Akbar' as the soldiers rejoiced while dejected Shimr and Umar bin Saad reached Kufa in a pitiable condition.

THE VALOR OF KHALID BIN SULAYMAN BIN SURD

As the soldiers were rejoicing their victory, a spy informed Suleyman about the proximity of the army of Umar bin Abdullah Ibn Ziyad. Sulayman at once mobilized his army and gave the marching orders.

The next day the armies were positioned and the battle commenced with personal combats. From the group of Abids, Khalid the son of Sulayman bin Surd advanced to the arena. He was a very handsome youth, only twenty years of age. He had donned a Persian armor and Yemenite turban, making it difficult to ascertain his identity. Galloping on his splendid steed to the center he shouted "God makes thankfulness incumbent upon us and created us the adherents of Ahl ul Bayt so that our swords may slash your throats in the same way as the necks of your ancestors were severed in the battle of the Camel." He sought a contender,

a Syrian named Murahi bin Yazid accepted the challenge. This man believed Yazid as an Imam. Khalid sprang upon him like an angry lion and with a dexterous move armed his javelin at Murahi. The javelin found its mark and the accursed Syrian stumbled from his horse and died. Khalid's slave cut the head of Murahi and took away his arms and mount.

Next Murahi's son came forward to avenge his father's death, he too succumbed to the wrath of Khalid whose whole being was inflamed and consumed by his hatred for those who inflicted pain on the family of the Holy Prophet. One after another eighteen mighty warriors fell to dust confronting the deluge of Khalid's unprecedented valour and courage. So shaken were the Syrians by his onslaught that none had the courage to face him. Thereafter Khalid returned to his army, changed his horse and launched a massive attack. On his signal "YA AALI SIRATUL HUSAYN" Sulayman and his troops joined in and the battle raged on till dusk. Khalid pursued Umar bin Ziyad. Umar was so terrified that he could not draw his sword from the scabbard. Khalid deftly smote his breast. As Umar fell from his horse, Khalid rejoiced "YA AALI SIRATUL HUSAYN." Thus Sulayman's army scored another victory. The booty was distributed and it was decided to return to Kufa and put the booty in safe custody and then prepare for the next battle.

Umar bin Saad sent a letter to Abdullah bin Ziyad describing the ravages rendered by Sulayman bin Surd.

Abdullah feared that the Basarities may also rise in rebellion like the Kufis so he devised a clever plan. He hired the services of a mercenary caravan leader Umar bin Haris to load his treasure on the camels and take him by a secret route to Damascus for a big sum of money. On the way they were intercepted by Sulayman's troops who had received information that Abdullah had fled under the escort of Umar bin Haris. Sulayman's troops could not capture Abdullah bin Ziyad because the cunning caravan leader had tied Abdullah bin Ziyad to the belly of the water carrier camel. Thus Abdullah got temporary respite and managed to reach Syria.

When Abdullah reached Damascus, he found that Muawiyah, the son of Yazid was murdered through an intrigue and the Syrians were inclined to pay homage to Abdullah bin Umar - the son of the second Caliph Umar and brother-in-law of Mukhtar and appoint him Caliph. Sensing the dire consequences, Abdullah bin Ziyad rushed to Abdul Malik bin Marwan bin Hakam and reprimanded "O Chief! What ails thee? Don't you know that the population of Syria is bent on appointing Abdallah bin Umar as the Caliph. If this happens all royal authority will slip through our fingers. So gird up your loins and grab the Caliphate." Marwan was hesitant: "Brother! I don't think so I can handle this situation."

Abdullah bin Ziyad encouraged "Don't loose heart! I shall guide you. Call the men of rank to your place and lavish gifts on them and win their support."

Then Abdullah confided that he had brought a hundred camels loaded with wealth which Marwan could use as his discretion but in return Abdullah bin Ziyad wanted the post of Commander-in-Chief after Marwan became the Caliph, so he could invade Iraq and kill Sulayman bin Surd and conquer the territories of Khorasan and Transoxia.

Marwan bin Hakam at once summoned the local chiefs and peers, gave them gifts and sought oath of allegiance from them. Soon he managed to get himself appointed the Caliph. As soon as he assumed power he made Abdullah bin Ziyad his Commander-in-Chief and giving him forty thousand troops ordered him to invade the 'Fertile Crescent.' He thundered "Murder anyone who dares to utter the name of Ali or wants to avenge the blood of Husayn."

Abdullah bin Ziyad was elated and he soon started with his mighty army to invade Iraq. Chief Sulayman bin Surd received information of the mobilization and sprang into action. Immediately all tribal chiefs were informed and they started arriving with their soldiers and volunteers. Musayyab bin Nukhab, Abdullah bin Va-il, Shaddad bin Akram etc. All the revered companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.) came and the plain became a conglomeration of clans, united in their fervour to avenge the blood of the martyred leader.

Within a short time Sulayman and his army reached Mosul and the army chiefs decided that they should concentrate on killing Ibn Ziyad as according to the prophecy of Imam

Ali (a.s.) the accursed Shimr, Sinan, and Umar bin Saad were destined to be killed by Mukhtar bin Abu Ubayda.

Ibn Ziyad first sent a contingent of ten thousand soldiers under the command of Rafia bin Shis, a mighty Syrian warrior, to attack Sulayman's army and bring the head of Sulayman to him.

The two opponents confronted each other on the battlefield and Sulayman's army inflicted a swift and severe defeat on the Syrians. About four thousand enemies were put to the sword. Rafia bin Shis himself was invincible, he kept advancing towards Sulayman. Khalid, the son of Sulayman saw his father in danger and sprang to his defense. With a mighty thrust of his javelin he pierced the right thigh of Shis. Rafia bin Shis fell from his horse and Sulayman's army cried in jubilation "YA ALI SIRATUL HUSAYN." The death of their leader shattered the morale of the troops and they took to their heels. Sulayman scored another victory, collected the booty and returned to the camp.

About six thousand half dead soldiers reached Ibn Ziynd in a pitiable condition. Abdullah was besides himself with rage and at once started with six thousand soldiers and reserve force to teach Sulayman a lesson.

Soon the two mighty generals were poised against each other as seasoned strategists. Each knew the game well with its tactics, capabilities and limitations. Sulayman positioned his troops. Musayyab was given charge of the left flank,

Khalid was given charge of the right flank and the central position Sulayman kept for himself.

The first man to gallop to the battlefield was the commander in chief Abdullah bin Ziyad himself. He shouted "O Sulayman! You killed five of my sons. I am still alive to take revenge." Sulayman replied "O accursed! You didn't fear Allah when you murdered the beloved grandson of the Holy Prophet. What wrong have I done by killing a few of the bastards among you?" Saying this Sulayman spurred his horse for attack but bin Ziyad fled back to his army which encircled him in safety.

Then the old chief summoned a contender for a duel. Halim bin Moari who had slithered the arm of Hazrat Abbas in Karbala accepted the challenge.

Sulayman recognised him and with a nimble hawk like movement struck him down. Next, Itab bin Qais a nephew of Abu Jehl advanced to confront the mighty Sulayman. He was also deftly dealt with and fell from his steed.

After that came Umar bin Marwan who was a poet. He had written four thousand couplets vilifying Imam Ali, Sayyida Fatima and four thousand couplets praising Yazid and Muawiyah. He used to boast: "I don't offer prayers because it contains the name of Muhammad." Sulayman recognised him and with a mighty stroke of his sabre he killed the accursed rogue. One by one the gallant old chief Sulayman killed seventy infidels of Ibn Ziyad.

Sulayman now decided to launch a unified attack and a bloody confrontation ensued. Then he saw dust flying and when it settled Shimr and Sinan's troops were seen approaching to re-inforce Abdullah bin Ziyad. The battle raged on. The earth was drenched with blood and both sides sustained great loss of lives. That night Sulayman bin Surd, the valiant warrior and true adherent of the Ahl ul Bayt had a strange dream. He saw a magnificent villa of rubies, pearls and precious stones and an ethereal voice offering salutation to him and commending his valour and bravery.

The next morning the battle resumed and the Syrian army had the upper hand. Chief Sulayman strengthened by the premonition of martyrdom fought with renewed vigour and zeal and killed numerous contenders in personal combat. His fury aggravated Ibn Ziyad and he ordered three thousand men to attack the lone contender. Khalid the faithful son of Sulayman sprang to his father's defence followed by Musayyab and his two thousand soldiers. Within a short time over a thousand Syrians were sent to hell. In this sanguine encounter, Sulayman was wounded. An arrow hit his forehead, and he fell to the ground and his soul departed to Paradise. Musayyab then took the standard and launched a fierce attack piling up corpses as he charged ahead. Soon he too was swarmed by enemies and martyred. Abdullah bin Va-il now took charge and continued to fight gallantly. He offered stubborn resistance but soon succumbed to the enemies. These three noble knights, devoted companions of the Holy Prophet, fought courageously till their last breathe and won eternal glory

and fame. They were buried with full honour in the same battlefield while Khalid and a few other chiefs who were wounded acknowledged their tragic defeat.

MUKHTAR IN HIJAZ

The sad news of the martyrdom of Sulayman, Musayyab bin Nukhab and Abdullah bin Va-il, the three revered chieftains reached Mukhtar in Ta-if. He was grief stricken and mourned their tragic loss for seven days and then proceeded to Makka. At that time the political situation in Makka was every unstable. Abdullah bin Zubayr, the grandson of Hazrat Abu Bakr had proclaimed himself the caliph but had not succeeded in consolidating his royal authority. Naseem bin Nameer, a Yazidite commander was on his way to attack Makka, so when Abdullah bin Zubayr heard of Mukhtar's arrival he immediately summoned the master strategist and asked his help to ward off the invading Yazidite army. Mukhtar agreed to help caliph Abdullah bin Zubayr on three conditions. First he wanted free access to the royal court, second, he wanted the governorship of Kufa, if Iraq was conquered and third he wanted the Ahl ul Bayt to be treated with due respect and kindness. The opportunist Abdullah bin Zubayr eagerly accepted every condition of Amir Mukhtar.

VIOLATION OF PROMISE BY ABDULLAH BIN ZUBAYR

Amir Mukhtar who was renowned for his strategic

grandeur and tactical acumen gallantly fought the invading troops on behalf of Abdullah bin Zubayr and scored a resounding victory which virtually established Abdullah bin Zubayr's authority over Hijaz, Yemen and Iraq.

Thereafter Abdullah bin Zubayr appointed his own brother Jafar bin Zubayr as governor of Madina but did not fulfill one single pledge of Mukhtar. On the contrary he instructed his door keepers not to allow Amir Mukhtar to enter the court premises.

Mukhtar was very disappointed at this betrayal as he considered breach of trust a despicable trait in a political leader. He decided to approach his friend Abdullah bin Muti (the governor of Ta-if) who wielded much influence with the caliph. When Mukhtar told him about Abdullah bin Zubayr's breach of promise, Muti laughingly informed him that the caliph would have kept his word except for the third condition imposed by Mukhtar - related to the good behaviour towards the Ahl ul Bayt - must have aggravated the caliph who was a sworn enemy of the Abids.

Abdullah bin Muti went to the court and pleaded Mukhtar's case but to no avail. He then informed Mukhtar about his failure and advised him to leave Makka.

Mukhtar then secretly visited Muhammad-e-Hanafia and in his presence humbly requested: "O Master! Muawiyah bin Abu Sufian pretexted to avenge the blood of caliph

Uthman and he gathered an army and waged wars, even though his cause was not valid. It is my humble entreaty that you permit me to claim the blood of your brother.”

Muhammad-e-Hanafia replied: “I won’t give permission until and unless Allah appoints a man to carry out this mission.”

Mukhtar’s countenance paled. He bent his head upon his knees as the grand master went inside a private chamber. He came out after one full hour. He had a letter written by Imam Ali (a.s.) in his hands. He read the letter and with a smile said: “Right were the words of Imam Ali bin Abu Talib.” Then turning to Mukhtar said: “Take this inscription and the permission is granted on behalf of the divine leader of the age, Imam Zayn al Abidin (a.s.). Begin your mission with the name of Allah, the Holy Prophet (s.a.) and the holy Ahl ul Bayt. Allah will fulfill your desire.”

The elated Mukhtar took the letter, bode farewell and departed for Kufa.

CONFERENCE OF ENEMIES OF MUKHTAR

The news that Mukhtar had got permission from Muhammad-e-Hanafia to lead a rebellion and avenge the blood of Imam Husayn (a.s.) spread like wildfire and proved unnerving to those who had taken part in the battles against the martyred leader. These accursed rogues Umar bin Saad, Shimr, Hakim bin Tufayl, Shish Rabee etc. led a delegation to

Abdullah bin Ziyad who was appointed as governor of Kufa by caliph Abdullah bin Zubayr and convinced him to arrest Mukhtar. Muhammad bin Talha, the master rogue warned: "O Chief! Don't take Mukhtar lightly. He will destroy all of us, unless we take some swift action right away." Thus the governor issued orders for the arrest of Amir Mukhtar who was arrested and thrown in jail.

This was Mukhtar's second jail term. It was not as severe as the former. Visitors were allowed to see him.

Although chained in fetters Mukhtar's total commitment to his mission kindled his spirit and sustained his courage. He envisaged his future mission and harassed his energy in planning his future course of action.

During this period of imprisonment, Mukhtar's house was raided and plundered. Women and children fled to save their lives and the slaves ran away in freedom.

Mukhtar bore this calamity with courage and consoled himself thus: "My wife and children are not more meritorious than the wives and children of the Holy Imam."

Soon Mukhtar managed to win his release from prison through the good offices of his brother-in-law, Abdullah bin Umar.

As soon as he was free he called a meeting of the Mumins to plan the future strategy.

The group of Mumins were of the opinion that as long as Abdullah bin Ziyad was the governor of Kufa, it would be very difficult to raise a rebellion, so they decided to send an application to caliph Abdullah bin Zubayr to transfer the governor of Kufa. Caliph Abdullah on the advice of his counsellors decided to replace Abdullah bin Ziyad by Abdullah bin Muti who happened to be a friend of Mukhtar and had been governor of Ta-if during Mukhtar's stay in Ta-if. So Abdullah bin Muti became the governor of Kufa.

Amir Mukhtar knew fully well that the success of his mission depended on the correct strategy and carefully planning. Any premature or hasty move could abort the mission even before it started. Amir Mukhtar and his sincere companions, the chiefs of Kufa came to the conclusion that if the gallant chief and renowned warrior Ibrahim bin Malik-e-Asthar would join the resistance he would be a great asset, so they decided to send Zayd Asadi to Ibrahim bin Malik Ashtar who was a pious and wise man with a heart full of devotion towards the Ahl ul Bayt.

When the chieftain heard that Mukhtar had secured permission from Muhammad-e-Hanafia, he expressed his enthusiasm and full support and promised to come and take oath of fealty to Amir Mukhtar. The next day when Ibrahim came, Mukhtar ran to receive him bare footed and greeted him warmly. Ibrahim took the oath and said: "Allah willing, I will force Syria and Iraq to submission." Eighteen thousand men paid homage to Mukhtar after Ibrahim's selfless move. Mukhtar's collaboration with Ibrahim played

a very important role in the success of his mission. Now the chiefs started preparation for their military maneuvers.

Mukhtar and Ibrahim planned to assemble all the troops of the loyal chiefs and launch a unified attack. Due to political intrigue, these plans were conveyed to Abdullah bin Muti the governor of Kufa, who immediately decided to curb the revolt by blockading the streets and sending small bands of soldiers to roam the streets and prevent the chiefs from reaching Mukhtar. Initially this move foiled the original plan but the innovative and courageous Ibrahim bin Malik Ashtar managed to break the blockade and informed the faithful chiefs about the slight change in plans.

On the way Ibrahim encountered the accursed Anas bin Magharib, the agent of Abdullah bin Muti who was ordered to kill the mischief makers. In a duel Ibrahim killed the rogue and cut his head amidst shouts “YA MUHAMMAD YA ALI.”

When Abdullah bin Muti received news about the murder of Anas, he summoned Rashid, the son of Anas and said: “Ibrahim bin Malik Ashtar has killed your father. Now I appoint you to your father’s post. Go and avenge the blood of your father and bring me the head of Ibrahim.” He also sent Shish bin Rabee with two thousand soldiers to co-ordinate with Rashid and launch a two pronged attack on Mukhtar’s army.

A spy informed Mukhtar about the move of the governor so

Mukhtar dispatched Ibrahim to confront Rashid and Zayd bin Rabia against Shish. Zayd defeated the army of Shish, killing, wounding and driving them away. While Ibrahim himself confronted Rashid and cried: “O accursed! I shall send you to your father, soon.” With this he slashed his sabre with such might that Rashid was cut into two. Seeing this, his men fled in fear and Ibrahim returned to Mukhtar, victorious.

When the defeated soldiers returned to Abdullah bin Muti he became desperate and made a wrong decision which brought about his own defeat. He called of all the soldiers who had blockaded the roads for re-inforcement of his troops. As the blockades were lifted, all the adherents of Mukhtar swarmed the streets shouting “YA AALI SIRATUL HUSAYN.” Mukhtar and Ibrahim addressed these fifteen thousand volunteers saying: “O brothers! O friends of Ahl ul Bayt! Trust in Allah, He is specially merciful to us. Be prepared to fight and attain martyrdom.”

The faithfuls launched such a valiant attack that the government troops were trounced and Mukhtar’s army laid siege to the palace. Abdullah bin Muti was besieged in the palace. In sheer desperation, he wrote a letter to Mukhtar begging and beseeching him like a slave: “O Chief Mukhtar! Have mercy on your slave and one time friend. I am an old man and I have not taken part against Imam Husayn. Have mercy on me and forgive me.” He put the entreaty in his turban and threw it out of the palace window. Mukhtar read the entreaty. It appealed to his just disposition and generous

heart. After consulting Ibrahim, Mukhtar decided to grant amnesty to Abdullah bin Muti. As Muti was departing Mukhtar said: “O Abdullah you have saved my life once but I have done more benevolence to you. Don’t forget my goodness to you. I know fully well that after getting your freedom you will bring an army to invade me. Imam Ali has told me about it.”

Abdullah bin Muti swore in the name of Allah and the Holy Prophet that he would never rise against Mukhtar. Mukhtar had now repaid debt he owed Muti.

MUKHTAR’S RULE IN KUFA

After defeating the army of Abdullah bin Muti, Mukhtar assumed control over Kufa. He became the ruler of Kufa. He acquired a sizeable quantity of arms, goods and wealth as booty. He appointed Ibrahim bin Malik Asthar as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, Abdullah bin Kamil as vicegerent, Abu Umar was appointed chief courtier and Ahmer bin Shormit the military adviser.

Mukhtar then embarked on the task of streamlining the administration, much to the joy of the people of Kufa who were truly impressed by his sagacity and judicious temperament. He rooted out corruption, favouritism, and other social evils and put the city administration on a sound keel.

An old erudite of Kufa announced in court one day: “May

Allah bless you O chief Mukhtar! I have witnessed with my own eyes the day when you were standing in chains and fetters before Ibn Ziyad who was sitting on the throne with the heads of the martyrs lying before him. Today I rejoice and thank Allah when I see you seated on the throne.”

One day as Mukhtar was sitting on the portico of the palace he was informed about the flagrant violation of promise by Abdullah bin Muti. This immoral coward, after swearing on the Holy Quran, that he would never rise against Mukhtar, had immediately gone to Basra and convinced Masab bin Zubayr, the younger brother of Abdullah bin Zubayr the caliph, to invade Kufa. Now their combined troops were leading towards Kufa. One section was advancing via the land route and the other was coming by the river route.

After due consultation it was decided that Mukhtar would stay and control Kufa while Ibrahim bin Malik Ashtar would advance to confront the enemies.

Soon the mobilization of the troops commenced, the kettle drums began to beat and Ibrahim bin Malik Ashtar advanced to confront the arch enemy Abdullah bin Muti. The opponents positioned their troops and Ibrahim's soldiers thundered: “YA AALI SIRATUL HUSAYN” and pounced upon the foes. Ibrahim thrust himself in the midst of the enemy and fought so bravely that his soldiers were greatly inspired and followed his heroic example. In no time the battle ground was littered with corpses and Abdullah bin Muti beat a hasty retreat. He sent a desperate

message to Masab: “O chief come to my rescue. Ibrahim has devastated us.” Abdullah bin Muti then took refuge in a deserted village and waited for Masab and his troops. On his arrival they re-organised their troops and advanced. Ibrahim bin Malik Ashtar was eagerly awaiting the enemy troops.

The next morning the armies took up strategic positions and the battle commenced.

Ibrahim swinging his sword relentlessly, sped towards the centre of the arena and threw a challenge. Masab prompted Abdullah bin Muti: “You are the most worthy man to accept the challenge of Ibrahim.” Abdullah boasted: “Well today I shall cheer your heart by killing Ibrahim and bringing his head to you.” With these words he advanced. Ibrahim recognised him and taunted: “O loathsome traitor! Mukhtar behaved nobly with you but you returned good with evil.” With a dexterous stroke he cut Abdullah from head to navel. Then Ibrahim’s army launched a massive attack. His valiant soldiers fell like hungry tigers on Masab’s army. By sunset Ibrahim’s army won the field. Masab was routed and fled to Basra with his few demoralised soldiers. The victorious army, then collected the booty and returned to Kufa. Part of the massive booty was sent to Imam Zayn al Abidin and saint Muhammad-e-Hanafia by Amir Mukhtar.

MASSIVE CONFRONTATION OF THE SYRIANS

Masab bin Zubayr reached Basra and wrote a letter to his

elder brother caliph Abdullah bin Zubayr informing him that Abdullah bin Muti had been killed and that Mukhtar had stripped him of all honour. He was hell bent on revenge and would not rest till he avenged his defeat and killed Amir Mukhtar.

At that time caliph Abdullah bin Zubayr was engaged in strife with the Yemenites and the people of Ta-if, so he could not help Masab.

Masab was chagrined by the attitude of his brother and decided to seek assistance elsewhere. He approached Abdul Malik bin Marwan, the ruler of Syria and informed him: "A Khariji named Mukhtar led a rebellion with the help of Abids and defeated me. Send me help and I will recognise you as caliph over Kufa and other areas of Iraq."

Abdul Malik appointed his nephew Amr bin Rabee who was a deadly enemy of the Abids and promised him governorship of Kufa in return for the heads of the rebels Mukhtar and Ibrahim.

As Amr bin Rabee reached the outskirts of Kufa, he planned in collaboration with some fourteen Azadis who were in the army of Mukhtar to strike from within and capture Mukhtar.

As fate would have it, the informer who was carrying the final instructions to the Azadi traitors was intercepted by Mukhtar himself. With his wisdom and keen insight

Mukhtar came to the conclusion that the stranger was a spy. He cross-examined him. During the course of the interrogation the informer was greatly impressed by Mukhtar's outspoken candour, judicious temperament and generosity. He realized that Mukhtar's army consisted of true Muslims who believed in the divine rewards of the hereafter, whereas the Syrians were hypocrites and lewd lustful, concerned only about the worldly gains. He saw the light of truth and broke down and confessed everything. He handed over to Mukhtar the letters addressed to the Azadis.

Mukhtar consulted Ibrahim and both of them reached the camp where the Azadis were sitting. As the apparent behaviour of the Azadis did not imply any disloyalty, Mukhtar devised a plan to expose their treason. He stood amongst them and disarmed himself, then ordered Ibrahim bin Malik Ashtar to follow suit. Thereafter Mukhtar ordered his soldiers to disarm themselves. All complied except the fourteen Azadis. Mukhtar was now sure of their betrayal. Upon his signal his loyal soldiers fell upon the disobedient Azadi traitors and killed them. Ibrahim went up to the dying traitor and inquired: "Why did you want to kill Mukhtar?" He replied: "All of us are the enemies of Ali and his children and were determined to kill Mukhtar but his luck overshadowed us and he overtook us." Strange are the ways of providence.

The Azadi convert was recompensed with wealth and gifts. He declined to accept anything and requested the wealth to be sent to the children of Imam Husayn.

Then the Azadi volunteered to lead Mukhtar to Syrian camp to capture the chief of the Syrian army, Amr bin Rabee. Since Mukhtar was known to nearly all Iraqis and Syrians he declined. Instead in the darkness of the night Ibrahim got up, donned the attire of the Azadis and along with the Azadi convert set off for the Syrian camp.

The guards apprehended them and informed Amr: “O chief! The messenger you sent to Kufa has returned with a stranger whom he claims is his nephew.” Amr summoned the two inside. As soon as his eyes fell on Ibrahim he recognised him and barked: “O son of Ashtar! Now you are in my clutches. This Azadi has brought you to your doom.” Even under these adverse circumstances Ibrahim’s courage did not waver. He retorted: “Yes, I have come to kill you. Allah willing I shall succeed.” Amr bellowed: “I shall get you executed right now.” Amr summoned the executioner and ordered him to kill both of them at once. Just then an officer of Amr’s army rushed forward and advised Amr thus, “O Chief! Ibrahim is well known in Iraq and Syria as a mighty and invincible warrior. Don’t kill him now, postpone the execution. Exhibit him before the army tomorrow and then execute him.” Amr bin Rabee liked this suggestion, so he put the two prisoners under heavy security and retired for the night.

The Azadi convert started waiting and cursing himself, but Ibrahim had implicit faith in the Almighty he consoled his companion and kept reciting Surah Dahr, “The power of the recitation of the Holy Quran has awakened many a

slumbering soul and brought them from the path of ignorance to the path of truth.” Ibrahim’s recitation had a miraculous effect on one guard and brought about a change of heart. He came near the two and whispered “O Chief! Formerly I considered you my greatest enemy but now I realize that this world is a transient one and I am answerable to Allah for my deeds. I fear Allah and therefore I shall free you from the chains.” Thus Ibrahim and the Azadi won freedom and ran for their lives putting as much distance as they could between themselves and the camp. At sunrise they saw a huge tree and took shelter in its sprawling branches. Soon they saw riders of Amr bin Rabee searching for them. Then a lone rider came near howbings “Alas! A big general of the Abids escaped from my clutches.” Ibrahim at once recognised Amr bin Rabee, pounced upon him, killed him, cut off his head, then hastily both fugitives mounted the steed and raced away to the safety of their own camp.

When Mukhtar’s soldiers saw Ibrahim and the Azadi return with the head of Amr bin Rabee they cheered them with cries of “YA AALI SIRATUL HUSAYN” and thanked Allah for their victory over a bitter enemy.

Then the army was ordered to march ahead and within a short time, thirty thousand gallants took up strategic positions against the Syrians.

Mukhtar’s troops were dauntless, they were confident that their cause was worthy of the greatest sacrifice while the

Syrians were incited by a desire to avenge the murder of their chief Amr bin Rabee.

The parched blood thirsty plains of Iraq got drenched in blood. Thirty thousand Syrians were killed in this encounter and many more died due to thirst and hunger. Only ten thousand soldiers reached Syria alive. It was a jubilliant victory for Mukhtar and his valiant troops.

MUKHTAR'S GROWING POWER

Day by day Mukhtar's power grew with his victories but Mukhtar did not inspire for worldly gains. His only ambition was to destroy the scoundrels who had fought against Imam Husayn (a.s.). As his power spread over Mosul and adjoining areas and Abdullah bin Ziyad got the news that Mosul was being governed by a deputy of Mukhtar, he was aggravated. He sent contingents under the command of famous warriors but they met defeat at the hands of Mukhtar; so finally he started for Mosul with a hundred thousand warriors.

It was then decided that Ibrahim bin Malik Ashtar should go with ten thousand men and the other thousand soldiers should be left behind to control the city. Ibrahim expressed concern over the small number of soldieirs kept for law enforcement but there was no other alternative.

With hope in Allah and total dedication to their worthy cause, Mukhtar's army under the command of Ibrahim

reached Tikrit where the fort dwellers of Tikrit welcomed them. After bringing provisions and other necessities the army marched ahead towards Mosul. After a day they reached a place called “Vail Allam” and set up camp. Ibrahim offered prayer and as he finished, a frail, old woman was brought to his tent. She informed Ibrahim that she had a message for him.

The old woman began: “My husband was a wood cutter and it was our sole means of subsistence. One day it rained so heavily that he could not go to work and we remained hungry. It kept on raining and the sand in our backyard was washed away exposing a strange slab of stone. Motivated by curiosity, we moved the stone and to our astonishment, found a cellar full of gold coins and jewelry. We began to use the gold coins according to our meagre necessities. Soon after, my husband died. Since I was childless, I began to worry about what would happen to all this wealth after my death. One day I saw a radiant vision in my dream who said: ‘O dear lady! This wealth belongs to Imam Husayn and his army will soon arrive to avenge the blood of the martyred Imam.’ Last night I was instructed in my dream: ‘Go and inform Ibrahim about the treasure which is prohibited to others.’ On confirming your identity I have come to you.”

Ibrahim was very happy at the significance of the dream. Along with some chiefs he went and took possession of the treasure. He distributed part of it to his men, gave a fair amount to the old lady and loaded the rest on forty camels

and sent them to Mukhtar in Kufa with details he had heard from the old lady.

THE LOYALTY OF THE GOVERNOR OF NASIBEN TO IBRAHIM

Ibrahim marched ahead and reached a place called Nasiben which was governed by an independent chief named Hanzala bin Ammara Salabi. He wrote a letter to Hanzala stating his mission to avenge the blood of Imam Husayn and asking permission to pass through his city, to confront the accursed oppressor Abdullah bin Ziyad.

At the same time, Abdullah bin Ziyad also sent a letter to Hanzala, the purport of which was “You must give me access through your city as I am going to fight Ibrahim bin Malik Ashtar. In case of non compliance I shall burn your city and turn it to dust.”

The irony of fate was that both messengers reached the gates of the city at the same time. Hanzala received the messenger of Ibrahim with honour and respect and smote his chest in grief exclaiming: “YA HUSAYNA YA SAYYIDA” while he tore up the letter sent by Abdullah bin Ziyad.

When news of the defence pact between Ibrahim and Hanzala reached Ibn Ziyad he was greatly perturbed and retreated about fifteen miles.

After a couple of days accompanied by Hanzala’s troops

Ibrahim reached the Marwari fort which was under the patronage of Hanzala. Here Ibrahim was elated to learn that Ibn Ziyad had visited this fort before their arrival and had deposited his wealth and household under the care of the chief of Marwari. Ibrahim at once sprang into action. He summoned the household which consisted of one son, three daughters, and one hundred and twenty household members and servants. They were soon put to sword and the wealth confiscated.

Later Ibrahim received news that Ibn Ziyad planned to cross the river in boats. Being a master strategist, Ibrahim decided to launch a surprise attack from all sides as soon as the troops crossed the river.

According to this brilliant plan a massive attack was launched which totally shattered the morale of the Ziyadite army. They began to flee but death confronted them on both sides. On one side, was the river and on the other side, the flashing swords of Ibrahim's troops. Thousands died fighting and hundreds drowned but the bastard Ibn Ziyad abandoned his army and fled to safety.

Ibrahim won ultimate victory. The vast booty was lavishly distributed among his soldiers, Hanzala's troops and the chief of Marwari.

Mukhtar was overjoyed when he received news of the glorious victory. He wrote to his victorious commander congratulating him on his success and requesting him to return to Kufa as trouble had erupted there.

PLOT TO OVERTHROW MUKHTAR

On his arrival in Kufa, Mukhtar enlightened Ibrahim about the critical political situation prevailing in the city.

The mischief mongers of Kufa were brewing trouble and Abdullah Ibn Ziyad was amassing troops to avenge his humiliating defeat. It was unanimously decided that the prominent people of Kufa should be taken into confidence. A reconciliatory move must be made and their assistance sought.

Hence the chiefs were summoned and Mukhtar addressed them: “O Chiefs of the city! I am sending Ibrahim bin Malik Ashtar to confront Abdullah bin Ziyad. Since I need some reserve for the protection of Kufa, I request you to give me your servants along with arms to form my reserve force till Ibrahim returns. After that your man will be returned to you.”

Umar bin Saad gave thirty slaves and twenty armed servants, similar contributions were made by others like Sinan bin Anas etc and a reserve force of five hundred armed men was mustered.

Ibrahim then mobilized his troops and left Kufa. As Ibrahim had predicted, as soon as he left Kufa, the enemies began to plot against Mukhtar. Shish bin Rabee, Muhammad bin Ashath, Umar bin Saad, the gang of murderers got together and sent Shish with the following message: “O Mukhtar!

Nobody appointed you governor of Kufa, yet you are ruling over the city. We acknowledge Abdullah bin Zubayr as our chief and offer allegiance to him. It is hence desirable that you abandon your claim over the city, otherwise we will revolt and murder you.”

Mukhtar replied, “What harm has been inflicted on you from me? Nobody except Imam Ali (a.s.) has ruled in a just manner like myself.” Shish lamented: “It is improper to offer congregation prayers behind you because you are an insurgent. Now return our slaves to us.” Mukhtar maintained: “I don’t need your slaves. I shall surely return them to you, once Ibrahim returns, as per our contract.” Shish returned and conveyed the message to the other plotters.

In the meantime, Mukhtar realized the threat of imminent danger, so he sent an urgent message to Ibrahim to return immediately. No sooner had the courier left Kufa, the enemies surrounded Mukhtar’s palace. Mukhtar summoned the reserve force and said: “You may return to your masters or stay with me, as you seem fit.” The servants had been so fascinated by the force of his personality, his wisdom, his eloquence and his patience, during the short spell under him, that they refused to leave him alone, under such critical circumstances. Mukhtar thanked them for their unflinching fidelity.

Soon Muhammad bin Ashath and other rioters broke down the palace gates. The servants suggested that they

take refuge in a hall till help arrived but Mukhtar being the brave, dauntless warrior with complete faith in Allah and in his cause retorted “We say Allah is sufficient for us; an excellent guardian is He! By Allah! Lets take up arms and fight.”

A bloody confrontation took place in which numerous rioters were slain. Muhammad bin Ashath, then called the road blockers for re-inforcement but this gave access to Mukhtar’s adherent, who also rushed to the scene to help their besieged chief. The battle continued from dawn to dusk resulting in casualties on both sides.

In the meantime as soon as Ibrahim got Mukhtar’s message he immediately ordered his army to march towards Kufa. He kept the pace of the march so swift that the three day journey was covered within less than a day. On the outskirts of Kufa, he encountered a band of road blockers, under Yazid bin Haris Shebani, who informed Ibrahim that the population of Kufa had revolted against Mukhtar and suggested that it would be better for Ibrahim to go elsewhere. The loyal Ibrahim thundered: “O bastard! Never in life were you our friend.” and with a flash of his saber he killed Yazid bin Haris. Hundreds of road blockers were also killed, after which Ibrahim advanced towards Mukhtar’s palace where Mukhtar was heroically holding the fort. Mukhtar was informed of the arrival of Ibrahim and in a feat of abandon he cheered: “YA AALI SIRATUL HUSAYN.” Loud cheers resounded among Mukhtar’s soldiers, as they saw the head of Yazid bin Haris. Soon the

revolt was crushed. Thereafter a standard was fixed at Dar al Imara and decree was raised, granting amnesty to those who came under the standard.

Mukhtar then issued order to Abdullah bin Kamil to seal the exits, so none could leave Kufa. He entrusted Abdullah and Abu Umrah to capture the killers of Karbala as soon as possible. Through the co-operation of the public, the man-hunt was a great success and many scoundrels were hunted down and produced before Mukhtar.

First, Abdullah bin Asad and Malik bin Bashir were captured and brought before Mukhtar. When they boastfully acknowledged their vicious deeds in Karbala, they were put to death.

When Nafea bin Halal was caught, Mukhtar was elated and shouted, "Allahu Akbar! My fervent wish is now fulfilled. This rascal had imposed water embargo on Imam Husayn." He was executed and sent to hell. Many more rogues namely Haris bin Bashir, Qasim bin Jadu, Hans bin Naufil etc were captured and executed after they confessed to their misdeeds.

Then it was Kholi Asbahi's turn. Abdullah bin Kamil stalked this rogue like a blood hound. Through the co-operation of Kholi's Iraqi wife, who was an adherent of the Ahl ul Bayt, he was finally arrested and produced before Mukhtar. When interrogated, this rascal confessed that when he had brought the head of the martyred Imam

and put it in a pit in the compound, he had taunted his wife thus, “This head belongs to the man whom you consider your divine leader. Allah has made Yazid victorious over the son of Ali.” At that time the pious wife of Kholi had cursed him, “May Allah degrade you and may some king pull out your tongue and sever your limbs.” Mukhtar prescribed his execution accordingly.

The man-hunt continued unabated. One day, Murrah bin Munqiz, the killer of Ali Akbar was captured; the next day, Riad bin Raqada, the villain who had shot an arrow through the eye of the beloved brother of Imam Husayn, that is Hazrat Abbas was captured. Both were executed and their corpses burnt.

One day, Abdullah confided that Hakam bin Tufayl, the murderer of Hazrat Abbas was the son in law of the influential chief, Adi bin Hatim Adi, who had fought besides Imam Ali. Nevertheless Mukhtar ordered Abdullah to arrest the rogue. When he was arrested, Adi got the news and approached Abdullah saying: “O Mukhtar’s deputy! Leave this man alone.” Abdullah refused and Adi rushed to the court to complain to Mukhtar. Abdullah realized that Hakam could earn freedom, through the influence of Adi, hence he drew out his sabre and killed Hakam bin Tufayl there and then. Adi bin Hatim reached the court and pleaded for amnesty for his son-in-law, but to no avail. The death of Hakam bin Tufayl had a terrifying effect on the public because even the influence of the veteran chief Adi had been fruitless in his case. Hardy criminals like Shimr,

Sinan bin Anas, Ishaq bin Ashath were now petrified. They held a secret meeting and decided to flee from Kufa to Basra, by a secret route. They hired two guides and under cover of darkness left Kufa. Mukhtar received news about their secret departure and sent Abdullah bin Kamil and Abu Umrah in hot pursuit. At a place called Kulaina they spotted the camp where the fugitives were resting, fell upon them and swiftly killed Shimr and some others and captured Sinan bin Anas and Haris bin Murrah. News of the death of Shimr reached Kufa and the people thronged the streets to curse and spit on the the corpse. The next day Sinan was produced before Mukhtar. As he was being interrogated, a crowd gathered outside the palace and demanded to deal with the murderer Sinan. Mukhtar accepted the public demand and Sinan was cut to pieces.

When Haris bin Murrah was questioned he refuted the charge and claimed his innocence. He claimed that he had taken no part and was averse to those who had committed massacre in Karbala and his departure from Kufa, with Shimr was also a precautionary measure because he was a cousin of Shimr and feared for his life because of his kinship. When two persons testified the validity of Haris's statement he was freed by the judicious Mukhtar.

The execution of Shimr and Sinan made Ishaq bin Ashath very nervous. This rogue had trampled the body of the Imam. He thought he could take advantage of his relationship with Abdullah bin Kamil who happened to be his sister's husband. Abdullah knew fully well that these bonds of kinship earned no weight at all. On the

insistence of his brother-in-law he went to Mukhtar and with his head bowed said; “Grant amnesty to Ishaq bin Ashath as you have granted to Umar bin Said.” Mukhtar contemplated in silence then said: “By God! I haven’t granted amnesty to him because he is not only among the murderer of Imam Husayn but their chief. He has just got temporary respite. Today it is your brother-in-law’s turn and tomorrow I will kill a man who is my relative.” Thus Ishaq bin Ashath was killed by Khair, a well loved slave of Mukhtar. The next day he arrested Umar bin Saad, killed him and presented his head to Mukhtar.

MINHAL’S REPORT ABOUT THE SUPPLICATION OF IMAM ZAYN AL ABIDIN

On the report of Minhal bin Umar, it is reported that he had gone to Makka for Hajj and there he had met Imam Zayn al Abidin. The Holy Imam inquired about Mukhtar’s mission and specifically asked about Hurmula. Minhal informed him that Hurmula had still not been captured. On hearing this, the holy Imam raised his hands and implored the Almighty, “O Allah! Make him taste fire.”

On his return from Makka, Minhal went to see Mukhtar. As Mukhtar was going somewhere, he accompanied his friend, chatting as they rode. When they reached Kanasa they saw some men approaching on horse-back, who came nearer and informed Mukhtar that Hurmala had been captured. When Hurmula stood before Mukhtar he was asked: “O Rascal! May Allah curse you! What nefarious

deed did you perform in Karbala?” Hurmula replied: “I shot three arrows with such expertise that my skill in archery was firmly established. With the first arrow I pierced the water bag of Sakina, which Abbas was carrying. With the second arrow, I pierced the tiny neck of Ali Asghar and the infant died writhing in pain in the arms of his father. With the third arrow, I struck the forehead of Imam Husayn as he was sitting on the sand severely wounded.” Mukhtar ordered the executioner to torture him to death and burn his corpse.

Minhal, who had witnessed the entire incident kept exclaiming, “Praise be to Allah. Praise be to Allah.” He then explained to Mukhtar how he had witnessed the fulfillment of the supplication of Imam Zayn al Abidin right before his own eyes here in Kanasa.

Mukhtar at once fell in prostration of thanks and put his forehead to the ground saying: “O Allah! I thank You for this great boon that the prayer of my Imam was fulfilled by You through me.”

The vigorous and relentless campaign continued and many more scoundrels were hunted down from remote hamlets and put to death.

ABDULLAH BIN ZUBAYR'S STERN REPRISAL

Caliph Abdullah bin Zubayr grew uneasy and jealous as

he witnessed the expansion of Mukhtar's influence and authority. Since he doesn't confront Mukhtar openly he devised a web of intrigue to curtail Mukhtar's power through Muhammad-e Hanafia the son of Imam Ali, the sage who was leading a life of a recluse in Makka. Muhammad-e Hanafia rarely left his home and his daily diet consisted of barely loaves and water. He passed his time in prayer and supplication.

Abdullah bin Zubayr sent a man, Qais, to bring Muhammad-e Hanafia to court. The sage was sitting on his prayer mat reciting the Holy Quran. When Qais conveyed Zubayr's message, the Holy saint asked, "What purpose has he with me? I am now a recluse having no concern whatsoever with worldly affairs." Qais insisted, so Muhammad-e Hanafia wore the Quran written by Imam Husayn round his neck, he had the ring of the Holy Prophet on his finger and he picked up the walking stick of the Holy Prophet. Qais requested him to mount a horse but he replied, "From the day of my brother's martyrdom in Karbala, I don't ride a horse."

Being extremely weak, he would walk some distance and then rest for a while. After intermittent walking and rest he finally reached the court of the caliph.

The court was full of chiefs and knights. Abdullah stood up to honour the venerable sage and seated him on his right and said, "I regard you as a pious ascetic and god fearing-man, true to his word. I also accept that I haven't

received any trouble whatsoever from your holy self; but at the same time there is no calamity that I have not received from your friends.”

Muhammad-e Hanafia asked, “What is the meaning of your speech and what occasion of complaint did you get?” Abdullah replied, “I want you to take oath of fealty to me.” Muhammad-e Hanafia argued, “I have never swerved from the covenant I had made with you.” Abdullah persisted “your oath of fealty would be like strengthening ties with me and a proof of non-alignment with my enemies, who keep on visiting you.”

Muhammad-e Hanafia asserted “O son of Zuabyr! Bear in mind, that those who visit me come only to ask solutions pertaining to erudition. I don’t call them to my house to seek fealty from them and it is not indecorum even if I do that, because I am better and more rightful than you. The behaviour of the people towards, my father and brother, in the matters of leadership, is world famous; My father was nearer than anybody else to the prophet in the matter of relationship. He was more perfect than anybody else in the matter of qualities. He had the best knowledge of the Holy Quran. He knew the esoteric and exoteric meanings, the plain and the ambiguous. Though he was the epitome of virtue, valour and knowledge, people misbehaved with him. With regard to my brother, the people of Kufa sent letters requesting him to come to Kufa, as they were leaderless. When Imam Husayn reached Kufa the same people went against him, nay, even murdered him.

Hence the best course for me is to remain in my house and worship Allah.” Abdullah heard the speech and the audience hung their heads in shame but the caliph continued, “Whatever you say is right but haven’t you sent Mukhtar to Kufa where he has murdered my friends; you claim that you have no concern with the affairs of the world, while such events are masterminded by you.”

Muhammad-e Hanafia calmly replied, “The only aim of Mukhtar is to avenge the innocent blood of Imam Husayn and it is regrettable that you consider his actions as sin, whereas the enmity of Muawiyah and the wars waged by him against my father, on the false claim of avenging the blood of caliph Uthman, is an act of merit before you! You know that Mukhtar is very enthusiastic about his mission, even then, I keep no concern with him.”

Abdullah lost his temper and barked, “I shall not leave you till you write and order Mukhtar to abandon his intrigues, renounce the state authority and go into seclusion.” Muhammad-e Hanafia declined “it is not incumbent upon me to write such directives; even if I write to him, I personally think he will still not refrain from the task in which he has engaged himself.”

The behaviour of Abdullah bin Zubayr became very rude and objectionable which led to the intervention by a prominent citizen of Makka, Uthman bin Shabia, who said, “O son of Zubayr! Pay heed; such rude behaviour with a pious Hashemite, is highly undesirable, as these noble people are the pride and honour of Islam.”

Abdullah summered down and said, “I grant you a time period of grace, in which you send a message to Mukhtar to cease his activities. If he agrees you will be freed, otherwise you will be killed.”

Abdullah then imprisoned saint Muhammad-e Hanafia in a tent near the well Zam Zam and delegated forty watchmen to stand guard.

From prison, Muhammad-e Hanafia wrote a letter to Mukhtar stating, “From Muhammad bin Ali bin Abu Talib to Mukhtar bin Abu Ubayda Thaqafi. Be it known that Abdullah bin Zubayr, without any reason, is suspicious of me. He summoned me to his court and ordered me to issue directives to you, to desist from your activities. He has given me three months of grace, after which he has threatened to kill me. At present he has confined me under forty guards who don’t permit me.”

He then sealed the letter and gave it to his faithful servant, Saad, to deliver to Mukhtar. On the way, he had to pass through several check posts, who censored the letter. After an arduous journey, Saad reached Kufa and presented the letter to Chief Mukhtar, who reverently raised it to his eyes, head, kissed it then read it and exclaimed “God forbid it! Indeed it is a calamity. I shall send a big army to his assistance.”

At this juncture, Mukhtar displayed the strategic grandeur and tactical awmen of a supreme general. He called

his senior officers and briefed them, emphasizing the element of secrecy. An elite force, commanded by Hani bin Qais, was ordered to go at once to Makka and get Chief Muhammad-e Hanafia released from prison. Thereafter, small inconspicuous groups were dispatched as re-inforcements. Hani bin Qais reached the tent near the Zam Zam well and asked for the Chief. The guards declined and in the wake of a heated argument, Chief Muhammad-e Hanafia stepped out of his tent. Hani at once dismounted, kissed the robe of the master and humbly said "O Master! I am ordered by Chief Mukhtar to kill all the antagonists and take you from here. What is your advice?" Muhammad-e Hanafia hurriedly replied "God Forbid! Don't kill anybody in the city of God." While this conversation was taking place the news spread through the streets of Makka that an army from Iraq had arrived to free saint Muhammad-e Hanafia. The happy public started assembling. Abdullah also hastened to the scene with his riders, as soon as he received the news. Abdullah approached Muhammad-e Hanafia and reprimanded "So you utilized the grace period to raise a dissent?" Muhammad-e Hanafia refuted the charge saying "God forbid! Am I a mischief monger and trouble maker? People know who are adept at this." Abdullah charged, "Didn't you write to Mukhfir to send an army?" Muhammad-e Hanafia asserted, "I never wrote such a letter. It is incumbent upon you to trust me because I don't have any worldly aspirations. My death is coming nearer each day. Had I wished to establish my domain, I would have done so because I am the last one among all those who are present here."

Abdullah turned livid with rage and threatened, “I wont leave you till you take oath; if you don’t, you will meet the same fate as your brother Imam Husayn.” Hani intervened in anger, “O Son of Zubayr! You can’t touch our Master and he will never take oath of fealty to you.”

Just then, Umar bin Tariq arrived with his army of soldiers, flashing their swords. Umar dismounted and offered salutation to saint Muhammad-e Hanafia. The sage answered the salutation and said, “O brave men! Put your sword in the scabbards.” Immediately all swords were shealed. Close on heel came Umar bin Haris with his army of lancers followed by Zubiyan bin Amr and Tufayl whose gallant soldiers were chanting “YA AALI SIRATUL HUSAYN.” Soon after, the special force of Moharrar bin Qais arrived. These soldiers had donned white uniforms were mounted on white steeds and were led by Moharrar, the renowned Qari, who in his ethereal voice was repeatedly reciting the verse. “And struggle for god as in His due.” (32.78)

The crowd was spell bound and awe stricken at the spectacular display of Mukhtar’s armed might. Abdullah bin Zubayr the veritable desert fox chided and taunted Hani “You cannot frighten me with your display of military might. Your troops are just a herd of lambs before wolves.” Hani retorted, “Stop making tall claims! A man of action never boasts.” Abdullah got enraged and he along with his companions drew their swords, he expected some support from the Makkan public but their hearts were sold to Muhammad-e Hanafia. In a loud battle cry, Hani ordered

his soldiers to take up positions and turning to the Makkan shouted, "O dwellers of the Holy sanctuary! Move back lest you receive injury in the conflict." The Makkans at once stood aloof, shattering the hopes of Abdullah, who gulped down his bitter humiliation.

Muhammad-e Hanafia stepped forward and intervened, "Brothers there would be is bloodshed in the Holy city of God." Mukhtar's soldiers stood motionless and Abdullah sullenly returned to his palace.

Then Zubiyan bin Amr, the commander in Chief approached Muhammad-e Hanafia and after salutation urged, "O Master! Permit me to drive Abdullah bin Zubayr away from Makka and make you Caliph because you are more rightful than he." The grand Master replied, "No O Zubiyan! This world is subject to destruction. Hence it has no value. Now you may retire to your camp as the danger has passed."

ARBITRATION

The next day Abdullah bin Zubayr reprimanded the public for not extending support to him and on remaining neutral. He scolded "why did you take oath of fealty to me when you are not ready to side with me?" The public replied, "We are firm in our oath; we never expected that you would misbehave with the pious, noble Muhammad-e Hanafia. You have now realised, that you would have been destroyed at his command but the noble son of a noble father does

not like bloodshed in Makka and has no aspiration for the Caliphate. Have faith in him.”

To appease the public and defuse the situation the leaders of Makka gathered at the palace of Caliph Abdullah bin Zubayr to make peace between him and sage Muhammad-e Hanafia. On one side side Muhammad-e Hanafia, Zubiyan, Hani bin Qais, Umar bin Tariq etc and on the opposite side sat Abdullah bin Zubayr, his brother Jaffar, Mansoor and Muhammad and other prominent chiefs of Makka. Abdullah bin Abbas the greatest renowned traditionist was appointed as arbitrator.

Before this huge elite gathering the noble Abdullah bin Abbas (who had lost his eyesight) delivered his opening speech in a soft, gentle manner. “Praise be to God who made us something from nothing and appointed the best amongst us as His messenger. He bestowed on that prophet excellence over all previous Prophets. He bestowed special merits on his cousin and made him chief of all the deputies and leader of the pious ones. This man was Ali (a.s.) and he was the successor of the Holy Prophet and a chosen friend of God. One hundred and eighty Quranic verses were revealed on his merit. After him, his sons, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn were the divine leaders. Thereafter, the divine leader of the present day is Ali bin Husayn. These holy patrons were the most excellent in the world in terms of piety and personal merit but the ungrateful community, misbehaved with them in the most despicable manner. May Allah shower His blessings on these divine leaders.”

Abdullah bin Abbas continued “O dwellers of Makka! Our Holy Prophet had signed peace treaty of Hudaibiya with the disbelievers of Makka. You all know fully well that Muhammad-e Hanafia is the son of Imam Ali (a.s.). His parents are better than anybody in terms of merit and excellence. Had he aspired for royal authority, he could have acquired it, but no, everyone knows that this man is not ready for worldly gains.” The Caliph could not suppress his anger and interrupted, “O people of Makka! There will never be peace between this blind, old man and me. This man has turned away from the right path. He is our enemy and tries to grieve us by his sharp tongue. We are the Zubayr family and it is our custom to forgive those who sin against us. This old man fagins friendship to me while he behaves as my enemy. Had he been a true man he wouldn’t have fought on the side of Ali in the battle of Camel or speak such nonsense. I however, overlooked and condemned his misbehaviour, as he is too old and senile.” Abdullah bin Abbas laughed aloud and ordered his servant to lead him towards the caliph. He stood before the caliph and continued, “O son of Zubayr! I am not surprised at your accusations against me. Truth is always bitter and it ignites fire in your mind and heart. Whatever I said in merit of Ali were the words of God, but due to your inherent enmity towards him, you are unable to accept it. I considered Ali as right, hence, I sided with him in the battle of Camel. There are only two alternatives, either the party against whom you fought the party of Ali was faithful or it was infidel. If Ali was a faithful Mumin, why did you fight against him? If you fought him inspite of this knowledge you should make

retribution for the blood of the martyrs you smoted with your hands. You call me blind. Some people are blind with their outward eyes only while several persons like yourself are blind with their hearts and have lost their sense of discrimination.” The truth of the speech of Abdullah bin Abbas put the caliph to utter humiliation and he remained silent. Then Uthman bin Sheba saw the plight of Zubayr and said “O grand old learned man! You are unanimously accepted as the erudite of the community. We all know that Talha and Zubayr committed a mistake by fighting against Ali, but these are things of the past. We are here today to pass a resolution, so that sage Muhammad-e Hanafia may live in peace.”

Thereafter, Abdullah bin Zubayr declared on oath, “I will never interfere in the affairs of Muhammad-e Hanafia; he may live in Makka or Madina as he desires.” He added “God knows, I implored Imam Husayn bin Ali not to leave Makka. Had he heard my advice, I would have sacrificed my life for him. Everyone knows that when I heard of his martyrdom, I narrated his merits from the pulpit. The imposition of guards around Muhammad-e Hanafia also had some reasons. Think the result is good.” A peace agreement was drawn up, signed and attested by both parties and Mukhtar’s army returned to Kufa. Zubiyan narrated the whole episode to Mukhtar and Ibrahim and won praise and accolade from them. This event also played an important role in establishment the effectiveness of Mukhtar’s striking force. Mukhtar now concentrated on planing the elimination of his formidable enemy Abdullah

bin Ziyad, the commander in chief of Abdul Malik bin Marwan who was waiting at Mosul with a force of eighty thousand for an opportunity to strike at Mukhtar.

BREACH OF PROMISE BY ABDULLAH BIN ZUBAYR

Muhammad-e Hanafia began to pass his life in prayer and supplication. Encouraged by the peace agreement people would gather to meet him, especially on Fridays, to ask him problems related to erudition. As the number of people starting increasing, Abdullah bin Zubayr began to feel insecure. He felt that all his efforts to acquire and maintain power would go in vain, if people turned to Muhammad-e Hanafia. Smitten by his inherent jealousy, he decided to eject the saint from Makka.

He sent a messenger to the saint, “you have the prayer mat of the holy prophet send it to me as I wish to pray on it.”

To this unreasonable demand, the sage only smiled and said, “Tell your master that he has made an impossible demand. Do you know that on this mat have prayed Hazrat Jibrael, lady Khadija, lady Fatima, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn. The great martyr gave it to Imam Zayn al Abidin, who gave it to me, to convey it to Imam Mahdi Saheb-e-Zaman. It is not possible to transfer this mat to anybody, save him. Tell Abdullah bin Zubayr that if he wants to achieve nearness to God, it is not via this prayer mat; he should instead visit me. If he wants a man more

knowledgeable, then he should visit Imam Zayn al Abidin (a.s.).”

When the caliph heard the answer, he immediately summoned Mastoor bin Tahreema - a one time companion of the Holy Prophet and a prominent figure in Makka and said, “O Mastoor! You are a respectable citizen in Makka, You know how hard I struggled to contain the domain of Hijaz. Now I fear Muhammed-e Hanafia will wipe out all my efforts.”

Mastoor spontaneously assured, “O Chief! I assure you that no harm will come to you through Muhammed-e Hanafia. It is incumbent upon you to honour the peace agreement. Muhammed-e Hanafia is a pious man, highly respected by all and sundry.” Abdullah insisted, “At present I am the commander of the Muslims, hence I must have the prayer mat. I won’t rest until I possess it.” Mastoor argued “The prayer mat is a memorial of the Holy Prophet. Moreover it is the private property of the family and should remain with the family.” Abdullah taunted, “O Mastoor! You have turned apostate!” Mastoor retorted, “I am still on the right path. You are blinded by jealousy, hence the truth evades you.”

The caliph then ordered his servants to enter the house of Muhammad-e Hanafia and bring the prayer mat - they were empowered to use force in case of resistance. The servants rushed to the house of the saint and when the gate was not opened, they threatened to set fire to the house. People gathered at the scene and shouted, “Abdullah bin Zubayr

has broken the pledge and turned away from his oath. Now he wants to set fire to the house of the Holy Prophet.” Hearing the commotion, Muhammad-e Hanafia came out and addressed the royal servants, “Man! Do you intend to set fire to the house where the Holy Prophet was born and where lies the grave of Lady Khadija? Your actions are in total conformity to the actions of your ancestors.” Public resentment ran high but the sage pacified the crowd and turning to the servants said, “Tell your master I need a period of grace. Thereafter I shall go away from Makka and He won’t see me for the rest of his life.”

Sage Muhammad-e Hanafia, then sent a letter to his nephew Imam Zayn al Abidin in Madina. He wrote: “O progeny of the Holy Prophet! The time of my departure, as it was predicted by my holy father, has arrived. I seek permission from your exalted self.” The Holy Imam replied: “O my respected uncle! You may start towards the place promised by Allah to you. Convey my salams to the Qa-im of the family of the Holy Prophet. May Allah bless you.”

Upon receiving permission, Muhammad-e Hanafia began making preparations for a long journey. As the news spread, many adherents thronged to his side and inquired the reason for his departure. The saint replied, “Brothers! Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) migrated from Bayt Allah to Syria, Prophet Musa (a.s.) migrated from Jerusalem to Basra, the Holy Prophet migrated from Makka to Madina. I am not better than they were. I will go towards Ta-if and Yemen, on account of the harassment of Abdullah bin Zubayr. I bid

farewell to you. Keep faith in the divine leadership of Imam Zayn al Abidin (a.s.)”

Muhammad-e Hanafia sent his wife and children to Madina to his nephew Imam Zayn al Abidin.

One night, after Isha prayers, he started on his final journey. As per the custom of the Arabs, he had put on a robe and a turban, the end of which covered his face. Only his eyes were visible. Around his neck he wore the Holy Quran and a mighty sword hung at his side. Saad, his faithful servant, knowing that the sage had sworn never to ride a horse after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, brought a camel duly saddled and the sage, alongwith his twenty faithful companions, departed from Makka. Ali, the son of Abdullah bin Abbas, the famous traditionist, was one of the members of the entourage.

The next morning Abdullah bin Abbas, the righteous erudite, couldn't control his emotions at this outrage, he went and reprimanded Zubayr, “Allah will severely punish you for your misbehaviour towards sage Muhammad-e Hanafia. He forgave your faults and saved you from destruction and this is how you repay his kindness.” The pseudo caliph remained silent but secretly plotted to murder his son, Ali, who had accompanied Muhammad-e Hanafia, and in this way, punish the old pious man for his taunts. The caliph immediately put his cruel plan into action instructing Abul Manzar to take a band of rough riders and attack Muhammad-e Hanafia's entourage.

When Abul Manzar overtook the small entourage of Muhammad-e Hanafia, he was confronted by the holy sage and told to return but he threatened the sage; his faithful companions drew their swords to protect their master. The sage intervened, "Wait O my friends! Let me deal with them." He then turned to Abul Manzar, "O accursed! Return to Makka and tell your faithless master That I left Makka due to his harrassment and infidelity and not due to fear. I was ordered by divine decree to leave the city. Now you better leave before I draw my sword because I have taken oath that I won't spare anybody who interferes." Abul Manzur bellowed "O son of Ali. Your authority is no more." He ordered his soldiers to attack. Muhammad-e Hanafia also advanced and said, "Today I shall flash my sword as my father used to swing the Zulfiqar to kill the infidels." He began to fight in the same heroic manner as the invincible Ali fought. He swept through the enemy soldiers like a tiger through a herd of goats. In his left hand he swung the sword and with his right hand he threw the unfortunate soldier high in the air and as he fell he slashed him in mid air. Then the sage turned to Abul Manzar and admonished "Defend yourself against the stroke of Haider e Karrar" and in a split second, he was cut into two halves. Soon all the soldiers were eliminated. The awe stricken companions who were silently watching this display of super natural valour came and kissed the stirrups of the sage in jubilation.

The saint and his party then advanced to the borders of Ta-if, where they were warmly welcomed by the local Chief, Ghassan bin Rashid, who made all arrangements for their

ease and comfort. After dinner Muhammad-e Hanafia asked Ghassan what had brought about this great transformation because his father had been a sworn enemy of the Prophet and so were the people of Ta-if. Ghassan then explained, "O Master! My father was inimical to Ali (a.s.) day in and day out he indulged in defaming the noble soul. I did not like his behaviour because I had been an adherent of the Ahl ul Bayt since my childhood. One day I asked, 'why do you abuse Ali (a.s.)? He was the man who was praised by God, the Holy Prophet and the angels. God called him a friend and the Holy Prophet made him his successor. He is famous for his bravery and magnanimity.' My father was so angry at my words that he struck and wounded me, then tied me up and shut me in a room.

Weak and wounded I dozed off. In my dream, I saw the Holy Prophet who asked, 'What ails thee, O Ghassan?' I replied 'O Master! Do justice between my father and me. He regularly abused your cousin and when I reprimanded him he struck me and has confined me.' Then a young man came with knife and held it towards me. I pointed towards my limbs which were tightly bound, the young man passed his hands over my arms and legs and behold! The knots were untied. Seeing this miracle, I fell at the feet of the young man. Then the Prophet ordered the young man to bring Rashid. My father was brought and the Holy Prophet asked, 'Is this the same man who abused my cousin Ali (a.s.)?' I nodded, then he gave me the knife and I thrust it in the belly of my father. Suddenly I woke up and heard my family wailing and mourning the death of my father who had died

with his belly split open. No one knew who had perpetuated this havoc. I carried out the funeral rites of my father and inherited his throne. After a month, I gathered the Chiefs of Ta-if and narrated my dream to them. The narration had such an impact, that people left their false beliefs and turned faithful, all of them are true believers ever since. The parapsychology, of the miracle has fortified their beliefs.”

After a few days, the sage and his party, left for Yemen. On the border of Ta-if another contingent of Abdullah bin Zubayr under the command of Hilal bin Moakal blockaded their way and the leader audaciously challenged the entourage. The sage heard the challenge and spurred his camel ahead, shouting, “May your mother weep for you, I am the son of Ali.” and catching Hilal by his midriff he threw him up in the air; and as he was falling swung his sword so dexterously that one half of the body fell to the ground while the other flew up in the air. Ali bin Abdullah is reported to have said that he heard sounds of Takbir “Allahu Akbar” from midair. From the enemy soldiers one man, Shaddad, addressed his companions, “O friends! Take mercy on yourselves because you will not be able to save yourself from his attack. He is not an ordinary man but the son of the invincible Ali bin Abi Talib.” Shaddad apologised to Muhammad-e Hanafia and the army dispersed.

FRIENDS AND FOES AMONG THE DESERT GENII

As the small band of Muhammad-e Hanafia advanced

through the desert wilderness, they were distraught with thirst and wanted to retreat but an invisible voice prompted them to advance. When the companions expressed fear and anxiety, the sage assured them of some divine mystery and guidance and allayed their fears. The party continued to advance, till they saw fire. The sage advanced and perceived a tent at the entrance of which sat a huge serpent. The companions were scared out of their wits, the saint said "Peace be on you O serpent! Clear my way if you are from the genii." The serpent replied: "Peace be on you O Muhammad-e Hanafia." The saint inquired "How do you know my name?" The gigantic monster, bent his head and said "I am from the group of genii who are Muslims and recite the *kalimah*, who were guided to Islam by Imam Ali (a.s.). I shall continue to inhabit this place till the advent of Imam Mahdi (a.s.)." "What is your name?" Asked the saint. "My name is Sazarmu. I have fourteen thousand genii under my command. Your father has ordered me to provide provisions for the journey and guide you through my domain." Then Sazarmu brought water and the adherents performed ablution and offered prayers. Thereafter Sazarmu brought pistachious nuts and sugar in abundant quantity. As they were eating, they suddenly heard an uproar from the desert, which puzzled and frightened them but the saint informed them that it was the army of Sazarmu who were celebrating their arrival. Muhammad-e Hanafia suggested that if they listened attentively, they would be able to hear the genii eulogizing the Holy Prophet (s.a.) and Imam Ali (a.s.). The companions were astounded as they confirmed this information.

The next morning, they started their journey with Sazarmu at the forefront, visible in the garb of a bedouin cameleer.

Ali bin Abdullah bin Abbas has reported a strange phenomenon which occurred at sunset. As darkness descended a brilliant glow lit up the whole environment, which suddenly gave way to a horrifying darkness. The saint pacified his party, explaining to them that the light belonged to Sazarmu who was the king of the Muslim genii. Here his domain ended and he bade farewell to the entourage. Suddenly a violent hurricane occurred and the desert floor started trembling and shaking. Eerie and blood curdling sounds ripped through the air. Amidst the pandemonium which broke out Ali ran to Muhammad-e Hanafia and stood there beside Saad the faithful servant of the sage. The saint drew his sword from the scabbard and his whole body vibrated as he shouted "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet and Ali is the friend of Allah." The hurricane subsided and the eerie sounds died down leaving behind a stifling silence. Casting their eyes around, they realised that some of their companions had died and others had fled during the horrendous attack of the disbelieving genii. The trio wept and mourned the loss of their party members, then continued with their journey. They reached a jungle where flowed a wild, tumultuous river. For three days, they journeyed along the bank of the river, till they reached a spot, where stood a small church, inhabited by a lone monk.

Saint Muhammad-e Hannfia dismounted from the camel,

performed ablution and offered prayers. As he completed his prayers, the monk came out and greeted the sage. Muhammad-e Hanafia scrutinized the monk and on closer observation found he had a cornelian ring on his finger, on which was engraved “WAHTAEAYA MAN TAWALLAK YA ALLIYO WA LA QAD ALAYKA WAHTADEYA MAN YOHDAK YA ALLIYO.” The sage was wonder struck and asked: “Do you know what inscription is carved on the ring?” The monk replied, “Yes, I know and I wear it for its auspiciousness. On account of this ring, I remain immune from the enemies and I shall never part with it.” Muhammad-e Hanafia then inquired “Is your name Majaris son of Abdul Quddus?”

The monk replied “Yes, I am that very person.”

THE MYSTERY OF THE GIGANTIC BIRD

Then Muhammad-e Hanafia asked “Please tell me, how long have you been living here?”

“About a hundred and twenty years.” Majaris replied. The saint then asked, “Have you witnessed any strange phenomenon during this period?”

Majaris then said “Yes for the last couple of years I witness a strange and mysterious event every year, in the middle of Ramadhan. A gigantic white bird appears at sunrise and stands on the billious of the river and shrieks thrice. The earth begins to tremble and the wild waves rise up

on both sides exposing the river bed. The huge bird then swoops down and brings a man in its claws and flings him on a black stone near the church. He is the most ugly and hideous looking man. Flames issue from his body and his tongue gushes out. The bird then strikes the neck of the man with its beak with such force that it decapitates him. Then it devours the head and the whole body until no trace is left. Thereafter the bird thanks God, saying, 'O Lord! I thank You that You have created me and ordained my sustenance the flesh of that man who is the enemy of Your friend.' The gigantic bird then flies away and the waves subside. This eerie event is repeated every year in the month of Ramadhan."

Muhammad-e Hanafia with tears in his eyes asked: "Do you know the identity of that bird? Nay, it is an angel of hell appointed by Allah to punish the murderer of my father - Abdul Rehman bin Muljim and it will continue to do this till the day of judgement."

The monk Then, asked, "Who was your father?" The saint replied, "Ali bin Abi Talib. The rogue smote him with his sword."

At the mention of Ali's name, the monk fell at Muhammad-e Hanafia's feet and said, "The ancient Prophets have praised him, as it is written in the Injil. The reason of my stay on this river bank is that I shall accept Islam through a family member of Ali (a.s.) and my tribe will follow me. I have read in the previous scriptures that man from the Children of Ali (a.s.) will come to this place and go into occultation."

The sage stated: “I am the very man you are waiting for and I shall go into occultation soon.”

The monk asked, “Are you son of Lady Fatima or offspring of another wife of Ali (a.s.)?”

The sage replied, “My mother’s name was Hanafiya and I am going to occultation due to the atrocities of the community.”

“Well” stated the monk, “Your case resembles that of Jesus. Now, I bear witness that I am becoming a Muslim by reciting the *kalimah*.”

Majaris, the monk, then went to gather his community so that all of them would become Muslims at the hands of Muhammad-e Hanafia, as was ordained. News of this incident spread to the adjoining areas and more and more people accepted Islam.

Soon after, a young man came to Muhammad-e Hanafia and whispered something in his ears and disappeared. The sage at once stood up and ordered said, “Bring my camel because my hour of occultation is near.” After that the saint, Ali bin Abdullah, Majaris and some new Muslims started towards Mount Carnellion also known as mount Farah. The handsome youth re-appeared and walked with the sage to a spring. There the saint performed ablution and offered prayers. Then he called his companions and said: “My hour is near. I shall soon disappear, never to be seen again. Therefore ask me, what ever you want to, just now.” Ali bin

Abdullah asked: “O Master who was the holy youth who appeared and disappeared?” “He was Prophet Khizr” replied Muhammad-e Hanafia.

The sage then informed them that he would remain invisible in the cave in the mountain till the advent of the Master of that age the Qa-im from the family of Prophet Muhammad, who would firmly establish the precepts of Islam. His line of parentage would be Hasan bin Ali bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Musa bin Jafar bin Muhammad bin Ali bin Husayn bin Ali bin Abu Talib.

Then a voice was heard. It came, from the mountain, “Come into my belly O deposit of Allah. Come to me. I am Mount Cornelian. I affirm the unity of Allah, the prophethood of Muhammad and the Imamate of Ali (a.s).” Muhammad-e Hanafia started reciting *durood* and walking towards the mountain. He entered the cave and disappeared, never to be seen again.

Ali and Saad returned home. When Ali narrated the details to his father, Abdullah bin Abbas, he assured him that he had already learnt the details from Imam Zayn al Abidin (a.s.).

IBRAHIM CONFRONTS IBN ZIYAD

The news of the forced expulsion and eventual occulation of Muhammad-e Hanafia caused great sorrow to Mukhtar. He wept for long time, then summoned his military

officers and briefed them about the heavy persecution of the saint by Abdullah bin Zubayr. He reiterated that he had eliminated all the participants of the massacre of Karbala who were in Iraq, but there were only the branches and stems. Abdullah bin Ziyad was the root and he was now to be eliminated and destroyed.

It was then unanimously decided that Ibrahim bin Malik Ashtar the undomitable warrior and great tactician would lead the invasion to Mosul against Abdullah bin Ziyad, while Mukhtar remained in Kufa, to manage the affairs of the state. Mukhtar had total confidence in his valiant general and was sure Allah would grant him complete victory over Ibn Ziyad and the Umayyads.

Thus with a large army, Ibrahim bin Malik Ashtar advanced towards Mosul for a final showdown.

Many skirmishes and battles were fought. During these tense weeks Ibrahim could not sleep at nights he was so obsessed by the desire to kill the accursed scoundrel.

Abdullah bin Ziyad tried various means to lure Ibrahim over to his side, promising him royal authority over Mosul etc. But faithful Ibrahim laughed and scoffed at these charades and informed his arch enemy that he would not rest till he killed him with his own hands.

In the initial surprise attack, Ibrahim's army inflicted heavy losses on the Syrians. The next day the armies took

up strategic positions and the battle commenced with individual duels in which many notorious enemies were sent to hell by the brave warriors like Mozahim, Nafae and others. Then, massive confrontation took place, resulting in violent bloodshed.

The battle was drawn in the evening. Scrutiny revealed that four thousand Syrians were killed while the loss of Ibrahim's was a few hundred.

In the subsequent battles Ibrahim's troops made incessant attack exploiting any weak point which might be uncovered and inflicting great losses. His gallant forces assailed the enemy positions not giving them any respite. Day after day, after dusk when the fighting stopped the Syrian would throw their dead into the river while Ibrahim's soldiers would be buried with customary rites. Ibrahim himself usually observed fast during the battle and after sunset opened the fast. Eventually due to the undomitable courage of Ibrahim and his inspiring orations combined with his tactical acumen he trounced the Syrians. In one of these sanguine encounters Haseen bin Nameer, met his doom at the hands of Ibrahim. His death was a great disaster for the Syrian forces and Abdullah bin Ziyad was devastated, while Ibrahim's army celebrated their victory.

Later, several top officers of Ibn Ziyad were killed by Ibrahim, while they were indulging in a drinking orgy. Ibrahim got information about this secret party and along with his elite force went and killed all the drunken chiefs

while they were senseless due to intoxication. Abdullah bin Ziyad was livid with rage when he received news about the wholesale slaughter of one hundred and sixty top ranking officers, in cold blood. He vowed vengeance and prepared for a massive attack.

Ibrahim suffered some initial setbacks but fortunately re-enforcements arrived. The Syrians couldn't withstand the fierce onslaught.

In this final encounter Abdullah bin Ziyad was pursued by Ibrahim, as he was fleeing from the battlefield. This time, he could not escape the wrath of Ibrahim, who with a flash of his sabre cut off his head and proclaimed his final glorious victory. Then Ibn Ziyad's corpse was dragged through the streets of Mosul. It may be mentioned here that the headless corpse of Ibn Ziyad was identified by its heavy scent. It was a well known fact, that when the head of the martyred leader was given to Ibn Ziyad, he rested it on his knees and a few drops of blood fell on his thigh and resulted in a painful and chronic lesion which oozed a foul, putrid fluid. To camouflage this obnoxious odour, Ibn Ziyad used a lot of musk and other strong perfumes.

This last battle yielded rewarding war booty and most of the soldiers received much wealth. Ibrahim then entered the city of Mosul to a tumultuous welcome by the people who lined the streets and cheered the noble chief, "Welcome! O splendour of the Adherents of the Ahl ul Bayt! O Protector of the faith! May Allah bless you." When Ibrahim reached

the spot where the corpse of Ibn Ziyad was lying on the street, he dismounted and lowered his head in prostration to express gratitude to Allah. He chanted aloud, "Praise be to Allah who bestowed victory upon the friends of the family of the Holy Prophet and disgraced their enemies."

Then the head of Abdullah bin Ziyad was sent to Kufa along with a letter, containing the details of the sanguine battle, that lasted for seventeen gruesome days.

When the head was presented to Mukhtar he was overjoyed enphoric and fell to the ground in prostration. Then the head was mounted on a javelin and taken through the streets of Kufa where the public spat on it and cursed it, saying, "O scum of the earth! You martyred the beloved grandson of the Holy Prophet for worldly gains. You have now lost your worldly benefits and the deadly sin committed by you has deprived you of the benefits of the Hereafter. Indeed you are a loser in this world and a loser in the Hereafter."

WAR BETWEEN MUKHTAR AND MASAB

After the death of Abdullah bin Ziyad, the last two scoundrels Muhammad bin Ashath and Umar bin Hajjaj were left. These two rogues had fled to Basra and joined up with Masab bin Zubayr who was licking his wounds of defeat at the hands of Mukhtar. After consultation with his officers, Mukhtar wrote letter to Masab seeking custody of the two fugitives, whom he was sheltering. Masab bin Zubayr refused to hand over the two fugitives. On the

contrary, he wrote a letter to his elder brother caliph Abdullah bin Zubayr, describing the growing powers of Mukhtar and the crushing defeat of the Syrians after the death of Abdullah bin Ziyad, at the hands of Mukhtar.

Abdullah bin Zubayr read the letter and haughtily exclaimed: "Mukhtar has grown too strong. He must be crushed." He wrote to Masab informing him to prepare for battle and he would be sending his troops from Fars and Kirman under the command of Mohlib, a great and formidable warrior.

Masab, in the mean time, tried various schemes and intrigues to undermine Mukhtar's might. He wrote to Ibrahim bin Malik Ashtar to stop assisting Mukhtar who was just exploiting him as a tool to gain power and glory. He promised grand rewards and governorship of Kufa if he defected to his side. Ibrahim replied that knew he was on the right path and he was completely disinterested in worldly gains. He vowed that his greatest desire was to eliminate all of them.

Now Masab and Mohlib started preparations for war. Mukhtar also mobilized his troops and sent word to Ibrahim to advance towards Basra so that they could launch a two pronged attack. Unfortunately Ibrahim was confronted by a large army of Abdul Malik bin Marwan. He immediately sent a message to Mukhtar advising him to slay in Kufa and control the city till he arrived.

Mukhtar appreciated the wisdom of Ibrahim and delegated his Persian chief, Ahmer bin Shomit and Abdullah bin Kamil to advance and confront Masab. These two brave and faithful generals with their valiant troops made incessant attacks. They hurled themselves at the enemy and mercilessly riddled them with their arrows and spears. Masab incurred defeat after defeat and vowed to strike back. He reprimanded Muhammad bin Ashath and Umar bin Hajjaj shouting, "O cowards! I am entangled in this bloodshed because of you two and here you are shying away from conflict. Go and fight on the forefront."

The next morning, Mohlib brought on his reserve force. After evaluating the situation on the battlefield, he came to the conclusion that he could achieve victory after eliminating the great chief, Ahmer bin Shomit. So he ordered his soldiers to concentrate on Ahmer only and surrounded him on all sides. Ahmer fought with rare courage. Broad of limb and iron of hand he hewed on bravely in the thick of the battle til he finally succumbed to a fatal blow and his pious soul departed to its heavenly abode.

Then Masab joined in the attack and played havoc with the Kufi army forcing Abdullah bin Kamil to accept defeat and retreat to Kufa.

Masab encouraged by his victory, now started towards Kufa. Mukhtar also resolved to put up a bold fight. Mukhtar was obsessed by his desire to eliminate Hajjaj and Ashath. As the two armies positioned themselves at Asleha on the

outskirts of Kufa, the first contender for a duel rode forward from Masab's army. Mukhtar at once recognised him as Umar bin Hajjaj and sent Muhammad bin Saad to confront him. Both the combatants were formidable masters of war, hence the breathtaking duel lasted for a long time. Eventually, with a nimble stroke accompanied by the cry of "YA MUHAMMAD YA ALI" Muhammad bisected the accursed Umar bin Hajjaj from head to thorax and Mukhtar thanked Almighty Allah. The next morning, Mukhtar and Masab, the two great opponents, confronted each other as seasoned strategists. Each knew the game well, with its tactics, capabilities and limitations. Mukhtar who was called "FARES-UL-HIJAZ" because of his tall, heavy built and strategic excellence proved supreme and wrought havoc in the battlefield. As the battle raged on, Muhammad bin Ashath, the last rogue who had participated in the murder of Imam Husayn (a.s.) was finally struck down. Mukhtar exclaimed in joy: "Thank God! My goal is achieved." There was jubilation all round in Mukhtar's army. A sense of fatigue and weariness descended on Mukhtar, he shrugged it off and continued to fight. Then Mohlib opened a second front and turned the tables. With his numeric superiority he got the upper hand and forced Mukhtar to retreat to Kufa with six thousand battle weary and worn out soldiers.

Masab followed them and besieged Kufa. The supply line was disrupted and no supplies could reach Kufa. Mukhtar's men then displayed the proverbial disloyalty of the Kufis. They decided to submit themselves to Masab. Mukhtar tried

to dissuade them from their cowardly decision warning them that they would not be spared by Masab soldiers. This would be death with humiliation, hence the better course would be to attack and die in the battlefield. To no avail.

Mukhtar along with twenty seven faithful companion, like Abdullah bin Kamil, Muhammad bin Saad etc. donned shrouds under their armours and boldly fought against all odds, until each and every one of them drank the cup of martyrdom and sacrificed their lives for the great cause - worthy of the greatest sacrifice. As Mukhtar's soul was departing from his body he recited the *kalimah* and thanked Allah for granting him victory in avenging the blood of Imam Husayn (a.s.).

The six thousand deserters of Mukhtar then came out seeking refuge but the soldiers of Masab fell upon these unarmed refugees and cut them like cabbage. They could not evade death but lost the glory of martyrdom by deserting Mukhtar.

Thus in Ramadhan 67 A.H. Mukhtar achieved his life's ambition and successfully concluded his campaign to avenge the blood of Imam Husayn (a.s.).

He sacrificed his own life fighting against the forces of Masab bin Zubayr. He attained martyrdom, eternal glory and scaled the ultimate heights of success.

In Ziyarat Ashura we say: “Peace be upon you (Imam Husayn (a.s.)) whose blood claimer is Allah”; so He, through Mukhtar punished the killers of Imam Husayn (a.s.) in this world and will condemn them with eternal damnation in the hereafter.

In fact he was a brave warrior, general, politician just administrator, and above all a true and devoted friend of the Ahl ul Bayt.

Peermahomed Ebrahim Trust
139, Faran Housing Society
Off. Haiderali Road, Karachi-75800