

KARBALA TODAY

by QAMAR HASNAIN

IMAM HUSSAIN was born in Medina in 4 A.H., about 623 A.D. He was killed on the 10th of Moharrum in 61 A.H. (680 A.D.). His head was cut off. It is not known for certain what happened to the head after it was taken to Damascus, where Yezid reigned. According to some, it was returned to Karbala and buried with the body. There is however a mosque in Cairo known as Masjid-i-Raas-i-Hussain; the head is believed to be buried there and the mosque is much revered by the Arabs.

Karbala, also known as al-Haaer, lies 60 miles to the south-south-west of Baghdad in the district of the biblical Ninevah. Today it is a rich and fertile locality standing on the edge of the great desert. The area's output of fruit and vegetables is so high that Karbala is the only city in Iraq which owns a large and modern canning factory. Its population is estimated at about 200,000.

In Karbala itself, and barely 200 yards from the tomb of Imam Husain, is the grave of his half-brother, Abul Fazl al-Abbas, a younger son of Imam Ali by his second wife. Abbas had also fallen fighting. His mausoleum is a little smaller but equal in magnificence to that of Imam Husain.

Pilgrims Down The Ages

The first known pilgrimage to Karbala is believed to have been performed by Sulaiman bin Surad and his followers in 684 A.D., almost four years after the historic tragedy. Umm-i-Musa, mother of Caliph al-Mahdi (775 A.D.), is reported to have made handsome contributions for the maintenance of the mausoleums. By 980 A.D., there existed over the graves sizable tombs much frequented by pilgrims.

In 1024 A.D., Husain bin al-Fazl built protective walls in Karbala and Najaf. Sultan Malik Shah I, the Seljuk, visited Baghdad in 1087 A.D. and went on a pilgrimage to these places. He made lavish gifts and his family later undertook to supply water to Karbala by constructing the al-Husainiyah canal fed by the Euphrates. Sultan Selim of Turkey contributed large sums to that project.

MAULANA SYED ALI NAQI, Mujtahed-ul-Asr, delivers a sermon at a Moharrum majlis in Hyderabad. H.E.H. Mir Osman Ali Khan, the late Nizam (indicated by white arrow), can be seen amidst the congregation. At Muslim congregational prayers and religious gatherings, kings and commoners sit together.



Ibne Batuta visited Karbala in 1326. He witnessed the silver enclosure surrounding the grave of Imam Hussain, with silver lamps hanging overhead and silk curtains adorning the doors. He also saw the canal and a large college, as well as a hostel of students called the al-Zawiyah. There used to be a guard at the gates to control admission, seemingly because of the harm suffered repeatedly at the hands of the political opponents of the House of Ali—the Umayyads and the Abbasids.

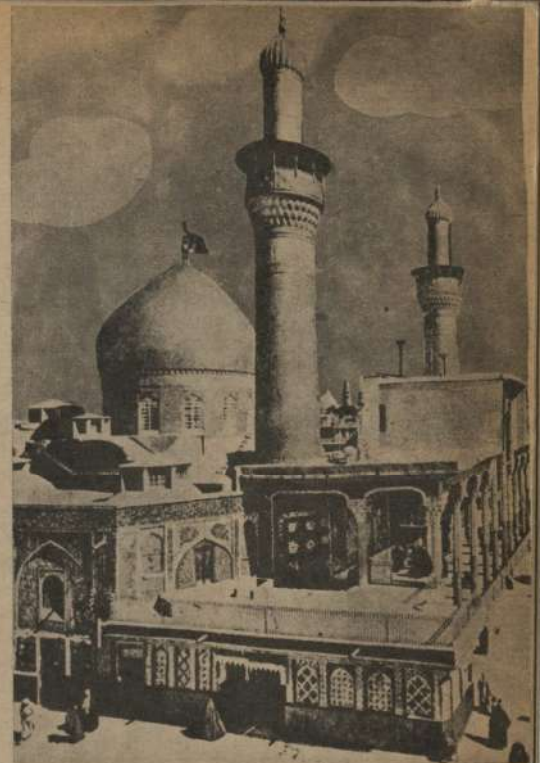
Shah Ismail Safavi of Iran visited Najaf and Karbala in 1523. Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent of Turkey made a pilgrimage in 1535 and Sultan Murad III in 1584. He ordered Ali Pasha, the Governor of Baghdad, to reconstruct and renovate the tombs.

Shah Abbas the Great had acquired domination over Najaf and Karbala. Princess Raziya Sultana, a daughter of Shah Husain, in 1622 made generous contributions for repairs. Nadir Shah visited Najaf and Karbala in 1743. Some of the matchless offerings made by him are still extant in a good state of preservation.

In 1843 Najib Pasha retook Karbala from Iran and re-established Turkish control.

In the main chamber of the mausoleum of Imam Hussain, there are two covered and richly decorated enclosures, in addition to the *zarih* (sarcophagus) dedicated to Imam Hussain himself. One of these two, adjoining the *zarih* of Imam Hussain, is in memory of his eldest son, Ali Akbar, who was killed fighting. The other enclosure, known as *Ganj-i-Shahidan*, commemorates the other martyrs. In the outer chamber stands the memorial to Habib bin al-Mazahir, the octogenarian friend who gave his life for the Imam.

The remaining chambers and the courtyard contain an unknown number of graves wherein lie buried kings, princes, nobles and great men of learning from all over the Muslim world. There are some other landmarks in Karbala that pilgrims visit, such as the Khaimagah (the Encampment where the Imam and his followers had



IMAM HUSSAIN'S MAUSOLEUM at Karbala, Iraq, draws Muslim pilgrims, especially the Shias, from all over the world.

pitched their tents), Muqam-i-Ali Akbar, Tille Zainabiyah, etc. Some 3½ miles to the north-east, a short distance from the Rashidiyah Canal, stands the small but colourful tomb of Hur Riyahi, the cavalry commander of Yezid who defected and died fighting for Hussain. Seven miles east of Karbala is another isolated tomb, believed to be that of Aun bin Abdulla bin Jaafar, the son of Zainab, sister of Imam Hussain.

The Vale Of Peace

On the western edge of Karbala begins the desert. There lies the famous cemetery containing the remains of a countless number of devotees who die in Karbala or whose bodies are brought for burial from their native countries. It is known as Wadi Aiman or the Vale of Security or Peace.

The mutilated bodies of Imam Hussain and his followers were left by the enemy unburied and exposed. The survivors, almost all women and children, were dragged in chains on their way to Damascus. The tribe of Banu Sa'ad lived in the vicinity of Karbala but its menfolk dared not bury the dead for fear of reprisals. However, their women took courage and performed the last rites.

This outwardly insignificant event is still remembered and is re-enacted annually. A select number of the tribal women, armed with digging tools, make a ceremonious entry into Karbala on the fortieth day after the anniversary of the battle. The entire population and the vast concourse of pilgrims, numbering around 100,000, turn out to greet them and to pay homage for the gallant and charitable performance put up by their great-great-grandmothers exactly 1,330 years ago on this day!

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EMINENT SHIAS



H. H. MAJOR-GENERAL SIR RAZA ALI KHAN OF RAMPUR (1897-1966) was an enlightened ruler who industrialised his state. His father Nawab Hamid Ali Khan was a great patron of art and music.



AMIN UL-MULK SIR MIRZA MOHAMMED ISMAIL, K.C.I.E. (1883-1958), one of the builders of modern India, was responsible for the modernisation of several Indian states. He was Dewan of Mysore from 1926 to 1941, Prime Minister of Jaipur from 1942 to 46 and was appointed President of the Executive Council of H.E.H. The Nizam's Government in 1946. He also attended the Round Table Conference in 1930 as delegate of the South Indian princely states and in 1933 as delegate of Mysore, Jodhpur and Jaipur. After 1947 he said: "We must not allow our country to become a paradise for politicians and careerists."



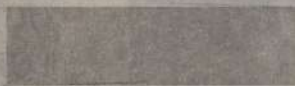
SIR SYED WAZIR HASAN (1874-1947) was Chief Justice of Oudh Chief Court. As a Muslim Leaguer he was one of the leaders instrumental in getting the Congress-League Pact signed in 1916. He presided over the Muslim League's Bombay Session of 1936. Later he joined the Congress. He was a close friend of Motilal Nehru.



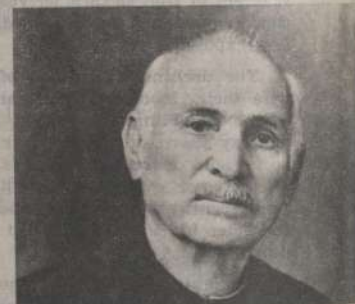
LADY WAZIR HASAN (1877-1957) worked for the All-India Women's Conference, and presided over the Hindu-Muslim Unity Conference at Kanpur after the communal riots of 1931. She had widely travelled abroad with her husband and became a member of the U.P. Legislative Council in 1937. She was held in great affection and esteem by the nationalist leaders.



SYED ALI ZAHEER (b. 1896) is the eldest son of the Wazir Hasans and a noted lawyer and Congress leader. He has served as Minister in U.P. and at the Centre and was India's Ambassador in Iran and Iraq. He is also a prominent Shia leader and President of Shia College, Lucknow, and Chairman, U.P. Pay Commission. **HASAN ZAHEER**, a senior member of the ICS, and **BAQAR ZAHEER**, a senior official in the Indian Railways, are his younger brothers.



Dr NURUL HASAN is a noted Marxist historian. He is at present a Union Minister of State in the Ministry of Education. He has taught at the universities of Aligarh, Lucknow and Oxford. He is a grandson of the Wazir Hasans.



SYED KALBE ABBAS (b. 1891) is a well-known lawyer, scholar and orator; General Secretary of the All-India Shia Conference since 1935; member of the Executive Committee, Muslim University, Aligarh. He has also served as Judicial Member, Income Tax Tribunal, Government of India. His brother, **SYED HAIDER MEHDI**, was a freedom fighter and a close associate of Jawaharlal Nehru.



BEGUM ALIYA ALI ZAHEER (b. 1902) is the daughter of a former Finance Minister of Bhopal and wife of Syed Ali Zaheer. She has served as Chairman, State Advisory Council of Women's Education, Member of the Executive Council of the Universities of Lucknow and Agra, Chairman of Social Advisory Board, U.P., and Chairman Central Social Welfare Board, New Delhi.



NAWAB ZAINYAR JUNG (b. 1888), educated at Hyderabad and London, is an eminent architect. Was also P.W.D. Minister. He acted as a mediator between the last Nizam and Sardar Patel.



MAJOR-GENERAL SYED MEHDI HASNAIN (b. 1917) has commanded an infantry brigade and division. He has been on the directing staff of Infantry School and the Armoured Corps School and Chief Instructor, Defence Services Staff College. He has been awarded the Param Vishisht Seva Medal for most outstanding services rendered during the recent Indo-Pak war.



SIR SYED FAZL-I-ALI (1886-1955) was appointed Chief Justice of the Patna High Court in 1943, Judge of the Supreme Court in 1947, Governor of Orissa in 1952, Chairman, States Reorganisation Commission, in 1954 and Governor of Assam in 1955



MURTUZA FAZL-I-ALI (b. 1920), son of Sir Fazl-i-Ali, is Chief Justice of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court. Justice Ali introduced several reforms in the Judiciary.



NAWAB ALI YAVAR JUNG (b. 1905), Masuma Begum's brother, was educated at Hyderabad and Oxford; was Professor of History and Political Science and, later, Vice-Chancellor of Osmania University; also Vice-Chancellor of Muslim University, Aligarh; India's Ambassador to France and U.S.A. Now Governor of Maharashtra. His father-in-law, Nawab Mehdi Nawaz Jung of Hyderabad, was Governor of Gujarat.



MASUMA BEGUM (b. 1901) is granddaughter of Emadul-Mulk-Nawab Syed Husain of Bilgram (U.P.) and daughter of Nawab Khadive Jung. Her mother, Tyeba Begum, was the first Muslim woman graduate in India. Masuma Begum is wife of Husain Alikhan, a former Rector of Osmania University. She has been associated with the All-India Women's Conference since 1927 and was elected its President in 1962. She has also served as Minister for Social Welfare and Muslim Endowments in Andhra and has led women's delegations to Yugoslavia and Russia. She has been Chairman, Central Welfare Board.



ZAWWAR HUSAIN (b. 1916) is a prominent Congress leader and has been Vice-Chancellor of Magadh University and a Minister in Bihar.



NAZAR SAJJAD HYDER (1894-1967) was the great-granddaughter of Mir Masoom Ali, Persian author and a nobleman and Nazim of Oudh. She was something of a child prodigy. At the age of 14 she became the celebrated author of the novel, *Akhtar-un-Nissa Begum*, and edited *Phool* (the now legendary children's weekly). She was one of the first Muslim women of North India to give up purdah. She widely travelled abroad with her husband, a Sunni and himself a distinguished writer. As a powerful journalist, during the 1920s, she earned the disapproval of conservative family friends Akbar Allahabadi and Dr Sir Iqbal. She was a prolific and immensely popular writer and took no royalties for her books. Her aunt, **AKBARI BEGUM** (d. 1928), was author of *Goodar ka Lal*, a novel once found in almost every Urdu-speaking Muslim home.



Col. S. BASHEER HUSAIN ZAIDI was educated at Aligarh and Cambridge. Has been Chief Minister of Rampur and Member, Constituent Assembly, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, and Vice-Chancellor, Muslim University. He is at present Chairman of the Board of Directors, Associated Journals Ltd, and is a Trustee of the Nizam's Trusts.

SYED JALALUDDIN HYDER (1872-1948) was Principal, Chiefs College, Lahore. He founded the famous Anjuman-i-Wazifa Sadat-o-Momineen for needy students.

SIR ALI IMAM (1869-1932) was Judge, Patna and Calcutta High Courts, and Law Member, Government of India. The credit for forming the province of Bihar goes to him.



MAHARAJKUMAR AMIR HYDER KHAN is the younger son of the late Maharaja of Mahmudabad. He is a good poet and writer, runs the seminary Madrastul Waizin at Lucknow, founded by his father, and publishes two journals: *The Muslim Review* and *Alwaiz*.



Dr HASHIM AMIR-ALI (b. 1903) got his doctorate from Cornell in 1929; worked in Santiniketan as a close associate of Tagore; was Principal, Agricultural College, Osmania University; nominee of Jawaharlal Nehru on the Governing Body of Visvabharati from 1958 to 1961. Has written many books on sociological subjects; also the *Students' Quran*.

AIR VICE MARSHAL SYED ABBAS HUSSAIN (b. 1923) has been Chief Instructor, Indian Air Force Academy; Chief Instructor, Air Wing, Staff College, Wellington; Director of Training and Director of Operations at Air Headquarters. Was awarded the AVSM in 1969.



TAHIR JARWALI is a controversial Shia leader and orator.



SYED MUSHTAQ ALI (b. 1914), a Padma Shri, is popularly regarded as the "Gay Cavalier of Indian Cricket". His batting was marked by a handsome unorthodoxy which made him the darling of the crowd. Even as the bowler began his run, Mushtaq would step out of the crease! He made two tours of England—1936 and 1946. In 1936, in the Manchester Test, he partnered Merchant in a double century opening stand.



SYED ABID ALI, the Hyderabad Test cricketer, toured Australia with the Indian team in 1957-58 and England last year with success.



USTAD BADE GHULAM ALI KHAN (1902-68) was called the "King of Melody".

He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1962 and was a Fellow of the Sangeet Natak Akademi.

Shia writers and poets include Ali Sardar Jafri, Kaifi Azmi, K. A. Abbas and Dr Ejaz Hussain.

Among film personalities: the late Kumar, Agha, Mumtaz, Sanjay, Firoz Khan, Agha Jani Kashmiri and Ali Reza.



USTAD BISMILLAH KHAN (b. 1916): in India and the West, he has held the audience spellbound with his playing of the shehnai.

He belongs to a family of musicians of Damroan, Bihar.

His uncle, Ali Bux, was attached to the Visvanatha Temple in Varanasi as a master shehnai palyer.

At the Edinburgh Festival, Bismillah Khan's programme unfailingly draws some of the largest crowds.



USTAD FAIYYAZ KHAN was called Aftab-i-Musiqi (The Sun of Music). He set traditions which still play a vital part in musical composition and interpretation.

His masterly rendering of the Tarana was astonishing.

The Ustad always kept apart the various musical forms and, by his inimitable performance, demonstrated the truth that each form of music has its own aesthetic personality.

Begum Akhtar, the popular ghazal singer, is also a Shia.

ZAMEER HASAN KAZMI

Z. H. KAZMI is a member of the Executive Committee of the All-India Shia Conference and often writes for the WEEKLY.



Shia Politics In U.P.

JUST as the Brahmin-non-Brahmin politics is a peculiarity of the South, the Shia-Sunni conflict is confined mainly to Lucknow and is part of UP politics. In an issue of *Caravan-i-Hayat*, Bombay, a magazine devoted to ecumenical unity, Dr Zakir Hussain Faruqi traces the history of the problem. He writes:

"During the last century, in order to sabotage the growing Pan-Islamic movement, the Europeans employed the ulema of both sects in the newly subjugated Middle East. Muslim missionaries were the Church's greatest rivals, especially in Africa. The sectarian quarrels also weakened their activities. Significantly, immediately after their liberation, Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Egypt and Syria made short shrift of the ulema suspected of being foreign agents.

Revealing Diary

"In India, in order to further downgrade the (Sunni) Mughal emperor, the English gave the title of 'His Majesty the King' to the Shia Nawab of Oudh. How the Shia-Sunni conflict was encouraged can be seen from the diary of Arastoo Jah Maulvi Mansab Ali, Meer Munshi to Lord Dalhousie, Governor-General. The Maulvi's job was to write books and pamphlets creating sectarian strife among the Muslims. These inflammable books were published by the East India Company. They produced the desired effect.

"In 1905 the All-India Muslim League was formed. This was also the year when Britain and Russia divided Iran between them and White Hall finalised the plans to dismember the Ottoman Empire. France, Britain and Italy had also acquired most of North Africa and West Asia. The general collapse of the Muslim world deeply angered the Muslims of British India. The Muslim press denounced European expansionism. Lucknow was the former Shia capital. Here at this juncture, for the first time, the 'Tabbara' (the Shias' denouncing the first three Caliphs) and 'Char Yari' (the Sunnis' praising the Four Caliphs) movements were launched with indirect government support. From that time Lucknow became notorious for its Shia-Sunni politics.

Jinnah's Hold

"In 1937 M. A. Jinnah revived the Muslim League and raised the slogan of Muslim unity. Exactly at this time, Maulvi Abdul Shakoor launched his Madah Sahaba (Praise of the Four Caliphs) movement. Many Sunni ulema of the pro-Congress Jamiat-ul-Ulema, who were against Jinnah's politics, also joined this agitation. On the Shia side, the pro-Congress All-India Shia Political Conference also became active. The Tabbara agitation leader Syed Ali Zaheer was a well-known Congressman. During 1937-39, the Muslim League accused the Congress of encouraging Shia-Sunni trou-

ble in order to weaken Jinnah's growing hold on the Muslim masses.

"At the time of Partition, a large number of Shias migrated to Pakistan. The remaining shared with the rest of the Muslims a feeling of insecurity. In 1964 the All-India Muslim Majlis Mushawirat was formed at Lucknow. It is alleged that Gulzari Lal Nanda managed to create a rift in the Jamiat-ul-Ulema and its faction led by Maulana Asad Mian became the chief opponent of the Majlis Mushawirat. The Majlis was formed in August. In September the offensive speech of a Shia leader resulted in a sectarian riot. Consequently the Shias left the Majlis Mushawirat. Many Sunnis joined Asad Mian's faction.

Fresh Trouble

"The reasons for this conflict in UP are fairly obvious. In their book, 'The Defence of Shiaism', Ashraf Hussain and Tahir Jarwalli declare that the Shias would win only if they join the Jana Sangh.

"In 1966 trouble began again. C. B. Gupta's party was not willing to give a ticket to their candidate, Syed Ali Zaheer, because it was feared that the Muslims would not vote Congress. The Jana Sangh too was not hopeful of gaining Muslim votes.

"In 1969 Dr Faridi formed the Muslim Majlis. It is said that the Jana Sangh became alert. Shia-Sunni riots began during May. One person was killed. Both factions published a large number of newspapers which were financed by mysterious sources."