The World Beheld

(An English Translation of *Jahan-e-Deedah*)

Hazrat Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (May Allah preserve and protect him)

کسِ کا خیال کونسی منزلِ نظر میں ہَے؟
صدیاں گزر گئیں کہ زمانہ سفر میں ہَے!
Who are you looking for? What is your destination?
Ages have passed, but time is still in journey!

بسم الله الرحمان الرحيم

الحمدلله وكفي ، وسلام علي عباده الذين اصطفي

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

All praise is for Allah who is Sufficient, and peace be on those of His servants whom He has chosen.

Foreword

If I look at myself, even the thought of writing a travelogue sounds absurd. In the words of our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him): "If a mosquito flies from one place to another, who would write its travelogue? And why?" But when I made the journey of *Umrah* in 1963 with my brother, respected Muhammad Wali Raazi Sahab, the desire arose in my heart to write its travelogue, because through this I would get the chance to write about the holy places of Hijaz and the fascinating historical events related to them. I thus began writing that travelogue with much zeal and zest, and the truth of the matter is:

لذيذ بود حكايت، دراز تر گفتم

The tale was captivating, so I went on telling

But this travelogue was not destined to be completed and published. One day during the return journey of the same trip, this manuscript got so lost on the upper deck of the ship that despite all efforts to search for it, including announcing the loss to the crew and passengers, it could not be found. After this incident I became so disheartened that I could not muster the courage to re-write it, and this is why an in-depth travelogue of Hijaz is not included in this collection.

Years passed after that incident without any noteworthy travel to any other place besides Hijaz, and neither did any desire arise in the heart to write a travelogue. However, I would pen my cursory impressions of any travels occurring while being editor of monthly "Al-Balagh" magazine. Finally a time came when travel became a part of my life, and such a chain of domestic and international journeys began that one of my friends said: "You should now be considered a non-resident Pakistani".

These travels began from those lands of the Muslim world to which precious memories of Islamic history are linked, and the heart had been desiring to witness them since the time when I was learning the ABC of Islamic history. The heart thus desired to write an account of the travels to those lands, since it would entail bringing lost pages of history to the fore, and would also give a chance to experience the sweetness of mentioning several such personalities who are a source of pride and admiration for us. I thus wrote the travelogues of Iraq, Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, Syria and Turkey with this very intention, which were published in "Al-Balagh" in monthly parts.

All those travelogues were written in a rush due to my manifold commitments and activities, and I seldom got time to write them with composure. But since they were travelogues less and compilations

of historical and geographical information more, readers read them with much interest, and I received a heap of letters in which the suggestion to compile and publish them as a separate book was put forward with much emphasis.

This book "*Jahan-e-Deedah*" (The World Beheld") is a fulfillment of the requests of those well-wishers, and all of my most important travelogues have been collected in this. These travelogues have not been presented based on their chronological order, rather the travelogues of the Muslim world have been presented first, and after them those of non-Muslim countries.

It would be unappreciative of me if I were not to make a mention of dear honorable Maulana Mahmood Ashraf Usmani (may Allah keep him safe) and my dear nephew Saud Usmani (may Allah keep him safe), who took it upon themselves to personally supervise the publication of this book. Then, when the book was prepared, my son dear Imran Ashraf (may Allah keep him safe) insisted upon attaching an index. He thus prepared, together with dear Muhammad Yahya (may Allah keep him safe), a very well-organized index which has been added to this book. May God make this compilation a source of interest, information and benefit for the readers. Ameen!

Muhammad Taqi Usmani

15 Muharram 1410H

Travel Essentials

When a traveler embarks on a long-distance journey, despite how eager and excited he may be, a potpourri of feelings stirs in his heart; leaving one's country and family, concern for their comfort and well-being, thoughts about the stages of one's own journey, awareness that the destination is far away, being filled with speculations and apprehensions about the new country, the desire to return with ease and comfort and finding family members in good health. In short, one departs one's house with innumerable tempests of emotions erupting in the heart.

Amidst a multitude of such thoughts and feelings, there is something that has always provided me with solace and tranquility. Before beginning the travelogues, the heart desires to present it to the readers as a gift. These are the pure and effective supplications of the leader of the two worlds (peace be upon him) which he (peace be upon him) used to recite at the time of departing for a journey. And the reality is that there is not a single need of a traveler which is left out from the ambit of these powerful words. Who can be more cognizant of the needs of human nature than him (peace be upon him)? He (peace be upon him) thus left no aspect of those needs without including it within those supplications. Those supplications are as follows:

بِسْمِ اللهِ، وَاعْتَصَمْتُ بِاللهِ، وَتَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللهِ وَ لاَ إِلَهَ إِلاَّ اللَّهُ وَ اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ.

أَللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ الصَّاحِبُ فِي السَّفَرِ وَالْخَلِيفَةُ فِي الأَهْلِ وَالْمَالِ وَالْوَلَدِ.

أَللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ وَعْثَاءِ السَّفَرِ وَكَآبَةِ الْمَنْظَرِ وَسُوءِ الْمُنْقَلَبِ فِي الأَهْلِ وَالْمَالِ وَالْوَلَدِ.

أَللَّهُمَّ هَوِّنْ عَلَيْنَا هَذَا السَّفَرَ وَاطْوِ عَنَّا بُعْدَهُ ،

أَللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ فِي سَفَرِي هَذَا الْبِرَّ وَالتَّقْوَى وَمِنَ الْعَمَلِ مَا تَرْضَى.

The true power of these supplications and their deeper meanings can only be appreciated in their Arabic words as expressed by the noble messenger (peace be upon him), and who can translate those meanings and feelings into any other language? However, in order to understand their basic meanings, a translation is presented below:

"With the name of Allah, I take support of Allah, I trust in Allah, and there is no God except Allah, Allah is the Greatest.

O Allah! You alone are my companion in this journey, and You alone are the protector of my family, my wealth and my children during my absence.

O Allah! I seek refuge in You from the hardships of the journey, from mournful sights, and from returning to my family, wealth and children in a bad state.

O Allah! Make this journey easy for us and roll up its distance for us.

O Allah! I ask You in this journey of mine the ability to adhere to righteousness and piety, and the ability to do (good) deeds by which You are pleased."

When he (peace be upon him) would sit on his conveyance he would say:

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ وَإِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُونَ

"Pure is the One who has subjugated this for us, while we did not have power to do so. And no doubt we are going to return to our Lord."

And when he (peace be upon him) would enter a new town or new city with the intention to stay therein, he would make the following supplication:

أَللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ خَيْرِ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ وَخَيْرِ أَهْلِهَا وَخَيْرِ مَا فِيهَا وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّهَا وَشَرِّ أَهْلِهَا وَشَرِّ مَا فِيهَا

"O Allah! I seek from You the good of this town, the good of its inhabitants and the good of whatever is in it, and I seek Your protection from the evil of this town, the evil of its inhabitants and the evil of whatever is in it."

If the heart and eyes are deprived of the ability to see anything beyond material things then that is another matter. Otherwise, what can be better travel essentials for a traveler than these?

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The Valley of Tigris and Euphrates

South Africa, Saudi Arabia and Iraq

Rabi Ul Awwal 1405H, November 1984

قافلہ حجاز میں ایک حُسین بھی نہیں

گرچہ ہَیں تابدار ابھی گیسُوئے دجلہ و فرات

There isn’t a single Husain left in the caravan of Hijaz

Though the tresses of Tigris and Euphrates are still shining

(1)

The Valley of Tigris and Euphrates (Iraq)

My entire month of Safar and the starting few days of Rabi Ul Awwal were spent in overseas journeys. I happened to travel to four countries: Kenya, South Africa, Saudi Arabia and Iraq in these five weeks. Many points from this tour would be beneficial to share with the readers, so I present a brief account of the events and my impressions thereof.

Around two years ago from today, the Lahori followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiyani filed a lawsuit against Muslims in the Supreme Court of Cape Town (South Africa), complaining: "The Muslims here do not let us pray in their mosques and also prohibit us from burying our dead in their graveyards and declare us non-Muslims. However, we are Muslims so this treatment hurts our sentiments. For this we wish to file a case in the Supreme Court, but until this case is adjudicated we request for a temporary prohibitory injunction to be issued against the Muslims which would prohibit them from calling us disbelievers, and from prohibiting us to use their mosques and graveyards." At that time, the Supreme Court had actually issued such an interim prohibitory injunction. But when it came to enforcing it, the Muslims requested for a delegation from Pakistan to bolster their case. The author of these words was also a part of this delegation. With the grace and favour of Allah Ta'ala, at this juncture the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Muslims by revoking the prohibitory injunction. I wrote a detailed account of this two years ago in the Muharram and Safar 1403H edition of Al-Balagh.

After this, the *Mirzai*s filed the actual case. According to the legal procedures there, the process of recording claims, rebuttals and documentary clarifications from both sides took almost two years, and the hearing of the case was finally announced for 1st of November.

A committee was working in Pakistan to analyze the various junctures of this case. At this stage, the Muslims of Cape Town once again requested this committee to come to them before the trial to bolster them, and to also help furnish an expert witness who could testify on behalf of the Muslims when the need arose. To this end, under the auspices of the Muslim World League and the leadership of respected Zafar Ahmad Ansari Sahab, an eleven-member delegation was formed. Besides the leader of this delegation and this lowly one, it included respected Justice (retired) Muhammad Afzal Cheema Sahab, respected Riyazul Hasan Gilani the Deputy Attorney General of Pakistan, respected Maulana Yusuf Ludhiyanvi, respected Allama Khalid Mahmood, respected Maulana Abdur Raheem Ashar, respected Haji Ghiyas Muhammad Sahab the ex-Attorney General of Pakistan, respected Professor Khursheed Ahmad Sahab, respected Dr Zafar Ishaq Ansari, and respected Professor Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi Sahab.

At 5pm on 25th of October we departed Karachi on a Pakistan International Airlines flight, and after a one-hour stopover at Abu Dhabi, reached Nairobi at 11pm. We spent the night in Nairobi and boarded a British Airways flight at 7am in the morning, and landed in Johannesburg at 11am local time. At Johannesburg we were received by the President of Jamiatul Ulama Transvaal, Maulana Ibrahim Mia, and his companions, as well as other acquaintances. The time for Friday prayer was near so we had to

pray the Friday prayer first. Therefore, as advised by our hosts, the members of the delegation spread to various Masjids. This lowly one led Friday prayer in the Kerk Street Mosque, and also delivered a brief talk in English.

After Friday prayer, all members of the delegation arrived at Maulana Ibrahim Mia's Madrasa named Waterval Islamic Institute and spent the night there. During this stay, we also benefitted from the Institute's library. Maulana has collected an excellent treasure of Islamic books in this remote place, which is probably the best collection of Islamic books in all of South Africa.

We departed Johannesburg on the morning of 2nd October and landed at Cape Town's airport after a two-hour flight. Though summer was arriving in South Africa, the weather was still quite pleasant and somewhat cold for our bodies. Representatives from the Muslim organization of Cape Town as well as other Muslims came to receive us in large numbers. This time as well, as in previous times, their traditional hospitality left deeply etched footprints in our hearts.

The hearing was initially set for 1st of November, but the claimant asked for an extension of four days which was granted. The trial thus began on 4th of November. On the first day of the hearing, a court in a town on the outskirts of Cape Town was selected for the trial, which was around thirty miles away from the main city. But common Muslims were so keen about this case that they started pouring in from early morning. And when the trial actually began, not only was the hall brimming to the full, there was not an inch of space to breathe even in the corridors. The adjacent verandah was also bursting at the seams. When the trial began the erudite lawyer of the Muslims, Ismail Muhammad Sahab, requested the court that before beginning the trial proper, he would like to argue on the point that the hearing of this case is not suitable for this court. When the judge asked the erudite lawyer the basis for this, he presented his arguments. Afterwards, the judge asked the claimant's lawyer, Mr Farlam, his stance regarding this point. He said that I have objection to this but Mr Ismail Muhammad's arguments should be based on arguments only, without any witnesses. At this the judge declared that he would announce his decision regarding whether to hear these points or not the next day, and with this the court was adjourned.

The next day the judge announced that Mr Ismail Muhammad is allowed to argue over the preliminary legal points, but he is only allowed to present his arguments without any testifying witnesses. Thereafter Mr Ismail Muhammad presented arguments in support of his points until evening. MashaAllah his speech was so well-grounded, thorough, well-referenced, and enchanting in terms of his oratory skills that the entire day passed by without notice. Very rarely is someone so well-prepared for a case, and very few are blessed with the ability to deliver such a captivating and well-laid out speech.

On 6th of November the opponent's lawyer, Mr Farlam, began his reply to Mr Ismail Muhammad's arguments. He raised numerous legal points in his speech and, giving proof of his professional dexterity, discussed his arguments at length until 3pm in the afternoon. Thereafter Mr Ismail Muhammad delivered his reply speech for about one hour, in which he gave quite an interesting rebuttal to Mr Farlam's objections point by point. At the end the judge said that he reserves his judgment regarding these preliminary legal points, and at that the court was dismissed.

Now the situation is such that the verdict regarding those preliminary points will apparently only be announced by January 1985. If the judge concurs with Mr Ismail Muhammad's arguments and declares that it is not suitable for this court to delve into the details of this case, then the *Mirzai*s' petition will be deemed unsuitable for hearing and dismissed. And if the verdict comes that the case is suitable for hearing, then a detailed trial will begin which will entail lengthy testimonies from both sides.

More details about the case and how further preparations were made for it will be presented, if life remains and if it is considered appropriate, after the final verdict is announced. But during the fifteen-day stay in Cape Town the one thing which was at once remarkable and instructive, and which left deep impressions on the heart, was the passionate religious fervour of local Muslims. Cape Town should be considered the farthest end of the world towards the south. This remote land has remained under the rule of Western countries for centuries, where forces of irreligiosity, hedonism, and nudity and immorality are in action day and night. Despite this, these Muslims are still holding firm to their religious traditions to a large extent. In spite of being a minority, they have put their lives on stake in order to maintain their religious identity. And whenever they see any threats to any part of their Deen, their restless anxiety is worth seeing.

When this trial took place, representatives of Muslims from all three provinces of the country, namely Transvaal, Natal and Cape, gathered in Cape Town and we could sense with open eyes their enviable sentiments of cooperation with each other.

The way they unrolled the red carpet for our reception, and the love and passionate hospitality they meted out to us, are among the unforgettable memorabilia each of us carries in his heart.

Cape Town is among the most beautiful places in the world. From seas to mountains, and lakes to verdant meadows, it features every kind of natural beauty. And at around 70 to 80km south of this very city is the famous historical headland called *raas ummeed* in Urdu, *Ra's ur-Rajaa as-Saalih* in Arabic and Cape of Good Hope in English, and which is the tip of the inhabited world in this direction. It was from here that Vasco Da Gama had discovered the route to India, and it is also here that the two great oceans of the world, namely the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, meet, which presents an enrapturing scene of مرج البحرين يلتقيان. I had visited this place before as well, but that time the boundary between the two oceans could not be seen clearly due to cloudy weather. This time the sky was clear. As a result, that demarcating line could be clearly made out for miles which the Noble Quran has described as بينهما برزخ لا يبغيان, and setting eyes upon which one spontaneously exclaims out: فتبارك الله احسن الخالقين.

Saudi Arabia

After the hearing in Cape Town finished, we stayed in Johannesburg and Azaadville for one day where we met old friends, and departed for our return flight to Nairobi on 11th of November. We reached Nairobi at 12 midnight and spent two hours in the VIP lounge of the airport. Thereafter at 2am we departed for Jeddah on a Saudi Airlines flight, and the plane landed at Jeddah Airport at around 7am in the morning. Here the Protocol Officer of the Muslim World League was waiting to receiving the delegation. We spent few hours in Jeddah and then departed for Makkah Mukarramah. We reached

Makkah Mukarramah much before Zuhr prayer, so we began our Umrah before Zuhr and completed it after prayers.

This lowly one was visiting this holy place after a hiatus of one-and-a-half years, and the realization hit again that the aura of this place can be truly understood only by seeing and experiencing, not by talking and hearing. The weather was rather pleasant and it was not so crowded. Allah Ta'ala bestowed the opportunity to be present here with great peace and tranquility. In view of my own embarrassingly deplorable state of affairs, the following thought stayed in my mind all the time:

کہاں میں؟ اور کہاں یہ نگہتِ گل؟

نسیمِ صُبح! تیری مہربانی

Me? Smelling this scent of flowers?

O morning breeze! Thank you

It would behove the stature Allah Ta'ala has bestowed upon this place, and the fact that He has made it the focal point of His illuminating lights, that people like us should not even be allowed to be killed here. But it is His bestowal, in honour of the Mercy for the Two Worlds (peace be upon him), that He continues granting opportunities to visit here again and again. May Allah Ta'ala make this visit purely for His pleasure, and may He accept it in His Court. *Ameen*.

After spending one day in Makkah Mukarramah, we departed for Madinah Munawwarah the next day. The new road for travelling from Makkah Mukarramah to Madinah Munawwarah, which has been constructed this year only, passes through the route taken by the Noble Messenger (peace be upon him) during his migration, and one enters Madinah Munawwarah from the side of Quba. For this reason it is called "*Tareeq ul-Hijrah*". Due to the construction of this road the distance has been reduced and, due to the creation of two one-way roads, the speed of travel has also increased. Consequently, if one does not make long stays on the way, one can reach Madinah Munawwarah in around four hours.

The *adhan* of Isha was being called when we reached Madinah Munawwarah. We left our luggage in the car and joined the prayer. The illuminated atmosphere of Masjid Nabawi, combined with the simple yet extremely captivating recitation of Shaikh Hudhaify, made it feel as if each and every particle of the universe is drowned in the luminance of the Noble Quran, and is enraptured by its recitation.

The remaining members of the delegation returned to Makkah Mukarramah, and from there to Pakistan the next day. I had to participate in the Islamic Fiqh Academy's session of 18 November, so I was blessed to stay in Madinah Munawwarah for a few more days. In the words of our respected father, these days were spent with these feelings:

پھر پیشِ نظر گنبدِ خضرا ہے، حرم ہے

پھر نامِ خدا، روضہ جنّت میں قدم ہے

پھر منّتِ دربان کا اعزاز ملا ہے

یہ اُن کا کرم، اُن کا کرم، اُن کا کرم ہے

Once again before my eyes, are the Green Dome and the Haram

Once again the name of God, my feet in the Rowdah of Paradise

Once again the honour of beseeching the gatekeeper,

This is all His favour, His favour, His favour on me

After five days I departed Madinah Munawwarah with feelings of regret at not being able to realize the true worth of the priceless moments gone by. They were attained purely through the mercy of Allah Ta'ala but I could not use them how they ought to have been used. While His showers of mercy were abundantly bountiful, what can be done if the land does not have the ability to absorb water? But it is hoped from His mercy only, that when He has allowed to visit this fountainhead of blessings then, despite the unworthiness, InshaAllah He will not leave me deprived.

Islamic Fiqh Academy

Organization of Islamic Cooperation is the only organization of Muslim countries which is acting as a common platform for the Muslim world since the past few years. Under the auspices of this organization, Islamic Conferences of heads of state and Islamic Conferences of Foreign Ministers are being held. This gives an opportunity to heads of state of Muslim countries to sit together, which is a great blessing in today's atmosphere of division and discord. Furthermore this organization, whose headquarter is located in Jeddah, has established numerous sub-organizations through which Muslim countries are cooperating and collaborating in various fields of life. And Alhamdulillah this collaboration is gradually increasing in the fields of science, economy, trade and information.

About three years ago, in the Islamic Conference of heads of state convened in Taif, the late King Khalid presented the proposal to establish an "Islamic Fiqh Council" under the auspices of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which should comprise scholars from the entire Muslim world. These scholars should, with mutual consultations and collaboration, research those *Fiqhi* (jurisprudential) issues which affect Muslims globally. Also, they should publish the age-old treasures of *Fiqh* in modern clothing and make it easier for readers to benefit from them.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation accepted this proposal and convened a worldwide conference to draft its charter. After undergoing several stages, this charter was officially ratified last year.

According to this charter, expertise in *Fiqh* and an ability to freely express oneself in Arabic were declared requisite qualifications for anyone to become a member of this Academy. It was also resolved in the same charter that, from among those who fulfill these criteria, one person will be selected from each Muslim country. And after receiving nominations from all countries, the first session of the Academy shall be convened, in which its modus operandi shall be defined with mutual consultation. At this stage it would also be possible to nominate more members from Muslim countries, or from Muslim-minority countries.

Consequently, the first session of the Islamic Fiqh Academy was convened on 20th of November. This lowly one was nominated as a member from Pakistan, so on 19th of November I returned to Makkah Mukarramah from Madinah Munawwarah.

The opening session of the Islamic Fiqh Academy was convened on the morning of 20th of November, which was presided over, on behalf of King Fahd, by the Governor of Makkah Mukarramah Majid Bin Abdul Aziz. The Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation respected Habib Shatti, Secretary General of Muslim World League Shaikh Abdullah Umar an-Nasif and the newly appointed Secretary General of Islamic Fiqh Academy Shaikh Habeeb Balkhouja (who is among the distinguished scholars of Tunisia) were also present on stage. The opening session ended with ceremonial speeches by the three of them.

After this the President, Vice President and Executive Council were to be selected. To this end, the following were selected in the evening session:

President:

Shaikh Bakr Abu Zaid – procurator of the Ministry of Justice (Saudi Arabia)

Vice President:

1. Dr Abdus Salam Abbadi (Jordan)
2. Dr Abdullah Ibrahim (Malaysia)
3. Al-Hajj Sayyid Abdur Rahman Bah (Guinea)

According to the charter, the Executive Council was to consist of six members. Thus, besides the Secretary General of the Academy (who automatically becomes a member of this Council due to his post), the following six people were selected as members of the Executive Council:

1. Dr Salih Tug, Dean of the Faculty of Theology, Marmara University (Turkey)
2. Muhammad Taqi Usmani (Pakistan)
3. Ustadh Sayyid Rawaan Bhai, Director of Islamic Institue, Dakar (Senegal)
4. Sayyidi Muhammad Yusuf Jeeri, Ambassador of Mali in the Gulf States
5. Ustadh Ajeel Jassim an-Nashmy, Dean of Faculty of Shariah and Islamic Studies, University of Kuwait (Kuwait)
6. Ustadh Abdur Rahman Shayban, Minister of Religious Affairs, Algeria (Algeria)

The main objective of this session was to define the scope and charter of the Islamic Fiqh Council, so that work could be begun later based on this. Therefore, in accordance with the charter, three committees were formed, one for each department of the Council: Planning Committee, Committee of Studies and Research and Fatwa Committee. This writer became a part of the third committee, whose sittings continued the whole day long on the second day. This lowly one presented the following recommendations regarding the scope and action plan of this department:

1. Before any *Fatwa* (legal ruling) is issued by the Council, a detailed ruling will be requested from those Fatwa-issuing centers of the Muslim world which are not part of the Council, and a conclusive decision will only be taken after their *Fatwa*s and evidences are considered.
2. For those issues which relate to the social, political and economic lives of Muslims, help will be sought from experts of the relevant fields to get the full picture of the issue before issuing any decisive Fatwa.
3. Those books of Fatwa of the four schools of thought which exist only in the form of manuscripts, or which were once published but have now become rare, the Council will make arrangements to get them published.
4. Those books of Fiqh and Fatwa which have already been published will be re-published according to modern publishing standards.
5. Detailed catalogs and indexes of all important books of Fiqh should be prepared, which should facilitate using the books and in extracting discussions regarding any issue from them.

All these recommendations were unanimously accepted and were added to the charter of the Council.

Later a joint session of all three committees was convened in which the recommendations of each committee were discussed, repetitive points omitted, and thereafter a single all-inclusive charter was prepared. According to this charter the Islamic Fiqh Council will do the following:

1. Prepare research papers and essays on those *Fiqhi* issues which relate to the entire Muslim world.
2. Prepare a comprehensive encyclopedia of Fiqh, which will incorporate the details of all Fiqhi schools of thought along with their evidences, and the Council will also bring to completion those encyclopedias which are as-yet incomplete.
3. Make arrangements to publish annotated editions of those Fiqhi books which are as-yet unpublished or which have become rare.
4. Make arrangements to publish revised editions of old Fiqhi books according to modern publishing standards.
5. Prepare detailed catalogs and indexes of all authoritative sources of Fiqh, which should facilitate referring to any *Fiqhi* issue.
6. To collaboratively investigate and ponder over those Fiqhi questions that affect Muslims globally, and to prepare and publish answers that comprehensively address each of the Fiqhi issues involved.
7. To prepare a comprehensive compendium of Laws of Islam which can become the law in all those Islamic countries that want to implement Islamic Laws.

It was also decided that each of the three departments formed would convene their sessions every three months. In those sessions, tasks will be determined for the next three months and assigned to relevant individuals. And all completed tasks will be presented in the general session of the Islamic Fiqh Council which will be convened at least once a year, and more than once when needed. The

Executive Council will convene its meeting at least twice a year, and will provide the foundation for the works carried out by the three departments and the general Council.

After the three committees drafted their detailed reports, the general Council restarted its sessions, in which these reports were passed. Also, matters relating to the formation of the Council as well as budget-related matters were discussed, after which this first session of the Council, the main objective of which was to draft its charter and modus operandi, came to an end.

There is no doubt that the aims and objectives of the Islamic Fiqh Council are a most crucial need of the time. Though numerous individuals and organizations around the Muslim world are, within the resources available to them, working towards them, most of them are hampered by a lack of resources. If this global organization can synergize their efforts and, by providing them the required resources, bring all those individual efforts under a master plan, highly fruitful results can be achieved. Besides, there are many things which, keeping in view the abilities and busy lives of our times, are very difficult to accomplish individually.

A big organization can carry all this out, but for it to successfully bring such goals to fruition is only possible if it acquires such sincere and able individuals who are infused with the passion to serve the Deen of Allah; who possess the serious and sincere fervor to achieve its objectives; who should not desire name or fame, rather should have the zeal to serve the Deen of Allah, and to achieve His pleasure; who desire to obtain tangible results, and not mere customary outputs and outwardly ostentation; and most importantly, they should render such service to Islamic Fiqh which is in line with its principles and temperament, and should be far removed from using Fiqh to fulfill their personal desires; who should be able to distinguish between the real needs of Muslims and the false propagandas of the time; whose sole goal should be to follow Allah and His messenger (peace be upon him), and who should not use their holy names to carry out what their intellectual slavery to others commands them.

May Allah Ta'ala provide such sincere individuals (whose impact will probably be long-lasting), and give them the real ability, in terms of knowledge as well as actions, to carry out these great objectives, and to bestow upon them the ability to run this organization according to the pleasure of their Creator and Lord. Ameen.

Iraq

The heartfelt connection and attachment we Muslims have always had with Iraq needs no words. After Madinah Tayyibah, the first capital city of the Islamic world was established in Iraq. After the Haramain Shareefain, no other region of the Islamic world could attain the same stature as this land as a center of Islamic learning. Furthermore, Baghdad remained the political, scholarly and cultural center of the entire Islamic world for centuries, and the unparalleled individuals it produced in all fields of life mark a golden chapter in our history.

For all these reasons, I desired to see Iraq since a long time. Recently, Iraq's Ministry of *Awqaf* (religious endowments) has published some rare books of Islamic knowledge which have only existed in the form

of manuscripts until now and have never been published before. For example, references to "*Mu'jam al-Kabeer lit-Tabarani*" can be found in other books but the book itself is not available. Iraq's Ministry of *Awqaf* is publishing it for the first time, and, besides some volumes in the middle (which it could not avail), twenty six volumes have been published until now. The Ministry of *Awqaf* has published more than one hundred such books. The desire to acquire these books became the immediate motivation for this journey, and our friend in Madinah Munawwarah, respected Qari Basheer Ahmad Sahab, got ready to accompany me.

This was supposed to be a private trip, but incidentally when Dr Muhammad Shareef Sahab (advisor to the Ministry of *Awqaf*), the representative of Iraq in the Islamic Fiqh Council, came to know of this, he insisted that I should become the guest of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. My natural response was to avert this offer by sidetracking to other topics during conversation, but he later informed that he had already notified the Ministry via Telex about my arrival, and that I would now have to accept his hospitality.

We thus boarded the Iraq Airways flight from Jeddah Airport on 25th of November at Maghrib time. Due to the regrettable war Iraq is caught up in, we had to go through several checks before we reached our seat. My briefcase, which was supposed to be hand-carried, also had to be sent as checked-in luggage. The very availability of flights during this war is itself a blessing, so the extraordinary security procedures were not surprising.

When we landed at Baghdad Airport after about a two-hour flight, Iraq's Secretary of Religious Affairs, Director of Public Relations and some other people were present to receive us. Baghdad's new "Saddam airport", in terms of its grandeur, splendor, and the magnificence and décor of its construction, checkmates some airports of Western countries. The receiving officials led us through immigration procedures within minutes, and informed us that they had already made arrangements for our accommodation, a vehicle and a guide. Provision of such facilities during a personal trip to a foreign land is a blessing in itself, but on top of that, in view of the love and warmth our hosts exhibited, it would also have been against courtesy to reject it. We thus considered these arrangements as blessings from God and accepted them. We later realized that it would not have been possible to do as many things as we eventually did in that short period of time without those arrangements.

The airport is quite far from the city. Our hosts had arranged our accommodation in the famous five-start hotel of Baghdad, Hotel Al Rasheed. This hotel had originally been constructed for a conference of heads of state of the Non-Aligned Movement. But when this conference could not be convened in Baghdad, the hotel was converted to a commercial hotel instead. As a result, its construction, size and facilities are more spacious, grander and more pleasant than normal five-star hotels.

We stayed on the tenth storey of the hotel. From here half of Baghdad lay before our eyes. The lights strewn out as far as the eyes could see presented a spectacle of the star-filled sky on earth. It was quite late in the night. When I lay down on the bed, the mind began flipping through pages from Iraq's history. What amazing tales of the rise and fall of Muslims has this land witnessed? What mountains of knowledge and excellence emerged from this land? What gatherings of knowledge and literature were

held here? What examples of devoutness and piety have been engraved here? And what suns and moons of our glorious past lie concealed beneath the earth even today? *Allahu Akbar*!

When Muslims conquered Iraq, Baghdad was not among its notable cities. It was just a small town on the western coast of the Tigris during the reign of *Kisra (*Khosrow II). It is said that *Kisra* had gifted this estate to an idol-worshipping slave. The idol he worshiped was called "Bagh", and so the area came to be named "Bagh daad" (which translates to: "Bagh gave this place to me"). It is for this reason that many scholars disliked calling it "Baghdad".

Though such major cities as Kufa and Basra were founded during the era of Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), this region remained as before. During the era of Banu Abbas, the Caliph Mansoor founded a city named "Shamiyah" between Kufa and Heerah, but could not make it his place of residence due to the rebellion of the Rawandiyyah. Kufa was notorious for its rebellions so he did not like to choose it for his capital city. After touring the entire area from Kufa to Mosul, he selected this place located on the coast of the Tigris and said: "On one side of this place is the Tigris, which separates us from China with nothing else in between, and on the other side is the Euphrates, through which we will remain connected with ash-Shaam (Levant) and Raqqah". (*Muqaddimat ul-Ma'aarif Libni Qutaybah*)

Mansoor's army therefore encamped on the western coast of the Tigris, and Baghdad's creation was completed on his orders in 146H. Mansoor named this city "*Madinat us-Salam*" (City of Peace) because of the hint of polytheism in the name "Baghdad", as mentioned above. And it is a bizarre fact that though this "*Madinat us-Salam*" (City of Peace) remained the capital city of the Caliphs of Islam for centuries, none of them died inside it. It was only the son of Haroon Rasheed, Ameen, about whom it is said that he was killed in Baghdad. But Khateeb Baghdadi (may Allah's mercy be upon him) narrates that in fact he was also not killed in Baghdad; rather he was sailing on a boat for leisure when he wandered far away from the city. It was there that he was captured and killed. (*Tarikh Baghdad li al-Khateeb*, Page 69, Volume 1)

Baghdad gradually bloomed into such a cradle of sophistication and culture and knowledge and arts for Muslims that it would be difficult to find its parallel in the entire world. It was so charming in terms of its beauty and décor, orderliness and structure, and sophistication and culture that such a God-fearing jurist and saintly elder as Imam Shafi'i once asked his student Yunus Bin Abdul A'la: "Have you seen Baghdad?" He replied: "No." At this Imam Shafi'i replied: "Then you haven't seen the world at all." (al-Khateeb, Page 4, Volume 1)

Today Baghdad is inhabited on both sides of the river Tigris. Initially, Caliph Mansoor had founded it on the eastern coast of the Tigris. Later, his son Caliph Mahdi chose its western coast as the location of his barracks, and gradually that area also became part of the city. The eastern part became known as Rusafa whereas the western part became known as Karkh. These areas are known by these names until today. Several prominent scholars of our history are known as "Karkhi" and "Rusafi", due to their links with these very places.

(2)

The next day was a Sunday. The representative of the hosts, Abdur Razzaq Sahab (Protocol Officer), arrived at the hotel after breakfast. We expressed our desire to visit the graves of Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa, Hazrat Abdul Qadir Gilani and other elders first (may Allah's mercy be upon them all). In view of convenience, he planned our visit to the tomb of Hazrat Shaikh Abdul Qadir Gilani (may his secret be sanctified) first.

When we first saw the roads and buildings of Baghdad during daylight, we found it a modern city. The buildings were beautiful, and the roads clean and wide. The ubiquitous underpasses, and flyovers built over roundabouts had, on the one hand, efficiently solved traffic problems. Additionally, they had upped the aesthetics of the roads to a whole new level. It is said that the cultural transformation Baghdad went through under Saddam Hussain catapulted the city to new heights. Khateeb has written in *Tarikh-e-Baghdad* that when Mansoor founded this city it was two miles long and two miles wide, and was the first city in the world to be constructed round in shape. Today, even single neighbourhoods of this city extend for miles.

We swiftly drove past various districts of the modern city one by one, until our car entered the old part of the city, and we could smell the eras gone by from the streets and pathways. In a short while our car stopped by the side of a half-paved road. Here we saw the wall of a majestic Masjid. Adjacent to it was a street and the door of the Masjid opened into that street. The door was rather exquisite, similar to the doors of ancient imperial buildings. This was the Masjid and Madrasa of Hazrat Shaikh Abdul Qadir Gilani (may his secret be sanctified), in one part of which Hazrat himself is also resting.

This Masjid has existed since the time of Hazrat himself, and Hazrat's blessed grave is located behind the *Qibla*-facing wall. We were blessed with presenting ourselves there.

Hazrat Shaikh Abdul Qadir Gilani (may his secret be sanctified) was actually born in Gilan, the north-western province of Iran. This province was also known as Daylam. He came to Baghdad at the age of eighteen (approximately 488H) and adopted it as his permanent residence. Though people may call it a coincidence, it was definitely a result of the all-encompassing wisdom of Providence that this was the same year in which Imam Ghazali (may Allah's mercy be upon him) bid farewell to Baghdad. As if when the city became bereft of one reformer, Allah Ta'ala immediately bestowed upon it another great reformer in the form of Hazrat Shaikh.

In olden times this neighbourhood in which Hazrat's tomb is situated was located near the gate of Baghdad called "Bab al-Azaj". The teacher of Hazrat Shaikh Gilani, Shaikh Hazrat Qadi Abu Sa'd Mukharimi (may Allah's mercy be upon him), had built a small Madrasa here, which was handed down to Hazrat Shaikh Abdul Qadir Gilani after his death. Hazrat made this very Madrasa as the center for spreading his knowledge and blessings, and began the works of teaching, writing books, giving Fatwa (legal verdicts), giving talks, and guiding people here. This eventually culminated into this place developing into a great Madrasa. (*al-Muntazim Libn il-Jawzi*, Page 219, Volume 10) Hazrat's blessings are still continuing in the form of this Madrasa.

During Hazrat's time, this Madrasa was considered the authoritative place of reference for all, the common man as well as the nobility. And why not? Hazrat used to personally teach here. He would

personally conduct one lesson on *Tafsir* (exegesis of the Noble Quran), one lesson on Hadith, one lesson on Fiqh and one lesson on *khilafiyaat* (comparative fiqh). Lessons on Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh and Nahw (Arabic grammar), etc. would take place in the morning and evening, and after Zuhr Hazrat would recite the Noble Quran in various *Qira'aat* (modes of recitation). Besides this, he would also issue Fatwas (legal rulings). He would normally issue *Fatwas* based on the Shafi'i and Hanbali schools of thought. (*At-Tabaqaat ul-Kubra lish-Sha'raani*, Page 109, Volume 1)

Imam Sha'raani has narrated that once someone swore that he would perform some form of worship which nobody else on the face of the earth would be performing at that time, and that if he did not fulfill this oath, his wife would get three divorces. This question came to many scholars of Baghdad. Normally, the scholars would reach the conclusion that apparently this person has no way to avoid divorce, because about which form of worship can one guarantee that nobody else would be performing it in the entire world? When this question was finally presented to Hazrat Shaikh Abdul Qadir Gilani (may his secret be sanctified), he spontaneously replied: "Empty the *Mataf* for this person in the Masjid al-Haram, and let him perform *Tawaf* such that nobody else is performing *Tawaf* with him."

Innumerable sayings and instructions of his give unbiased testimony to his teachings and exhortations of strictly following the Shariah and Sunnah and avoiding innovations. Moved by his talks, scores of people would repent from their past lives in almost every gathering. Imam Sha'raani has also narrated Hazrat's saying: "One day an exquisite brilliant light loomed before me which lit up the entire horizon. Thereafter I saw a figure emerge from it and heard a voice: "O Abdul Qadir! I am your Lord. From today, I have made permissible for you all that was impermissible." I immediately replied: "Get lost, O you the accursed!" As soon as I said this, the light vanished into darkness and the figure faded away into smoke. Thereafter a voice proclaimed: "O Abdul Qadir! You escaped my ploy through your knowledge, otherwise I have led seventy masters of the Path astray through similar traps." I replied to this: "This was (not through my knowledge, rather) purely through the favour and grace of Allah." (at-Tabaqat lish-Sha'raani, Page 109, Volume 1)

The spiritual masters have said that the second ploy was more beguiling and graver than the first one, because after Hazrat escaped the first trick unscathed, Shaitan, by making a mention of Hazrat's knowledge, tried to induce him into becoming haughty about his knowledge. But Allah Ta'ala protected him from this subtle ploy as well.

It can be appreciated from such incidents as to how much importance Shaikh Abdul Qadir Gilani (may his secret be sanctified) placed, along with the *Tareeqah* (*Tasawwuf*), on the Shariah and, along with knowledge of spiritual matters, on the knowledge of outwardly matters. It was due to this that he personally remained busy with teaching religious knowledge and giving *Fatwa*s (legal verdicts), etc. until the very end:

در کفے جامِ شریعت، در کفے سندانِ عشق

ہر ہوسناکے زداند جام و سنداں باختن

Translation:

The goblet of Shariah in one hand, the anvil of true love in the other,

Not every desirous one knows how to hold the two together

However, similar to the situation at the graves of several other *Awlia* (Friends of Allah), expressions of absurd beliefs in the form of innovations were also witnessed at the grave of this high-ranking *Imam* (leader) of Shariah and Tareeqah. The one whose entire life was spent in following the teachings of Shariah, how painful would such matters, which are completely against the Shariah, be for him himself? The heart remained engulfed with grief at this thought.

After coming out from the tomb, nearby is the Madrasa which was founded by Hazrat Shaikh himself and which still exists until today. After Maghrib the next day, we were also blessed with visiting a saintly elder Shaikh Muhammad Abdul Kareem al-Mudarris (may Allah preserve him) in this Madrasa. He was among the companions of Hazrat Shaikh Amjad az-Zahawi (may Allah's mercy be upon him) and instead of undergoing degree courses according to the customs of contemporary universities, he completed acquisition of religious knowledge in the age-old method of studying under expert teachers and spiritual mentors. In this age of "Magistrates" and "Doctorates", few are left who appreciate the value of such scholars. But the reality is that the fragrance of knowledge of Deen and the aroma of Shariah and Sunnah which is perceived in these unassuming personalities, is normally not felt amidst the grand buildings and pompous environments of universities. It is for this reason that I seek out such scholars wherever I happen to travel.

The respected Shaikh resides in a simple apartment next to the Madrasa. Ancient Arab-style sitting-place, heaps of books around, the door open for every visitor, the face ever-smiling like a rose, speech drenched in rustic innocence, frankness and unpretentiousness, far removed from ostentation. Jubilation engulfed the heart at first sight.

Dr Muhammad Shareef Sahab (Advisor to the Ministry of *Awqaf*) had informed Shaikh before-hand about our visit, and Shaikh was delighted at hearing that this lowly one has links to these old-style religious Madrasas and their scholars by way of being a servant to them. Thus, after initial greetings and introductions, the first question he asked was regarding the curriculum and study program of our *Madrasa*s. And when I mentioned, while outlining our syllabus, books like Sharh Jami, Sharh Tahzeeb, Nur ul-Anwar and Tawdeeh, he almost shrieked out, and exhorted me: "Do not ever abandon such a deep capability-building curriculum, for we are witnessing the adverse effects of this with our own eyes." Together with this, the second thing he urged me was not to forget to supplicate for Iraq to be liberated from the war it was caught up in, and to request the scholars of Pakistan for the same.

Shaikh is ethnically Kurd and has authored scores of books in both Kurdish and Arabic languages. Most of his works are in Kurdish language, which have fulfilled the responsibility of spreading the teachings of Islam in Kurd areas very well. It was not possible for us to benefit from the Kurdish books due to our inability to understand the language, so Shaikh gifted us a set of his Arabic books. Among those books is "*Ulamaa'una fil Iraq*", which mentions Kurd scholars of Iraq, and which consists of approximately eight hundred pages. Another book was related to *aqeedah* (creed).

After taking leave from Shaikh, we visited the Madrasa's library. This library was also established by Hazrat Shaikh Abdul Qadir Gilani (may his secret be sanctified) himself, and contains approximately forty thousand books. Just an introduction to the manuscripts housed in this library was published in five thick volumes. Properly benefiting from this evergreen garden of knowledge would require months, but we were still blessed with laying our eyes upon several rare manuscripts in that short span of time. We also came to know of several new books. But out of all the manuscripts we beheld, there was one which had such an effect on the heart that it is difficult to describe in words. I was looking at a manuscript of *Tafsir* when the manager of the library suddenly put another handwritten manuscript in front of me, and suggested me to take a look. When I put my gaze upon it, it turned out to be a handwritten copy of Imam Raghib Isfahani's "*Mufradaat ul-Quran*". Several letters were faded way from many places, as if water had been poured over it at some point of time. I had not yet asked about the peculiarities of this manuscript, when the manager of the library pointed to a text written at its title and said: "Please read this." When I read the text, it said:

"لقد انتشلت هذا الكتاب من نهر دجلة بعد أن رماه التتر، وذلك سنة ٦٥٦هـ - وأنا الفقير إليه تعالي عبدالله بن محمد ابن عبد القادر المكّي."

"I found this book in the river Tigris in 656H and picked it up from there, after the Tatars had thrown it inside.

The indigent one, Abdullah Bin Muhammad Bin Abdul Qadir Makki"

This caption unreeled a film of the heartbreaking events of seven hundred and fifty years ago in my mind. I had read in history that after capturing Baghdad, the Tatars built a bridge over the Tigris by throwing the books of Muslims in it, and that even the colour of the Tigris had changed due to the ink of the books. How many treasures of knowledge and wisdom were sacrificed at that altar of savagery and barbarism? No one knows their details except Allah the Exalted. But this handwritten manuscript is giving testimony to the truth of this historical event even today.

(3)

At the Tombs of the Noble *Awlia* (Friends of Allah)

After visiting the blessed grave of Hazrat Shaikh Abdul Qadir Gilani (may his secret be sanctified), the same evening we visited an ancient graveyard of Baghdad which was famously called "*Maqbarah Bab ad-Dayr*". Here, the graves of Hazrat Ma'roof Karkhi, Hazrat Junaid Baghdadi and Hazrat Sirri Saqati (may Allah's mercy be upon them all) are all located next to each other inside a small enclosure.

Hazrat Ma'roof Karkhi

Hazrat Ma'roof Bin Firoz Karkhi (may Allah's mercy be upon him) is among the famous Awliya (Friends of Allah) of the second century Hijri. He was a freed slave of Hazrat Ali Bin Moosa ar-Rida, and his sayings and teachings have always been a guiding lamp for the noble *Sufi*s.

He was born in a Christian family, but his brother ‘Eesa reports: “Allah Ta’ala had chosen him for belief in *Tawheed* (Oneness of God) since his childhood. He and I used to study under a Christian teacher. The teacher used to teach us the doctrine of “Father and Son”, but Hazrat Ma’roof Karkhi used to reply: “One, only one.” The teacher would beat him at this. One day, the teacher beat him so much that he ran away and went missing. His mother would cry incessantly and say: “If God returns my son to me, I will not prevent him from adopting any religion he wishes.” When he returned after several years, our mother asked: “Son, which religion do you follow?” He replied: “Islam”. At this, our mother also became Muslim, and thereafter our entire family was blessed with Islam.
(*Safwa tus-Safwah libnil-Jawzi*, Page 180, Volume 2)

He was among those *Awlia* who were more preoccupied with *Zikr* (remembrance of God) and *Fikr* (contemplation) than abundance of optional prayers. One of his contemporary narrators Abu Bakr Bin Abi Talib says: “I went to visit Ma’roof Karkhi in his Masjid. When he began calling the Adhan, I noticed that Hazrat Ma’roof Karkhi (may his secret be sanctified) was overcome by an extraordinary state of agitation. And when the Muadhin called: “*Ash-hadu Allaa Ilaha Illallah*” the hair of his blessed beard and even his eyebrows stood up on end, and he bowed down so uncontrollably that I was worried whether he would even be able to complete the Adhan.”
(*Hilyatul Awlia, Li-Abi Nu’aim*, Volume 8, Page 361)

One day a hairdresser was cutting Hazrat Ma’roof Karkhi’s (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) hair. Hazrat was busy with *Tasbeeh* (verbal remembrance of God) even during this time. The hairdresser said: “I will not be able to trim your moustaches if you continue reciting,.” Hazrat replied: “You are doing your job, should I not do my job?”
(Ibid, Page 362)

It was his habit, as is the Sunnah, that he would accept everyone’s invitation. One day he attended a *Walimah* (marriage banquet) where various types of dishes were laid for the guests. Another *Sufi* elder was also in attendance who, seeing the extravagant dishes, said to Hazrat Ma’roof Karkhi: “Do you see? What is all this?” He meant that these lavish delicacies are not appropriate. Hazrat replied: “I did not order these dishes.” As more types of dishes were brought, that person continued repeating his complaints. Finally Hazrat Ma’roof Karkhi said:

أنا عبد مدبر آكل ما يطعمني و أنزل حيث ينزلني.

“I am a slave. I eat whatever my Master gives me to eat, and go whereever my master takes me.”

(Ibid, Page 364)

One day he was going somewhere when he heard a water-carrier announce: “May Allah have mercy on whoever drinks whatever from me.” When Hazrat Ma’roof Karkhi heard this voice, he went to him and asked for water and drank it. Someone asked: “Weren’t you fasting?” He replied: “Yes! But I thought that perhaps the supplication of this slave of Allah may be accepted in my favour.” (And the fast was optional. He would have kept another in its place later on) (Ibid, Page 365).

One day he was sitting at the shore of the Tigris. A boat passed in front of him in which some heedless youngsters were singing and playing music. Someone said to Hazrat Ma'roof Karkhi: "Look! These people do not desist from disobeying Allah Ta'ala even in the river. Please curse them." At this Hazrat Ma'roof Karkhi raised his hands and supplicated:

"O Allah! O my Lord! I beseech you, that just as you have bestowed delights upon these youngsters in this world, please bestow upon them delights in *Jannah* (paradise) as well."

Those present said: "But we had asked you to curse them." He replied: "If Allah Ta'ala bestows joys upon them in *Jannah*, it means He will accept their repentance from their wrongdoings in this life. What do you lose if this happens?" (*Safwa tus-Safwah*, Page 181, Volume 2)

Hazrat Ma'roof Karkhi passed away in 200H, and it was popular among the residents of Baghdad that Allah Ta'ala accepts supplications made at his grave, especially the supplication for rain during a drought (*At-Tabaqaat ul-Kubra lish-Sha'raani*, Page 61, Volume 1). Abu Abdullah Bin al-Hamili (may Allah's mercy be upon him) says: "I know from seventy years that whenever someone stricken with grief visits the grave of Ma'roof Karkhi and supplicates to Allah Ta'ala, Allah Ta'ala accepts his supplication." (*Tareeq Baghdad lil Khateeb*, Page 123, Volume 1)

Hazrat Sirri Saqati

Hazrat Sirri Bin Mughlis Saqati (may Allah's mercy be upon him) (year of passing away: 251H) is the special *Khalifa* (deputy) of the very same Hazrat Ma'roof Karkhi. He was an *Imam* (authority) of his time on the topics of *Tasawwuf* and *Aqaid* (creed). Imam Sha'raani has written that he was the first to elucidate upon about the science of *Tawheed* in Baghdad (*Tabaqaat*, Page 630, Volume 1). Imam Abu Nu'aim has narrated the following golden quote from him:

"من ادعي باطن علم ينقض ظاهر حكم فهو غالط"

"If someone claims such a spiritual knowledge that contradicts the outward laws of Shariah, then he has erred."

(*Hilya tul-Awliya*, Page 121, Volume 10)

Hazrat Sirri Saqati (may Allah's mercy be upon him) was especially concerned that every work of Deen should be undertaken in such a manner that even a hint of the desire for worldly benefits should not contaminate it. To this end, he would not accept any gifts from any of his devotees. This was to such an extent that one day he developed cough. Someone from his devotees sent his son to him to present him a tablet. At that, Hazrat asked: "How much does this cost?" The son replied that my father has not told me its cost. Hazrat said: "Give my *salam* (greetings of peace) to your father and tell him that for the past fifty years we are teaching people not to use their *Deen* (religion) for acquiring worldly benefits. Then how can we use our own *Deen* to acquire worldly benefits today?"
(*Hilyah*, Page 117, Volume 10)

Hazrat Sirri Saqati used to say: “Whatever good condition Allah Ta’ala has bestowed upon me, it is all due to the blessings of Hazrat Ma’roof Karkhi. One day I was returning from Eid prayer when I saw Hazrat Ma’roof Karkhi taking a boy with disheveled hair somewhere. I asked him: “Who is this?” He replied: “On my way, I saw some boys playing and saw this boy standing gloomy on one side. I asked him: “Why don’t you play?” He replied: “I am an orphan.”” Hazrat Saqati said: “I asked Hazrat Ma’roof Karkhi: “What will you do after taking this boy with you?” He replied: “I will collect some fruit pits from somewhere and give them to him, so that he can buy some walnuts and become happy.” At this I said: “Please give this boy to me. I will take care of him.” He asked me to promise: “Will you really do that?” When I promised to do so, he said: “Take him, may Allah Ta’ala fill your heart with affluence.””

Hazrat Sirri Saqati narrates: “As a result of this supplication of Hazrat Ma’roof Karkhi, my heart has become such that the world appears more lowly to me than the most lowly of things.”
(*Hilyah*, Page 123, Volume 10)

Another incident related to Hazrat Sirri Saqati (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) is that one day he became sick and some people visited him to enquire about his well-being. According to the *Ahadith*, the Sunnah method of visiting the sick is that those people who are not very frank with the patient should only visit for a short while and should not stay on for too long, so that the patient does not feel uneasy. But the visitors of Hazrat Sirri Saqati remained sitting with him for a long time. It is natural for a sick person to feel uneasy and perturbed when someone he is not frank or close with stays with him for too long. Hazrat also felt uncomfortable. When they had stayed for a long time the visitors said: “Please supplicate for us.” At this Hazrat Saqati raised his hands and said: “O Allah! Please teach us the etiquettes of visiting the sick.” (Ibid, Page 122)

Hazrat Junaid Baghdadi

Sayyid ut-Taifah (Leader of the Group) Hazrat Junaid Bin Muhammad Baghdadi (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) does not need any introduction. He was the nephew of Hazrat Sirri Saqati and also his *khalifah* (deputy). His ancestors were residents of Nahawand, but his birth and upbringing took place in Iraq. Besides being a leader among the Noble *Sufi*s, he was also a distinguished scholar of the outwardly sciences of Islam. In terms of *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) he would normally give *Fatwa* according to the school of thought of Hazrat Imam Abu Thaur (may Allah’s mercy be upon him), who was a student of Imam Shafi’i.
(*Tabaqaat ush-Sha’raani*, Page 72, Volume 1)

Imam Abu Nu’aim Isfahani has narrated his saying: “The one who has not memorized the Quran, and does not write *Ahadith*, and has not acquired the knowledge of *Fiqh*; such a person is not worthy of being followed.” (*Hilya tul-Awlia*, Page 255, Volume 10)

The noble *Awlia* (Friends of Allah) have preserved innumerable sayings of his and have transmitted them to us, in which are concealed great treasures of knowledge and wisdom and faith-guided foresight. Imam Abu Nu’aim Isfahani, in the tenth volume of his famous book *Hilya tul-Awlia*, has narrated his sayings across thirty pages. Out of those, few are presented below:

1. He said:
   من ظنّ أنّه يصل ببذل المجهود فمتعنّ ، ومن ظنّ أنّه يصل بغير بذل المجهود فمتمنّ
   "The one who thinks he can reach Allah through his own efforts is needlessly putting himself in hardship, and the one who thinks he can reach Allah without efforts and hard work is nursing mere wishful desires."
   (Page 267)

   Meaning that entertaining hopes without making efforts is wrong, and similarly, making efforts and becoming haughty about them and relying on them is also wrong. The correct mode of action is to continue making efforts while at the same time asking Allah for His benevolence and mercy, because one can attain *wusool* (union) only through the benevolence, grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ala.
2. He said:
   لا تيأس من نفسك وأنت تشفق من ذنبك، وتندم عليه بعد فعلك
   "Do not lose hope over yourself as long as you fear your sins and, if ever a sin is committed, you feel regret over it."
3. His Shaikh (spiritual mentor) Hazrat Sirri Saqati asked him: "What is the reality of *shukr* (gratitude)?" He replied:
   ألا يستعان بشيء من نعمه علي معاصيه
   "The reality of *shukr* (gratitude) is to not use any of Allah's blessings in His disobedience." Hazrat Sirri Saqati liked this reply very much. (Page 119 and 268, Volume 10)
4. He said:
   الانسان لا يعاب بما في طبعه، انما يعاب إذا فعل بما في طبعه
   "As long as an evil thought remains limited to one's nature (heart), it is not a defect. But when one acts upon that thought, that is a defect."

This exact point is also found in the *mawaiz* (speeches) and *malfoozat* (sayings) of Hakeem Ul Ummah Hazrat Thanvi (may his secret be sanctified), that as long as one does not act upon the demands of the *razail* (blameworthy morals), those *razail* remain harmless.

5. At another point he said: "I do not dislike any incident in the entire world, because I have firmly embedded this principle in my heart that the world is a place of sorrow, grief, trials and tribulations. Therefore, it should only bring evil to me. As a result, if ever it brings things which I like, then that is a favour of Allah. Otherwise the expectation remains the same." (Page 270)
6. One day he was asked: "What is "*Dunya*" (the world) which we are commanded to shun?" He replied:
   ما دنا من القلب، وشغل عن الله
   "Whatever comes near to the heart and leads one to neglect Allah." (Page 274)
7. One day a man asked:
   "متى تصير النفس دائها دواؤها؟"
   "When does it happen that the diseases of the *nafs* (heart) themselves become the cure for it?" He replied:
   إذا خالفت هواؤها صار داؤها دواؤها

> When you oppose the *nafs* (desires of the heart), its diseases themselves will become the cure. (Page 274)

These are just a few examples. Otherwise, all of his sayings are replete with similar words of wisdom.

Abu Bakr Attar (may Allah's mercy be upon him) says that I was present near Hazrat Junaid Baghdadi at the time of his passing away. He was praying sitting and would double his feet during Sajdah. It was in this state that his soul departed his feet, and he could no longer move them. But he continued praying. Someone said: "It would be better if you lie down." He replied: "This is in fact the time for favour from Allah Ta'ala, Allahu Akbar." And then he passed away in that state. His year of death was 297H."

The graves of all three of these saintly elders are housed in the same enclosure, and graves surround this enclosure till far. We could identify the graves of these three elders only, but only God knows how many suns and moons of knowledge and excellence, asceticism and piety, and struggle and hard work would be hidden beneath this ancient graveyard. Baghdad was the capital city of the Muslim world and a central place for scholars and *awliya* (Friends of Allah), and *mujahid*s (those engaged in *jihad*) and martyrs for centuries. Each nook and cranny of its graveyard is illuminated by the *nur* (light) of the leading personalities of the Islamic world. But it was impossible for a foreign traveler of the fifteenth century to find and identify those personalities. My respected father's couplet comes to mind:

ڈھونڈیں ہم اب نقوش سبک رفتگاں کہاں؟

اب گردِ کارواں بھی نہیں کارواں کہاں؟

Where should we search for the trails of those who have gone far ahead?
What to say of the finding the caravan, even its trail of dust has not remained

Therefore there was nothing I could do except reciting *al-Fatiha* on all the residents of the graveyard as a whole, and then proceeding on.

In Kadhimiyyah

After visiting the graves of those elders, we presented ourselves at the blessed grave of Hazrat Moosa al-Kadhim (may Allah's mercy be upon him), which is located in the western part of Baghdad called Karkh. Due to this grave, the entire surrounding area is named "Kadhimiyyah".

Hazrat Moosa al-Kadhim (may Allah's mercy be upon him) was the son of Hazrat Ja'far Sadiq (may Allah's mercy be upon him). He faithfully preserved the qualities of devoutness, piety, knowledge and excellence he inherited from the noble Prophetic family, and was also the authority and *Imam* (leader) of the Muslims in his time. He also held a high rank in the knowledge of Hadith. Imam Tirmidhi and Imam Ibnu Majah (may Allah's mercy be upon them both) have narrated Ahadith from him. (*al-Khulasah lil-Khazraji*, Page 390)

He resided in Madinah Tayyibah. The Caliph of the time, Mahdi, had a misconception that Hazrat may rebel against his government. He thus arrested him. However, while Hazrat was in prison, Mahdi saw

Hazrat Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) in a dream in which Hazrat Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) was reciting the following verse of the Quran while addressing Mahdi:

فَهَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ أَن تُفْسِدُواْ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَتُقَطِّعُوٓاْ أَرْحَامَكُمْ
(Surah Muhammad: 22)

"Then, is it to be expected of you, that if you were put in authority, you will cause mischief in the land and break your ties of kinship?"

When Mahdi woke up it was still night, but he could not muster courage to wait till morning. He immediately called his vizier and ordered him to bring Hazrat Moosa Kadhim (may Allah's mercy be upon him) to him immediately. When Hazrat came, Mahdi embraced him with honour and respect and made him sit beside himself. He thereafter narrated his dream and said: "Can you guarantee that if I release you, you will not rebel against me or my successors?" Hazrat replied: "I swear by God! Neither have I ever done this, nor is such a thing in my nature." Hearing this, Mahdi gifted him three thousand Dinars and released him. Mahdi's vizier Rabi' says: "I carried out this order during the night itself and, apprehending some unexpected obstacle, I set Hazrat on his way to Madinah Tayyibah before daybreak." (*Safwa tus-Safwah libnil-Jawzi*, Page 104, Volume 2)

However, later when Haroon Rasheed became the Caliph he also harboured the same misconception. Therefore when he visited Hijaz for Hajj, he brought Hazrat Moosa al-Kadhim (may Allah's mercy be upon him) with him and imprisoned him in Baghdad again. Hazrat passed away in this state. The brief letter Hazrat wrote to Haroon Rasheed during this second imprisonment is a masterpiece in terms of its eloquence and power. However times one reads it, one finds a universe of wisdom and admonition packed in it. He wrote:

إنه لن ينقضي عني يوم من البلاء إلّا انقضي عنك معه يوم من الرخاء، حتى نفضي جميعاً إلى يوم ليس له انقضاء، يسخر فيه المبطلون
(Safwa tul-Safwah, page 105, Volume 2)

The true power and effect of this power-packed paragraph can only be appreciated in the original Arabic words, but the general meaning is as follows:

"Each day I pass in this tribulation eliminates one day from your luxurious enjoyments, until one day we both will reach that Day which can never be eliminated. That day, failure will be the lot of those who are upon falsehood."

Hazrat Moosa Kadhim (may Allah's mercy be upon him) was a saintly elder from whom *Kashf* (unveiling of normally hidden knowledge) and *Karamaat* (miracles) were witnessed. Due to excessive worship, he was famously called "*al'Abd us-Salih*" (The Righteous Slave). He was also exceptional in his generosity and magnanimity. Whenever he learned of someone who had backbitten him, he would send him some financial gift. He passed away on 5th of Rajab 163H while imprisoned by Haroon Rasheed.
(*at-Tabaqaat ul-Kubra lish-Sha'raani*, Page 33, Volume 1)

Allah Ta'ala bestowed such stature to his grave even after his death that, according to what elders have experienced, Allah Ta'ala accepts whatever supplication is made there. Abu 'Ali Khallal says: "Whenever I faced a matter that worried me, I would go to the grave of Hazrat Moosa Bin Ja'far (may Allah's mercy be upon him) and make supplication through his *tawassul* (intermediary), and each time Allah Ta'ala would facilitate what I wanted." (*Tarikh Baghdad Lil Khateeb*, Page 120, Volume 1)

It was permissible if someone did this much, but those devotees who did not possess a correct understanding of the limits set by Shariah in these matters transformed it into God knows what. Such a tempest of *bid'aat* (religious innovations) and misguided beliefs erupts there at all times that a person who desires to visit his grave according to the Sunnah way finds it difficult to stay there even for a short while.

Since according to the *Ahl ut-Tashayyu'* (*Shia*s) he is one of the twelve *Imam*s, the building constructed over his grave is a wonder of the art of construction. Its *Minar*s and doors are coated with gold and can be seen glittering from afar. A carnival-like atmosphere pervades the tomb at all times. Some people visit to see the grandeur of the building; some (we seek Allah's refuge) take it as the *Ka'ba* and do *Tawaf* (circumambulation) around it while kissing its grills; some, considering the resident of the grave as independently powerful to fulfill their needs, directly supplicate to him for their needs. To cater to the visitors, all kinds of hotels surround the grave till far. Some people have taken up being a tour guide as their occupation, and render their services to visitors; some people have opened flower shops, so that visitors can buy flowers from them and strew them on the grave; some people bring cash and coins and cast them inside the grills of the tomb--- amidst this storm of ignorance and misguided beliefs, who has the time to think that the resident of this grave himself has never advocated any of these despicable beliefs and gestures of veneration? If, after his death, he had any power to do something, his grave would not have been more than a simple uncemented grave, as is the Sunnah; neither would it have been plastered, nor would such a sparkling palace be built over it, nor would anyone dare to do anything which had the minutest doubt of *bid'at* (religious innovation) or *shirk* (polytheism).

Among the peculiarities of *bid'aat* (religious innovations) and rituals is that they normally do not possess a uniform global format, rather it takes a different form in each place. Since these rituals and *bid'aat* have no basis in the Quran and Sunnah, the people of each place concoct whatever rituals suit them. Such that sometimes the people in one place invent such rituals that people in other places do not even know that such rituals exist, while the people in other places take up some other customs. The same is observed for *bid'aat* that exist at graves; some such rituals were observed at the graves in Iraq as we had already witnessed in Pakistan and India, but we also observed some novel customs which are not in vogue in our countries.

What else can a powerless traveler do when he sees such injustices being perpetrated at the graves of those saintly elders except feeling sickened with disgust and abhorrence, and supplicating that Allah guides those religious leaders who, instead of enlightening the naïve and uneducated common people with the teachings of those saintly elders, have left them entangled in these absurd *bid'aat* and rituals.

(4)

At the Tomb of Imam Abu Yusuf (may Allah's mercy be upon him)

Within the precincts of the tomb of Hazrat Imam Moosa al-Kadhim (may Allah's mercy be upon him), to the south is a Masjid named "Jami' Abi Yusuf". Within a portion of this Masjid is the grave of Hazrat Imam Abu Yusuf (may Allah's mercy be upon him). We arrived here after visiting the grave of Hazrat Moosa al-Kadhim (may Allah's mercy be upon him).

Hazrat Imam Abu Yusuf (may Allah's mercy be upon him) is among those benefactors of the Ummah to whom the Ummah will forever remain indebted for his favours. Especially for the followers of the Hanafi school of thought in *Fiqh* (jurisprudence), his services are indelible and impossible to take for granted. As a *faqeeh* (expert in Islamic jurisprudence), he not only transmitted the knowledge of his teacher Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah's mercy be upon him) to the Ummah, rather as the *Qadi ul-Qudaat* (Chief Judge) he also brought this *Fiqh* out from the realm of mere theoretical discussions to the real world by practically implementing it.

Hazrat Imam Abu Yusuf's father passed away during his childhood. Due to financial difficulties his mother had sent him to a drycleaner as an apprentice, but he was more interested in acquiring knowledge. He thus began attending the lectures of Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah's mercy be upon him). When his mother learned of this, she forbade him, due to which he could not attend Imam Abu Hanifa's lessons for several days. It is natural for a teacher to pay special attention to an intelligent and eager student. When he returned to the lesson after a hiatus of many days, Imam Sahab asked for the reason. He narrated the entire story. Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa called him after the lesson and handed him a bag which contained one hundred Dirhams and said: "Make do with this, and let me know when they finish." Hazrat Imam Abu Yusuf himself relates: "After that day I never had to inform Imam Sahab when the bag had become empty. Whenever the money finished he would himself give more, as if he had *ilham* (divine inspiration) about it."

Perhaps his mother thought that this arrangement would not last long, and that there should be a regular source of income. One day she thus said to Imam Abu Hanifa: "He is an orphan. I wish for him to learn some trade so that he is able to earn a living. So please stop him from attending your classes." But Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa replied: "He is, in fact, learning to eat *faloodah* (a kind of dessert) in pistachio *ghee*." His mother thought this was a joke and left.

But Imam Abu Yusuf himself narrates: "With that very knowledge Allah Ta'ala bestowed upon me such a standing that I attained the position of judge, and during that time I happened to eat on the tablecloth of the Caliph of the time, Haroon Rasheed, very often. One day I was sitting beside Haroon Rasheed when he presented a bowl to me and told: "This is a very special delicacy, which is made once in a while even for us." I asked: "*Ameerul Mumineen* (Leader of the Muslims)! What is it?" He said: "This is a *faloodah* prepared in pistachio *ghee*." I laughed in amazement at hearing this. When Haroon Rasheed asked for the reason of my laughter I told him the whole story. He was also amazed and began saying:

“May Allah Ta’ala have mercy upon Imam Abu Hanifa. He used to see with the eyes of his intellect what cannot be seen by the eyes on our heads.” (*Tareekh Baghdad Lil Khateeb*, Page 245, Volume 14)

Allah Ta’ala had bestowed upon Imam Abu Yusuf (may Allah’s mercy be upon him), through the blessings of the company of Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah’s mercy be upon him), an extraordinarily high standing in terms of knowledge and jurisprudence. Besides *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), his standing in the knowledge of Hadith is also well-recognized, to such an extent that even those who, due to certain misunderstandings, criticized Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Muhammad in terms of their knowledge of Hadith, recognize Imam Abu Yusuf as *thiqah* (trustworthy) in Hadith. (Tareekh Baghdad, Page 255, Volume 14)

He continued holding the position of *Qadi* (judge) for seventeen years after the death of Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa, and he was also the first in Islamic history to be conferred the title of *Qadi Ul-Qudaat* (Chief Judge). But it is reported from Hazrat Yahya Bin Mu’een (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) that despite the fervent and never-ending busyness that goes hand-in-hand with the position of *Qadi* (judge), he would offer two hundred *Rakat*s of prayer daily, during the day and night combined, even after taking up this position. (*Mir’aat ul-Khabaan lil-Yaafi’i*, Page 382, Volume 1)

Hazrat Imam Abu Yusuf (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) was first appointed as a *Qadi* (judge) by Caliph Moosa Bin al-Mahdi. Coincidentally he fell into a dispute regarding a garden with a commoner and the case went to *Qadi* Abu Yusuf. Testimonies were presented on behalf of Caliph Moosa to prove his ownership. Based on the testimonies, it appeared that the verdict would be declared in favour of the Caliph. But Imam Abu Yusuf had some doubt that perhaps the reality is contrary to what appears from the testimonies of the witnesses. He therefore summoned Moosa Bin al-Mahdi to court and said: “Ameerul Mumineen! Your adversary wants you to swear that the testimony your witnesses have given is truthful.”

According to normal principles, if the claimant presents reliable witnesses in support of his claims, he is not forced to swear. Moosa thus asked:

“Do you consider it correct to ask the claimant to swear like this?”

Imam Abu Yusuf replied: “Qadi Ibn Abi Layla (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) considered it permissible to ask the claimant to swear.”

The Caliph could not bear swearing over material disputes so he said: “I take back my claim from the garden in favour of the defendant.”

The garden was thus awarded to the defendant. (Tareekh Baghdad, Page 249, Volume 14)

When the time of his passing away neared, having spent seventeen years carrying out the delicate and sensitive responsibilities of being a *Qadi* (judge), he once said: “Alhamdulillah! I have never intentionally issued the verdict of any case unjustly. I always endeavoured to pass judgments in the light of the Quran and Sunnah. And if ever I faced some difficulty in any case, I relied upon the opinion of Imam Abu Hanifa

(may Allah's mercy be upon him), because to my knowledge he was the best interpreter of the commandments of Allah Ta'ala."

Hazrat Ma'roof Karkhi (may Allah's mercy be upon him) (a brief biography of whom has been mentioned above) was a contemporary of Imam Abu Yusuf. One day he said to one of his disciples: "Imam Abu Yusuf is sick nowadays. Inform me in case he passes away." (He meant by this that he desired to attend his funeral prayer)

That person says: "When I went to Imam Abu Yusuf's house to enquire about his condition, his funeral procession was coming out from it. I thought to myself that its too late to inform Hazrat Ma'roof Karkhi for him to attend the funeral prayer, so I myself went to attend his funeral prayer and informed Hazrat Ma'roof Karkhi later. Hazrat Ma'roof Karkhi continued repeating *Inna lillahi Wa Inna Ilayhi Raji'oon* ("We certainly belong to Allah, and to Him we are bound to return") and expressed much regret at missing out on attending his funeral prayer."

For a scholar who is appointed to the governmental position of *Qadi* (judge), if suspicions do not raise in the hearts of his contemporaries, then at the very least they do not retain so much respect for his virtuousness, piety and fear of God that a *Sufi* elder like Hazrat Ma'roof Karkhi should feel so aggrieved at missing out on attending his funeral prayer. Perhaps it is for this reason that that person asked Hazrat Ma'roof Karkhi: "Why do you feel so aggrieved at missing out on attending his funeral prayer?" Hazrat Ma'roof Karkhi replied: "I have seen (perhaps in a dream) as if I am in *Jannah* (paradise). A palace is being built with curtains draped over its doors. I asked: "Whose palace is this?" I was told: "This is for Qadi Abu Yusuf." I asked: "Due to which action did he attain this stature?" I was replied: "He teaches people goodness and is himself desirous of it, and people have also caused much harm to him." (*Tareekh Baghdad Lil Khateeb*, Page 261, Volume 14)

At the Tomb of Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah's mercy be upon him)

The sun was about to set when we came out from the tomb of Hazrat Imam Abu Yusuf (may Allah's mercy be upon him). The heart now eagerly desired to visit the grave of Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah's mercy be upon him), which is located quite far from here. But our driver, who was not only driving but also fulfilling the responsibilities of hospitality with utmost sincerity and love, drove us to Jami' ul-Imam il-A'zam by Maghrib time.

This entire area became famously known as "A'zamiyyah" due to the grave of Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah's mercy be upon him). Today it is a rather radiant and bustling part of the city, but it was a graveyard during the time of Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa, and was famously called "*Maqbara tul-Kheezran*" because the Caliph's slave girl "Kheezran" was buried here. Khateeb has written in Tareekh Baghdad that the famous biographer of the Noble Messenger (peace be upon him) Muhammad Bin Ishaq (may Allah's mercy be upon him) is also buried in this graveyard. However, now no signs remain of all other graves as this place has become an inhabited area, while the tomb of Hazrat Imam al-A'zam (may Allah's

mercy be upon him) remains, and beside it a magnificent Masjid named Jami' ul-Imam Abi Hanifa has been constructed.

The captivating sound of the Adhan of Maghrib prayer echoed around the Masjid when we reached its gate. We offered Maghrib prayer first. Thereafter, with eagerness and enthusiasm erupting in my heart, we visited the grave. It felt as if a halo of bliss and tranquility and *nur* (spiritual luminance) had enveloped the blessed grave. That beloved personality lay resting before us with whom I had such a heartfelt connection since childhood that whenever his name was mentioned it felt as if the heart was exuding fountains of veneration and love.

Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah's mercy be upon him) was born in Kufa at a time when this city had become a center of knowledge and excellence. Circles of knowledge of the most distinguished *Muhaddithin* (Hadith masters) and *Fuqahaa* (masters of Fiqh) adorned every here and there of the city, and no student of knowledge of Hadith could do without the scholars of Kufa. The name of Hazrat Imam Sahab's father was Thabit, and he passed away during Imam Sahab's childhood. Rather according to one narration, his mother had later married Hazrat Ja'far Sadiq (may Allah's mercy be upon him) and Hazrat Imam Sahab's upbringing took place in his cradle of nurture.
(*Hadaiq ul-Hanafiyya*, Page 43 with reference to *Miftah us-Sa'adah*)

Initially Hazrat Imam Sahab remained more busy with business, but at the same time he remained involved with the knowledge of *Aqeedah* (creed) and *Kalaam*. When Hazrat 'Aamir Bin Sharaheel Sha'bi (may Allah's mercy be upon him) observed in him signs of intelligence and precocity, he advised him to fully immerse himself into attaining knowledge. This piece of advice hit the mark, and Hazrat left business and made acquisition of knowledge his full-time passion (*Manaqib ul-Imam il-A'zam Lil Makki*, Page 59, Volume 1) and acquired knowledge from most of the eminent scholars of his time, to such an extent that some have reported the number of teachers of Imam Sahab to reach four thousand.

Thereafter the great works ,with respect to knowledge of Deen, that Allah Ta'ala took from Hazrat Imam Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) do not need any words. And it is a fruit of those works that today more than half of the Muslim world has taken him as their *Imam* (leader) for interpretation and explanation of the Quran and Sunnah.

Initially Hazrat Imam Sahab remained in Kufa, but the ruler of Kufa Ibn Habeera, due to certain political reasons, not only imprisoned him but also inflicted punishments upon him. When he was finally freed from prison, he headed for Makkah Mukarramah to evade the ruler's atrocities and stayed there for many years. He returned to Iraq when the situation became tenable. It was the beginning of the Abbasid caliphate. Initially he welcomed the Abbasid caliphate in the hope that they would prove to be more religious than the Banu Umayyah. But when this hope faded away unfulfilled, he began having disagreements with the Abbasid caliphs as well. Caliph Mansoor wished for Imam Sahab to accept some governmental position during his rule, so that people got the impression of Hazrat's approval of him. But Imam Sahab was not ready to accept any governmental position, because this would entail him having to follow certain governmental orders which were against Shariah. Finally when the insistence increased, he agreed to supervise the masons of Baghdad and taking up the responsibility of tallying the

bricks used for construction. Later he was pressured by Mansoor to accept the position of *Qadi* (judge) but Hazrat Imam Sahab adamantly refused. In retribution, Mansoor had him imprisoned and also sentenced him to one hundred and ten lashes. After that, according to some narrations it seems that he passed away while in prison, while according to others he was released but was prohibited from issuing *Fatwa*s (Islamic legal verdicts) and mingling with people outside his home, and his time of deathapproached in this state and he bid farewell to this world. And as a result this part of Baghdad attained the good fortune of becoming his resting place.

As has been mentioned before, this place where the tomb of Imam A'zam is located used to be a graveyard famously known as "*Maqbara tul-Kheezran*". But after the burial of Hazrat Imam Sahab it became known as "*A'zamiyyah*". Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa's devotees built a Masjid here and began conducting religious classes. This same Masjid, as a result of gradual expansions, developed into a grand Jami' Masjid. This Masjid carries with it a peculiar history about which the current Imam has written an entire book.

The tomb of Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah's mercy be upon him) has always remained a center of attraction for the common man as well as the nobility. Rather Khateeb Baghdadi has, on his personal liking, narrated the following words of Imam Shafi'i:

انّي لأتبرك بأبي حنيفة، و أجيئ إلي قبره في كل يوم ـ يعني زائرا ـ فإذا عرضت لي حاجة صليت ركعتين، و جئت إلي قبره و سألت الله تعالي الحاجة عنده، فما تبعد عنى حتي تقضي

(*Tareekh Baghdad*, Page 123, Volume 1)

"I visit the grave of Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah's mercy be upon him) every day to attain blessings from him, and whenever I have a need I pray two *Rakat*s and then visit his grave and supplicate to Allah there; Allah Ta'ala soon fulfills my need."

And it is also very famously known that once Imam Shafi'i visited the grave of Imam Abu Hanifa and, contrary to his own opinion, did not read the *Qunoot* during Fajr prayer because Imam Abu Hanifa differs with this opinion.

I felt such peace and tranquility at the grave of Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa as a child feels in the cradle of his mother. The heart desired for this feeling to continue for as long as possible, but it was quite late and there was no option except to leave. I thus departed with a heavy heart.

At the Bookstores

It was night time, so after visiting the tomb of Hazrat Imam Sahab the heart desired to buy such books from the bookstores here which are unavailable in Pakistan. We thus arrived at "*al-Bab ush-Sharqi*", the most radiant, bustling and central area of Baghdad. Since a long time I had the impression that *Maktaba tul-Muthanna* of Baghdad possessed the biggest stock of Arabic books in the entire world. While in Pakistan, we had once ordered the list of books it sold, and just this list comprised of hundreds of pages. I therefore expressed my desire to our guide, respected Abdur Razzaq Sahab, to visit it. I thought I would

be able to find enough books at this bookstore alone, and so would not need to visit any other bookstore.

But after asking around when we finally reached "*Maktaba tul-Muthanna*", I was dumbfounded beyond belief that it turned out to be just a small shop containing more stationery material than books. I thought we had come to the wrong shop, but after inquiry we learned that "*Maktaba tul-Muthanna*" had now lost its former distinguished position. The original owner would probably have passed away and none of the inheritors were able to maintain it properly. It therefore gradually declined such that now it only sells course books, novels, story books and stationery material. This spectacle of the upheaval of time was so deeply admonitory that the heart remained moved for a long while. What can man rely upon in this world? ما عندكم ينفد و ما عند الله باق (What is with you shall perish and what is with Allah shall last).

However, there were some bookstores located nearby, from which I bought some books. But when I came to know that the government-set exchange rate of one Iraqi Dinar was four Dollars, meaning around sixty five Pakistani Rupees, I lost courage for any further shopping. It turned out, thankfully, that this lowly one's companion on this trip, respected Qari Basheer Ahmad Sahab, had bought some Iraqi Dinars from Saudi Arabia at the open market rate of approximately one Dollar for an Iraqi Dinar. I therefore did not suffer much loss from whatever books I had bought. But further shopping would have cost a small fortune. By wandering around the shops I also sensed that, probably due to the war, Baghdad no longer holds a sizable treasure of books. I thus sufficed with whatever books we had already purchased and returned to the hotel.

At the Ministry of *Awqaf* (Islamic endowments)

At ten the next morning, our hosts had invited us to the Ministry of *Awqaf* (Islamic endowments). We met Iraq's Minister of *Awqaf* Abdullah Fazil Sahab, who is a good-natured, good-humoured, sociable and knowledge-loving person. He had visited Darul Uloom on his recent visit to Pakistan and, with the grace of Allah, had returned touched by the manner in which knowledge is imparted here, and by the good organization. He met us with much love and warmth.

Iraq's Ministry of *Awqaf* (Islamic endowments) is distinguished among all Ministries in the entire Muslim world for publishing, with great diligence and in a very well-organized manner, a great treasure of rare and precious scholarly and religious books. It has published, until now, more than a hundred such rare and precious books which only existed in the form of manuscripts before and the general scholarly world could not benefit from them. Especially worthy of mention among such books are "*al-Mu'jam ul-Kabeer lit-Tabarani*", the commentary of Hazrat Sadr Shaheed (may Allah's mercy be upon him) on Imam Khassaf's "*Adab ul-Qadi*", "*ar-Ritaaj*" the commentary of Imam Abu Yusuf's *Kitab ul-Khiraaj*, Imam Sughdi's "*an-Nutafu fil Fatawa*", Allama Qasim Bin Qatloobgha's (may Allah's mercy be upon him) "*Moojibaat ul-Ahkaam*", etc. Had Iraq not have to face war, this series of publications would have made immense progress by now.

Many of those books were published and thereafter became short in supply. The above-mentioned Minister gifted one set of the books available to this lowly one, which took up three cartons. If truth be told, acquisition of those books was among the major objectives of this trip to Iraq. May Allah Ta'ala recompense him the best of rewards.

In Madain

After finishing our work at the Ministry of *Awqaf* we headed for Madain, which is located at a distance of about fifty kilometers from Baghdad. When we exited Baghdad and got on the highway leading to Madain, we were greeted by a scene of date gardens extending on both sides of the roads till far. However, since the country is at war and Iran's border is not far from here, military posts and fortresses could be seen every here and there, with armed personnel manning tanks. After entering Iraq, this was the first time we felt that the country is at war. Otherwise, observing the hustle and bustle of Baghdad, the throng of lights lighting up the night sky and the normal flow of daily life, one would not even sense that a war is going on in the country.

But I was deeply aggrieved by observing those military posts, the fortresses, the soldiers manning them and the weapons they were carrying. Who was the enemy, really? And by whom did the war happen to be initiated? Be it Iraq or Iran, both claim to be Muslim countries. There are already social powers throughout the entire world that bear enmity to both. If both these countries were to unite against those malicious forces, these weapons, these soldiers, these war armaments would instead be used for the protection, safety, honour and liberation of the Ummah. But what is actually happening is that both these countries are getting weaker and weaker by fighting each other out. Millions of rupees are being burnt to dust every day on a meaningless war. Scores of families are losing their caretakers every day from both countries, and the enemies of Islam are having fun watching this show. This has been going on for so long that it would now be hard to find a family who has not lost at least one member to this futile war.

Who started the war? There are contradicting reports about this from both countries. But if the first serious mistake was committed by Iraq, then it has offered unconditional ceasefire even now, and the dispute can be resolved by accepting it and reconciling. However, the present government of Iran is not ready to stop the war at any cost. God knows what they want. And what they expect to achieve by continuing this devastating war.

I was immersed in these thoughts when the houses of Madain appeared.

(5)

In a short while our car entered the city of Madain. Today it is a small city, rather a town, but it was the royal capital during the reign of the Sasanian Empire, and Chosroes used to live here. In those days, the Tigris used to pass through the middle of the city, and the part on the western bank of Tigris used to be called Bahurashir (Seleucia), while the part on the eastern bank used to be called Madain (Ctesiphon). Today the river has shifted slightly away from the city and the entire city is situated to its east.

Owing to its congenial climate and excellent geographical location, the Iranian kings had chosen it as their capital city and built such a fortified castle in it that, due to its massiveness and strength, it used to be considered impregnable. However, the alchemic company of the Leader of the Two Worlds ﷺ had destined those desert dwellers of Arabia to liberate humanity from the despotism of Caesar (Heraclius) and Chosroes. They reached here outwardly ill-equipped, draped in worn-out clothes and carrying dull swords. At first Chosroes ignored them, considering them insignificant foes, but the devastating battle of Qadisiyya broke the back of Chosroes's power, and he was left besieged in Madain. He thought his impregnable castle and the Tigris flowing before it would safeguard him from coming into the hands of the Muslims. But no river or mountain could stop the onslaught of those slaves of Allah who had set out on the earth to raise the name of Allah. Thus, eventually Chosroes's flag of awe-inspiring glory was lowered from the city of Madain, a city once considered invincible. And this flag became so tattered that it could never be raised again; the city has been under the control of Muslims since that day.

One is greeted by a Jami' Masjid immediately after entering Madain. Three noble Sahaba (may Allah be pleased with them) are buried within the precincts of this Jami' Masjid; Hazrat Salman Farsi, Hazrat Hudhaifa Bin Yaman and Hazrat Abdullah Bin Jabir. I was blessed with presenting myself at the blessed graves of all three of these companions and presenting my *salam* (greetings of peace).

Hazrat Salman Farsi (may Allah be pleased with him) was originally a citizen of Iran and belonged to a fire-worshipping family. However, when the search for truth instilled in him repulsion from fire-worship, he defied his father and accepted Christianity, and then went to ash-Shaam (Levant) and remained under the tutelage of various Christian scholars of ash-Shaam and Iraq. He finally went to a Christian scholar of Ammuriyah and began staying in his company. When the time of this scholar's death approached he said: "I have remained under the tutelage of so-and-so scholars until now. Who should I go to after you?" The Christian scholar replied: "I do not know of any scholar who is completely on the truth now. However, the time is near for the coming of a Prophet who will follow the religion of Ibrahim. He will be sent in the land of the Arabs and will migrate to a land replete with date-palm trees. If you can reach this Prophet, then do so. There will be three signs of this Prophet. First, that he will not eat from charity. Second, that he will accept gifts. Third, that between his shoulders will be the stamp of Prophethood."

After the death of the Christian scholar, Hazrat Salman departed for Arabia along with a caravan. However, on the way his ruthless caravan mates sold him off as a slave to a Jew. That Jew was a resident of Madinah Tayyibah, and so brought him along to Madinah Tayyibah. Observing the date-palm gardens here, he became almost certain that this is the very place the Christian scholar had told him about. Years passed by while he continued serving the Jew as a slave. One day, he was doing some chore while on top of a tree while his Jewish master was sitting below. In the meanwhile, the Jew's cousin came and began saying: "May God destroy the Bani Qaylah (Ansar)! They are right now gathering in Quba to welcome a man who has come from Makkah, and they say he is a Prophet and a Messenger." Hazrat Salman himself says: "Shivers ran down my spine the moment I heard these words, and I felt like I would fall down on my master."

Collecting himself, he climbed down and asked the Jew the full story. But the Jew master replied him with a slap, and his wish to meet the Noble Messenger ﷺ right away fizzled out into disappointment--- But after work, in the evening, he arrived at Quba with his small savings and presented them to the Noble Messenger ﷺ saying: "You people are needy, so here is some *sadaqah* (charity) for you and your companions". The Noble Messenger ﷺ declined the charity for himself and gave permission to the Sahaba to accept it. The first sign thus came to pass before Hazrat Salman.

After he ﷺ arrived in Madinah Tayyibah from Quba, Hazrat Salman once again presented himself and, instead of charity, presented a gift. He ﷺ accepted it--- This was the second sign for Hazrat Salman.

When Hazrat Salman came again after a few days, the Noble Messenger ﷺ was at Baqi' accompanying a funeral procession. A group of the Sahaba was also present, with him ﷺ sitting in the middle. Hazrat Salman greeted with Salam and, in order to see the third sign, i.e. the stamp of Prophethood, sat down behind him. The Noble Messenger ﷺ understood his purpose of sitting behind and removed the cloth from his blessed back. Hazrat Salman recognized him as soon as he saw the stamp of Prophethood--- the ultimate goal of his long and arduous quest for the Truth lay right before his eyes. The one in whose search he had gone through innumerable trials and tribulations, from leaving his home to undergoing slavery, was in plain view offering unbridled pleasure to his eyes. When the fruit of the struggle of years suddenly presented itself as the delight and coolness of his eyes, a tsunami of emotions, which had laid dormant for God knows how long, suddenly burst forth in the form of streams of tears from his eyes. He proceeded forward and kissed the stamp of Prophethood, and presented it the offering of sincere tears of veneration, which had remained restrained for years.

When the Noble Messenger ﷺ noticed his crying, he called him to his front and asked him the matter. He narrated his entire tale and got the honour of accepting Islam at his ﷺ blessed hands. The reward the Noble Messenger ﷺ gave to Hazrat Salman for his being alone in foreign land, away from family, and for all the adversities he went through for the sake of Islam, was such that Hazrat Salman could sacrifice for it not only the comforts of being in one's land with one's family, rather all the comforts the entire world and whatever it contains have to offer. He ﷺ said:

سلمان منّا أهل البيت

Salman is one of us – the *Ahl ul-Bayt* (people of the household of the Prophet ﷺ)

On the one hand he received treatment of such honour and respect that the leader of the universe ﷺ declared him to be among his family, while on the other hand he was still under slavery of the Jew. The Noble Messenger ﷺ recommended him to agree to *Kitaabat* with the Jew, i.e. to attain freedom by paying him something. The conditions the Jew put for his freedom were almost impossible to fulfill – he said: "Pay me forty *uqiyah*s of gold and plant three hundred date trees. When the trees bear fruit, you will be free." A lifetime is required for three hundred date trees to bear fruit, but the Mercy of the Two Worlds ﷺ encouraged the Sahaba to aid Hazrat Salman with date saplings. Consequently, through assistance from the Noble Sahaba, three hundred date saplings were collected. The Noble Messenger ﷺ told Hazrat Salman to dig holes for the saplings. When the holes were dug, the Noble Messenger ﷺ personally went and planted all the trees with his own noble hand and supplicated for *Barakah*

(blessings). These trees had been planted by that holy hand which had inundated barren hearts, and which had nurtured lofty trees of the Truth in the span of a few years. It was a miracle of that blessed hand that all the trees bore fruit in only one year, and the toughest condition of Hazrat Salman's freedom was thus fulfilled.

Now what remained was the condition of forty *uqiyah*s. One time some gold came to the Noble Messenger ﷺ which he gave to Hazrat Salman to use to get his freedom. The gold appeared to be less than forty *uqiyah*s, but when Hazrat Salman weighed it, it turned out to be exactly forty *uqiyah*s. And thus he attained freedom from slavery by virtue of the Mercy of the Two Worlds ﷺ. Due to his slavery, Hazrat Salman Farsi (may Allah be pleased with him) was unable to take part in the Battles of Badr and Uhud. His first battle in the company of the Noble Messenger ﷺ was the Battle of Ahzab, and it was due to his suggestion that the trench was dug in this battle.

He continuously took part in *Jihad*s after the death of the Noble Messenger ﷺ. Especially during the caliphate of Hazrat Umar, when the Muslim armies advanced towards Iran, he participated as a distinguished military leader of the Muslims. Hundreds, rather thousands of Arab Muslims would engage in Jihad under his command. And it is reported in Jami' Tirmidhi that when any Iranian fortress was to be attacked, Hazrat Salman would first invite them to Islam and tell them: "By virtue of Islam, I am the leader of the Arabs despite being an Iranian."

After Iran was conquered, he took Madain as his place of residence. He also remained the Governor of Madain for some time, but he used to live such a simple life even while being the Governor that nobody would take him to be the Governor of Madain by his appearance.

Once a Syrian trader came to Madain with his things when he saw Hazrat Salman, who was walking in the streets as a common man. The Syrian trader mistook him to be a labourer, and said to him: "Pick up these things." Hazrat Salman carried the load without the least bit of reluctance or hesitation. After a while, when the residents of Madain saw him carrying the load, they told the Syrian trader: "This is the Governor of Madain." Hearing this, the trader was amazed as well embarrassed, and apologized to Hazrat Salman and requested him to put down the things. But Hazrat Salman did not agree and said: "I had intended a good deed. I will not put these things down until I complete it." He thereafter did not take a sigh of relief until after carrying the things to their destination (Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, Page 88, Volume 4).

Hazrat Salman (may Allah be pleased with him) passed away during the caliphate of Hazrat Usman (may Allah be pleased with him) in Madain and he was buried here as well. The following Hadith is still inscribed on his grave:

سلمان منّا أهل البيت

(6)

Hazrat Hudhaifa Bin Yamaan

Two other graves are located near the grave of Hazrat Salman Farsi, one of Hazrat Hudhaifa Bin Yamaan (may Allah be pleased with him), and on the other the name of Hazrat Abdullah Bin Jabir is written.

Hazrat Hudhaifa Bin Yamaan is among the famous and distinguished *Sahaba* (companions) of the Noble Messenger ﷺ. He belonged to the tribe of Banu 'Abs and had accepted Islam together with his respected father while still in his home town. His father's real name was "Hisl" and he was known by the epithet "Yaman". After accepting Islam, the two of them left their homes to present themselves in the service of the Noble Messenger ﷺ. Coincidentally, this was exactly the time when the Noble Messenger ﷺ was preparing for the Battle of Badr, and Abu Jahl's army had departed Makkah Mukarramah to face the Muslim army. Hazrat Hudhaifa Bin Yaman and his father bumped into Abu Jahl's army on their way. They arrested the two of them and said: "You are heading to meet Muhammad (ﷺ)". They replied: "We are going to Madinah." At this, Abu Jahl's men said: "We will not release you until you give us your word that you will only go to Madinah, but will not join them in war against us." They promised this under compulsion, and thereafter presented themselves to the Noble Messenger ﷺ and narrated the entire incident.

This was a time when the first battle between Truth and Falsehood was brewing. The Muslims were facing those disbelievers of Quraish who were coming heavily armed, and who outnumbered the Muslims by more than three times. And every single soldier of the Muslims was highly prized. But the Leader of the Two Worlds ﷺ did not bear breaking a promise even in this critical situation, and said:

نفي بعهدهم، ونستعين الله عليهم

We will fulfill the covenant made with them and seek Allah's help against them.

(Saheeh Muslim, *Kitab ul-Jihad*, *Bab ul-Wafa Bil 'Ahd* (Number 1778) and Musnad Ahmad Volume 5 Page 395 and Mustadrak Hakim Volume 3 Page 379)

Due to this, they could not take part in the Battle of Badr. Where can one find such glorious examples of trustworthiness and faithfulness in the history of other nations?

Hazrat Hudhaifa Bin Yaman (may Allah be pleased with him) took part in the Battle of Uhud. However, as a result of a tragic mistake, his father Yaman (may Allah be pleased with him) was martyred at the hands of Muslims themselves. Since this incident had occurred as a result of a misunderstanding, Hazrat Hudhaifa forgave his brothers the blood money as well. (Saheeh Bukhari, etc.)

Hazrat Hudhaifa Bin Yaman accomplished some remarkable feats in the Battle of Ahzab. On the last night of the battle, the Noble Messenger ﷺ dispatched Hazrat Hudhaifa to collect information about the enemy army. He carried out this precarious mission with outrageous audacity and courage and extraordinary wisdom and sagacity, until the army of the disbelievers eventually fled away.

Once the Noble Messenger ﷺ carried out a census of the Muslims, and put him in charge of this. He carried out this responsibility in an excellent manner. Muslims numbered one thousand five hundred at that time.

(Saheeh Muslim, Kitab ul-Iman, Number 149)

He continuously remained busy with Jihad even after the passing away of the Noble Messenger ﷺ. The city of Daynawar was conquered at his blessed hands. He made extraordinary contributions in the conquests of Iraq and Iran. It was also him who delivered the thrilling speech in the court of Chosroes which sent shockwaves through his palace.

After the conquest of Iran, Hazrat Umar had appointed him as the Governor of Madain. He entered Chosroes's capital city riding a donkey, while carrying some travel paraphernalia on its saddle cloth. The residents of Madain welcomed him and offered to fulfill any and every wish he may have. He replied:

طعاما آكله، وعلف حماري هذا من تبن

"It is enough for me if I get some food for myself and fodder for my donkey."

Hazrat Hudhaifa continued working as the Governor of Madain for a long time with this extreme simplicity. Once he went to visit Madinah Tayyibah. Hazrat Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) sat hiding on his way, so that if Hazrat Hudhaifa were bringing some wealth from Madain then he would come to know. But he saw Hazrat Hudhaifa returning in the exact same manner as when he had gone there the first time. Seeing this, Hazrat Umar embraced him.
(*Siyar A'laam an-Nubala* Lidh-Dhahabi, Page 366, Volume 2)

Hazrat Hudhaifa continued residing in Madain till his death, and he passed away in Madain forty days after the martyrdom of Hazrat Usman (may Allah be pleased with him). May Allah be pleased with him, and may Allah please him.

Hazrat Abdullah Bin Jabir

There is a grave next to his which says "Abdullah Bin Jabir". This lowly one could not find out as to who he was. As for Hazrat Jabir Bin Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him), he is a famous Ansari Sahabi. But he resided in Madinah Tayyibah and passed away there. (al-Isaabah, Page 214, Volume 1)

There are two *Sahaba* mentioned in books by the name of Abdullah Bin Jabir. One is Abdullah Bin Jabir al-Ansari al-Bayadi and the other is Abdullah Bin Jabir al-Abdi. However, the biographies of neither one of them is available and it is also not known as to where they passed away (al-Isaabah, Page 277, Volume 2). Thus, one possibility is that the resident of this grave is one of them.

Another possibility is that he may be the son of the famous Sahabi Hazrat Jabir Bin Abdullah, and may have moved to Madain. But after a brief investigation, this lowly one could not find any information about the sons of Hazrat Jabir Bin Abdullah which could have shed light on the plausibility or otherwise of this possibility.

Anyway! It is nevertheless famous in this place that he is one of the *Sahaba*.

An Amazing Faith-Enhancing Incident

An extraordinary faith-enhancing event unfolded in relation to the graves of Hazrat Hudhaifa Bin Yaman and Hazrat Abdullah Bin Jabir (may All be pleased with them both) in this century itself, which very few people are aware of nowadays. The first time I heard this incident was from respected Maulana Zafar Ahmad Sahab Ansari (may his shade be extended). Later respected Khair Ullah Hadeesi Sahab, Director of Public Relations in the Ministry of *Awqaf* in Baghdad, also briefly mentioned it.

This occurred in 1929. Iraq was ruled by monarchy at that time. In those days, the graves of Hazrat Hudhaifa Bin Yaman and Hazrat Abdullah Bin Jabir (may Allah be pleased with them both) were not located here (i.e. within the precincts of Jami' Masjid Salman), rather they were located at quite a distance from here, at some place between the river Tigris and Masjid Salman.

In 1929, the monarch of the time saw in a dream Hazrat Hudhaifa Bin Yaman and Hazrat Abdullah Bin Jabir telling him: "Water is seeping into our graves. Make some appropriate arrangements regarding this." The king ordered for a deep hole to be dug at some place between the river Tigris and the graves to check whether the water of the river was streaming down to the level of the graves. The hole was dug, but there were no signs of water flowing down. Therefore the king disregarded this, considering it just a dream.

However, once again --- probably more than once --- he saw the same dream. This perturbed the king, who then gathered the *Ulama* (Islamic scholars) and mentioned it to them. If I remember correctly, one of the scholars of Iraq mentioned that he also saw the exact same dream. After mutual consultation and discussions, it was decided to unearth both the blessed graves to confirm their condition; if water were found, then the blessed bodies would be moved to some other place. The scholars of the time also concurred with this opinion.

As this was the very first time in the history of Islam that the graves of two great elders of the First Generation and companions of the Noble Messenger ﷺ were being dug, the government of Iraq made great preparations for this. A date was announced for this, so that the public could also take part. Coincidentally, the date announced was close to the days of Hajj. When news of this reached Hijaz, the people who had arrived there for Hajj requested the government of Iraq to delay the date by some time, so that after completing Hajj, whoever wished to visit Iraq to witness this could do so. Therefore, the government of Iraq rescheduled it to a date after Hajj.

It is said that people thronged not only from within Iraq, rather from other countries as well. The crowd was so big that the government fit huge screens till far, so that those who could not witness the event from near with their own eyes could view its mirror image on the screens.

In this manner these blessed graves were dug. And a sea of thousands of people witnessed the astonishing scene with their own eyes that after the passage of about thirteen centuries, the blessed bodies of both the elders were intact and fresh. Rather a non-Muslim eye specialist doctor was also present there. After seeing the blessed bodies, he said: "Their eyes still contain the gleam which cannot remain in a person's eyes even a short while after passing away". He therefore became Muslim after witnessing this scene.

A place was first prepared near Hazrat Salman Farsi (may Allah be pleased with him) to shift the blessed graves. The blessed graves were then placed on a bier, to which long bamboo rods were tied, and thus thousands were blessed with the opportunity of giving shoulder to them. And in this manner the graves of these two elders are now located at their current location.

Hazrat Maulana Zafar Ahmad Sahab Ansari (may his shade be extended) reports: "I still remember that event of 1929. It made headlines throughout newspapers. An Indian couple belonging to a literary family was visiting Iraq in those days. The husband and wife witnessed the event with their own eyes". And it was perhaps the wife who had penned her experience in the form of a travelogue, which was published as a book as well. Hazrat Maulana (may his shade be extended) possesses a copy of that book.

The travelogue also says that photographs of the entire process were also taken through a foreign firm. And many non-Muslims also came to witness this event. Not only were they deeply affected by this moving spectacle, rather many of them even accepted Islam as a result.

Allah Ta'ala sometimes manifests such miracles of His All-Encompassing Power and the truthfulness of His religion.

سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ

"We will show them Our signs in the universe and within their own beings until it will become manifest to them that this (religion) is the truth."

It also merits a mention here that if Abdullah Bin Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him) is indeed the son of Hazrat Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him), then it is a bizarre coincident that this exact thing happened in the time of Hazrat Muawiya (may Allah be pleased with him) to his grandfather as well.

What happened is that Hazrat Jabir's father, Abdullah (may Allah be pleased with him), was the first martyr of Uhud, and the Noble Messenger ﷺ had buried him together with Hazrat 'Amr Bin Jamooh (may Allah be pleased with him) in the same grave. The Muslims faced such poverty at the time that even a shroud was not available for each martyr. As a result, Hazrat Abdullah was enshrouded in a single sheet of cloth which covered the head but the feet remained uncovered, on which some grass was put. Coincidentally this grave was located on a low-lying patch of land. Forty years later, during the reign of Hazrat Muawaiya (may Allah be pleased with him), this place become flooded, and thereafter the Muslims wanted to direct a stream through that area. When the graves were dug up at that time, with Hazrat Jabir present, the bodies of both the elders were found completely intact and fresh. Rather according to one narration, his hand was placed on top of a wound. When people moved the hand, blood gushed forth from the wound. When they put the hand back on the wound, the blood stopped flowing.

(Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, Pages 562 and 563, Volume 3)

Chosroes's Palace

When we proceeded from our visit to these graves of the Noble Sahaba, we saw a wall belonging to *Kisra's* (Chosroes's) palace, which is located at almost the end of Madain, still standing and serving as an admonitory lesson. At one time this palace belonged to Chosroes, the most powerful outwardly superpower in the world at the time. It was the same palace fourteen turrets of which had fallen at the blessed birth of the Noble Messenger ﷺ, and whose glory and grandeur was shown to the Noble Messenger ﷺ in the spark flaring out from the pickaxe, as an omen of glad tidings that this palace will one day come under Muslim rule. When these glad tidings were being delivered, Muslims were in such a state that, as a result of the conglomeration of Arab tribes attacking them, their hearts reached their throats even inside Madinah Munawwarah itself. The Leader of the Two Worlds ﷺ personally took part in digging the trench with his own blessed hands. And due to extreme hunger, the noble Sahaba had tied stones to their stomachs and the Mercy for the Worlds ﷺ had himself tied two stones on his blessed stomach. Who could have imagined that these penniless and empty-handed individuals would take down the pomposity of the greatest super-power of the world, Chosroes?

But the world witnessed with its own eyes that not even fifteen years had passed after this incident when the followers of the very same Muhammad the Arab ﷺ stood up raising the name of their Lord, and battled that great power whose majesty and awe would shake even the royal palaces in Rome. Despite withstanding the blows of times for more than fourteen centuries, this wall of Chosroes's palace is still an image of splendour and awe. And even today, one standing beneath it cannot help but be inspired with feelings of awe. Several of its turrets are preserved even today. In the center is a lofty arched gate which ushers into, from the signs of it, a spacious hall. It appears that this must either be Chosroes's audience chamber or some other notable chamber of the palace.

According to one narration, the curtain draped over the gate of this chamber was burned down when Madain was conquered. Later, one million *mithqaal* of gold was extracted from it, whose value was ten million Dirhams. (Tareekh Baghdad, Lil-Khateeb, Page 131, Volume 1).

When such is the majesty emanated by this building in its current state of dilapidation and ruin, how majestic and awe-inspiring must it have been at its peak? Its soaring bastion must really have been impregnable in those times. The Tigris used to flow beneath this bastion in those days. Hence, crossing the river, then climbing the bastion and capturing it, with vigilant sentry patrolling every inch of the bastion, showering arrows, spears and scalding oil every moment, is no less a feat than producing a river of milk.

But only God knows what passions and powers of faith those servants of the Leader of the Two Worlds ﷺ carried in themselves, such that this imposing and awe-inspiring edifice could not fend off their onslaught. The centuries-old trails of history blazed by the emperors of Iran were buried into dust in moments, and its iconic awe and majesty faded away into oblivion under the dust of the feet of the *Mujahideen*.

The Muslims preserved this chamber as an admonitory relic. Once, the Caliph Mansoor intended to demolish it. At this, one of his court advisors suggested that if you were to preserve it, anyone who sees

it will feel that God's help was definitely with the Muslims. Otherwise, those penniless desert-dwellers could not conquer such a chamber as this.

Mansoor heard the suggestion but thought to himself that perhaps this adviser is advising this because he is Iranian of descent, and therefore wishes to preserve the relic of his forefathers. The Caliph therefore ignored this suggestion and ordered for its demolition. But when the chamber's demolition began, it was learned after demolishing only a small portion that the complete demolition would cost so much that only a small part of the expenditure could be recovered from its rubble, and therefore a large amount of national wealth would be wasted. At this Mansoor called the same advisor. He said: "I had already advised you not to demolish it. But now I consider it embarrassing for you if people were to say that the Iranians constructed such a mighty building that you could not even demolish it. I therefore now recommend going ahead with its demolition."

The Caliph Mansoor once again fell into a quandary, but after pondering over the matter he finally decided to stop the demolition, because continuing with it would entail wasting a lot of money. This chamber has stood since then. (Tareekh Baghdad Lil-Khateeb, Page 130 and 131, Volume 1)

The famous Arab poet Buhturi has composed a phenomenal *Qaseedah*[1] in which he has used powerful imagery to describe this chamber. It is said about this *Qaseedah* that it is the best "*Qaseedah Seeniyyah*" in Arabic language. It is also said about two *Qaseedah*s composed by Buhturi, one in which he has depicted Chosroes's chamber and the other in praise of a pond built by Mutawakkil, that if he had not composed any poetry besides these two *Qaseedah*s, even then these would have been enough to attest to his poetic greatness. About Chosroes's chamber, the poem begins with these couplets:

صنت نفسي عمّا يدنّس نفسي

و ترفّعت عن جدا كلّ جبسِ

وكأن الإيوانَ من عجب الصَّن

عَةِ جَوْبٌ في جنب أرعن جلسِ

Standing beneath Chosroes's palace niche, a film of innumerable events of the past fourteen centuries began unreeling in my head. The eye of imagination would sometimes see the emperors of Iran under whose dominion the sun would not set; sometimes those figures of arrogance and pomposity would appear who dared to tear the blessed letter of the Leader of the Two Worlds ﷺ; sometimes the speeches of Hazrat Hudhaifa Bin Yamaan and Hazrat Rab'ee Bin 'Aamir echoing through the gold-decorated rooms would be heard; sometimes those fearless Mujahideen would be seen climbing its bastion, at whose hands this arrogance and pomposity were destined to be eradicated; sometimes it saw Hazrat Sa'd Bin Abi Waqqas, Hazrat Khalid Bin Arfatah and their companions here, prostrating in gratitude for the victory. In short, a myriad of fascinating scenes from the past flashed through the mind one after the other. And when the mind returned back to the real world, the beautiful palace of my

[1] Translator: A type of Arabic poem written in praise of something or someone

imaginations fell into ruin; I was standing on a land in which the followers of those victors of Madain felt straitened. This was a land where the inept successors, like ourselves, of those desert-dwellers are, despite an abundance of resources and wealth, constantly losing out on that treasure of faith and conviction which used to instill such valour as to conquer Rome and Iran. As a result of this, instead of looking the modern successors of Caesar and Chosroes in the eyes, they are giving in to their awe and fear, and are ready to follow in their footsteps in every walk of life.

Imagining this great and tragic antithesis filled the heart with agony as well as wonder. But then I found the answers to all my doubts and qualms in one couplet:

حیرت نہ کر بدن کو مرے چُور دیکھ کر

اُن رفعتوں کو دیکھ جہاں سے گِرا تھا مَیں

Do not wonder seeing my aching body

Look at the heights from which I fell

(7)

Within Madain itself, the government of Iraq has constructed an extraordinary and queer panorama of the scene of the battle of Qadisiyya, such that the onlooker would feel as if he is standing right above the battleground and personally witnessing the battle raging below. This is an approximately seven-storey building. When one climbs up its stairs, it feels as if one is climbing a wide tower. The last stair ends at a dome-shaped hall, reaching which one feels as if one is standing atop a turret of a lofty fort, and before him is a huge ground extending as far as the eyes can see. At the end of this turret is a fort of ancient architecture. This is the fort of Qadees, sitting where Hazrat Sa'd Bin Abi Waqqas (may Allah be pleased with him) had led the battle of Qadisiyyah. In all three directions of this fort, the Muslim and Chosroes's armies can be seen in combat.

Actually, such three-dimensional (3D) images have been constructed on the walls of this hall that the colour of their ground so matches the colour of land, the environment and the sky, in this order, that they appear to be the real sky, environment and ground. And due to the painting being three-dimensional, all distances appear to be real. All events related to the Battle of Qadisiyya have been portrayed in this ground, which extends until the horizon. The attack of the Iranian elephants; the scene of the Muslims chopping off their trunks; the retaliatory attack by the Muslims employing shrouded camels; in accordance with the psychological tactic proposed by Hazrat Qa'qa', platoons of cavalry, each consisting of a hundred horsemen, would continuously emerge from the horizon of some direction every now and then; the Iranian forces falling into disarray; anguishing bodies lying scattered around; and various types of arms strewn around the vast ground extending into the horizon, which reminds of the following stanza composed by Anees:

بے رُخ کمانیں تیروں سے، چلّے کماں سے دُور　　مرغانِ تیرسہمےہوئے آشیاں سے دُور

برچھی سے پھل گرے ہوئے، نیزےسناں سے دُور　　پیروں سے عقل دُور، تہوّر جواں سے دُور

تیغوں کی کچھ خبر تھی، نہ ڈھالوں کا ہوش تھا

نیزہ ہر اک سوار کو اک بارِ دوش تھا

Arrows apart from bows, bowstrings from bows apart

The arrows like frightened birds, from nests apart,

Tips fallen from lances, heads from spears apart

Senses apart from feet, fearlessness from the young man apart,

Unconcerned about swords, unmindful of shields,

The lance, to each horseman, felt like a burden on the shoulder

In short, this panorama is an artistic wonder, but alas! If only its makers could keep in mind the fact that a majority of those who took part in the Battle of Qadisiyya were Sahaba, and making fictitious pictures of them is not only contrary to the commandments of Shariah, it is also disrespectful towards them. *Astaghfir Ullah al-Azeem*.

In an open ground near Chosroes's chamber, Iraq's Ministry of Tourism has built a vast tent of ancient style. It is exactly how, in olden times, the tent of the leader of an army would look like when he would encamp at some place. Its interior is designed to copy ancient Arab culture, such that when one steps inside, one feels as if one has gone centuries back in time. Carpets and mats of ancient style, with old bolsters and pillows laid out on them, goatskin water-container, wooden and earthen utensils, stone stoves, and the Arab mannequin sitting inside clad in the same old Bedoin-ish clothes. In short, everything inside reflected ancient Arab culture.

When we entered the tent, the Bedoin-looking Arabs sitting here proved their traditional Arab hospitality by warmly welcoming us, and presented Iraqi Qahwa with great insistence. The bitterness of that Qahwa has still not faded away from my memory. The tradition of Qahwa exists in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, getting used to the bitterness of which the taste buds took quite a long time. But this black Iraqi Qahwa is in a class of its own, and I reckoned that getting habituated to this is beyond the abilities of the likes of us.

When we finished visiting the notable sites of Madain, after praying Zuhr in Jami' Masjid Salman Farsi, we went to a beautiful restaurant at the shore of the Tigris for lunch. The Tigris could be seen flowing in all its grace and glory adjacent to the courtyard of this restaurant. This was the same Tigris the Iranian emperors of Madain had declared to be their strongest line of defense in the face of the Muslims' onslaught. They thought that the horses of the Mujahids of Islam, which had arrived crossing the bleak and barren sandy deserts of Arabia and Iraq, would become powerless in front of this roaring river, and would thus not be able to reach Chosroes's capital city.

But those caravans of the Mujahids of Islam which had arrived with such miraculous passions as could subjugate the universe, the Tigris opened its cradle of love for them. They entrusted their horses to the waves of the river. And the entire army crossed through safe and sound.

Trip to Kufa

The next morning, at around 10am, we departed Baghdad for Kufa in a car. Kufa is located at about 150km to the south of Baghdad. A clean and rather spacious highway connects the two cities. Most of the route features lush date gardens on both sides of the road. Dates are a special agriculture produce of Iraq, and it is said that Iraq is the biggest producer of dates in the world. We passed small villages and towns every now and then, the most notable of which Is Hillah, which is among the historical cities of Iraq.

It was near Hillah that the ancient-most historical city of the world Babylon was located. Babylon was a great center of the Chaldean civilization. It is said that Hazrat Nuh (peace be upon him) had founded this city after the flood, and his and his companions' progeny spread from here. They founded several cities near the Tigris and Euphrates, and they spread until Kaskar at the coast of the Tigris, and from Kufa till Babray at the coast of the Euphrates, and later this entire region became known as Sawad.
(Mu'jam ul-Buldaan Lil Hamawi, Page 309, Volume 3)

It was from their progeny that the Chaldeans were born, who were considered their soldiers. But gradually they became kings. Before the Chaldeans, Babylon was called "Kheetaaruth". The Chaldeans named it Babylon. The planet Jupiter is called Babylon in their language. This city was named after it. It is said that at its peak, Babylon was spread across 12 *farsakhs*[1], and was considered an architectural marvel of its time. This city is associated with a lot of talismanic tales as well, and due to an abundance of magicians it had become famously known as "*Madeenat Tasahhur*" ("The City of Magic").
(Mu'jam Ma-sta'jam Lil Bakri, Page 219, Volume 1)

The Noble Quran has also mentioned Babylon in Surah al-Baqarah, that two angels by the name of Haroot and Maroot were sent here, and that they were sent with a particular knowledge as a trial for the people of Babylon. There is a dry well located here called "Jubb Daniyal (peace be upon him)", about which it is popularly believed that this was the well of Haroot and Maroot.
(Aathaar ul-Bilaad Wa Akhbaar ul-'Ibaad Lil Qazwini, Page 304)

The ruins of Babylon still exist in this area, and some signs of these can also be seen from the road leading to Kufa.

Later, Saif ud-Dawlah Sadaqah Bin Mansoor founded the city of Hillah in 495H in this same location, and it used to be considered one of the most beautiful cities of Iraq of his time (Hamawi, Page 294, Volume 7). Numerous scholars are also known by their links to this city. Today it is a small city and the center of its administrative division. Kufa is situated to its south-east, and signs of Kufa can be made out soon after leaving Hillah.

[1] Translator: Approximately 80km.

Kufa was a great center of the Islamic history of the Sahaba and those after them. It used to be the fountainhead of political movements against the central government during the first and second centuries Hijri, and it has witnessed a myriad historical revolutions. At the same time, it remained a great center of learning due to the presence of Hazrat Ali, Hazrat Abdullah Bin Mas'ood and some other noble Sahaba. It was from here that Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa, Hazrat Abdullah Bin Mubarak, Hazrat Wakee' Bin al-Jarraah, and God knows how many other mountains of knowledge and excellence sprouted. A heartfelt connection with Kufa, therefore, is naturally expected from a student of knowledge like myself. Consequently, among the places I desired to visit during the trip to Iraq, Kufa was on the top of the list.

During the caliphate of Hazrat Umar, the Conquerer of Iraq Hazrat Sa'd Bin Abi Waqqas (may Allah be pleased with him) had founded Kufa as a military barracks, and various tribes of the Arabs had made their quarters therein. Before this, this area used to be called Suristan. Since this place was used as a barracks, its inhabitants had initially constructed temporary houses with Bamboo sticks and date-palm leaves. Whenever they needed to go for Jihad, they would tear these houses down and give the rubble in charity, and would construct their houses anew after returning. It was when Hazrat Mugheerah Bin Shu'bah became the governor here that brick houses were constructed.

Before Kufa, Hazrat Umar had founded Basra. One time the two cities were being compared in the gathering of Abdul Malik Bin Marwan, at which Hajjaj Bin Yusuf said: "Ameer ul-Mu'mineen! I know both cities very well." (Hajjaj had remained the governor of both cities). Abdul Malik said: "Then tell truthfully, what is the difference between these two cities?" At this Hajjaj said the famous words:

أما الكوفة فبكر عاطل لا حلي لها ولا زينة، وأما البصرة فعجوز شمطاء بخراء ذفراء أوتيت من كلّ حلي وزينة.

Translation:
Kufa is a damsel devoid of any ornaments or adornments, while Basra is gray-haired old woman whose mouth and armpits smell, but she is adorned with all kinds of ornaments and adornments.
(Aathar ul-Bilaad Lil Qazwini, Page 250)

Kufa's location was such that it became the center for tribes near and far, and its population began spreading. *Mujahid*s and newly converted Muslims resided here in large numbers, but initially there was no religious teacher available who resided here with the sole purpose of teaching and nurturing them. To fill this gap, Hazrat Umar sent Hazrat Abdullah Bin Mas'ood and wrote to the people of Kufa: "In terms of him, I am preferring you over myself". Meaning that I am more in need of Hazrat Ibn Mas'ood, but I am sending him to you by favouring you over myself due to your need.

Hazrat Abdullah Bin Mas'ood illuminated this city with knowledge and excellence. His students, after acquiring knowledge from him, created their own teaching circles, and after the Haramain Shareefain, this city became the biggest center of the science of Hadith and Fiqh (jurisprudence). When Hazrat Ali visited Kufa, seeing knowledge having spread so widely he said: "May Allah have mercy upon Ibn Umm 'Abd (i.e. Hazrat Abdullah Bin Mas'ood). He has filled this city with knowledge."

Hamawi has written that at its peak (approximately 264H), Kufa was spread over sixteen miles and it contained seventy thousand houses (Mu'jam ul-Buldaan, Page 492, Volume 16). But today this city does not hold any distinguished standing in terms of its cultural significance. In terms of both area and population it appears to be only a small town. After entering Kufa, we first headed to the historical Masjid of Kufa, which is among the oldest mosques in the world.

Jami' Kufa

This Masjid was built by Hazrat Sa'd Bin Abi Waqqas (may Allah be pleased with him) in approximately 19H. It could accommodate forty thousand worshippers. Later Ziyad Bin Abi Sufiyan expanded it, after which it could accommodate an additional twenty thousand worshippers. Even today, one entering it cannot help but be struck by its extraordinary space. It is surrounded by a bulwark-like thick wall which exhibits conspicuous signs of antiquity. Tens of chambers line its inner portion, with their doors opening into the courtyard of the Masjid. At some time in history, these were the residences of students of knowledge in which students travelling from other places used to stay.

Numerous small vaults are erected in the middle of the courtyard of the Masjid. At one place is a circular enclosure. Each of these carries an inscription which bear cock-and-bull stories about their historical significance. One of them says Hazrat Ibrahim (peace be upon him) offered prayer here, while another says Nuh (peace be upon him) offered prayer here, and so on.

In reality the source of these claims is a baseless tradition which Hamawi has narrated in Mu'jam ul-Buldaan (page 492, Volume 16) and Qazwini in Aathar ul-Bilaad (Page 250). In brief, it says that a person desired to visit Kufa from Bait al-Maqdis. Hazrat Ali told him not to go and said: "You don't need to go there. The Jami' Masjid of Kufa is a place of great blessings. It was in a corner of this Masjid that the oven had gushed forth in the time of Nuh (peace be upon him) (which caused the flood). It was on the fifth pillar of this Masjid that Ibrahim (peace be upon him) had offered prayer, and a thousand prophets and *Awliya* have prayed here. It is in this Masjid that the staff of Hazrat Musa (peace be upon him) is buried, and the pumpkin tree through which Hazrat Yunus (peace be upon him) got cured was also located inside it… etc."

But this is an utterly bogus and fictitious narration. Both Hamawi and Qazwini have narrated it from a person named Habbah Bin Juwayn al-'Urfi. About him, Hafizi Dhahabi says:

"من غلاة الشيعة، وهو الّذي حدّث أن عليّا كان معه بصفّين ثمانون بدريّا، وهذا محال."

"He is among the fanatic *Shi'a*s. He is the one who narrated that eighty Sahaba who had participated in Badr participated alongside Hazrat Ali in the battle of Siffin, which is logically impossible."

Hafiz Ibn Hajar has also mentioned this in Tahzeeb ut-Tahzeeb (page 176, volume 2), and has reported that most of the scholars of the science of *rijaal* have severely criticized him. However, he is mentioned with much praise and adulation in the books of *rijaal* of the Shi'a. Maqani has strongly defended him, but at the same time has written that he belonged to the tribe of 'Urayna, whose members had turned

apostate after visiting the Noble Messenger ﷺ, and had run away with the camels given in charity (Tanqeeh ul-Maqal Lil Maqani ,Page 250, Volume 1).

This is the condition of Habbah al-'Urfi, the original source of the narration. Who are the narrators after him in the chain of narrators? Even Hamawi and Qazwini have not mentioned this. This narration is, therefore, not at all trustworthy, neither in terms of the science of narration, nor logically.

Although these fables regarding the virtue of Jami' Kufa are completely unfounded, its historical significance is undeniable, in that it is the oldest Masjid from the times of the Sahaba, where Hazrat Sa'd Bin Abi Waqqas, Hazrat Ali, Hazrat Hasan and Husain, Hazrat Abdullah Bin Mas'ood, Hazrat Abdullah Bin Abi Awfa, Hazrat Abdullah Bin al-Haarith, Hazrat Salman Farsi, Hazrat Mugheerah Bin Shu'bah, and God knows how many other Sahaba (may Allah be pleased with them all) have offered prayers. A myriad of renowned religious scholars have delivered their sermons here. Thereafter this Masjid remained the center of countless *Muhaddithin* (experts in the science of Hadith) and *Fuqaha* (experts in *Fiqh*), who had immersed themselves in these sciences while becoming oblivious to earning worldly wealth. Without exaggeration, thousands of scholars have taught here. What devoted and ascetic A*wlia*, what Mufassirin, Fuqaha, Muhaddithin and what masters of religious as well as worldly sciences and arts have imparted the fruits of their knowledge and research here! A student like me cannot help but perceive the fragrance of their sacred souls, their Zikr and Tasbeeh and their scholarly favours. Jami' Kufa stands today with the same length and width and the same grandeur and majesty. But the eyes search for those scholarly circles today which produced such mountains of knowledge as Imam Abu Hanifa, Sufyan Thawri, Abdullah Bin Mubarak, Wakee' Bin al-Jarrah, Qadi Abu Yusuf and Imam Muhammad (may Allah's mercy be upon them all), who inundated the entire world with their knowledge and excellence.

Today one cannot even find one person reading a book by himself; only uneducated guides can be seen going about narrating baseless stories to visitors. There was not even someone who could tell the reality of those absurd narrations to the people. Amidst the vast and spacious courtyard, I conjured up those circles of knowledge with my mind's eye whose fragrance used to perfume every nook and cranny of the Masjid once upon a time. And the heart sorrowfully thought to itself that a student like me has reached this Masjid so late that now even a solitary soul remembering those circles of knowledge cannot be found:

جمگھٹ وہ گُل رُخوں کے الاہی کدھر گئے

کیا ہو گیا گُلاب کا تختہ کھلا ہوا

Where have the gatherings of those beautiful faces gone?

What happened to the blossoming rose garden?

We crossed the courtyard and reached the roofed area of the Masjid. This part is not much wide; hardly five to six rows can be accommodated here. And the *Mihrab* (arch) where Hazrat Ali was martyred is located here. The roofed area has probably remained this size since the early times.

The courtyard and verandah are utilized when large crowds gather for prayers. Alhamdulillah! I was blessed to offer *Tahiyya tul-Masjid* in this historical Masjid. When one walks back to the courtyard, two large domes can be seen to the right. One is the tomb of Hazrat Muslim Bin 'Aqeel, who resided in Kufa as the deputy of Hazrat Husain (may Allah be pleased with him) before the incident of Karbala, and was martyred here itself. The incident of his martyrdom is renowned. The dome to the left is the tomb of Hazrat Hani Bin Urwah, who was among the active supporters of Hazrat Husain (may Allah be pleased with him) in Kufa. He was the one who hid Hazrat Muslim Bin 'Aqeel in his house.

Daar ul-Imaarah (The Royal Palace)

After presenting ourselves at both the tombs we left Jami' Kufa. Along the Western wall of the Masjid, a street runs towards in the direction of the *qibla* (i.e. towards the south). We reached the southern end of the Masjid after crossing this street, from where we saw the ruins of some fort-like building alongside the Qibla-facing wall. This was the Royal Palace of Kufa. This was the arena of political wrestling matches in the first century Hijri. Countless governors called this place home within a short period of time, but the inhabitants of Kufa did not let any of them stay for long.

Since Kufa was a city comprising of various tribes, and all types of people had come and stayed here, several leaders of (especially) political unrest also called this city home. They did not let any governor stay for long. To such an extent that during the caliphate of Hazrat Umar, they said regarding the distinguished Sahabi Hazrat Sa'd Bin Abi Waqqas, who, besides being one of the *'Ashrah Mubashshrah*[1],was also the one who conquered Iraq and founded Kufa, that he does not lead prayer in a good manner.

ناوک نے تیرے صید نہ چھوڑا زمانے میں

Your arrow did not spare any prey in the world

The anarchists of Kufa also played a major role in the martyrdom of Hazrat Usmani (may Allah be pleased with him). Though they outwardly expressed their veneration and love for Hazrat Ali (may Allah be pleased with him), their actions kept him worried and concerned throughout the duration of his caliphate. They were the ones who called Hazrat Husain (may Allah be pleased witih him) to Kufa, and later left him high and dry, thus becoming the cause of the tragedy at Karbala.

How many a governor took over this Royal Palace and was later killed. Abdul Malik Bin 'Umayr Laythi has related the admonitory events regarding this. He says: "I once saw Abdul Malik Bin Marwan lying on a *charpai* (bedstead) in this Royal Palace. I said to him: "I first saw the head of Hazrat Husain (may Allah be pleased with him) presented on an armour before Ubaidullah Bin Ziyad in this palace. Later, in this very palace, I saw the severed head of Ubaidullah Bin Ziyad presented before Mukhtar Bin Ubaid Thaqafi. Afterwards, in this palace itself, I saw the severed head of Mukhtar presented before Mus'ab Bin 'Umair. Afterwards I saw the severed head of Mus'ab Bin 'Umair in this very place presented before you." Hearing this, Abdul Malik became frightened and moved out from this palace."

[1] Translator: The ten companions given the glad tidings of Paradise by the Noble Messenger ﷺ during their lifetime.

(Tareekh ul-Khulafa lis-Suyuti)

(8)

Hazrat Ali's House

To the right of Kufa's Royal Palace is a brick house of old architecture, about which it is famously said that this was the house of Hazrat Ali (may Allah honour his face). This is so popularly believed here that this place has become a popular visiting site for the common man as well the nobility. But with my limited investigations, this lowly one could not find any evidence to prove that this is really the house of Hazrat Ali. This lowly one could not find a mention of this anywhere in the books describing the history of Kufa. At the same time, owing to the popularity of this belief among the people of Kufa, it is also not impossible that this be really true.

This is a small house whose door opens towards the north. The door leads to a brief courtyard. Two small rooms line the eastern wall of this courtyard at both corners. It is said about these rooms that they were the residences of Hazrat Hasan and Husain (may Allah be pleased with them both). The main part of the house is towards the west. Here, a tunnel-ish path ushers one into a small living room, which also houses a well. The southern wall of the living room has a door which leads into a big room. It is popularly believed that this room was used as the place of residence of Hazrat Ali (may Allah be pleased with him). It also contains a small fireplace at its south-west.

The ceilings of the house are quite low, and its architecture is old. It is said that this house has remained on its original plan until now, meaning that it has been renovated several times such that today its walls are cemented, but the plan has remained unchanged since the blessed caliphate of Hazrat Ali (may Allah be pleased with him). And Allah alone knows what is the truth.

In Najaf

After visiting Kufa, we departed for Najaf. Today Kufa and Najaf are several kilometers apart, and an uninhabited and rather long forest falls on the way. But when Kufa was at its peak, the population of Kufa almost continuously reached up to the population of Najaf. And what is today called "Najaf" used to be called "*Zuhr ul-Kufa*" or "*Zaahir ul-Kufa*" (The back of Kufa) in olden times. Two streams called "Rabd" and "Najaf" flowed here, which inundated the nearby date gardens. And since it was apprehended that the water of these streams may harm the nearby graveyard and residential areas, the land here was made to slope in such a way that its higher level was in the direction of Kufa, so that water did not flow in that direction. (Maraasid ul-Itlaa' Lil Baghdadi, Page 1360, Volume 3)

The population here gradually increased while the population of Kufa began receding, until the population of Kufa shrunk to the area surrounding Jami' Kufa. In this way, this entire area began being called "Najaf" after the stream, and it became a separate city.

Nowadays there is a major university of the *Shia*s located in Najaf and one of their major religious authorities Imam al-Khoei also resides here. In fact, after entering Najaf our guide also showed us the

house in which the leader of the Iranian Revolution Khomeni Sahab resided for many years as an official guest of the Iraqi government.

After crossing many roads of Najaf we arrived near the grand golden building about which it is popularly believed that this is the tomb of Hazrat Ali (may Allah honour his face).

The truth of the matter is that Hazrat Ali's being buried here is quite doubtful from a historical perspective. Even though it has now become popular belief for generations that this is Hazrat Ali's tomb, the reports regarding Hazrat Ali's burial place are so varying and contradictory that it is difficult to come to a decisive conclusion regarding this.

Khateeb Baghdadi has narrated numerous narrations regarding this in his book "*Tareekh-e-Baghdad*". Ahmad Bin Abdullah al-'Ijli says: "Hazrat Ali was martyred by Abdur Rahman Bin Muljam in Kufa and Hazrat Husain killed Abdur Rahman Bin Muljam. Hazrat Ali was buried in Kufa but his place of burial is not known."

Ibn Sa'd says: "Hazrat Ali was buried in Kufa near Jami' Masjid Kufa, in the *Qasr al-Imaarah* (Royal Palace)". Abu Zaid Bin Tareef says: "Adjacent to the Qibla-facing wall of the Jami' Masjid, there is a house in front of Bab ul-Waraaqayn. Hazrat Ali is buried in this house." This house belonged to a person named Yazeed Bin Khalid, and there is also one narration which says that at some point this house had to be dug and the body of Hazrat Ali was found fresh and intact.

Some narrations say that while Hazrat Ali was buried in Kufa, during the caliphate of Hazrat Muawiya (may Allah be pleased with him) Hazrat Hasan (may Allah be pleased with him) moved Hazrat Ali's blessed body to Madinah Tayyibah and that he was buried near the grave of Hazrat Fatimah in Jannat ul-Baqee'.

According to another narration, Hazrat Ali was immediately placed in a coffin after his martyrdom and the coffin was placed on a camel to be transported to Madinah Tayyibah. But the camel got lost on the way near the area of the Tay tribe. The people of Tay tribe picked the coffin, mistaking it for some treasure. But when they found a body inside they buried it there in their own land.

Abu Ja'far Hadree, who is famously known by the epithet "Mutayyin", says: "The grave people visit (in Najaf) today, considering it to be the grave of Hazrat Ali, if it were really Hazrat Ali's grave I would have remained there day and night. In reality, it is not the grave of Hazrat Ali. And if the Rawafid were to know who this grave actually belongs to, they would try to destroy it instead of visiting it. The person residing in this grave is actually Hazrat Mugheerah Bin Shu'bah (may Allah be pleased with him)."
For all these narrations, see Tareekh Baghdad Lil Khateeb (Page 138 to 136, Volume 1).

It is obvious that in view of these contradictory narrations, nothing can be said with certainty regarding the grave of Hazrat Ali (may Allah honour his face).

Trip to Karbala

We departed for Karbala from Najaf. A rather wide and clean road leads to Karbala from here. A bleak and barren desert appears to extend into the horizon on both sides of this road. On the way, caravans of camels were seen engrossed in journey every now and then. Their sight took me down the memory lane to the caravans centuries ago. Today Karbala is a radiant and bustling city, and for any visitor, that desert of Karbala seems unimaginable in which the tragic incident of the martyrdom of Hazrat Husain (may Allah be pleased with him) took place. However, it can be imagined from the sandy desert which falls on the way from Najaf to Karbala that this land must have been tough, and would have been rather patience-testing for those travelling through it.

We entered Karbala proper near Zuhr time. This city is quite radiant now, and perhaps more populous than both Kufa and Najaf. This was a bleak and barren desert at the time when the incident of the martyrdom of Hazrat Husain (may Allah be pleased with him) took place. In ancient times, this entire region used to be called “Tif”, while the particular desert in which Hazrat Husain (may Allah be pleased with him) was martyred was named Karbala. There are varying opinions regarding the origin of its name. Some are of the opinion that it is derived from “Karbalatun” which means the softness of the heels. Since this land consisted of soft ground it was named “Karbala”. In Arabic, “Karbalan” also means “to clean wheat”. Some therefore say that since this land did not contain any stones or rocks, and it appeared as if this land had been specially cleaned by someone, it was therefore named Karbala.

On the other hand, some have said that this word is derived from “Karbul”. This is the name of a special grass which is abundantly found in this desert, after which this area became known as Karbala. (Mu’jam ul-Buldaan Lil Hamawi, Page 445, Volume 4). And Allah alone knows what is the truth.

After reaching Karbala, we first presented ourselves at that structure about which it is popularly believed that it is the tomb of Hazrat Husain (may Allah be pleased with him). There are varying narrations regarding the tomb of Hazrat Husain (may Allah be pleased with him) as well. It is commonly believed that his blessed body is buried in Karbala while his blessed head, since it was taken to Yazeed in Damascus, is not buried here. Thereupon there are big buildings in various cities which claim to be the tomb of his blessed head. If the narration that his blessed head was brought to Yazeed in ash-Shaam (Levant) is true, then while it being buried in Damascus is fathomable, a grand tomb is also built in Cairo near al-Azhar University and that entire area is famously named “Mahalla Sayyiduna al-Husain”.

Anyway! Narrations regarding his blessed head vary too much, but as for his blessed body, it appears logical that it would be buried in Karbala, even though the exact spot is quite uncertain from a historical perspective. Imam Abu Nu’aim is a famous Muhaddith and historian. When someone asked him regarding the burial place of Hazrat Husain (may Allah be pleased with him), he expressed his unawareness.
(Tareekh Baghdad Lil Khateeb, Page 144, Volume 1)

The other famous tombs in Karbala are those of Hazrat Hasan’s (may Allah be pleased with him) brother Hazrat Abbas and son Ali Akbar, etc. I was blessed to present myself at these. The agonizing events of the tragedy of Karbala flashed through the eyes one by one. In those days the river Euphrates must have flown nearby. Now it has moved a bit farther from here. Those noble members of the family of the

Noble Messenger ﷺ had definitely not left Madinah Tayyibah to give up their lives in this remote desert of Karbala for some worldly gains. They did not desire anything except the pleasure of their Lord.

خدا رحمت کند ایں عاشقان پاک طینت را

May God have mercy upon those lovers possessing pure characters

Last Night in Baghdad

Maghrib time was near when we returned to Baghdad from Karbala. This was to be our last night in Baghdad. After resting in the hotel for a while, we left for the coast of the Tigris. The weather was infused with a pleasant touch of coolness and the Tigris was flowing in all its grace and glory. A fish called "*Bunni*" in the local language is found in this historical river, which is rather tasty and is devoid of any smell. It is cooked in Baghdad in a peculiar traditional style. It is slit from the middle and grilled over a fire pit for around twenty-five minutes, and it is ready in this short time. This is called "*Samak Mazgouf*". Restaurants serving "*Samak Mazgouf*" at the shore of the Tigris extend till far. I enjoyed this specialty cuisine of Baghdad that day. Thereafter respected Qari Basheer Ahmad Sahab (may his shade be extended) and I strolled along the coast of the Tigris till late. Lights from the magnificent buildings along both sides of the Tigris reflected onto the Tigris to produce fascinating colours. This is the same Tigris at whose shores the grand palaces of the Abbasid Caliphs once stood. This was the very Tigris which, when the Tatars attacked, at one time became red with the blood of the Muslims, and at another time black with the ink of books. How many tales of the rise and fall of Muslims has it witnessed! With innumerable secrets of history buried under its waves, it still flows with the same grace and glory. But to witness the glorious culture the Muslims had endowed to the world at the shore of this river, one must close one's eyes to imagine it. And in trying to conjure up those scenes, one cannot help but say:

ہاں دکھادے اے تصوّر پھر وہ صُبح و شام تُو

دوڑ پیچھے کی طرف اے گردشِ ایّام تُو

Yes O mind, do show again, those mornings and evenings once more

Run behind, O flow of time, (back to those days again)