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## Remembering Karbala Once Again

Selected Marsias of Meer Anis and Mirza Dabeer

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Selected elegies (Marsias) of Meer Anis and Mirza Dabeer

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uncle;

My children, Mehdi and Abiha, inspired and motivated me to translate the marsias and continually oblige me by struggling to learn Urdu; It would be inexcusable to not mention my sisters, Sarah Naqvi and Soghra Raza, who have always encouraged my poetic blabber and listen patiently (or at least pretend to listen) to my ramblings; their respective husbands, Luthfe Naqvi and Sayyid Qayem Husain have also assisted in the circulation of this book; Finally, my many thanks to the readers of Meer Anis' and Mirza Dabeer's marsias in Hyderabad, India, whose beautiful recitation of the marsias fostered in me a love for the poetry, the reading of which I continue to enjoy to this day.

## About the Translator

Syeda B. Naqvi was born in Hyderabad, India. She migrated to the United States in 1987 and has since lived in Maryland. She is a mother of two children, Mehdi and Abiha. She is also an attorney practicing in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

## Introduction

Meer Anis or Mirza Dabeer need no introduction. The translation of their immortal marsias perhaps does. The Urdu-speaking Shias who have had the pleasure of reading and hearing Meer Anis' and Mirza Dabeer's marsias can attest that nothing else can evoke with such clarity and such depth the memory, the emotion and the pathos of Karbala, as do these marsias. In Hyderabad, India where I grew up, Muharram and these marsias are synonymous. The recitation of the marsias there has reached an art form, passed on for generations, refined and evolving with every new reader.

The Shias owe much to Meer Anis and Mirza Dabeer who put into words for them, in a heart-wrenching, exquisitely human form, the Divine glory of Prophet's Muhammad's household, the tragedy of Karbala, the clash between good and evil, and the ultimate triumph of good. A Majlis in the Urdu-speaking Shia community without the marsias of Meer Anis or Mirza Dabeer is inconceivable.

Yet those of us who live in the West have been forced to accept the undeniable fact that our children will probably never experience the beauty of Meer Anis' or Mirza Dabeer's words. The thought is painful; the loss of significant proportions. Who, if not Meer Anis or Mirza Dabeer, can bring Karbala to life for our children.? Who will tell the tale as well as they did? A tale told in a manner so as to evoke within us grief, pain, and above all, love for the Ahlul Bayt? I lamented at the thought that nobody can do all this as well as Meer Anis or Mirza Dabeer. I continue to believe that this will remain true forever.

The idea of translating Meer Anis' and Mirza Dabeer's marsias was born from this sense of loss; after all, if our children cannot understand the words of these memorable poets because they don't know Urdu, why not bring the words to them in the language that they do understand? This book is a humble attempt to accomplish this task

I must apologize to the reader, however, for the numerous deficiencies in my translation. While I have tried to adhere to Meer Anis' and Mirza Dabeer's words as much as possible, in my attempt to maintain a rhythm in the verses, I have often lapsed in this effort. I also apologize for the mistakes, the incongruities, or the gaps with which the reader may find my translation to be riddled. Despite all this though, it is my hope that the translation gives the reader a sense, *albeit* slight, of the beauty of Meer Anis' and Mirza Dabeer's memorable poetry

## The Journey of Imam Husain ('a) Leaving Medina

("Ghar Sejab Behre Safar Sayyid-a Aalam Nikle")  
When the Noble Prince left His home  
His eyes were teary and His heart did mourn  
As friends and sons followed behind  
He cried out "Destiny, here I come."  
"I've heard the cries of Zahra all night  
The forsaken wilderness is in my sight"  
Then towards the Prophet's tomb He glanced  
He bowed His head in a respectful stance  
Then approaching the tomb, He knelt and bowed  
"Do I have Your permission to leave?" He asked  
"Today I depart from this home and this land  
Your grandson leaves this country's sands"  
"Though mankind sleeps with peace in its homes  
This peace is denied to me alone  
The cry of my family breaks my heart  
Where must we go with babes in our arms?"  
"Neither jungle nor city can shelter me now  
To send me to my grave, they've taken a vow'  
"The enemy swords await my neck  
On my friends and family havoc will wreck  
You had warned my Mother of these days my Lord  
She had cried and Her heart had filled with dread"  
"But pray do not forget this forlorn Grandson  
Who'll be beheaded under the blazing sun"  
"In this heat, even birds stay close to their nests  
it's the month of fasting, but leave I must  
For danger lurks wherever I stop  
My children or family can find no rest"  
"My Lord, I've tired of living thus  
Come, take me, hide me in Your grave's dust"  
Inconsolable He wept at His Grandfather's tomb  
The tomb did tremble and darkness loomed  
Then the voice of the Prophet filled the air  
"My noble son, your foes are doomed"  
"Forgetting how much I hold you close  
They seek to kill you, your wretched foes"

"My patient, my noble, my pious Grandson  
My virtuous, my truthful, my brave Grandson  
Woe to the people who forsake You now  
My honor, my pride, my dearest Grandson"  
"I'll be Your company, forever and now  
Abandoning my tomb with You I will go"  
Heartened, the Grandson rose and bowed  
And His noble sister cried out loud  
"Let us go my Brother to our Mother's grave  
To bid farewell and kiss the shroud"  
"Why must I weep here in the palanquin?  
With strangers around and in this din?"  
So He led His family to Zahra's grave  
And Zainab alighted at a somber pace  
And they bowed and kissed their mother's tomb  
And around Him He felt His Mother's embrace  
And He heard His Mother weep at His plight  
"O Mother," He cried, "Bid me farewell tonight"  
"Not yet," She cried,,, I must see Abbas,,  
"Then I will bid you farewell soon alas!  
He's born of another, but my son no less"  
Hearing this Husain called "Hither Abbas"  
"Do not proceed we leave not yet  
My mother summons you to her grave instead"  
Hearing this Abbas slowed his horse's pace  
And came and knelt at the foot of the grave  
And Zahra cried "My beloved son"  
"I leave Husain's safety up to you beware!"  
"You are a friend to Husain in these lonely times  
Farewell, protect him from his enemies' designs"

## **The Warrior Friend of Imam Husain ('a) Respected Hurr**

("Run mein jab Shah Id taraf se Hurr-a Deendaar Aaya")  
When Hurr left the camp of the Noble Prince  
And came to battle His enemies thence  
A murmur rippled through Yazid's camp  
"Here comes a friend of Hyder's clan"  
"A strange light lights up his path  
As though angels in his company he hath"  
Hearing this, the son of Saad cried  
"Rain arrows and spears with a measured tide"  
The army geared for a massive attack  
And the lone soldier held his spear by his side  
Seeing Hurr tremble with rage and might  
The murderers scurried like rats in the night  
Abbas applauded Hurr's battle skills  
And Akbar admired, standing still

Qasim cried often "Bravo dear Hurr"  
And the Noble Prince himself would smile  
Listening to the applause from his Master's camp  
Hurr would smile and bow at every chance  
Alas as he bowed, the army slacked  
And assailed the soldier from behind his back  
And thousands surrounded the lonely Hurr  
As he braced, the massive army attacked  
Close by his heart he felt a spear  
And he sensed that Death was very near  
The arrows poured at his lurching chest  
He doubled over seeking some rest  
Watching Hurr's state, Alder cried  
"May I go my Master to save our guest?"  
"The devoted servant of Zahra and Ali  
Now falls to the ground without a plea"  
The Noble Prince seeing Hurr's plight  
wept with sorrow at the sight  
And replied to Akbar "Not you my son"  
" I will be the one to go by his side"  
"To whom can I express the sorrow I bear?  
He is my guest and I must take his care"  
Saying this Shabeer then mounted His horse  
In a glimpse the battlefield He crossed  
There Hurr fell on the scorching sand  
And the Prince found him breathing his last  
He held His guest and wept in pain  
And watched Hurr rub his heels in the sand  
He wiped Hurr's brow and held him close  
And watched in misery as the blood flowed  
And cried "Your wounds have broken my back"  
"Yet another friend I've lost in my woes"  
"You fell to the ground but didn't call for help  
Come open your eyes my brother, my friend"  
Hut opened his bruised and bloodied eyes  
Saw the glorious face of the Prince in sight  
Saw his head cradled in the Prince's lap  
And smiled at his fortune and in delight  
The Prince then asked "What do you sees"  
Hurr replied "The heavens have opened to me'  
"I see angels descend from the skies for me  
Even in Death's face, a love I can see  
Here comes Hyder Oh my good fortune!  
I see Shabbar with him, boundless is my glee!"  
"I see Muhammad's Daughter bareheaded in grief  
And Muhammad Himself comes to me receive"  
Then Hurr's face contorted in pain  
He looked at Husain and whispered His name  
And the Prince cried "So you depart my friend"  
Hurr's soul departed and his body went limp  
Even in death his glance toward Husain

A smile on his lips, forgotten the pain.

## **The Sacrifice of Zainab's Sons Most Reverred Aon and Muhammad ('a)**

("Jab Zainab-e-Ghareeb ke run mein pisar lade" )

When in Karbala Zainab's children fought  
The two alone with the massive army fought  
With the courage and valor of Ali they fought  
Oh like lions the grandsons of a Lion fought  
Gallantry inherited from the Grand Amir  
Such vigor can come only from Zainab and Ali  
Zainab waited barefoot by the door  
And Abbas reported their progress in the war  
"Noble sister do not cry nor worry for them  
Your sons have vanquished thousands more"  
"Their strength reminds the world of Khyber today  
Victorious they will return, the enemy they will slay"  
With tears in her eyes Zainab replied  
"May Allah bless them with success and might  
The two are alone, fighting thousands today  
Their fate rests with God, He will do what is right"  
"Though helpless, I trust the Almighty God  
He will grant me the wish I've always sought"  
"Oh my brother, I do not fret for them today  
They may die or get trampled by the army, yet I say  
'If a thousand sons I had, let them all so get killed  
To save the Son of Fatima, this price I will pay'  
"In Husain's stead, let me bear all the pain  
Even if nobody lives, yet live my Husain"  
As Abbas and Zainab spoke thus, Husain cried  
"Oh Abbas, the children are gone from my sight"  
Abbas charged at the battlefield  
On his way he heard Ali Akbar's cries  
"We live to witness this day and to weep?  
Let us get their bodies, on the sands they sleep"  
Abbas charged, by his side his spear  
And Husain grief-stricken, bare-headed was near  
The army retreated seeing them approach  
Dying on the sands lay the youth so dear  
Though apart in battle, yet together in death  
Still clutching their swords, wounded their chests  
Seeing His sister's sons in this state  
Crushed like flowers, trampled in haste  
Their brow and long hair matted with dust  
Lips blue with thirst, bruised the face  
Their brows gashed and battered, their clothing torn  
Ribs mashed and broken by the enemy swords  
Husain cried, holding their bodies close

"Come open your eyes, watch my tears flow  
In Death' slumber, heavy-lidded were their eyes  
Abbas felt their pulse and wept in woe  
"Raised in my lap, yet dying in my sight?"  
Husain held the dear boys in His arms and cried  
Alongside Abbas in sorrow wept  
And cried "Oh here comes the shadow of Death"  
And weeping in pain, Husain replied  
"The two now depart to eternally rest"  
"Within the camp, the hopeful mother waits  
Now we take their bodies to her in this state"  
But Zainab's heart knew that they lived no more  
Quiet in grief, she sat down by the door  
And Husain brought in her blood-soaked sons  
And said "Oh Zainab, my heart is torn"  
"What has happened, what is lost, how can I say?  
I hoped they would live, but they died on the way"  
Hearing this Zainab rose, weeping in pain  
And hugged their bruised bodies, uttering their names  
She praised their valor and their sacrifice  
And cried "Come wake up now, weeps my Husain"  
" Wake up, walk bravely and show me your swords  
The Imam needs you, so sleep no more."

## **The Slaughter of a Baby Most Revered Ali Asghar ('a)**

("Banu ke sheerquar ko haftum se pyaas hai")  
Banu's son has had no water for days  
His pulse is weak and his mother prays  
No hope in sight of getting water or milk  
Helpless, she lingers by his cradle in a daze  
"Pray tell me, what shall I do now Ya Husain?  
The baby's eyes now roll back in pain"  
"Oh Ya Ali, Ya Ali where can I go?  
I cannot watch my baby suffer so  
How do I find a way to make him live  
Ya Ali he needs water, that I cannot give"  
" Last night I saw him open his eyes  
But today he lays still, doesn't move, doesn't cry"  
Then everyone said, "Lets call the Imam  
For God's sake somebody, go get the Imam  
The baby is dying, go tell the Imam  
His face is blue, his body calm"  
"Taking the baby's body to lay it to rest  
The Imam is on his way, with grief beset"  
His face stained with the blood of His 18 year old  
The Imam entered, His head bowed  
And everyone led Him to the baby's crib

And showed Him the baby's still fingers and toes  
"He barely breathes Oh Noble Prince" they cried  
"Sometimes you would think he had already died"  
At the head of the crib, the Prince knelt down  
in the baby's ear He whispered, head bowed  
Hearing the Prince's voice, the baby smiled  
Toward Husain he extended his arms and glowed  
"It's a miracle my father," Sakina cried  
"Oh mother, my brother has opened his eyes"  
The baby in His arms, the Prince left the camp  
And Death followed, eyeing them askance  
To shelter her baby from the midday sun  
The mother draped a sheet over the Imam's arms  
Holding Asghar close, Husain walked, head bowed  
in the arms of the heavens, a snow white cloud  
As He neared the lowly enemy, Husain paused  
Couldn't ask for water, couldn't utter the words  
with embarrassment He paled and His body tensed  
So He removed the sheet from the baby's face  
Head bowed, he said, "I've brought my son to you  
Seeking water Asghar now has come to you"  
Then He kissed His baby's parched lips and looked  
And whispered "My son I've said what I could  
There is nothing else to say now Oh my son  
maybe you can show them your dry, parched tongue"  
And the baby obeyed, licked his lips dry  
And Husain shuddered and looked up to the skies  
And as Husain looked to the heavens so  
The cursed Hurmula strung an arrow in his bow  
And aimed the arrow at Asghar's throat  
Pulling taut the bow, let the arrow go  
As the tiny neck the arrow gashed  
Asghar lurched and clung to his dad  
A six month baby and an arrows force  
Blood poured from the tiny, thirsty throat  
Once more he lurched and then went still  
His cap fell to the ground and he breathed his last  
The tiny fists curled over his chest, body numb  
A minute ago he was sucking his thumbs  
And the desolate Father, watched His son  
saw the devastation the enemy's arrow had done  
And watched the baby in the throes of death  
The tiny hands groping at the injured neck  
The lifeless eyes rolling back in the head  
Blood gushing forth from the battered neck  
Gently pulling out the arrow from the neck  
Husain lifted His son toward the heaven and said  
"My God please accept my last sacrifice  
For your cause, in your path, my son is now dead"  
"Little in age but magnanimous in deeds  
Thus are the children of Allah's creed"



# Husain's Eighteen Year old Soldier Most Revered Ali Akbar ('a)

("Daulat koi dunya mein pisar se nahin behtar")  
No greater wealth than your children in this world  
No greater peace than their peace in this world  
just as no better flavor than a freshly picked fruit  
Or the fragrance of a rose with dew in its swirls  
Soothing your troubled heart, they make you whole  
They are your comfort, they calm your troubled soul  
Ask a master of the loss of a household destroyed  
Ask the members of the household who can only cry  
Ask a parent of the ruin the death of a child brings  
Ask Husain of Akbar's parting, the answer is in his sighs  
May a parent never so suffer, nor a child thus part  
In the tears of a mourning parent, is the blood of a bleeding  
heart  
When the dastardly arrows pierced Akbar's heart  
His breathing became labored and almost stopped  
He thought of Husain, as he fell from his horse  
And he cried out "Oh Father from you now I part"  
"Pray come to this wounded son, so alone, so bruised  
Come help your Ali Akbar, whom you're about to lose"  
Hearing His son's cries, Husain's heart sank  
His legs gave way, He dropped often to the sands  
With every breath He felt He could breathe no more  
"Oh Asadullah" He cried, clutched His heart in pain  
With shock His face ashen, desert dust in His hair  
Trembling, He rose again; blinded, He stared  
He shouted "Oh Ali Akbar, which way do I comes  
Do I search in the sand dunes under the blazing sun?  
My heart palpitates, do I seek the enemy's help?  
I will come to you, I'll find you, to me you cannot come"  
"Your loss has robbed your parents of every wish to live  
Me you were supposed to bury, the job to me you give"  
"Alter, call out my name, ask me once more to come  
Call your desolate father, call me, my precious son  
Call for your isolated, your heart-broken father now  
Call your anxious father so that I may come"  
"whatever God wills must happen, let it be, let it be  
So I must be beheaded, so what, let it be"  
Stumbling and falling, Husain found His injured son  
Lodged in Akbar's heart was an arrow, damage done  
He felt as though the arrow had pierced His own heart  
He clutched at His chest, Oh Akbar, so young  
He heard Akbar's labored breath, his toil to hide the pain  
The son dying before His eyes, the Father watched in vain  
Lips dry, ashen faced, hair matted with dust  
in his eyes a distant look, his body bruised and cut

Shoulders and neck wounded with arrows and swords  
Blood smeared on his face, on his cheeks tears of hurt  
His lips whispering, "My master hasn't come yet  
My Father isn't here and I'm so close to my death"  
"Oh listen my fluttering heart, beat till He gets here  
Stay Oh parting life, the Lord of Gin and men is near  
Linger Oh departing soul, the Imam must come  
Await Him Oh Death, do you hear?"  
"It is my wish to see Him once then I may die  
In His laps, in His arms, once more I wish to lie"  
"I am here Ali Akbar," said Husain, "I have come"  
"Get up my beloved, my dearest, lovely son  
You're waiting for me, your eyes searching the battlefield  
Your forlorn father is here, your wait for me is done"  
"Say something Akbar, open your eyes, look at me  
I'll hold you so my miserable face you can see"  
"You moan in pain, in your neck an arrow is stuck  
Does it hurt to moves Should I let your rest on the dust?  
My world has come crashing down on me today  
I've raised you in my lap, do I watch you die thus?"  
"Your liver comes gushing out of your wounded chest  
Through the open wounds I see your broken ribs no less"  
"Oh Ali Akbar, Ali Alter, say something, talk to me  
Open your eyes Ali Akbar, so my face you can see  
If you're leaving, say goodbye, do not so quietly go  
You must die and I live, how can it be? "  
"Even tired grooms do not sleep soundly as you do  
I weep for you in pain, and yet you do not move"  
In his unconscious state Akbar heard Husain's cries  
The obedient son opened his arms and sighed  
Husain held Akbar to His chest and wept in pain  
Showed the thirsty son, His own tongue, parched and dry  
And said "Oh dearest Akbar, not a drop I could find  
I couldn't get any water, Oh dearest son of mine"  
Tears flowed from Akbar's bloodied eyes  
He looked at Husain heard his father's cries  
And whispered "Mother Zahra has come for me"  
He took his last breath, shuddered and sighed  
Eyes open toward Husain, Ali Akbar passed away  
Resting in his Father's arms, nothing more did he say  
Historians say that the moment Akbar died  
Zainab left the camp, "Oh my Ali Akbar" she cried  
Her chador now forgotten, so intense was her grief  
The ladies followed her, wailing, teary-eyed  
The desert air echoed with their grief-stricken cries  
"Oh Ali Akbar, Ali Akbar" in unison they cried  
"Take me to Akbar, show me where he lies  
Have mercy on me, guide me, hear my painful cries  
My Brother sits alone with His wounded, youthful son  
Behind a cloud hides my moon, show me" Zainab cried  
"In grief I'm now blinded, where must I go?"

I'm searching for my son, look at my tears flow"  
Hearing Zainab's cries Husain ran to her side  
Covering her with His cloak, her face He tried to hide  
And said "My Zainab, why did you leave the camp?  
Oh daughter of Ali, dead is my joy and pride"  
"Bruised with spears, he lies on the desert floor  
What do you wish to see Oh Sister? Akbar is no more"

## **Imam Hasans Pride and Joy Most Revered Qasim ('a)**

(" Zaqmee jo run mein Qasim a gulpayrahun hua")  
When in the battle of Karbala Qasim fell from his mount  
Blood soaked his garments, that became his shroud  
The heavens shook with the Prophet's mournful cries  
And the army's gleeful cries could be heard loud  
They shouted " We've trampled the garden of Husain  
Come soldiers, douse the light of Hasan's lamp"  
Upon hearing the shouts, to Abbas Husain turned  
And said "For Qasim now we must mourn.?  
The battle is over, Qasim's fate is sealed  
Death's shadow now approaches the child of Hasan"  
"Call for Ali Akbar now, let us pray, let us pray  
Bare headed we will pray that death be stayed"  
Toward Kaaba then the imam faced  
To the heavens He looked, His hands raised  
And cried out "Oh my wondrous, almighty God  
From the hands of the enemy may Qasim be saved"  
"You are the protector of all, Oh merciful God  
Save the fatherless child from the evil swords"  
And everyone prayed for Qasim, Hasan's son  
in grief Zainab's hair was hastily undone  
And Banu's heart trembled and wept for Qasim  
And his mother cried "Tell me, how is my son?"  
with shock, Abid's feverish body turned cold  
And Qasim's little brother paled as fear took hold  
While adults and children in the camp prayed  
The army surrounded Qasim, ready to slay  
Their arrows and spears blocked his way, circled him  
And thousands of swords flashed in the air  
His face flushed, chest riddled with wounds  
Blood dripped from his body, like sweat at high noon  
He leaned over his horse, weak and giddy with thirst  
Then a deadly arrow his chest pierced  
The evil Sheesh stabbed a spear into his heart  
As Qasim fell, at his back an arrow lurched  
Tariq's spear assaulted, Qasim cried out in pain  
"Oh Imam, I've fallen, Oh come now dear Husain"  
With Zulfiqaar in hand, Husain charged at the field

Seeing Him, the evil army trembled and keeled  
In terror the soldiers scattered, their horses neighed  
The killers panicked and fled, took to their heels  
As the army took flight, trampled and rushed  
With the hooves of a thousand horses, Qasim's was crushed  
When Husain reached Qasim, what a sight He saw  
His lips parched with thirst, with pain his body raw  
Grief-stricken Husain wrapped Qasim in His arms  
Qasim's soul departed, not a breath did he draw  
Husain gathered Qasim's body, the limbs crushed, torn  
Marked with hooves the body of the thirteen year old

## **Imam Husain's Beloved Brother and Standard Bearer of the Army Most Revered Abbas ibn Ali ('a)**

("Jab Ibne Bu Turaab ba rue zameen gira" )  
When to the ground the son of Abu Turaab fell  
With arms severed, the brave warrior fell  
And the banner he held fell with him to the ground  
And Fatima cried out as he lay still  
"Any moment now, behead him they will  
A living symbol of Ali, surely they will kill"  
The Prince heard the cry, to the battlefield He ran  
In His haste, He stumbled falling often to the sands  
His legs trembled, He grabbed His young son's arm  
And cried "O Akbar, lead the way in this new land"  
"Pray, move the crowding army from the river barks  
Lead me to my brother, the delay I cannot stand"  
"Oh Akbar, my life is ruined alas  
My back is broken, this pain shall never pass  
It's as though I've lost my Father once again  
Oh the pain, like a knife, cuts right through my heart"  
"Condolences to my Father, turn me toward Najaf  
And let go my hands so I can mourn thus"  
Akbar led Husain to His brother's side  
And Husain saw that Abbas was ready to die  
But hearing Husain's wails, Abbas opened his eyes  
Akbar showed Husain the severed arms by his side  
Seeing the severed arms, Husain fell to the ground  
And hugged His brother, looking helplessly around  
And Abbas stirred and opened his eyes  
And cried, "Oh my Lord, have I lost my sight?  
Why don't I see you, where are you Oh my Lord"  
Husain said, "My brother in your stead I will die"  
"Look at my plight, as you depart from me  
This parting of brothers, how can it be? "  
"Your beloved Sakina waits for you by the camps

And the thirsty children surround her, holding hands  
And Sakina counsels them patience and says  
"Look at Ali Asghar, toward the door his glance"  
"For three days there's no water in the camps  
My Ammu will come soon from the river banks"  
But Abbas answered, "My Imam I depart  
It is my will though that once I've passed  
Please leave my body on the shores of Furat  
Here will be my grave, that's a wish of my heart"  
"Do not carry my body back to the camps  
Hyder's son will stay forever on the banks."  
"May I make another wish, Oh my beloved Lord?  
I wish the ladies not leave their abode  
And Sakina not see my injured body so  
And a last dying wish grant to me my God"  
"That your presence, Oh Imam illumine my grave  
And your cloak be my shroud, it's a wish I crave"  
So Husain draped Abbas in His cloak  
"Are you happy my brother?" He asked tear-soaked  
" But the army will rob you of this cloak tonight  
You won't have it for long, such is destiny's stroke"  
"The enemy will loot everything tonight  
Without chadors, our women will caulk in daylight"  
Hearing this Abbas shuddered and opened his eyes  
On the Imam's feet he rested his sight  
In the throes of death, then he glanced at Husain  
Dread at Husain's words now in his dying eyes  
Then Abbas went still as Husain watched  
A brother lost his life as a brother watched

## **The Prophet's Grandson Most Revered Imam Husain ('a)**

("Jab qatema ba qae hue foj a Shah kaa" )  
When the army of the Prince was no more  
Thirsty, it had departed to Kausar's shores  
His friends murdered, His family destroyed  
The home of the Prophet was plundered to the core  
No brother or friend or loved ones remained  
Two sisters to mourn, and there was Husain  
Earlier in the day, sons and friends were around  
But by the afternoon, everyone was gone  
The sun blazed, wind blew, the desert scorched  
The tents flapped with a desolate sound  
Husain was surrounded, alone in His pain  
A commander but no army, all had been slain  
"Why delay oh Death" in misery He asked  
"Why must I live after Alder has passed?  
Every moment feels like a lifetime to me

Only in Death will my pain pass"  
"I should have died when Akbar was killed  
I should've been beheaded, that is my will"  
"Yet I remain, I live, after everyone has died  
Alone I shed tears with no one by my side  
Enduring the loss of my sons in this war  
In my old age to bury them, to struggle and cry  
"No son by me when I succumb to death  
No support if I stumble, no place whereon to rest"  
He glanced at Akbar's body on the desert sand  
He clutched His chest and cried out in pain  
"Oh Akbar you rest, your hair on the dust strewn  
Come help me, I am falling, rise from Death's daze"  
"In Death's slumber you forget your father my son  
Say your Namaz (Salat) alongside under the blazing sun"  
"From the banks of the Furat, Abbas come to me  
My wounds burn with the heat, I'm thirsty, come see  
Sprinkle on my body, water if you can find  
I'm dying, say goodbye, come to me, come to me"  
"In death you sleep soundly, what can Shabeer say?  
May no one be as wretched as me I pray'  
"Since you've left, every bone inside me hurts  
My brow, neck, eyes, my joints, and head hurts  
My heart, back, chest, every muscle is full of pain  
Distraught I am my son, every vein within me hurts"  
"I've battled a thousand soldiers, I'm soaked in blood  
Young ones I've buried, with pain my heart floods"  
Impatiently Saad's son addressed the army thus  
"Come on brave soldiers, surround Husain we must"  
They turned toward Husain, attacked and besieged  
Thousands bearing arrows, armed with swords the rest  
midst archers, stone throwers, Husain stood alone  
Spears flashed in the sun, thousands against one  
Surrounded by the massive army, all alone  
Spears and swords charged, He stood all alone  
Arrows inflicted fatal blows, Husain was all alone  
Target of a thousand blows, Husain was all alone  
in the gloom of Shaam's army, like the moon His Being  
glowed  
The world had turned against Him, toward Him its fury  
flowed  
Alas the wretched army knew not a Sayyid's worth  
They pierced His noble body with arrows and spears  
Aiming at Him their swords, they sought to massacre Him  
They circled, surrounded Him, each seeking to kill him first  
These were the Prophet's followers, they attacked His own  
Grandson  
Your Imam was unaided under the scorching sun  
Husain fell from His horse, no friend to aid His descent  
No one to pull the arrows from His riddled chest  
His friends and loved ones dead, Husain now all alone

Weak with thirst and hunger, nowhere to go, no rest  
Facing a treacherous army, drowning in their flood  
in every face around Him, a hunger to spill His blood  
It felt as though the heavens fell to the earth that day  
Wounded the son of Fatima, on His horse swayed  
The in-um of the universe, the Prophet's dear Grandson  
Precariously He swayed and fell to the earth that day  
Oh the thousand bruises on His body as He fell!  
Imagine the pain and hurt when to the sands He fell!  
Fizza took the news to the ladies within  
"The Imam is surrounded Oh what a sin"  
Hearing this Abid stood up from his bed and fell  
in panic the ladies ran out into the din  
With Zainab's cries heaven and earth quaked  
Stumbling she ran into the field, her eyes seeking Husain  
" Where is my brother? " She cried, running every way  
"All's wealth is lost, plundered here today  
Show me the way to the river, take me to the battlefield  
Show me where my Brother lies, wounded, show me pray'  
"The heavens are no help, let me pass Oh blessed earth  
I've come searching for Husain, wounded, alone, He hurts"  
"I'm Syeda have mercy, help me find the way to Him  
I'm Ali's daughter help me, save yourself from sin  
May you live happily, find peace after death  
Show me where the Sayyid lies, pray take me to Him"  
"We've lost everyone, we're ruined in this new land  
We're residents of Medina, against thousands today we  
stand"  
Then she heard Husain's groans, sensed her Brother near  
And Zainab ran to where a the sound came clear  
She watched in disbelief as Shimer beheaded Husain  
She covered her face, fell to the earth, in shock and fear  
With grief her heart shattered, she silently prayed  
The severed head of her Brother, she saw on a spear raised.

## **Hind, Wife of the Cursed Yazid Visits the Prisoners of War**

(" Qaid qaane mein talatum hai ke Hind aatee hai" )  
The prisoners are informed that Hind is on her way  
Beset with humiliation is Zainab's state  
Agitated, distraught, embarrassed, distressed  
Beside herself with grief, she cries out her prayers  
"Unyielding the earth, distant the sky  
Come pray Oh ladies that I rather die"  
"What must I do now in this moment of sham  
Save me from humiliation in Akbar's name  
Make a circle around me, conceal me in your midst  
Hide me in a corner, away from such disdain"

"I'm bare headed, no chador, hide me you must  
Hind is coming, cover me with the prison's dust"  
"At Hind's arrival, why mustn't I be dismayed?  
I'm the daughter of Ali, now in prison I stay  
The prison walls I wish would part, wrap me within  
Or escape to Karbala, where my dear Brother lays"  
"In the desert of Karbala, I will feel no disgrace  
Un shrouded is my Brother, uncovered my face"  
Then Fizza cried out "My Lady, I see her now'  
"With glory and fanfare Hind comes, people bow  
Her maids in chador, yet Hind's head is bare  
Accompanied by guards, the trumpets play loud"  
"Her pace is unhurried, she pauses often times  
Frequently she stops to weep at the prison sights"  
Hind cries "At the prisoners' sobs, I'm distraught"  
"Their wails of `Yaa Husain' with pain are fraught  
who killed their leader, why do these prisoners weep?  
Was he a Sayyid? Tell me, keep from me not"  
"My heart is burdened, I weep in pain  
I see Fatima, bare headed in grief, complain"  
"I am certain a terrible wrong has been done  
The angels grieve, grieve the moon and the sun  
I must go to Najaf, I find no peace these days  
Only Ali can help me, he is the one"  
"If all is well, my Maula sleeps in peace  
if not, then restless in his grave, he weeps"  
Just then Hind's entourage drew closer in  
And saw a Noble Youth bound in chains, laying still  
Gaunt and withered for lack of water or food  
His face and body bruised with spears and whips  
As He quivers with weakness starvation brings  
A rattling is heard from His shackles and chains  
The royal maidens turned to Hind and cried  
"In this dark prison, He glows like a light  
Engrossed in prayer, He's oblivious to us all  
Why imprison Him.? He most certainly will die"  
"Who bound Him in shackles, ropes and chains?  
To Maula Ali He's related we're certain Oh Hind"  
Hind approached the imam in great distress  
moving the chains, her head on His feet she placed  
"Who is it?" He called and Hind replied  
"A servant of Shabeer, my salaam to you I say"  
"Oh Prisoner its time to state Your last will  
You're close to death, are You prepared still?"  
"Your last will I will honor, do not fret Oh dying one  
I'll walk with Your coffin, barefoot under the sun  
Pray tell me about You, tell me Your name"  
He replied "For forty more years live I must"  
"You can call me a captive, a helpless soul  
I'm a prisoner in shackles, I'm ill, such is my lore"  
"What ails You?" She asked "Orphan hood" He replied



"The cures" Hind inquired "His mourning" He cried  
 "And Your homes" asked Hind, "Nowhere" said the imam  
 "Your caretaker?" She asked "Oblivion" He replied  
 Hind asked Him the reason for His mournful sighs  
 He showed her the bruises on His back in reply  
 "Why do they punish You so?" Hind cried  
 "Not a faulty deed have I done," He replied  
 Hind then asked, "Since when are You so chained"  
 "It was the 10th' of Muharram when they bound me" He  
 sighed  
 "For my shroud I own not a piece of cloth  
 My Father's body I've left on the sands, burning hot"  
 Hind then turned toward Zainab and cried  
 "Looks like Fatima in prison, Oh what a plight"  
 She then stared at Banu, and in amazement said  
 "It's a princess from Iran in prison, what a sight"  
 "I'm speechless at the sights I have seen today"  
 "Kulthum and Zainab in prison.? Oh what a day'  
 Zainab cried "Oh Hind, do not mention these names"  
 "Would such ladies be in prison? Imagine the shame"  
 "Of Fatima's daughters, do not so speak  
 "Hold your speech, seek pardon in Allah's name"  
 "with reverence of whom the Prophet did speak  
 Will the Muslims capture them, their chadors steal?"  
 "The Lady who was buried in the dark of the night  
 Bare headed her daughters would roam in daylight?  
 Of whom the Prophet spoke highly, with love  
 The Muslims will loot and with them they will fight?"  
 "Oh Hind, in public the kin of Muhammad parade  
 The heavens didn't fall and the earth didn't quakes"  
 Horrified, in distress, Hind fell on Zainab's feet  
 "Pray forgive me" She cried, "Do not sit still"  
 "Behead me for speaking with such disrespect"  
 "Curse me," Hind cried "Of me speak ill"  
 "When I mention Shabeer's name, you weep in pain  
 When I ask your names, you bow your heads in shame."

## **The Imam's Beloved Daughter Most Reveled Sakina ('a)**

(" Bevon kaa mulke Shaam mein jis dum guzar hua" )  
 When in Shaam the caravan of widows arrived  
 In embarrassment they bowed their heads and cried  
 Seeing the spectators lined up on the streets  
 Tears of humiliation filled their eyes  
 Having trailed through the roads, shops and streets  
 The Queens reached the court of the infamous Yazid  
 There Yazid conversed with Abid at length  
 Hearing Abid's responses, the attendees wept

Disgraced, Yazid brought the confrontation to a close  
Enraged at Sajjad's character and strength  
while all spectators went back to their homes  
To prison the kin of the Prophet went on  
In the dark prison, they sat heads bowed  
Frightened of the darkness, Sakina looked around  
So exhausted was Abid from His journeys on foot  
He dropped to the floor without a sound  
Many nights He had stayed up, many miles He had walked  
He slept now, resting His head on the wall  
"why is it so dark" Sakina wanted to know  
"What place is this mother, where no air flows?  
The darkness is smothering, I can't see a thing  
Not the earth beneath or the sky above"  
"We cannot stay here, no one will survive  
Won't lamps be lit when evening arrives?"  
"If it stays this dark, I will certainly not last  
I'm convinced that this night will not pass  
My Father would cradle me on his chest at night  
Now sleep on the dirt? I cannot alas"  
"If a lamp blew out, I'd wake with a start  
Have I ever, Oh Mother, slept in the dark"  
Her mother replied, wiping Sakina's tears  
"Hush my little one, lest the guards hear  
Morning will come soon, the dark will be gone  
The moon will illumine this place my dear"  
"The breeze will flow, the night will cool down  
I'll hold you in my arms, rest Oh little one"  
Thus the mother consoled, cajoled and calmed  
The girl was restless, the night stretched on  
Sakina sobbed and wept through the night  
Weary she curled up in her mother's arms  
Her frail body weak and drowsy, she slept  
And Banu held Sakina in her arms and wept  
Within moments Sakina was restless again  
She dreamt of her Father, His presence she felt  
Stretching wide her arms, she woke with a start  
And peered in the darkness, her eyes seeking Him  
She cried "Oh Mother, not a thing I can see  
My Father was here, tell me where is He"  
Everyone wept at Sakina's state  
And so did the prison guard, hiding his face  
And Yazid learned of Sakina's distress  
That she's crying for her Father, for Him she prays  
Inconsolable she weeps, nothing calms her down  
She wants her Father, she wants Him now  
"Then take His head" Yazid ordered his men  
And Husain's severed head was carried thence  
Its glory and radiance lighting the path  
Fragrant and glorious Its noble presence  
Sensing the approach, the prisoners hastily rose

impatiently Sakina waited by the door  
Anxious to see Him, smiling through her tears  
The air grew fragrant as His head drew near  
With His halo the prison aura transformed  
Gone with the gloom was Sakina's fear  
In reception the prisoners lined up at the door  
in respect and salutation Abid arose  
To receive her Father, Sakina held out her dress  
And hugged His head close to her chest  
She kissed His forehead, His cheeks, His lips  
The prisoners circled her in awe and respect  
Where Zainab stood hair strewn, head bare  
Husain's glance was affixed to her face  
Holding her Father's severed head  
Sakina sat on the floor and said  
Words of love, of her loss, her pain  
Then unconscious she was, close to death  
Her face resting on her Father's face  
She sighed, shuddered and took her last breath  
Her silence at first gave no one alarm  
For everyone thought she was feeling calm  
But as the silence stretched, the mother said  
"Wake up dear Sakina, pass the head to you Aunt"  
Hearing no response, terror filled Banu's heart  
"She's fainted" said everyone, "Banu take heart"  
Banu lifted Sakina into her arms  
Saw the lifeless limbs, eyes shut, face calm  
Neck limp, face drooping to her chest, not a sound  
"what is this?" She cried, "What is this now?"  
"What healer do I consult, where do I go?  
The prison door is locked my dear, what do I do?"  
She fanned Sakina's chest, lifting her shirt  
"Pray my lady," she turned to Zainab and urged  
She called out for Abid to come to her aid  
"Come here my Son, Your sister won't stir"  
"I'm trying to rouse her, I see no response  
She's passed out I gather, but her breathing has stopped"  
Feeling her pulse Abid moaned and tensed  
And the mother cried "I have no more strength"  
"Yet I'll face the truth, do not hide from me Son"  
Abid replied "Dear mother, she is dead"  
"Lay her down on the sand, let her rest  
Her body is bruised, yet she's peaceful in death"  
"In this dark prison my daughter is dead"  
Banu cried "This death I will never forget"  
And Fizza went to the prison door and asked  
The guards for a lamp for the house of the dead  
"No one keeps a body laying so in the dark  
Yet our little girl lies in the prison night black"  
With the light of dawn, the prison was lit  
And Banu bent over Sakina and looked

Saw the bruised ears, dried blood on her neck  
Her dress blood-stained, tattered and burnt  
Pale and gaunt, resting on the prison floor  
Hair laden with dust, crying no more  
"My dearest" She cried, "Wake up now  
Its time for Namaz (Salat), your head you must bow  
"You've never needed my help to wake up before  
You'd wake on your own, what's happened now?"  
"You know the guards' fury, do not so doze  
This isn't home Sakina, they'll come to the door"  
"The darkness troubled you, you couldn't rest  
You'd pray for a breeze, you'd get upset  
The breeze from heaven gill cool you tonight  
in your new home Sakina my dear, sleep well"  
"I hope you find comforts you couldn't find here  
The grave is roomier than this prison my dear"

## **Most Reverred Zainab ('a) Returns to Karbala Chehlum**

("Chehlum jo Karbala mein bahattar ka ho chuka")  
The Chehlum<sup>1</sup> for seventy two martyrs was done  
And the bodies and the heads had finally become one  
And Husain's slain army was remembered by all  
And the children of Muhammad lamented His son  
For three days and nights in the desert they mourned  
Embracing His tomb as though never to be torn  
Hearts lit like candles, their love for Him bloomed  
Their sons, like flowers, scattered around His tomb  
Remembering those killed, they cried out in grief  
And clutched at their hearts and in pain swooned  
" Where are those who would protect us?" they cried  
"Now we wander, heads bare in broad daylight"  
The air fraught with sobs as the widows wept  
And the Noble Sister's face on His tomb did rest  
And cried "Oh my beloved brother dear Husain  
For three days and nights I've been Your guest"  
"Heartbroken and forlorn is this Prophet's grandchild  
For my services You didn't accept, what a plight"  
"The will of the imam, I will gladly accept  
But the bruises on my arms I haven't shown You yet  
I am alone today, no friend in sight  
Without You I am nothing, how can You forget?"  
"I've lost sons and brothers and You in this war  
my back is bruised with the tip of the spear"  
"I cared for the orphans, the fathers lay dead  
Their frail ages and captivity, the pain and the dread  
To divert them from their misery, I narrated your tale  
I was their mother, their aunt, or their father instead"

"And I will live on to see them suffer and die  
For it is not my destiny to see beloveds thrive"  
" I had imagined pilgrims surrounding Your tomb  
And the throng of the angels had lifted the gloom  
And in Your memorial, we would all gather here  
Yet I see not a soul, I am here alone"  
" By your graveside I sit my Brother, and weep  
And console my heart though my pain is deep"  
Saying this, Zainab inconsolable, sobbed  
And the tomb of the Prince shuddered and rocked  
And Basheer approached the Prince's son and said  
"Oh Imam shall we leave Your aunt is distraught"  
And Abid toward His Aunt did turn  
And asked "Dear Aunt shall we return."  
And Zainab replied, "As you wish dear Imam"  
The preparations to leave for Medina began  
The tents were untied and the camels lined up  
And around the graves gathered Ali's clan  
Bidding farewell to those who slept in their graves  
The old and the young stood around in a daze  
At the thought of leaving her Brother's tomb  
Distraught, Zainab cried " How can I leave You along  
In this forsaken desert away from us all  
This empty, desolate city now Your home"  
"where nothing grows and nothing lives  
Such a place You've chosen to gather and rest"  
"Oh Noble Lord of Karbala, farewell  
Oh the sands that cradle His shroud, farewell  
Dear grave of the noble, lofty Prince, farewell  
My Brother Your sister departs now, farewell"  
"This Prophet's grandchild is unfortunate indeed  
For You're not pleased with her deeds"  
"How do I face Medina having left You here  
What if the Prophet questions, how can I bear?  
If I go to Najaf, the same question I will face  
'Where is Husain?' That is all I will hear"  
"You've asked me to leave, so how can I stay?  
But where must I go, where must I stay?"  
"won't You come, hold my hand as I alight?  
Won't You shelter me from strangers' sights?  
Won't Abbas or Alder come to bid me farewell?  
Won't You bring Asghar for whom Banu cries?"  
"You're our leader come lead us ahead  
we're ready, yet You sleep, the grave Your bed"  
"Although I weep and call out Your name  
You do not answer Oh Prince, I'm amazed  
if only You would embrace me now  
I will leave for Medina, though never the same"  
The Prince then answered "My dear Zainab farewell  
Give my love to Soghra, my daughter who is ill"

1. The word "Chehlum" or "Arba'in" in Arabic, denotes the traditional memorial held on the 40th day after death.

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