

122. In that sunshine, the King of the nations stood alone. There was no longer the lap (refuge) of the Prophet, nor the shade of the standard. Flames of sighs welled up from his heart at every moment. His lips were gray; there were thorns in his tongue; his back was bent. This was the third day that the guest (Husain) had spent without water. His tongue tripped over every word he uttered.
123. The (enemy) cavalry leaders let their horses drink to the full. Camels came to the watering places in droves. Birds in countless numbers drank water from the river. Water carriers sprinkled water on the ground over and over again. It was regarded as a pious action to give water to wild and tame animals. Only the son of Fatima (Husain) was deprived of water.
124. The son of Sa'd<sup>174</sup> put a golden parasol over his head. Here and there were a number of fan-swingers. The water sprinklers repeatedly made the ground wet. The son of Fatima did not have the shade of a tree over him. That sunshine of the desert; that blazing of the sun. The blessed complexion of the Lord became black.
125. Ibn Sa'd spoke: 'Oh Lord of the heaven! If you will give me your allegiance, there is a cup of water here waiting for you now'. Husain replied: 'Oh cursed one! The son of the dusty one ('Ali) regards the river as if it were dust (i.e. of no account). Oh impious one! Do you have no respect for Islam? Even if you give me the water of eternal life now, it is no use to me.
126. If I ask, Abraham will come himself now bringing his tray.<sup>175</sup> If I wish, in a moment, I can arrange for the fountain of Salsabil.<sup>176</sup> What cup of water will you give, oh vile one? Dishonourable, mean, tyrant. miserly one, avaricious one! May the flower on which your shadow falls give no perfume. If you have yourself bled, your vein will never give blood.<sup>177</sup>

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174. 'Umar ibn Sa'd, a general of Yazid's army.

175. xəlil (wllah) - 'the friend of God' ; Abraham was noted for his generosity. xwan-e xəlil is proverbial for a liberal feast.

176. A fountain of Paradise. The primary meaning of səbil is 'a road'. səbil kərna 'to make a way', 'to prepare, arrange'. During the month of Muharram water or sherbet is set out at places along the road for thirsty travellers in memory of Husain's suffering. The stalls set up are known as səbil. Thus the verse may be interpreted as 'I could make a sherbet stall of Salsabil'.

177. fəsd khwlvana 'to have a phlebotomy', 'to have one's veins opened to let out bad blood'. Ibn Sa'd is so heartless that he does not even have blood in his veins!

127. If I call the name of Jamshed,<sup>178</sup> he will come now bringing his cup. Kausar<sup>179</sup> will come here bringing the injunctions of the Prophet. Gabriel<sup>180</sup> will come down onto the earth calling my name. The host of the angels will come bringing a message of victory. If I wish for a complete change, the world will be finished. The earth will be turned upside down (to the extent) that Kufa<sup>181</sup> and Syria will exist no more.
128. He said this, and as he looked towards Zulfiqar, that tyrant (Ibn Sa'd) fell back. From the (enemy) ranks countless arrows fell upon the afflicted one (Husain). The sound of the drums of war crossed through the sky. Raising their spears, the cavalymen were drawn up in array for war. The black flags were unfurled in the black-faced army.
129. The noise of the drums of battle; the shrill notes of the trumpet. The ears of the angels were deafened with the din. The earth trembled so much that the sky lost its senses. Brandishing their spears, the cavalymen wearing their armours came out. Shields covered the heads of the ill-omened cavalry, so that they seemed to advance like a rain cloud swooping on the desert.
130. See, reciting a number of martial verses the king of the faith (Husain) advanced.<sup>182</sup> In order to steady the universe, Gabriel advanced.<sup>183</sup> Like a male lion (Husain) stopped here and advanced there. Like Ali with his sleeves rolled up, he advanced. The intrepid one gave splendour to the bride of the battle.<sup>184</sup> The sword of the Solver of difficulties left its sheath.<sup>185</sup>

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178. jam-e jəm is strictly speaking 'the mirror' of Jamshed, in which he could see whatever he wished. It is however frequently understood in the sense of 'the cup' of Jamshed, which is here more appropriate.
179. A spring of Paradise.
180. Cf. v.32.
181. A town in Iraq in the possession of Yazīd.
182. rajez - a verse, basically in the metre — — — — — x4, particularly associated with martial poems.
183. I.e. in case the universe should be toppled by Husain's cries.
184. jelva - a ceremony in a marriage when the bride and bridegroom see each other's faces. wrus-e mesaf, i.e. the sword itself which is unsheathed.
185. mwkylkwfa - Ali, whose sword was Zulfiqar.

131. The flaming (sword) was separated from its sheath, as a beautiful girl tears herself away from the embrace of her lover; as the moonbeams leave the moon, or as perfume drifts from the rose; as breath departs from the breast; as blood comes out of the jugular vein. When the thunder roared,<sup>186</sup> lightning rained down from the clouds. Suffocated in her camel-litter, Laila fell out.<sup>187</sup>
132. Husain came on just as an eagle swoops; as a wild lion in the jungle attacking a deer; as flashing lightning comes to a rain-cloud. The horse ran like water down a slope. The sharp sword flashed onto that band, as lightning quivers and falls onto a mountain.
133. As the lightning of the sword flashed in the heat, sparks flew. As the gust of the wind whistled, heads flew. As the sparks flew here and there from the shields, Gabriel knew full well that his wings flew. The signs of the name which has the effect of a charm were manifested.<sup>188</sup> Those wings on which (the name of) 'Ali was written became a shield.<sup>189</sup>
134. The one on whom that sword fell, (Husain) cut him in two; and as he (Husain) drew (the sword) he cut him once more into four pieces. (The sword) was there where Death pointed. If some great hardness met (the sword) then it accepted it.<sup>190</sup> There was neither a saddle on the horse, nor riders on the saddle. The links of the armour were scattered on the ground.
135. When (the sword) came flashing down on the multitude, it made their heads fall. In a moment it made the assembled ranks fall flat. It brought down the citadel of the body<sup>191</sup> of each one of them. When its torrent came roaring down, it made houses fall. Whoever landed upon its curved blade fell dead.<sup>192</sup> A river of blood flowed with the lustrous sharpness of the sword.<sup>193</sup>

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186. I.e. when Husain called out, or when Zulfiqar was brandished.
187. The sword is compared to Laila (the beloved of Majnun) who travelled in pardah in her camel-litter.
188. Gabriel (ruh wl amin) is supposed by Shi'as to have the names of Ali and Husain written on his wings. These are the ysm-e ezimat eser.
189. I.e. for a while, Gabriel shielded Husain. Note the play (tejnīs) on per and syper.
190. saxti, i.e. the sword cut through anything, however hard.
191. qesr-e ten, i.e. the body itself.
192. ghaj - lit. 'a landing place' may also mean the curved blade of a sword. Here the word is particularly appropriate.
193. panī - the equivalent of ab which means 'lustre', 'sharpness' as well as 'water'.

136. The shower of flames upon that water - the glory of God!<sup>194</sup> Fire in water, and water in fire - the glory of God! Silence and quick-talking (i.e. sharpness) - the glory of God! The swift current in the stagnant water - the glory of God! When (the sword) quivered, the full spate (of the enemy) at once subsided.<sup>195</sup> The sharpness<sup>196</sup> of Zulfiqar was ahead by the distance of several spears.<sup>197</sup>
137. The centre, the flank, the right wing and the left wing of the army were destroyed. The murderers of the followers of the Best of Creation (Muhammad) were destroyed. The earth was spinning, the ranks were overthrown, the flank was destroyed. Bodies were lifeless; the soul, which is a guest in the world, was destroyed.<sup>198</sup> The market was closed; the flags were torn down. Armies were destroyed; the quarters of the city were uprooted.
138. Ah God! the speed and sharpness of that flame coloured (sword). It flashed down upon the rider and soon found its way to the horse's girth.<sup>199</sup> It only thirsted after blood; it sought only battle. It had no need of a grindstone or a flint. It filled the heavens with blood and the battle-field with corpses. In one moment it went up to the sky and came down a hundred times.

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194. The whole verse, in praise of Husain's sword, contains a number of amazing paradoxes, marked by the exclamation xwda ki fan.
195. The enemy is compared to a river in full spate, which the sword makes abate.
196. For pani, cf. verse 135.
197. neza ('a spear') is used as a measure of depth (something like 'fathom'). nezon berha hua tha 'it was deeper by fathoms'. Here pani in the sense of 'sharpness' is particularly appropriate.
198. The soul is imagined to be a guest in the body, which is compared to a travellers' inn (mwsafyrsara).
199. Lit. 'it brought news of the horses girth'. I.e. it cut rider and horse right through.

139. It was the sword of autumn; what concern had it for the garden of existence? The one whose very house has been uprooted,<sup>200</sup> what need has he of a settlement? It pointed towards righteousness; what concern had it with infidelity. The one who has his head held high, what need has he to lower himself? That which they call uprightness is with its curve;<sup>201</sup> its sharpness is with its tongue; its cutting edge is in its breath.<sup>202</sup>
140. If it struck a breast, the heart was bathed in blood,<sup>203</sup> as if the fingernails of death were plunged into the heart. When it flashed, the cry of 'God preserve us' rose up from all sides. He who fell on its blade (lit. 'face') was left without honour.<sup>204</sup> One blow (of the sword) was not stopped by even five or ten (of the enemy). Faces were blackened by its flame.<sup>205</sup>
141. Ranks were spread out upon ranks wherever it struck. It now flashed on that side, it came in this direction, it went there. On both sides the army cried out 'where has it gone?' One called out, 'it is here', another 'it has gone over there'. The archers had no idea which way its blade (lit. 'face') was facing. Heads were falling, and the bodies were not aware of it.
142. The enemy who were on the banks, washed their hands of life. The head was separated from the body, the reins were parted from the hands. Here (the sword) broke a heart; there it pierced a hand with its tip. When they have been cut off and have fallen, then where will hands come from? Now no hands were available<sup>206</sup> to hide the face. Indeed only the feet remained for running away.

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200. The sword's house was uprooted when it was pulled from its sheath.
201. Righteousness (rasti) resides in the curve (xəm) of its blade. rasti and xəm are of course opposites.
202. dəm also means 'the edge of a sword'.
203. kəleja lwhu hona also means 'to be in a state of panic'.
204. Cf. verse 3. There is a play on mwnh and ru.
205. Implying siyahru 'dishonoured'.
206. There is a play of hath (hand) and dəstyab ('available, to hand'). Note dəst is the Persian equivalent of hath.

143. Ah God, the fear of the sword of the Lion of Creation. The water of the Euphrates turned into bile through fear.<sup>207</sup> On the river, this was the state of every evil character. There was no means of escape for them nor had they the strength to stay there. There was a cry that 'lightning is falling on every armoured man; run away! the river of God's destruction is in full spate'.
144. Although the fish were completely covered in armour,<sup>208</sup> they nevertheless went hither and thither with their mouths open, hiding themselves. The wave fled, leaving the shield of the whirlpool. The crocodiles lurked on the bottom, but their hearts were fluttering.<sup>209</sup> The river could not remain still out of fear of that (sword) which flashed like lightning,<sup>210</sup> but there were blisters of bubbles on its feet.<sup>211</sup>
145. Whenever the destruction of God came, it came with a whirring (of the blade of the sword). The shout of 'God help us' reached the ears from the battle field. Splitting the helmet in two it came through the breastplate onto the saddle, and slicing through the warhorse it came onto the ground. When the lightning of the sword of the Lord fell on the sand, a cry came from the earth: 'Ah! Dusty One ('Alī)'.<sup>212</sup>
146. Pressing each other, the bowmen died in the fray. Their bowstrings all remained taut, while their arms hung loose.<sup>213</sup> The horns of the bows were cut; the flights of the arrows were lost. There was no means of surviving on the battle field - they passed away. In panic, the senses of the bird of vain imagining flew away.<sup>214</sup> The notches of the arrows opened their mouths in terror.<sup>215</sup>

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207. zehra 'the gall bladder', 'bile'. Note that the expression zehra ab ho jana 'the bile to turn to water' means 'to be in a panic'.

208. I.e. the scales of the fish (khepra).

209. There is a play on nyheng and megar.

210. berq-tab, i.e. the sword itself.

211. The river itself panicked, and would have fled, but because of the heat it had blisters (bubbles) on its feet, and thus could not run.

212. cylla cephna - of a bowstring to be fixed/made taut. The taut bowstrings contrast with the limp arms of the dead bowmen.

213. Vain thoughts (vehm) are compared to a fluttering bird (mwry).

214. The notches on the arrows look like mouths open in terror. sehm in Arabic means 'arrow'; in Persian 'dread'. In Urdu sehenna means 'to fear'. The play on words here is obvious.

147. Those whose archery was renowned in every city found no place of refuge except the grave.<sup>215</sup> Those whose target in the darkness of night was the eye of the ant,<sup>216</sup> fear for their life in the camp made them blind.<sup>217</sup> The senses of the army of perdition flew away. They put their bowstrings in the heads of the arrows, mistaking them for notches.<sup>218</sup>
148. Ranks fell on top of ranks, flanks upon flanks; they fell forward and back. Riders fell on riders, horses upon horses. For five who got up from the ground and fled, ten fell. Messengers fell on heralds, and patrol guards fell dead on messengers. The flanks (of the army) broke; the main cause of the tyranny was broken.<sup>219</sup> Such a rout has rarely been seen in the world.<sup>220</sup>
149. The wild lion of the desert of Karbala was angry. The wolves abandoned their abode and asylum at Karbala. The sword of Ali was the adornment of the battlefield of Karbala. No place was empty of (fallen) heads at Karbala. A dwelling of the dead was settled; the villages were uprooted. The ground was made of corpses; the mountains were made of heads.
150. As the warrior (Husain) brought (the enemy) under his sword, there was an amazing turmoil (taking place) under the old sky. The bowstrings gathered themselves and went (to seek refuge) under the bow. The bow put its head down and hid itself under the arrow. The radiance of that pitiless sword was everywhere. All were in panic, but there was no haven of peace.

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215. The word order is: (vwh) jyn ki tir-afgani ka for harek fehrr men tha, ynhen kehni gofa na mylta tha...

216. cafm-e mor - the smallest thing imaginable. The archers were so experienced that they could even hit the eye of an ant at night.

217. ker diya kor. Note that kar (in Persian) means 'deaf'. There is a play on the words kar and kor.

218. Lit. 'knowing them as notches'. That such experienced bowmen should mistake the head of the arrow for the notch shows the extreme state of panic they were in.

219. The word order is: pere tute (hue the); byna-e sytem [ykost hui.

220. Lit. 'In the world such a rout has come about rarely'.