

151. On all sides the twanging of the strings of the royal bow.<sup>221</sup> That unceasing downpour of arrows<sup>222</sup> from the Syrian cloud! The clamour of the whinnying of the piebald and chestnut horses! The hot wind, the sweltering heat of the sun, the battle! Here the desert of hatred was set on fire; no heart was at ease. (To know) the terrible heat of that day, ask (only) Husain.
152. The water carriers called out, taking the water-skins there: 'The market-place of war is brisk;<sup>223</sup> the afternoon sky comes down. Let anyone who is thirsty cool his heart with water'. Running upon the water-skins, the wicked people fell on them. What a fire consumed the evil world. Everybody drank, while Husain alone longed for water.
153. There was such thirst in the heat that the heart was set on fire. Now he cried out in exasperation, now he shielded his face. His eyes felt a sharp pain when he glanced at the sun. Now he leapt in one direction; now he attacked in the other. His holy face was streaming with drops of sweat. Pearls<sup>224</sup> rained down upon the dust of the battlefield.
154. Those who were filled with water walked off and hid themselves from the thirsty battle. The one sword of Ali was brandished in thousands of ways. It flashed down upon a scalp and came out from the girth.<sup>225</sup> It could not be stopped by shields, iron or stone. The Creator had given it a blade<sup>226</sup> of wondrous sharpness and lustre; in front of it the helmet was the blister of a bubble.<sup>227</sup>

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221. tarang 'the twang of a bow string', hence 'a wave', 'emotion'.  
kayani 'of the race of Kai' - the famous Persian king.

222. xadang 'the white poplar' from the wood of which arrows were made.

223. Lit. 'hot' - an obvious play on words. The words reflect the calls of Indian water-carriers, who sell water at the hottest part of the day. The following phrases reflect the street cries of Lucknow water-carriers (saqqe).

224. Drops of sweat are often compared to pearls.

225. Cf. verse 145.

226. manh here 'the blade of a sword'.

227. Cf. verse 144, i.e. ready to burst open.

155. (The enemy) were so scared, that none of them knew where the head of the arrow was or where the notch was. Because of the tumult of men, the bows were so frightened that they bowed their heads to the ground and sought places of refuge.<sup>228</sup> No-one had the courage to pull an arrow from the quiver. As soon as anyone put his hand on the gripe of the bow, he had no head on his body.
156. The restlessness of the horse, the flashing of the sharp sword; hundreds of ranks were mowed down when it jumped and leapt. From among the thousands (of warriors) not one had strength for battle. On every side there was the shout of 'flee and scatter'. All (the swords turned their faces (blades) away from the battle.
157. From the jumping and leaping of the horses, yellow dust rose up. The firmament was filled up with sand like an hour-glass.<sup>230</sup> The dark-blue heaven was made into a heap of dust. For miles the whole valley of conflict was black and dark. The light that illumines the world was hidden from the sight. The afternoon passed by, but there was no night and no day.
158. Ah God! the prowess of the Lord (Husain) in the fight. In his swarthy complexion there was the brightness of the sun. Were they his dry lips, or the petals of roses? It was the image of the dusty one (Ali) on Zuljanah.<sup>231</sup> There was a clamour (of the voices of those) who cried out in the battle: 'Run away; for a lion is roaring in the swamp.'

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228. This verse has a double meaning. merdm: 'man' or 'pupil of the eye'; kəman: 'bow' or 'the bow-shaped eye brows'; gofa: 'place of refuge'; go: 'ear'. Taking the second meaning of these words the verse could be translated 'Because of the tumult of the pupils of the eyes, the eye-brows were so frightened that they bowed their heads and sought ears on the ground (of the fallen heads)!'
229. When Zulfiqar struck repeatedly, the blades of the swords were pitted and resembled the teeth of saws (ari).
230. {ifa-e saet - an hour glass filled with sand.
231. The name of Husain's horse, mounted on which Husain resembles Ali.

159. Then the clamour arose: 'Husain help us';<sup>232</sup> Husain's fighting is (like) the anger of God; the river is Husain's; the marshes are Husain's. The world belongs to Husain; God's power belongs to Husain. He (Husain) was the one who saved Noah's boat from the storm.<sup>233</sup> Have pity on us now for the sake of the soul of Ali Akbar.
160. When (Husain) heard the name of Ali Akbar, his heart was pierced by a spear. With his eyes full of tears, he pulled up the reins of his steed. Turning round, the king of the world called out to the corpse of his son<sup>234</sup> 'You did not see the battle of your father, oh life of your father. These people invoke your spirit. Behold! Now I shall stop (put down) Zulfiqar.'
161. Ibn-e Sa'd cried out as he slapped his knee with his hand. Ah the disgrace, such a defeat after a victory! It is not fitting for brave heroes to go back on their word. On hearing this, a strong man bellowed like thunder, he cried out 'I shall make an attack upon the Imam. Oh Ibn-e Sa'd write down the victory in my name.'
162. (He was) gigantic and ugly, corpulent and dark headed; brazen-bodied and black-hearted, with a waist of iron; his arrows (were) heralds of death; his quiver the abode of destruction. His shield (was) that on which a thousand arrows had broken. In his heart was evil; in his evil spirit was corruption. Was he a villain on a horse or a mountain on the wind?
163. Accompanying him was another warrior of the same height and form. His eyes were dark blue; he had wrinkles on his black brows. (He was) wicked, evil minded, tyrannous and full of depravity. (He was) well tried in battle and had put hordes of soldiers to flight. They took their spears and girded up their loins for conflict. One boasted about the strike of his club; the other about his fast sword.

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232. Or 'Save us from (the wrath of) Husain.'

233. There is a popular legend that Noah called upon Husain to save him from the flood.

234. ko pukarna (here intransitive) 'to call out to', 'to invoke'.

164. For painting the picture of the war, I need that resolve. So that all the enemy will also assent (and praise my verse), I need that (power of) speech. In the sharpness of my tongue, I need the image of a sword. I need a pen of steel, and the forcefulness of description. The picture of the battle ranks will be painted clearly. The inkpot needs the lustre (lit. 'water') of Zulfiqar.
165. The soldiers were in anguish; the armies were in panic. Brave warriors were scared; the steadfast and strong were timid.<sup>235</sup> They feared at every moment that Husain might advance and use his sword.<sup>236</sup> They cried out that 'On one side are Marhab and 'Antar<sup>237</sup> and on the other Ali. Who will hold his head high today (i.e. who will win) and whose head will be bowed? See who will have victory and will suffer defeat.
166. Then an invisible voice from heaven sounded: In the name of Allah,<sup>238</sup> oh Lord, oh joy of life of the Arabs'. The King of the world sat straight on his horse. The double-edged sword of Ali rose up, licking its lips. From the other side that infamous one advanced raising a cry; here the mouth of Zulfiqar watered.<sup>239</sup>
167. In the battle, all the young heroes of the army fought risking their lives. There, that evil-looking one glowered at them (lit. 'buried his eyes'). Was it the shields of the army that crushed against each other, or the thundering of the clouds. Becoming furious, the horse gnashed its teeth. When it beat its hooves, in panic every cursed (enemy) moved back. The feet of the cow which supports the earth tottered on the fish.<sup>240</sup>

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235. dheni and bali are Hindi words, like savent, unusual in Urdu poetry of this period.

236. Lit. 'there was a fear that: 'see Husain has advanced; his sword has moved'.

237. Two soldiers on Yazid's side.

238. bysmyllah: pronounced at the commencement of a work to ensure its success.

239. manh: also 'the blade of a sword'; pani: also 'the sharpness of a blade'.

240. The earth is imagined to be supported on the horns of a cow (gav-e zemin) which in turn is supported by a fish (mahi) swimming in the primordial ocean.

168. That selfish one came against the King, brandishing his spear. The darling of the Solver of Difficulties ('Ali) solved all the difficulties.<sup>241</sup> But he (the enemy) was not benefitted at all by his arrows and bow. As he pulled back his bowstring, the sword shot up into the air. The arrows were broken as if they penetrated a rock. There were no horns on the bow, nor heads on the arrows.
169. The tyrant picked up his club and came upon the Lord; anger came over upon the son of the Dusty One (Ali). As he beat his hands and thrust his feet into the stirrup, lightning fell on the wrathful head of the villain. Defeat to the evil hand; victory to the righteous hand! With one fell swoop, (the enemy's) hand flew off and landed some distance away.<sup>242</sup>
170. Becoming scared and confused that good-for-nothing went away; but how might the prey escape from the hand which deals death? There he (the enemy) picked up his sharp sword in his left hand; here Zulfiqar cut him from his head straight down his backbone. How miraculous<sup>243</sup> the sharp sword of the renowned king (Husain); the rider and his horse were cut into two pieces.
171. Then lifting up his club against the second (giant), the king called out: 'Why, have you also looked upon the strike of Zulfiqar'. That shameless one was drunk with the wine of arrogance. How could he escape, for death had barred his way? There was a cry that destruction has surrounded him and brought him forward. See! another victim has walked into the mouth of the lion.
172. (The enemy) was coming on when the horse of the King of the Faith (Husain) turned (towards him). It was as if a hungry lion leapt (into the fray). The scimitar of the miserable foe hit (Husain's) shield and fell obliquely (on it). Was it (the scimitar) that struck or had the revolving dome (of heaven) split open. The body and head (of the enemy) was pressed down in the middle of the saddle.<sup>244</sup> The horse sunk down into the ground upto its breast.

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241. temam band kholna: the Urdu equivalent of the Persian phrase mw/kyl kwjaden 'to solve problems'.

242. There is a play on hath: (1) hand; (2) cubit, measure of distance (koi hath); (3) strike, moment (ek hath men).

243. Cf. v.13.

244. Lit. 'the body and head became joined to the centre of the saddle'.

173. The fairies lost the Caucasus,<sup>245</sup> the Jinn their home. Lions were estranged from the desert, the wolves from the jungle, and the pythons from their abode. The royal hawk and the partridge<sup>246</sup> hid in one place with their heads together. The animals of the deep flew up and fell down on the islands. The mountains huddled up, covering their heads with their skirt. The white eagle dropped its feathers, shaking and trembling.
174. There came an invisible voice: 'Long live Shabbir (Husain).' This sword was (made) for his hand; long may he live! This glory, this battle; this honour; long may he live! He has shown the effect of his mother's milk. Long may he live! God has made you victorious over creation. Indeed, the end of the battle depends on you.
175. Enough! Desire conflict no more, Husain, enough! Rest, take a few breaths in the air, Husain, enough! The horse is panting in the heat, Husain, enough! It is time for the afternoon prayer, enough, Husain, enough! No-one fights thus, thirsty, in the throng. Now, you must attend to the welfare of the community.
176. 'I obey you',<sup>247</sup> said the king, and put his sword in his sheath. The army recoiled, and on the day of judgement came in the world. Then the rebels fixed their arrows in their bows. Then they unfurled the banners, which they had rolled up, upon the standards. The helpless Husain was surrounded by those intent on cruelty. Your Lord<sup>248</sup> was surrounded by a hundred thousand cavalrymen.
177. From the facing (enemy) ten thousand arrows were aimed at his breast. Several hundred arrows struck his chest at one time. Spears transfixed his side, arrows pierced his breast. Ten arrows hit him for every four that he pulled from his body. Arrow-shafts were in the body of the Shadow of God,<sup>249</sup> as spines in the body of a porcupine.

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245. The traditional home of the fairies.

246. The hawk and the partridge are natural enemies, but were so afraid that they took refuge together.

247. lebbeyk - an Arabic word.

248. mawla twmhara - here Anis is addressing the crowd in the majlis.

249. zylle ylahi - an epithet of Husain.