

CHARACTERS OF THE MARSIYA

The following list contains (in more or less chronological order) the names of all the characters mentioned in this marṣiya.

a. Husain's side

Ḥashim	Great grandfather of MUḤAMMAD. The family of the Prophet is often referred to as <u>ḥashimī</u> (Hashimite)
Ḥamza	Paternal uncle of MUḤAMMAD.
Muḥammad	The Prophet of Islam.
Ja'far	A cousin of MUḤAMMAD. He was killed at the battle of <u>Khaibar</u> (629 A.D.). He bore the standard of the Prophet's army. When he lost his arms in battle, God replaced them with jewelled wings. Hence he is referred to as Ja'far <u>Tayyār</u> 'the winged Ja'far'.
'Alī	MUḤAMMAD'S cousin and, later, son-in-law. Father of ḤASAN and ḤUSAIN. According to Shi'as, the first Imam.
Fāṭima	Daughter of MUḤAMMAD; wife of 'Alī; mother of ḤASAN and ḤUSAIN. Frequently referred to as <u>Zahra</u> 'pure'.
'Aqīl	Paternal uncle of ḤUSAIN.
Muslim	Son of 'Aqīl; Husain's cousin; killed at Kufa by Ibn Ziyād.
Ḥasan	Elder son of 'Alī and Fāṭima.
Husain	Younger son of 'Alī and Fāṭima.
Bāno (Shahr Bāno)	Daughter of a Persian king; wife of Husain.
Zainab	Elder sister of Husain.
Umm ul Banīn	Mother of 'Abbās.
'Abbās	Younger half-brother of Ḥusain; elected standard bearer of Ḥusain's army; went to the Euphrates to fill the water skins.
'Alī Akbar	18 year old son of Ḥusain.

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'Alī Asghar	6 year old son of Ḥusain.
Qāsim	Eldest son of Ḥasan (13 years old). Traditionally said to have been married at Karbala to Fātima Kubrā (see below).
'Abdullāh	Young son of Ḥasan.
'Aun and Muḥammad	Young son's of Zainab; grandsons of Ja'far and 'Alī. Both killed in battle.
Kulṣūm	Young sister of Ḥusain
Fātima Kubrā Fātima Suḡhrā	Young daughters of Ḥusain
Sakīna	4 year old daughter of Ḥusain.

b. Yazīd's side

Ḥur	A brave soldier of Yazīd's army who crossed the lines and joined Ḥusain.
Yazīd	Son of Mu'āviya (governor of Syria), belonging to the Umayyad tribe. Succeeded his father, 'tyrannized' Iraq and challenged Husain at Karbala.
'Ubaidullāh Ibn Ziyād	Governor of Kūfa (Irāq); struck the decapitated head of Husain with a cane.
'Umar ibn Sa'd	A general of Yazīd's army.
Ḥurmila ibn Kāhil	An archer of Yazīd's army.
A'var Salamī	A soldier of Yazīd's army.
Azraq	A famous Syrian wrestler.
Sinān ibn Ins	A soldier of Yazīd's army.
Hind	Yazīd's wife.

The main characters of the marsiya are given a number of epithets (special adjectives or descriptive phrases) which identify them. The most common are:

Muhammad

nabi (Prophet), paygambar (messenger), resul-e xwda, resulwllah (the Prophet of God), rysalet-penah (the refuge of the prophethood), xayr wl bafar (the best of men), xayr wl vara (the best of creation), mwstafa (the chosen one).

'Ali

asad wllah (the lion of God), haydar (lion), emir, jenab-e emir (the lord), ebu twrab (the dusty one), šah-e mardān (the king of men), mwškylkwšā (solver of difficulties), mwrtaza (the chosen one).

Fātima

zehra (pure), betul (handmaiden), bynt-e resul (daughter of the Prophet), xayr wn nyša (the best of women).

Husain

šah, šeh, šahenšah (King), šah-e din, šah-e zaman, šah-e hyjaz (king of the faith, the world, Hejaz), server-e do alem, server-e kownayn (leader of the two worlds), šahid-e kərbala, mwšafyr-e kərbala, mazlum-e kərbala (the martyr, traveller, afflicted one of Karbala), sybt-e resul (the grandson of the Prophet), ybn-e ali, ybn-e fatyma (son of Ali, Fatima), server, jenab, hezret (leader (leader, master), ymam (the Imam), šebbir (a pet name given to Husain by Muhammad), seyyed (Sayyid - descendent of the Prophet), and many variations on these titles.

'Ali Akbar

hemšakl-e nabi, šahih-e resul (the image of the Prophet, whom he resembled in looks), mwəzzyn (the caller to prayer).

Zainab

bynt-e ali (the daughter of 'Ali), xwāher-e ymam (the sister of the Imam), hemšir-e šah (the king's true sister).

There are many other particular epithets as well as a number of general ones such as xwṣ-xysal (of fine temperament), gwl-əzar (rosy cheeked), swrx-ru (red-faced, honourable), etc. to describe Husain's men; Yazid's party on the other hand is usually zalym (tyrannical), siyah-ruh (black hearted), səng-dyl (stony hearted), etc. Husain's horse (rahvar) has epithets denoting speed and swiftness and his sword (Zulfiqār) denoting sharpness, brightness and flashing. An extremely common comparison which occurs over and over again is that of Husain to a bridegroom about to be united with his mystical beloved in heaven. His clothes are perfumed like that of a bridegroom; he wears a wedding garland made from the flowers of death; he leaps into the battle like a bridegroom leaping unto his bride, unsheathing his sword, which is as loath to leave its scabbard as a bride her newly wedded husband. Such references are so common and so blatant that it has been suggested that Anīs (perhaps subconsciously) connected the bridegroom's sexual prowess with Husain's daring exploits in battle. Mystical comparisons of the lover or hero being united with his beloved to the union of the soul with God are very frequent in all Urdu poetry, but the directness of some of Anīs' remarks in a highly religious context are a little surprising and often found amusing by all but the most fervent devotees.

A useful and fairly traditional account of the events leading up to Karbala and the aftermath of the battle can be found in Ameer Ali: Spirit of Islam, Chapter VIII, 'The Political Divisions and Schisms of Islam'. The facts highlighted by Ameer Ali are largely those given prominence by the marsiya writers.