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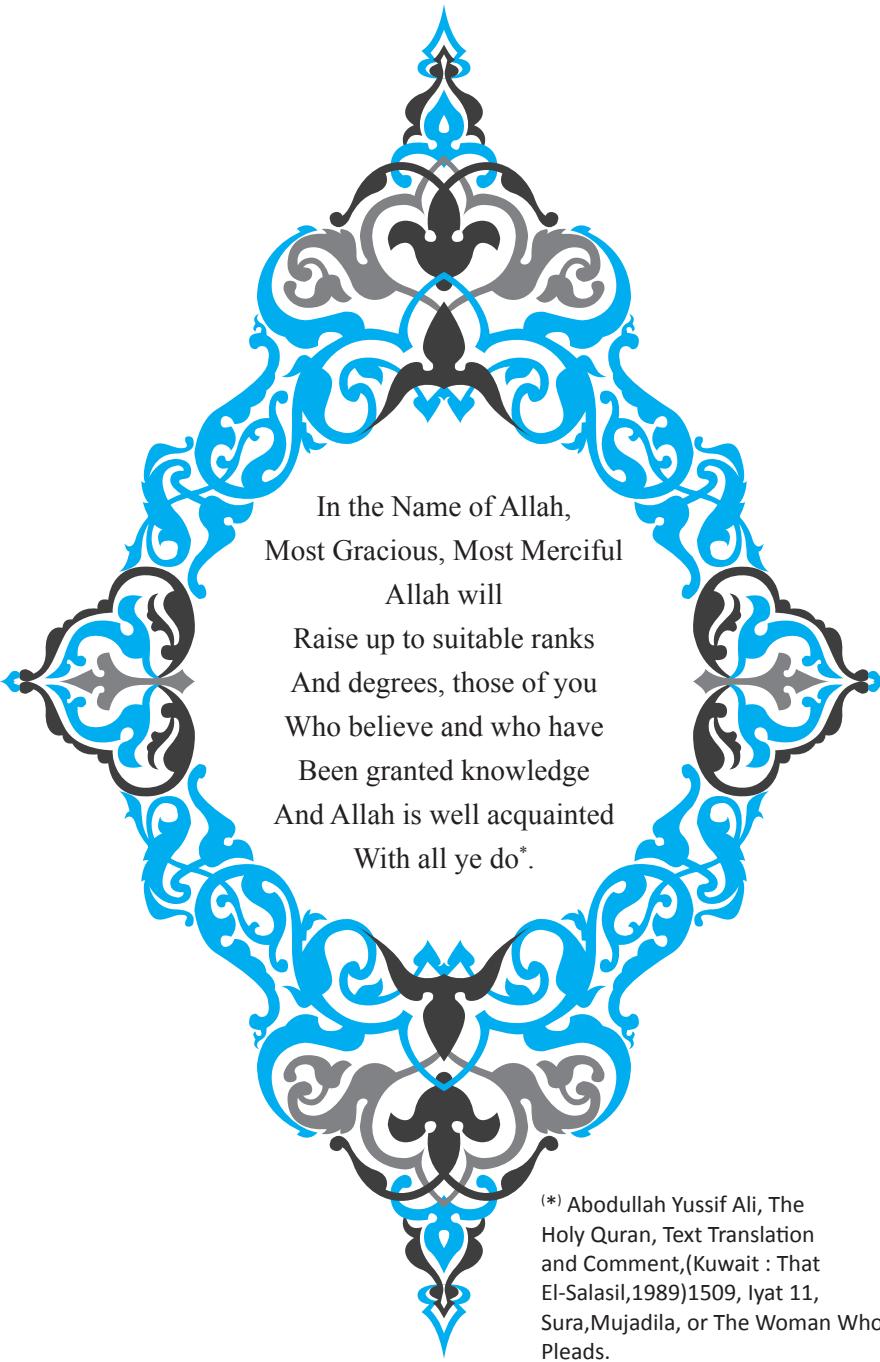
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In the Name of Allah,  
Most Gracious, Most Merciful  
Allah will  
Raise up to suitable ranks  
And degrees, those of you  
Who believe and who have  
Been granted knowledge  
And Allah is well acquainted  
With all ye do\*.

(\* ) Abodullah Yussif Ali, The  
Holy Quran, Text Translation  
and Comment,(Kuwait : That  
El-Salasil,1989)1509, Iyat 11,  
Sura,Mujadila, or The Woman Who  
Pleads.



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3. Delivering the abstracts, Arabic or English, not exceeding a page, 350 words, with the research title.

For the study the should be Key words more few words.

4. The front page should have; the name of the researcher / researchers, address, occupation, (English & Arabic), telephone number and email, and taking cognizance of averting a mention of the researcher / researchers in the context.

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6. Submitting all the attached sources for the marginal notes, in the case of having foreign sources, there should be a bibliography apart from the Arabic one, and such books and research should be arranged alphabetically.

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## In the Name of the High

... Edition word ...

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As a matter of fact, such a propensity stipulates the mind of the researchers ,worldwide ,from various cultures and humanitarian fields . What is to the point is that Al-`Ameed commissions certain quills to write about a specific issue just to manifest its thought about some essential loci : Ahlalbayt heritage ; here comes the sayada. Zeinab in the current edition to surge more effulgently , three research studies dissect her two sermons in Kufa and Levant , the first research paper focuses upon the speech acts theory in these two sermons, the second does upon the « other» occurred in them and the third , in English, does upon the pragmatic angles .

In time the rest of the research studies rotates around certain humanitarian isles ; policies of Ahlalbayt in confronting extremism sand kafirization , translation of the Glorious Quran on the religious scale, the concept of certitude in the Glorious Quran on the speech-philosophy scale , the detriments of the electric generators to environment , literary skills to explicate a text , the geopolitical scopes of Russian-American completion on Syria and

As much as there is diversity in issues , there is a diversity of researchers in countries and universities ; Al-Mustafa university of Iran, Sydney university of Australia and Iraqi universities ; Al-Qadesia, Babylon, Karbala, Meissan and

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## Sayada Zeinab Speeches from Language to Influentiality

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**A Pragmatic Study of Curse in Al-Sayyeda Zeinab's(PBUH) Sermon to Yezid**

**دراسة تداولية للعن في خطبة السيدة زينب (عليها السلام) إلى يزيد**

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**خضع البحث لبرنامج الاستدال العلمي**  
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## Abstract

Curse is an appeal to Allah, Most Praised and Most Glorified , asking for His punishment against someone. The act of curse has been studied psychologically , sociologically, linguistically and even pragmatically, but the major concern of such studies deals with curse from Allah, Most Praised and Most Glorified , to people. Accordingly, this study attempts to deal with the act of curse uttered by someone who suffers a lot from someone else, her suffering leads her to express a wish that Yezid is to incur misfortune as the sayyeda Zeinab curses him due to the harm that he causes to her.

**Keywords:** Pragmatics, Curse, Al- Sayyeda Zeinab(PBUH), and Pragma- Rhetorical Strategies.

## ملخص البحث

اللعن هو احتكام الى الله سبحانه وتعالى طلبا منه عقوبة شخص ما. درسَ فعل اللعن نفسيا واجتماعيا ولغويا وتداوليا ولكن المحور الرئيس لما تناولته هذه الدراسات هو اللعن من الله سبحانه وتعالى الى الناس. وفقاً لذلك تحاول هذه الدراسة تناول فعل اللعن الذي يصدر من شخص عانى الكثير من شخص آخر اذ دفعتها هذه المعاناة للتعبير عن رغبة من سوء الحظ ان تحدث لهذا الشخص. تلعن السيدة زينب عليها السلام يزيد بن معاوية بسبب الضرر الذي كان يسببه لها .

## 1. Introduction

Curse is an act of prayer to Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) for harm or injury upon someone. Etymologically, the word curse is an old English word. Its synonyms are “imprecation”, “anathema”, “ban”, and “execration” (Web Resource,1).

The act of curse can be seen as an inherent supernatural power that has its own effects against someone. Cursing is mentioned in the Holy Bible where God curses Cain: “You are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand. 12 When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth” (Slick,2008:1). It is also mentioned in the Glorious Quran where Allah(curses the unbelievers:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا  
بَيَّنَهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ الْعَنُوتُ﴾  
109

Those who conceal the clear (Signs) We have sent down, and the” Guidance, after We have made it clear for the people in the Book,- on them shall be Allah’s curse, and the curse of those entitled to . (curse” (Al-Beqra:159)(Ali, 1988:44

Pragmatically, this study attempts to investigate the act of curse in Al-Sayyeda Zeinab’s(PBUH) sermon to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is the pragmatic structure of curse?
2. What are the pragmatic strategies employed in introduction, operative, and conclusion stages of curse?

3. What are the contextual factors employed in issuing curse?

### **1.2 The Aims**

This study aims at:

1. Identifying the pragmatic structure of curse, that is, the stages of which curse is composed.
2. Finding out the pragmatic strategies employed in introduction stage, operative stage, and conclusion stage of curse.
3. Identifying the contextual factors employed in issuing curse.

### **1.3 The Hypotheses**

It is hypothesized that:

1. Issuing the act of curse can be recognized by three stages: introduction, operative , and conclusion.
2. Each stage in issuing curse can be employed by the use of speech act sets and pragma- rhetorical strategies.
3. The speech act of curse can have the following contextual variables: sender, reason, receiver, date, and location.

### **1.4 The procedure**

In order to achieve the aims of the study and test its hypotheses, the following steps will be adopted:

1. Explicating the speech act of curse pragmatically.
2. Analysing data delivered by Al-Sayyeda Zeinab(PBUH) to Yezid by developing a model.



### **1.5 The Limits**

This study is limited to the investigation of the speech act of curse in Al-Sayyeda Zeinab's ( PBUH) speech to Yezid bin Muawiya.

### **1.6 The Value**

Hopefully, this study will be of some value to those who are interested in the fields of pragmatics and contrastive linguistics as it tries to focus on some pragmatic aspects of the speech act of curse.

## 2. Definitions and Types of Curse

Curse can be defined differently by different writers. It is an act of invocation that can be uttered either by Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) to someone for calling harm and punishment upon him/her or uttered by someone who expresses a wish for misfortune to happen to someone else (Advanced English Dictionary , 2001: 194).

According to Hassel (2005: 78-9) curse is defined as “the invocation of harm on someone; or God's enacted vengeance or punishment.”

On the other hand , curse can be defined as a wish of adversity made by someone to befall harm or punishment to someone else (Web Resource,2).

Quiring (2014: 1) states that curse can be defined by referring to its biblical use where it refers to either “an act of judgment by God or an appeal to His avenging justice”.

It is worth mentioning that the Advanced English dictionary's definition will be adopted by the researchers in the analysis of the chosen data. Adopting such definition, the researchers take into consideration the fact that curse can be uttered by both sides; Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) to someone and by someone to someone else.

Curse can be classified into two types: serious and ludic. The former refers to those cases where the speaker believes in the power of his words; that is, his words are taken for granted to cause harm when uttering them. The latter, on the other hand, refers to those cases where the speaker wishes harm due to his anger and frustration. Serious curse is used in religion while ludic curse is used in nonreligious situations. Pragmatically, the illocutionary force of serious curse is different from that of ludic curse. In the former, the curser intends to befall harm against another person; it is a directive act. In the latter, on the other hand, the curser expresses his state of anger and frustration; it is an expressive act (Danet and Bogoch, 1992:135).

In this study, it will be dealt with serious curse rather than ludic curse. It is a religious kind of curse. It is uttered by Al- Sayyada Zeinab(PBUH) who is spiritually more powerful than Yazid.

### 3. Curse as a Speech Act

Explicitly, Austin in his book *How to Do Things with Words*(1962) states that curse is an act that is related to the family of complex speech acts fallen under the category of behabitives. “Behabitives include the notion of reaction to other people behaviour and fortunes and of attitudes and expressions of attitudes to someone’s past conduct or imminent conduct”(Austin, 1962: 159).

Searle(1979), on the other hand, classifies the speech act of curse under the category of expressives which is similar to Austin’s behabitives. He defines expressives as “The function of this class is to express or make known the speaker’s psychological attitudes towards a state of affairs which the speech act presupposes. In expressive, there is no direction of fit (the speaker does not get the world or words to match each other”(Searle, 1979:18).

Depending on both Austin(1962) and Searle(1979), Bach and Harinsh(1979:110) propose a classification of illocutionary acts: communicative and conventional illocutionary acts. The former refers to the fact that the act succeeds by recognition and intention(promising, warning, etc.) while the latter refers to the fact that the act succeeds by satisfying a convention(marrying a couple or sentencing a person).

Within Bach and Harinsh model, the speech act of cursing falls under the communicative category of “acknowledgment”. It captures the expressions of hope that something bad will happen to the hearer. More specifically, they(ibid.:54) said:

Similar to congratulation and condolences are biddings or expressing wishes which may be negative as in curse.

#### 4. Felicity Conditions of the Speech Act of Curse:

**Propositional content condition:** Future event related to hearer.

**Preparatory condition:** (1) (Event) is not in (Hearer's) interest.

(2) (Speaker) has a pact with the devil and is able to use his power.

**Sincerity condition:** (Speaker) sincerely wants to befall harm against (hearer)

**Essential condition:** Count as declarations that event will happen to hearer.

( Danet and Bogoch, 1992:12).

#### 5. Structure of Curse

Little (1993: 116) identifies three stages of curse:

**Introduction :** It includes narrative events that lead to the offence. It is regarded as a reason for the issuance of curse.

**Operative Stage :** The act of curse is pronounced against the addressee. The length of this stage depends on the authority of the speaker.

**The Conclusion :** This is the closing part where all the people present in the setting or joining the event say "amen" or "so be it."

#### 6. Pragmatic Structure of Curse

In accordance with the data of this study, the above mentioned stages (section5)will be adopted with reference to the different speech acts and pragma- rhetorical strategies by which each stage is achieved .

##### 6.1 The Introduction Stage

The doer of the act of cursing utilizes the use of different speech acts and pragma- rhetorical strategies in order to emphasize the offence of the one who is being cursed.



## First: The Speech Acts

The introduction stage can be employed by the use of the following speech acts:

### 1. The Speech Act of Supplication

According to Vanderveken (1990: 192), to supplicate is to beg very humbly, usually from a superior or someone in power. We can, for instance, supplicate a person in such a powerful role to spare the life of a prisoner, or someone else threatened. Moreover, Sykes (2004:143) considers supplication as a kind of prayer that is offered with pleading, by someone who is lacking something, so that it might be obtained. For example:

-Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication. Sykes (ibid.).

### 2. The Speech Act of Request

The speech act of request can be seen under the category of declaratives in which the illocutionary force consists in that the speaker intends them to do some future action(Searle, 1979: 34).

-John, please, have mercy on us1.

## Second: Pragma- Rhetorical Strategies

### 1. Intertextuality

It is shaping the text's meaning by another text in order to influence the reader and add depth to the text(Web Resource,3).

-To buy or not to buy. It is no longer the question2.

### 2. Rhetorical Questions

Rhetorical questions are questions that have the force of strong assertions. They can be understood as statements in which the wh-elements are substituted by negative elements (Quirk et al. 1985: 825).

-Hold him in contempt?(Hein, 1991:9).



### 3. Vocative

Quirk et al. (1985: 773) define the vocative as “an optional element, usually a noun phrase, denoting the one or more persons to whom the sentence is addressed.”

-John, dinner is ready (ibid.).

### 5. Antonyms

Egan (1968:30) defines an antonym as: “ a word so opposed in meaning to another word, it is equal in breadth or range of application, that it negates or nullifies every single one of its implications.”

- “You can't hide from anybody in prison . They soon know if you're innocent or guilty (ibid.).

### 6. Repetition

Gray (1984:172) considers repetition as “a major part of the language of literature both in verse and prose”. Repetition, according to the way it occurs, is of three main types: semantic, formal, and full

#### 6.1 Semantic Repetition

Repetition is defined as the recurrence of some unit of language . However, it may not be a full repetition: the recurrence may be just in content (i.e. in meaning) (ibid.).

-I had never seen a murderer ...the decent symbol which indemnifies the taker of life.

( De Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981:58)

#### 6. 2 Formal Repetition

Formal repetition means the recurrence of form i.e. repeating some unit of language – mostly a word – just in form, that is, with a different meaning or referent (Hatim and Mason, 1990:199).

-Why does this little boy have to wriggle all the time? Other boys don't wriggle.

(Halliday and Hasan, 1976:282)



### 6. 3. Full Repetition

Full repetition occurs when words or larger linguistic units are repeated both in form and meaning. This is the commonest type of repetition(ibid.).

- . I can do it I can do it<sup>3</sup>.

### 6.2 The Operative Stage

This stage can be employed by the use of the following speech acts with the following pragma- rhetorical strategies.

#### First: The Speech Acts

1. The Speech Act of Supplication: See P:7.
2. The Speech Act of Threatening

Threatening belongs to the commissives category in the which the speaker attempts to make the world fit his words(Searle, 1979:34).

-Do your homework, otherwise you make me angry<sup>4</sup>.

#### 3. The Speech Act of Complaining

According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985: 213), complaining can be either assertive or expressive. A speaker can complain by asserting that an action is bad or by expressing his discontent and annoyance.

-I'm so tired today<sup>5</sup>.

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(1) , (2) , (3), (4) and (5)the examples are given by the researchers



## Second: Pragma- Rhetorical Strategies

### 1. Parallelism

According to Quirk et al. (1985: 1427) parallelism is maintained when neighbouring sentences share the same grammatical features of tense, aspect, clause structure, or word order giving a strong impression of being connected.

De Beaugrande (1984: 170) defines parallelism as the reoccurrence of the same grammatical structure in two or more sentences:

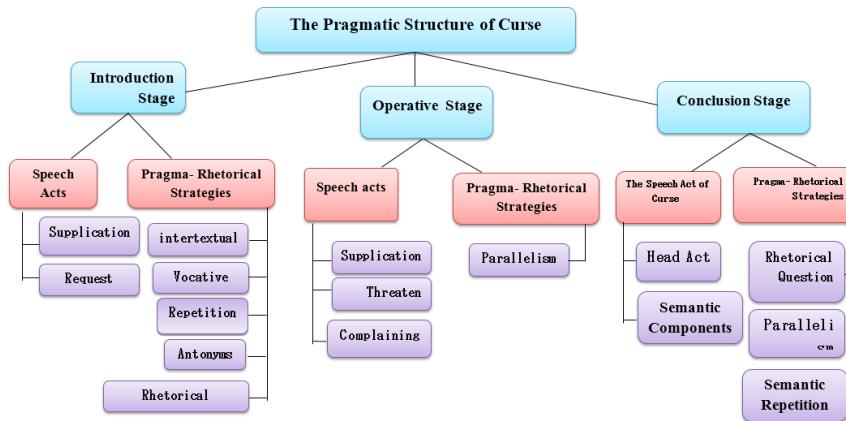
-He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, and burnt our towns( *ibid.*).

## 6.3 The Conclusion Stage

This stage is employed by the use of the speech act of cursing which is defined previously along with some rhetorical strategies such as rhetorical question, parallelism, and semantic repetition.

## 7. The Model of Analysis

The analysis of the chosen data is based on a developed model. This model is based on Little's(1993) classification of the pragmatic structure of curse. He identifies three stages for the issuance of curse: introduction, operative , and conclusion. Each stage is recognized by the use of certain speech acts and pragma- rhetorical strategies. Pragmatically, language is used to perform an act and to introduce different rhetorical strategies in order to add flavor to our utterances. Therefore, the researchers employ for each stage the use of different speech acts along with pragma rhetorical devices. The use of the speech acts is based on Searle's model (1979) of micro speech acts. The mentioned pragma- rhetorical strategies are taken in accordance with the data of the study.



The Developed Model for the Analysis of the Pragmatic Structure of Curse in Al- Sayyeda Zeinab's(PBUH) Sermon to Yazid.

## 8. The Contextual Factors of issuing Curse

In Al- Sayyeda Zeinab's(PBUH) sermon, the following contextual factors are recognized:

1. The speaker: Al- Sayyeda Zeinab (PBUH).
2. The reason behind issuing curse which is the homely crime committed against the progeny of Prophet Muhammed(PBUH).
3. The addressee: Yezid bin Muawiya
4. Date: 61 of Hijra.
5. Location: Yezid's palace.

## 9. Data Analysis

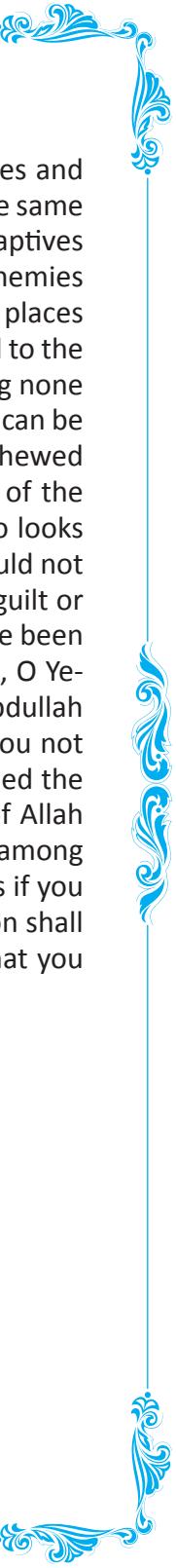
The represented data of the study is that of Al-Sayyeda Zeinab's(PBUH) sermon delivered to Yezid in his palace.

### 9.1 The Introduction Stage

الحمد لله رب العالمين وصلى الله على رسوله وآله أجمعين. صدق الله كذلك يقول: ثم كان عاقبة الذين أساءوا السُّوَّاًيَ أَنْ كَدَبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَكَانُوا بِهَا يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ . أَظْنَنْتَ يَا يَزِيدَ حِيثُ أَخَذْتَ عَلَيْنَا أَقْطَارَ الْأَرْضِ وَآفَاقَ السَّمَاءِ، فَأَصْبَحْنَا نُسَاقَ كَمَا نُسَاقَ الْأَسَارِيَ، أَنْ بَنَا عَلَى اللَّهِ هَوَانًا وَبِكَ عَلَيْهِ كَرَامَةٌ! وَأَنْ ذَلِكَ لِعَظَمٍ خَطَرَكَ عِنْدَهُ فَشَمَخَتْ بِأَنْفُكَ، وَنَظَرَتِي فِي عَطْفَكَ، جَدَلَانَ مَسْرُورَاً، حِينَ رَأَيْتَ الدِّنَيَا لَكَ مُسْتَوْسِقَةً، وَالْأَمْرُ مُتَسْقَةً، وَحِينَ صَفَا لَكَ مُلْكَنَا وَسُلْطَانَتَا. مَهْلَا! مَهْلَا! أَنْسَيْتَ قَوْلَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى: لَا يَحْسَبُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا نُعْلَمُ لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِأَنْفُسِهِمْ، إِنَّمَا نُعْلَمُ لَهُمْ لِيَزِدَادُوا إِثْمًا وَلَهُمْ عِذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ! أَمْنُ العَدْلِ، يَا ابْنَ الْطَّلَقَاءِ، تَخْدِيرُكَ حَرَائِرَكَ وَإِمَاءَكَ وَسُوْقُكَ بَنَاتِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ سَبِيلًا يَا قَدْ هُنْكَتْ سُتُورُهُنَّ، وَأَبْدَيْتِ وَجْهَهُنَّ! تَحْدُو بَهِنَ الْأَعْدَاءِ مِنْ بَلْدٍ إِلَى بَلْدٍ، وَيَسْتَشْرِفُهُنَّ أَهْلَ الْمَنَاهِلِ وَالْمَنَاقِلِ، وَيَنْتَصِفُ وَجْهَهُنَّ الْقَرِيبُ وَالْبَعِيدُ وَالدُّنْيَا وَالشَّرِيفُ لَيْسَ مَعْهُنَّ مِنْ رَجَالِهِنَّ وَلَيْ، وَلَا مِنْ حُمَّاهِهِنَّ حَمِيَّ، كَيْفَ يُرْتَجِي مَرَاقِيَةً مِنْ لَفَظِ فُوهُ أَكْيَادَ الْأَرْكِيَاءِ، وَيَسْتَلِحُهُ بِدَمَاءِ الشَّهَادَةِ! وَكَيْفَ يَسْتَطِعُ فِي بُعْضِنَا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ مَنْ نَظَرَ إِلَيْنَا بِالشَّنَفِ وَالشَّنَآنِ، وَالْإِحْنِ وَالْأَضْفَانِ! ثُمَّ تَقُولُ غَيْرَ مَتَّأْمِ.. وَلَا مُسْتَعْظِمَ: لَوْأَهْلُوا وَاسْتَهْلُوا فَرَحَّا ثُمَّ قَالُوا: يَا يَزِيدُ لَا شَلَّ

مُنْتَحِيَا عَلَى ثَيَا أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ سَيِّدِ شَيَّابِ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ تَتَكَبَّرُ بِمَحْسُورَتِكَ، وَكَيْفَ لَا تَقُولُ لَكَ وَقْدَ نَكَاتِ الْقَرْحَةِ وَاسْتَأْصَلَتِ الشَّأْفَةُ بِإِرَاقَتِكَ دَمَاءً ذَرَّيَةً مُحَمَّدٌ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَنَجُومُ الْأَرْضِ مِنْ آلِ عَبْدِ الْمُطَلَّبِ؛ وَتَهَفَّتْ بِأَشْيَاكَ زَعْمَتْ أَنْكَ تَنَادِيهِمْ، فَتَرَدَّنَ وَشَيْكَا مُؤْرَدَهُمْ، وَلَتَوَدَّنَ أَنْكَ شُلُّتَ وَجُكِمَتْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ قَلَّتْ مَا قَلَّتْ وَفَعَلَتْ مَا فَعَلَتْ.

"All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, Allah's blessings be upon His Messenger Muhammad and his entire progeny. True are the words of Allah Who says, "Then the end of those who committed evil was that they disbelieved in Allah's signs and they were ridiculing them. Do you, Yezid, think that -when you blocked all the avenues of the earth and the horizons of the heavens before us, so we were driven as captives- that we are worthless in the sight of Allah and that you are respectful in His eyes? Or is it because you enjoy with Him a great status? So, you look down at us and become arrogant, elated, when you see the world submissive to you and things are done and you want them, and when our authority and power became all yours? But wait! Have you forgotten that Allah has said, "Do not regard those who disbelieved that we grant them good for themselves? We only give them a respite so that they may increase their sins, and for them there is a humiliating torment. Is



it fair, O son of the 'Released ones', that you keep your ladies and condmaidens in their chambers (under protection), and at the same time you drive the daughters of the Messenger of Allah as captives with their veils removed and faces exposed , taken by their enemies from one land to another, being viewed by those at watering places as well as those who man your forts, with their faces exposed to the looks of everyone -near or distant, lowly or honorable, having none of their men with them nor any of their protectors? But what can be expected from one descended from those whose mouths chewed the livers of the purified ones<sup>1</sup> and whose flesh grows out of the blood of the martyrs? How can it be expected that one who looks at us with grudge and animosity, with hatred and malice, would not hates us- the Ahl al-Bayt? Besides, you, without feeling any guilt or weighing heavily what you say, recite saying, They would have been very much delighted, then they have said, "May your hands, O Ye-zid, never be paralyzed. How dare you hit the lips of Abu 'Abdullah (a), the master of the Youths of Paradise? But why should you not do so, since all mercy is removed from your heart, having shed the blood of the offspring of Muhammad, peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his Progeny, and the stars on earth from among the family of 'Abdul-Muttalib? Then you cite your mentors as if you speak to them. Soon shall you be lodged with them, and soon shall you wish you were paralyzed and muted and never said what you said nor did what you did(Web Resource,4).

### 9.1.1Speech Acts

Al—Sayyeda Zeinab(PBUH) opens her speech by the use of the speech acts of supplication and request. She invokes Allah(سبحانه وتعالى)when she says

”الحمد لله رب العالمين”

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the world.”

”وصلى الله على رسوله وآلته أجمعين”

“Allah's blessings be upon His Messenger Muhammad and his entire progeny”.

She then pleads to Him to peace be upon the Prophet Muhammad and his household.

### 9.1.2Pragma- Rhetorical Strategies

In her introduction stage, Al-Sayyeda Zeinab ((PBUH uses different pragma –rhetorical strategies to refer to her eloquence and to pave the way for the next stage which is the issuance of curse. These strategies are:

#### 9.1.2.1 Intertextuality

Al-Sayyeda Zeinab((PBUH opens her speech with a verse from the Glorious Quran so as to enrich her speech and to give a hint to Yezid that he is going to be cursed twice; by Allah(سبحانه وتعالى) and by her(PBUH) due to his dirty sin so to speak.

﴿ثُمَّ كَانَ عَذِيقَةَ الَّذِينَ أَسْكَنُوا السُّوَادَ أَنْ كَذَّبُوا بِيَقِنَتِ اللَّهِ وَكَانُوا هُنَّا يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ﴾  
الروم: ١٠

True are the words of Allah Who says, “Then the end of those who committed evil was that they disbelieved in Allah's signs and they were ridiculing them”(Al-Room:10).

Furthermore, whenever she speaks, she tries to enrich her speech by a verse from the Glorious Quran .

﴿وَلَا يَحْسَنُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنَّمَا نُلِيلُهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِأَنَفْسِهِمْ  
إِنَّمَا نُلِيلُهُمْ لِزَادَوْا إِلَيْهَا وَلَمْ يُعْلَمُ عَذَابُ مُهَمَّهِينَ﴾  
آل عمران: ١٧٨

“Do not regard those who disbelieved that we grant them good for themselves? We only give them a respite so that they may increase their sins, and for them there is a humiliating torment”(Al Imran:178).

### 9.1.2.2 Rhetorical Question

In order to let Yezid be involved in her conversation, Al-Sayyeda Zeinab (PBUH) makes use of rhetorical questions. She let him mentally think that he is going to be punished by Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) due to his dirty sin.

أظنتَ يا يزيد حيث أخذت علينا أقطار الأرض وآفاق السماء، فأصبجنا نُساق كما نُساق الأساري، أَنْ بنا علىَ الله هوانا وبك عليه كرامة! وَأَنَّ ذلك لعظم حَطْرُوك عنده! فَشَمَخْتَ بِأَنْفُك، وَنَظَرْتَ فِي عَطْفِك، كَذَلِكَ مُسْرُورًا، ”حين رأيت الدنيا لك مُسْتَوِسِقة، والأمور مُسْتَقِبة، وَهِنَ صَفَا لك مُلْكُنَا وَسُلْطَانَنَا“.

“Do you, Yezid, think that -when you blocked all the avenues of the earth and the horizons of the heavens before us, so we were driven as captives- that we are worthless in the sight of Allah and that you are respectful in His eyes? Or is it because you enjoy with Him a great status? So, you look down at us and become arrogant, elated, when you see the world submissive to you and things are done and you want them, and when our authority and power became all yours”?

### 9.1.2.3 Vocative

She says يا يزيد to give a hint that Yezid is the only intended person in her speech. Although she is alone, she can speak to Yezid face to face and calls him by his name and by other names such as :

”يا ابن الطلقاء“

”O son of the ‘Released ones“

When she calls him يا ابن الطلقاء she wants to rebuke him for his mean behaviour towards Prophet's Muhammad's (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ) household. She also wants to remind him of the kindness of Prophet Muhammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ) towards his predecessors as he sets them free at the time when they have to be slaves. Besides, she wants to make clear how Yezid is far from the natural disposition which stipulates that “is there any reward for good other than good?!”

#### 9.1.2.4 Full Repetition

Al-Sayyeda Zeinab employs the use of full repetition when she repeats the words مهلا مهلا in order to emphasize the idea that Yezid is going to be cursed sooner or later due to his dirty sin.

#### 9.1.2.5 Antonymy

Al - Sayyeda Zeinab ((PBUH) employs the use of antonyms so as to refer to the painful state. She is alone, no one tries to help her even those who are the nearest and those who are honorable.

”القريب والبعيد والدني والشريف“

“near “Near and distant, lowly and honorable”. lowly or honorable”

She, ironically, asks Yezid whether his status is better than Muhammad and his household.

”أنّ بنا على الله هواناً وبك عليه كرامة“ ؟

“We are worthless in the sight of Allah and that you are respectful in His eyes”?

### 9.2 The Operative Stage

اللهم خذ بحقنا، وانقم من ظلمتنا، وأحل غضبك بمن سفك دماءنا وقتل حمانتنا. هو الله ما فریت إلا جلدك، ”ولا جرئت إلا لحكمك، وتترد على رسول الله بما تحملت من سفك دماء ذريته، وانتهكت من حرمته في عترته ولحمته! حيث يجمع الله شملهم، ويُلْمِ شعّتهم، ويأخذ بحقهم.. ولا تحسّنَ الذين قُتلوا في سبيل الله أمواتاً بل أحياء عند ربيهم يُرْزقون. حسبك بالله حاكماً، وبمحمد خصيماً، وبجبريل ظهيراً، وسيعلم من سُوّي لك ومكّنك من رقاب المسلمين (أي أبوك معاوية) بئس للظالمين بدلًا وأيكم شرّ مكاناً وأضعف جنداً! ولئن جررت على السواهي مُخاطبتك، إني لاستصرُّ قدرك، وأستعظامُ تكريعك، واستكبر توييحك!! لكن العيون عَبْرِي، والصدور حَرَقِي). ألا فالعجب كل العجب.. لقتل حزب الله النجباء، بحزب الشيطان الطقاء؛ فهذه الأيدي تختلف من دماقتنا، والآفواه تتحلّب من لحومنا.. وتلك الجثث الطواهر الزواكي تتباها المُواسِل (أي الذئاب)، وتهفوها أمهاتُ الفراعل. ولئن أخذتنا مَعْنَماً، لتجدنا وشيكاً مَعْرِماً، حين لا تجد إلا ما قدمتَ وما رُبِك بظلام للعبيد.. فلي الله المشكى وعليه المعلول.

“ O Allah, take what belongs to us out of his hands, seek revenge against all those who oppressed us, and let Your wrath descend upon whoever shed our blood and killed our protectors! By Allah, you have burnt only your own skin, you have cut only your own flesh, and you shall come face to face with the Messenger of Allah, peace of Allah be upon him and his progeny, bearing the burdens of

the blood which you have shed, the blood of his offspring, and of his sanctities which you violated, when Allah gathers them together and seeks equity on their behalf. "and do not reckon those who are slain in the way of Allah as dead. Nay! They are living with their Lord, receiving their sustenance it is quite sufficient that Allah is your Judge and Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny, is your opponent, and (Archangel) Gabriel as the supporter (of Muhammad).

All those who instigated you to do what you did and all those who put you in charge due to which you are playing havoc with the lives of the Muslims will know for certain how evil the end of the oppressors is and which of you shall have the worst place and will be the least protected. Although calamities have forced me to speak to you, I see you trivial in my eye and find your verbal attacks great and I regard your rebuke too much to bear, but the eyes are tearful, and the chests are filled with depression. What is even stranger is that the honored Party of Allah is being killed by the Party of the 'Released ones' -Party of Shaitan. Such hands are dripping with our blood; such mouths are feeding on our flesh, while those sacred and pure corpses are offered as food to the wild beasts of the desert and are dirtied by the brutes. If you regard us as your booty, you shall soon ding us as your opponents -that will be when you find nothing but what your hands had unjustly. To Allah is my complaint, and upon Him do I rely".

## 9.2.1 Speech Acts

### 9.2.1.1 The Speech Act of Supplication

She invokes Allah to seek revenge against all those who oppressed her and her family.

”اللهم خذ بحقنا، وانتقم من من ظلمنا، وأحل غضبك بمن سفك دماءنا وقتل حمائنا“

“O Allah, take what belongs to us out of his hands, seek revenge against all those who oppressed us, and let Your wrath descend upon whoever shed our blood and killed our protectors”!

### 9.2.1.2 The Speech Act of Threatening

She threatens Yezid that he is going to bear out the burdens of all what he has done to the progeny of the prophet Muhammad. Then, she emphasizes her idea with reference to a verse from the Glorious Quran.

فَوَاللَّهِ مَا فَرِيْتَ إِلَّا جِلْدَكُ، وَلَا جَزَّرَتِ إِلَّا لَحْمَكُ، وَلَتَرَدَّنَ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ بِمَا تَحْمِلْتَ مِنْ سَفَكِ دَمَاءِ ذَرِيْتَهُ، وَأَنْتَهَكَ مِنْ حُرْمَتِهِ فِي عَرْتَهِ وَلَحْمَتِهِ حِيْثُ بَجَمَعَ اللَّهُ شَمَلَهُمْ، وَبِلَمْ شَعْنَهُمْ، وَيَاخْذُ بِحَقْهُمْ.. وَلَا تَحْسِنَ الَّذِينَ قُتَلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بِلَأَحْيَاءٍ عَنْدَ رَتِيْمِ يُرْزَقُونَ . حَسِبْكَ بِاللَّهِ حَاكِمًا، وَبِمُحَمَّدٍ حَصِيمًا، وَبِجَبْرِيلَ ظَهِيرًا، وَسَيْعِلَمْ "مَنْ سَوَى لَكَ وَمَكَّكَ مِنْ رَقَابِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ أَيْ بَئْسَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ بَدَلًا وَأَيْكُمْ شَرُّ مَكَانًا وَأَضَعَفْ جُنْدًا !

"By Allah, you have burnt only your own skin, you have cut only your own flesh, and you shall come face to face with the Messenger of Allah, peace of Allah be upon him and his progeny, bearing the burdens of the blood which you have shed, the blood of his offspring, and of his sanctities which you violated, when Allah gathers them together and seeks equity on their behalf. "and do not reckon those who are slain in the way of Allah as dead. Nay! They are living with their Lord, receiving their sustenance.

### 9.2.1.3 The Speech Act of Complaining

She complains to Allah when she says :

"فَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمُشْتَكِي وَعَلَيْهِ الْمَعْوَلُ"

To Allah is my complaint, and upon Him do I rely""

### 9.2.2 Pragma- Rhetorical Strategies

#### 9.2.2.1 Parallelism

!!إِنِّي لَا سُتَصْغِرُ قَدْرَكَ، وَأَسْتَعْظُمُ تَقْرِيْعَكَ، وَاسْتَكْبَرْتُ تَوْبِيْخَكَ

لَكِنَّ الْعَيْنَ عَبْرِيَّ، وَالصَّدُورُ حَرَّى

"اَلَا فَالْعَجَبُ كُلُّ الْعَجَبِ.. لَقْتُلُ حَزِيبَ اللَّهِ النَّجِيْبَاءِ، بِحَزِيبِ الشَّيْطَانِ الطَّلَقَاءِ !

"I see you trivial in my eye and find your verbal attacks great and I regard your rebuke too much to bear, but the eyes are tearful, and the chests are filled with depression. What is even stranger is that the honored Party of Allah is being killed by the Party of the 'Released ones' -Party of Shaitan".

She uses parallelism to emphasize the oddity of the situation. That is to say, how the honored party of Allah being killed by the devilish party! This leads to great sorrow and depression.

كَدِ كَيْدَكَ، وَاسْعَ سَعِيكَ، وَنَاصِبْ جَهَدَكَ، فَوَاللَّهِ لَا تَمْحُو ذِكْرَنَا، وَلَا تُمْيِتْ وَحْيَنَا، وَلَا تُدْرِكْ أَمْدَنَا، وَلَا تَرْحَضْ  
”عَنْكَ عَارِهَا“

So scheme whatever you wish to scheme, and carry out your plots, and intensify your efforts, for, by mention, nor will you ever be able to kill the revelation (that was revealed to us), nor will you ever exalt to our position, nor will your shame ever be washed away”.

She uses parallelism to intensify the idea that whatever schemes or plans are done by Yezid to kill the revelation, yet he will never ever exalt the position of Muhammad's household. She swears that they will never be forgotten.

### 9.3 The Conclusion Stage

وَهُلْ رَأَيْكِ إِلَّا هَنَدَ، وَأَيَّامَكِ إِلَّا عَدَدَ، وَجَمِيعَكِ إِلَّا بَدَدًا! يَوْمٌ

يَنْنَادِيَ الْمَنَادِيُّ: أَلَا لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الطَّالِبِينَ! فَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَتَمَ لَوْلَنَا بِالسَّعَادَةِ وَلَا خَرَنَا بِالشَّهَادَةِ وَالرِّحْمَةِ، وَنَسَأَلُ  
”اللَّهُ أَنْ يُكَمِّلَ لَهُمُ الْثَوَابَ، وَيُوَجِّبَ لَهُمُ الْمَزِيدَ، وَيَحْسِنَ عَلَيْنَا الْخَلَافَةَ، إِنَّهُ رَحِيمٌ وَدُودٌ، وَحَسِبْنَا اللَّهَ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ“.

“Your view shall be proven futile, your days limited in number, and your wealth wasted on the upon the oppressors. When the caller will call curse of Allah on those who do wrong. All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, Who sealed the life of our early ones with happiness and forgiveness, and that of our last ones with martyrdom and mercy. We plead to Allah to complete His rewards for them, grant them an increase, and recompense us pleasingly; He is the most Merciful, the most Compassionate. Allah suffice us, and He is the best Guardian”.

The conclusion stage is achieved by the use of the speech act of cursing along with pragma- rhetorical strategies. Here, there is the specification of the punishment. Such a specification is achieved by the use of the Head Act with some semantic components:

### 9.3.1 The Speech Act of Cursing

#### 9.3.1.1 Cursing:

الْأَلْعَنَةُ اللَّهُ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ !

“Curse of Allah in those who do wrong”.

#### 9.3.1.2 Negative evaluation or threatening:

”!! وَهُلْ رَأَيْكِ إِلَّا هَنَدْ، وَأَيَّامَكِ إِلَّا عَدَدْ، وَجَمِيعُكِ إِلَّا بَدَدْ“

“Your view shall be proven futile, your days limited in number, and your wealth wasted on the upon the oppressors”.

#### 9.3.1.3 Plea and Gratitude to Allah(سِيَاحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى).

فَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَتَمَ لَأُولَئِنَا بِالسَّعَادَةِ وَلَا خَرَنَا بِالشَّهَادَةِ وَالرَّحْمَةِ، وَنَسَأَلُ اللَّهَ أَنْ يُكَمِّلَ لَهُمُ التَّوَابَ، وَيُوَجِّبَ لَهُمْ مَالَ الْمُزِيدِ، وَيُحْسِنَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَلَافَةَ، إِنَّهُ رَحِيمٌ وَدُودٌ، وَحَسِبَنَا اللَّهُ وَنَعَمُ الْوَكِيلُ.

“We plead to Allah to complete His rewards for them, grant them an increase, and recompense us pleasingly; He is the most Merciful, the most Compassionate. Allah suffice us, and He is the best Guardian”.

### 9.4. Pragma- Rhetorical Strategies

This stage is achieved by the use of such pragma- rhetorical strategies as rhetorical questions, parallelism, and semantic repetition.

#### 9.4.1 Rhetorical Questions

Al- Sayyedda Zeinab (PBUH) knows that Yazid's days are very limited in number. Therefore, she says:

”!! وَهُلْ رَأَيْكِ إِلَّا هَنَدْ، وَأَيَّامَكِ إِلَّا عَدَدْ، وَجَمِيعُكِ إِلَّا بَدَدْ“

“Your view shall be proven futile, your days limited in number, and your wealth wasted on the upon the oppressors”.

#### 9.4.2 Parallelism

” وَهُلْ رَأَيْكِ إِلَّا هَنَدْ، وَأَيَّامَكِ إِلَّا عَدَدْ، وَجَمِيعُكِ إِلَّا بَدَدْ !!“

“Your view shall be proven futile, your days limited in number, and your wealth wasted on the upon the oppressors”.



فالحمد لله الذي ختم لآئتنا بالسعادة والآخرنا بالشهادة والرحمة، ونسأله أن يكمل لهم الثواب، ويفوّجّب لهم ”المزيد، ويسأل علّيـنا الخلافـة، إـنـه رحيمـ وـدودـ، وـحـسـبـنـا اللهـ وـنـعـمـ الوـكـيلـ“.

”We plead to Allah to complete His rewards for them, grant them an increase, and recompense us pleasingly; He is the most Merciful, the most Compassionate. Allah suffice us, and He is the best Guardian“.

#### 9.4.3 Semantic Repetition

Al- Sayedda Zainab (PBUH) pleads to Allah (سبـانـه وـتـعـالـيـ) using different words with the same content:

فالحمد لله الذي ختم لآئتنا بالسعادة والآخرنا بالشهادة والرحمة، ونسأله أن يكمل لهم الثواب، ويفوّجّب لهم ”المزيد، ويسأل علّيـنا الخلافـة، إـنـه رحيمـ وـدودـ، وـحـسـبـنـا اللهـ وـنـعـمـ الوـكـيلـ“.

”We plead to Allah to complete His rewards for them, grant them an increase, and recompense us pleasingly; He is the most Merciful, the most Compassionate. Allah suffice us, and He is the best Guardian“.



## 10. Conclusions

It is concluded that the speech act of cursing is composed of three stages: introduction, operative, and conclusion. Each stage is recognized by the use of certain speech acts such as supplication, request, threatening, and complaining and pragma rhetorical strategies such as vocative, parallelism, rhetorical question, antonymy, and repetition. Accordingly, the first and second hypotheses are confirmed: 1. Issuing the act of curse can be recognized by three stages: initiation, maintain, and termination, 2. Each stage in issuing curse can be employed by the use of speech act sets and pragma-rhetorical strategies.

In her sermon, Al- Sayyeda Zeinab(PBUH) utilizes the above mentioned stages so as to issue the speech act of cursing:

1. The introduction stage is identified by the use of the speech act of supplication and request along with such pragma-rhetorical strategies as repetition, antonymy, vocative, and rhetorical question.
2. The operative stage is identified by the use of the speech acts of supplication, threatening, and complaining along with the use of parallelism.
3. The conclusion stage is issued by the use of the speech act of cursing as a head act with its semantic components along with the use of rhetorical questions, parallelism, and semantic repetition.

The third hypothesis: The speech act of curse can have the following contextual variables: sender, reason, receiver, date, and location is also confirmed as the speech act of curse is identified by the above mentioned contextual factors. Al- Sayyeda Zeinab(PBUH) is the sender of the message, the martyrdom of al- Imam ul- Hussein (PBUH) is the reason behind delivering her speech to Yazid who is the receiver of the message, Yazid's Palace is the place where al-Sayyeda Zeinab's(PBUH) delivers her speech.

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**This Land (Iraq) was no Longer Suitable for  
Anything”**

**The Cult of Personality in Adnan Al-  
Sayegh’s ‘Dictator Poems’**

هذه الأرض 'العراق' لم تعد صالحة لشيء  
عبادة الشخصية في 'قصائد الدكتاتور' للشاعر  
العربي عدنان الصائغ

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## Abstract

Being politically and socially engaged, the Iraqi poet Adnan Al-Sayegh wrote a number of what might be termed 'The Dictator Poems' in which he sheds light on the nature of the Cult of Personality that can be considered a natural outcome of the political system in modern Iraq. These poems present very gruesome and ghastly pictures of life dominated by a ruthless and bloodthirsty dictatorial system that kept on violating human rights and abusing power. The paper aims at exploring the manifestations of the 'Cult of Personality' in a number of Al-Sayegh's poems. First, it introduces dictatorship as a political system that runs contrary to the values of freedom, humanity and civilized life; it also focuses on the tyrannical and totalitarian regime that reigned Iraq for about forty years. Having established the theoretical background, the paper then presents a critical analysis of some of Al-Sayegh's poems that deal with Cult of Personality. The conclusion argues that the aim of Al-Sayegh is not only to criticize and protest against the offenses and law-breakings of dictators, but also to warn them that they are the big losers who are to live and die alone and isolated from others.

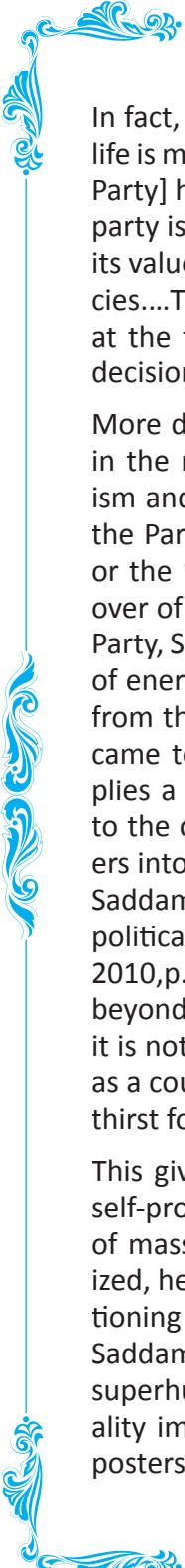
**Key Words:** Cult of Personality, Al-Sayegh, dictator, Iraq, violation.

## ملخص البحث

كتب الشاعر العراقي عدنان الصائغ، الذي كرس الجزء الأكبر من أعماله الشعرية للحديث عن مشكلات بلده الاجتماعية والسياسية، مجموعة من القصائد يمكن تسميتها بـ (قصائد الدكتاتور) سلط فيها الضوء على -عبادة الشخصية- التي يمكن عدّها نتاجاً طبيعياً للنظام السياسي في العراق الحديث. تقدم هذه القصائد صورةً قائمةً ومفجعةً للحياة التي هيمن عليها نظام دكتاتوري متغرس ومتغطش للدماء ما برح يتهاك حقوق الإنسان ويسيء استعمال السلطة. يرمي البحث إلى جلاء ظهورات -عبادة الشخصية- في عدد من قصائد الصائغ. يتناول البحث بالشرح الدكتاتورية بوصفها نظاماً سياسياً يقف على الضد من قيم الحرية والإنسانية والحياة المتحضرة مؤكداً في أثناء ذلك على النظام الشمولي الدكتاتوري الذي حكم العراق لأكثر من ثلاثة عقود ليتقل بعد ذلك إلى تقديم تحليل نقدي لبعضٍ من قصائد الصائغ التي تناولت ثيمة -عبادة الشخصية-. إنَّ غاية الصائغ في هذه القصائد لم تكن نقد انتهاكات الدكتاتور وفضح ممارساته القمعية فحسب، مثلما تبين الخاتمة، بل تحذير الدكتاتورين من خسارتهم المؤكدة لكل شيء بعد حياة قصوها وحيدين ومعزولين عن الآخرين.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصائغ، عبادة الشخصية، الدكتاتور، العراق، والانتهاك.

I. Since the overthrowing of the monarchy in 1958, Iraq has never known a genuine and real stability. The post-1958 period was marked by internal political and social unrests, regional rivalries and successive coup d'états. It culminated in another coup d'état in 1968 by the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party after a "long history of political instability and repression"(Lewis, qtd in Al-Athari,2008, p.2), in which politics in Iraq was "bathed in bullets and blood... [and] had evolved into a Darwinian struggle to survive"( Anderson and Stanfield, 2004,p.49). Immediately after its seizure of power, the Party embarked on a massive campaign to subjugate and "re-shape Iraqi society in the image of Saddam Hussein[its sole leader] and his regime" ( Dodge, 2003,p.57). In order to achieve this goal, the Party adapted a number of aspects typical of the totalitarian systems which can be grouped around five closely linked clusters of characteristic features. They are first, an official ideology that covers all vital aspects of man's existence; second, a single mass party consisting of a small percentage of the population; third, a technologically conditioned near-complete monopoly of control of all means of effective armed combat; fourth, a similarly technologically conditioned near-complete monopoly of control of all means of effective mass communication; and fifth, a system of terroristic police control, depending for its effectiveness on the third and fourth points(Friedrich, 1953,pp.52-3). Besides these aspects, the Party extensively depended on propaganda, indoctrination, sectarian discrimination, surveillance, terror practiced through its security agencies, and rewriting of history to "discipline the population and to destroy autonomous social structures" and to ensure the survival of the regime (Rohde, 2010, p.11). This comes in accordance with what Nalepka and Sassoon state about the oppressive nature of the Ba'ath's rule of Iraq. In her seminal study "Saddam is Iraq and Iraq is Saddam: Saddam Hussain's Cult of Personality and the Perception of his Life and Legacy", Nalepka blatantly states: "There was a single party at the center of power in [Iraq], with its tentacles extending into every aspect of society and politics and into the lives of its members, backed up by incessant spying, and never hesitating to kill, imprison or torture anyone suspected of disloyalty".(2014, p.13)



## • “This Land (Iraq) was no Longer Suitable for Anything”

In fact, the tendency of the Ba’ath Party to dominate all aspects of life is made crystal clear in the following official declaration: We [the Party] have to emphasize that this society is led by a party, and that party is the Arab Ba’ath Socialist Party...which leads [the people] in its values, its organizations, and also leads it in its ideas and its policies....Thus it is necessary that the party’s values and ideologies are at the forefront of these activities, and throughout the country’s decision-making apparatus. (qtd in Sassoon, 2011,p.34)

More dangerous and alarming is the rise of what is widely-known in the modern Iraq studies as ‘Saddamism’-reminiscent of Stalinism and Maoism- which typically means the reduction not only of the Party, but also of Iraq itself to the figure of its ‘One and Only’ or the ‘necessity’ leader, Saddam Hussain. In fact, after his taking over of the presidency in 1979 until his overthrowing in 20003, the Party, Sassoon (2011, p.39) remarks “devoted an enormous amount of energy and resources to building up the image of its leader, and from the mid-1980s the Ba’th’s philosophy and political education came to embody a cult rather than a political ideology.” This implies a gradual and menacing movement from the one Party rule to the one man rule (Anderson and Stanfield,2004, p.58) and ushers into the emergence of what is called a “Shadow State” in which Saddam, the “dictator and his narrow inner circle” became the sole political, economic and social movers’ in the Ba’thist Iraq (Rohde, 2010,p.3). In this State, “Autonomous collective social structures beyond the control of the state simply do not exist.”(Ibid) As such, it is not strange to hear people talk of Iraq as “Saddam’s Iraq.” Iraq as a country was sacrificed on the altar of Saddam’s despotism and thirst for absolute power.

This gives rise to what is called Saddam’s ‘Cult of Personality,’ or self-promotion. Nalepka defines the cult of personality as the “use of mass media, propaganda or other methods to create an idealized, heroic, and at times, worshipful image, often through unquestioning flattery and praise”(2014, p.6). The systemic idolization of Saddam was expressed through every medium, projecting him as a superhuman capable of doing all things perfectly. His cult of personality immediately invaded Iraqi society, as thousands of portraits, posters, statues and murals were erected in his honor all over Iraq.

His face could be seen on the sides of office buildings, schools, airports and shops, as well as on all denominations of Iraqi currency (Sassoon, 2011, 174).

In his study, "Saddam Hussein's Iraq: A political psychology profile," Post (5-6) delineates the psychological characteristics of Saddam as a dictator. According to him, Saddam is known for his malignant narcissism, exalted self-concept, no constraint of conscience, unconstrained aggression in pursuit of his goals, and paranoid orientation. Moreover, Saddam's monopoly of the authority, his single-handedness, reckless and repressive policies, and his ceaseless efforts at self-aggrandizing resulted in embroiling Iraq into two successive wars: Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) commonly known as the First Gulf War and The Second Gulf War (1990-1991) after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, followed by twelve year sanctions that depleted the economic and human resources and rendered Iraq more divided and worn out than ever. No doubt, these wars and unsettling circumstances caused incalculable damage—human, material, social, and environmental—to Iraq whose people fell victims to various forms of displacements, ordeals, and shocks. Al-Sayegh's devotes a considerable number of his poems to the delineation of the totalitarian system and condemnation of the cult of personality in Iraq. The following section is a critical analysis of his 'dictator poems'.

II. Al-Sayegh (1955) was thirteen years old when the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party assumed power in Iraq in a bloody coup d'etat. His first confrontation with this despotic ruling Party took place when he was dismissed from The Institution of Agriculture in 1976 because of a poem he recited and was considered provocative and anti-authorities (Al-Sayegh, 2004, p.706). In the prime of his youth, when Al-Sayegh was twenty five years old, he was forcibly conscripted, like hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, and taken to battlefields of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988). Al-Sayegh rapidly growing poetic talent underwent another test during the years of war. As usual with dictatorial and domineering systems, poetry was employed by the political regime to serve its propagandistic projects. In fact, literary productions, in general, were highly and perniciously affected by the dictates of autocratic regime that was intent on submitting it to a severe censorship and to its rigorous official ideology. Like other fields

of life, poetry became state-controlled and the poets were divided into two groups: the panegyrists who used to glorify the wisdom of the 'Necessity' leader and its 'reckless' actions and ally themselves with the despotic system and resisting or anti-war poets who stood against the war and its atrocities and refuse to praise it. Due to the terrorizing and oppressive atmosphere they were living in, the resisting poet, like Al-Sayegh were compelled to resort to various poetic means like symbolization, equivocation, circumlocution, myths, pun and periphrasis. This may account for Al-Sayegh's resembling writing unconcealed anti-war poems as "walking in a minefield" (qtd in Amyn, 2003). Intimidated by arbitrary murdering, forced disappearance, imprisonment and day and night surveillance, Al-Sayegh was sure that the stifling climate in Iraq where freedom of expression was absent was not conducive for free and conscientious poets like him. Reflecting on these horrible circumstances, Al-Sayegh (2010, p.694) wonders: "How can freedom be snatched from the claws of the dictator. How can you go on in your life and your creativity is under threat amid minefields, barbed wires, guards and contrabands".

The second confrontation with the authorities took place when Al-Sayegh caught red-handed with a number of books that are categorized as 'banned.' Not only the books were confiscated, but Al-Sayegh himself was imprisoned in a stable for two years amidst the animals' excrement, bombing, scorpions, boxes of ammunitions, and the hallucination of Said Hirz; a soldier who was suffering from schizophrenia (qtd in Lateef, 2008).

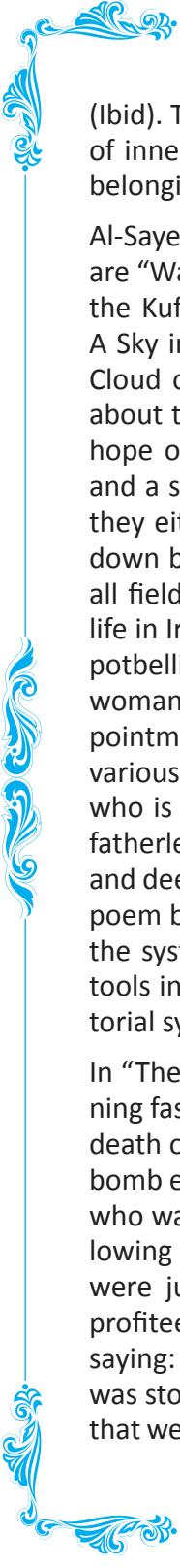
With the third confrontation which took place in 1993, Al-Sayegh became sure that Iraq was no longer safe for living. After presenting the play "The One who has been Awake in his Hallucination" in Al-Rasheed theatre which was adapted from Al-Sayegh's poem "Hallucinations inside a Bleu Skull with which Adnan Al-Sayegh has Nothing to do." Abood, the mouthpiece of the poet and the main character in the poem/play, severely criticizes the political system and its socially, economically, and psychologically damaging policies. Abood says "I was riven by my thirst in the land of waters" (Al-Sayegh, 2004, p.706). Immediately after the presentation of this play, Al-Sayegh was blacklisted and marked as 'renegade' in the then Uday Saddam Hussain-controlled newspapers Babel and Al-Zwra'. Al-Sayegh

decides “see off the homeland of famines and oil,”(Ibid) and go to another place that offers him integrity of being and space of creativity. He chose self-exile rather than continue living in a country that oppressed its people and abort their dreams.

Al-Sayegh’s writing of poetry can be roughly divided into two phases. The first phase extends from the mid-1970s when his poetic genius began to blossom to the early 1990s when he left Iraq. The poems Al-Sayegh wrote in this phase might be termed the ‘pre-exile’ poems. In this phase, Al-Sayegh was offered very few options, namely; to leave Iraq which he could not afford because of financial and family circumstances; to pay lip service to the authorities which is an unthought-of option for him; to risk his life; and to resort to the art of ‘overt discourse’(2004,p.707). He found the last option the lesser of the four evils since it enabled him to overcome many prohibitions and restrictions imposed by the apparatuses of the police state. This may explicate the absence of direct references to the ‘dictator’ in his pre-exile poems. Instead Al-Sayegh was satirizing the damaging socio-political consequences of oppressing people and applying the rules of totalitarianism. As such, the pervasiveness of lifeless images of alienation, abandonment, frustration, fear, death, hunger, hopeless waiting for change, and suffering is quite natural and expected. In an answer to a question about the possibility of evading the political issues when writing poetry, Al-Sayegh answers:

The moment an Iraqi is born, a long list of debts, aborted dreams and political losses is put in his mouth. The contents of this list would keep hounding him till the last moment in his life which he spends either as a homeless exile outside his homeland or as a grumbling and frustrated person inside the red-hot furnace.(Al-Zareebi, 2008, p.12)

Living independently and writing freely is not possible for a poet who believes in the values of liberty, freedom and human rights. Al-Sayegh painfully looks back at Iraq and could see nothing except “windmills and waterwheels of blood that keep rotating throughout our lives and history...It begins with a coup d’etat and ends with a coup d’etat and with these devastating upheavals, the land and its keep jerkily rotating. The movement is always from bad to worse”



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(Ibid). The Iraqis, among them Al-Sayegh, never taste the pleasures of inner security, real happiness, freedom of speech and sense of belonging.

Al-Sayegh wrote six collections of poetry in the pre-exile phase. They are "Wait for me under the Monument of Liberty (1984), Song over the Kuffa Bridge(1986), The Sparrows don not like Bullets (1986), A Sky in a Helmet (1988), Mirrors for her Long Hair (1992), and A Cloud of Glue (1993). Most of the poems in these collection talk about the eerie atmosphere that the Iraqis were living in. Without hope of realizing their dreams, they were leading a monotonous and a spirit-draining life in the battlefields and home fronts where they either fell preys to the devastating claws of war, or hounded down by the police, security agencies, and informers who invaded all fields of life. In 'Files', Al-Sayegh gives a very dreary picture of life in Iraq in which everything, 'the houses, the land, the wars, the potbellies, women' are turned into 'files.' In the early morning, the woman/persona of the poems opens the first file to see only disappointments. She is passively watching the quick movement of the various portentous files in her life. There is the file of her husband who is reported missing in the war, the file of her sill unborn and fatherless file, the file of her lonely bed, the file of her black dress and deep sense of failure in front of mirrors. The poet concludes the poem by asserting that all Iraqis become mere 'files'. This points at the systemic policy of dehumanizing Iraqis and turning them into tools in the grand project of aggrandizing and upholding the dictatorial system 2004, p.256-8).

In "The South," the poet is a passenger in a war train that was running fast. From the window of the train, the poet kept watching the death of the streets and his own "death crammed-like orphans-in a bomb envelope. He watched a bare-headed and disheveled woman who was running quickly and stumbling into mud and martyrs. Following a series of painful images of deprivation and poverty that were juxtaposed with images of high buildings, banknotes, war profiteering, the poet concludes his poem by addressing Baghdad saying: "Oh City! How could you forget our lifespan half of which was stolen by war/How could you forget our sorrows/and the faces that were lost to sight by trenches/Not like that, Oh City! We are the

food of battles" (Al-Sayegh, 2004, p.259-62).

The central theme in "The Cloud of the Glue," "I Survived War by Mistake," "This Pain that Shines," "A Stone and Stanzas and Your Hand", "Search for an Address," "Thus, I Said Everything to her," "Homeland is A Sun, Mail Stamps, and You," "From the Ashes of War to your Long Hair," and "A Sun on the Edge of War," and "Waiting for You," is the devastating effect of war as a life-changing and heart-rending experience and the prevalence of death-in-life state. In the first poem, Al-Sayegh dreams of having the ability of stretching his body on "the spacious daylight/overshadowed by clouds not airplanes." He searches for the leftovers of his age and friends amidst the mud and bombs. He dreams of inhaling a pure air and coming back home without hearing the military communiques. Of course, the poet's dream was in vain since it was broken into fears and corpses. The same sense of disillusionment and discouragement is repeated and further stressed in the last poem which begins with:

In the long nights of war,

The sky, sometimes, seems without stars, without memories.

We throw the nets of sleeplessness

In the lake of artificial dreams

We stay tuned to what they would catch

The fish were hopping around in front of you

The minutes, the cities, the women, the friends, the barracks, "the wires", the poems, the trees, the roads, and "mines",

All of them were hopping around.

Nothing was there in your empty nets.

The sea never relinquishes his indifference

And the nets never have mercy on your hunger. (2004, p.385)

This sense of alienation continues in the poems Al-Sayegh has been writing in the second phase which extends from the beginning of his exile in 1994 to the present time. These poems can be

safely called 'post-exile poems. Besides the dominant sense of social, psychological and cultural dislocation and disconnection which Al-Sayegh experiences in his actual and metaphorical exile(s), the central theme in these poems is Iraq; its ordeals, history, people, wars, and suffering. He keeps remembering Iraq nostalgically and painfully reflecting on the tragic impact of the successive disasters that befell it. More important is the sense of freedom Al-Sayegh enjoys in his exile, especially the European. For the first time, he can express his opinions freely without fearing the scissors of the official censor, the malice of the security informer, the policeman, and the direct physical and psychological intimidation. In exile, Al-Sayegh was offered the chance to directly talk about the totalitarian political system that had been wreaking havoc in Iraq. However, rather than criticizing Saddam Hussain by name, Al-Sayegh chooses to criticize all the dictators, despots and oppressors in the history of mankind. His aim is to condemn and criminalize those tyrants, to expose their wrong doings and to draw their attention to the importance of learning from past events which tell us of the tragic and sorrowful death of many tyrants.

Al-Sayegh wrote seven collections of poems in this phase. They are: The Cloud of the Glue (1994), Under a Strange Sky(1994), Formations (1996), The Anthem of Uruk (1996), The One who Puts his Exile under his Armpit(2006), And(2011), and I Walk Captivated by my Wonder as if fly by the Wings of a Feathered Poem(2015). In the poems of these collections, one notices a gradual movement from the expositions of the ordeals, catastrophes, and various forms of repression suffered by the Iraqis without directly referring to the real causes to direct attack and condemnation of the prime cause, i.e., the tyrannical and corrupted political regime. The references to the apparatuses of oppression such as police centers, terror, police dogs, informers, officers, investigation rooms, cells, guillotines, and equipment of torture abound in these poems. The personae of these poems, like the Iraqis, were powerless and ineffective. They were afraid all the time of those who were lying in wait of them. The dominance of fear and terror is made clear in almost all the poems of these collections.

In "Apprehensions," the poet describes the state of fear and distress

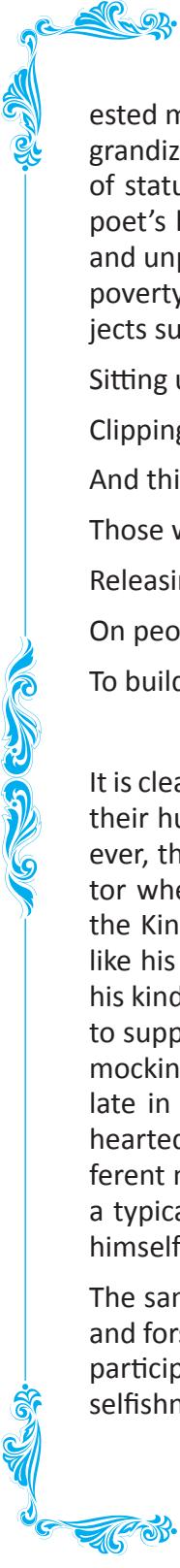


he is living in. He cannot lead a normal life as he is threatened day and night by the agents of the totalitarian regime. His inner anxiety grows bigger and deeper until it becomes hallucinatory. Those agents look like ghosts that haunt his mind. He is sure that one day 'They' would come to take away and destroy the most precious thing in his life: his poems. He says:

As soon as I hear the softest knock on the door,  
I quickly and-perplexed- hide my poems in the drawers.  
However, the knock almost always turns out to be  
An echo of the police patrols that turn around  
in the street of my head.  
In spite of this, I am certain  
One day, THEY will knock on the door,  
Their hands, trained like police dogs, will stretch  
Into the drawers of my heart  
To snatch my poems  
And.....  
My life  
Then they will leave quietly. (2004, p.11)

In "Iraq", Al-Sayegh points directly to cause of his country's calamities: it was ruled by a series of despots that sucked its energies and potentials and destroyed its people. Although they have various names like Sultan, General, King, Lord, Tyrant, Mr. President, Fascist, they have many things in common like their aggressive nature, reliance on ruthless security apparatus whose main aim is to keep the status quo, and assuming a god-like character that is self-centered. In "Three stanzas for Perplexity," a father told his son not to narrate his dreams to anyone because "the street is booby-trapped with ears(informers)/Each ear is linked to another by a secret wire/Till it reaches the Sultan."(p.16) The Sultan of the poem is a self-inter-





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ested man; he cares for nothing except his self-gratification and aggrandizement. These two last qualities are translated into multitude of statues are forcibly implanted in every nook and cranny of the poet’s homeland. In the third stanza, the images of vain grandeur and unproductive hugeness are juxtaposed with images of filth and poverty. The more the sultan/dictator is glorified, the more his subjects suffer and feel pain. Evocatively, the poet says

Sitting under the shadow of their statues  
Clipping my dirty nails  
And thinking of their sumptuous glories  
Those who are erected in the squares  
Releasing their high giggles and laugh  
On people who grind their teeth out of hunger  
To build monuments of gold and prayers for them(2004.p.17)

It is clear that the people are living in a state of servitude in which all their human rights are sacrificed on the altar of dictatorship. However, these unlimited powers and authorities fail to save the dictator when he is confronted a coup d’etat. In “A Homeland Board”, the King is frightened, perplexed, and forsaken the closest people like his minister, soldiers and wife. For the first time he asks about his kind people whom he never heard of for years. He expects them to support him, but they forsake him as he did long time ago. They mockingly and meaningfully inform him “Oh! Lord, you have been late in remembering/And now we can do nothing except wholeheartedly welcoming the new victor.”(p.18) Although stated in different names, the dictator whether he is a king or a sultan, follows a typical pattern in rule; i.e., oppressing his people and detaching himself from them.

The same is true of the leaders who abandon their responsibilities and forsake their people. They fail in the first test of patriotism they participate in. they are just like the Sultans and Kings in their vanity, selfishness and meanness. In “Leaders,” Al-Sayegh explicates:

You will know them from the shoes they had left  
....before they ran away from the battlefield  
Certainly, you will know them  
Those who fill the platforms of the city  
With the drums of their heroisms  
I wonder where are they now?(p.20)

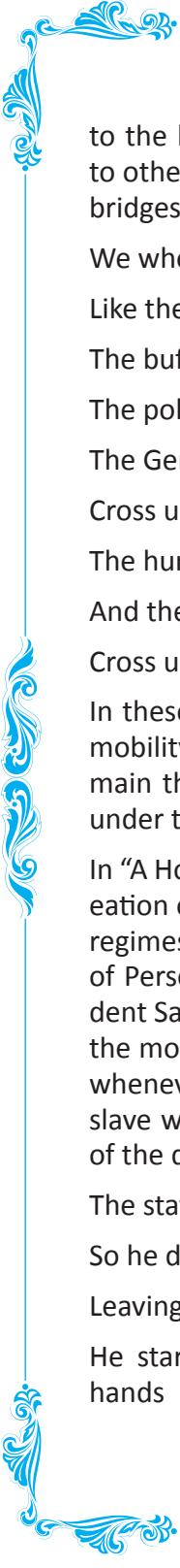
These lines point at the irresponsibility and selfishness of the leaders who turn out to be self-centered. They are busy all the time with their sham heroisms which more often than not result in catastrophes for the people.

In “The Martyrs of Intifada (Uprising)”, Al-Sayegh illuminates an essential aspect in any dictatorial regime: the repression of any opposition and the ruthless crushing of uprising and revolutions. Following the Second Gulf War (1991) which Saddam’s regime tragically lost, Iraqi people in the southern provinces revolted against his disastrous and risky internal and external policies. The poem points out the fate of such uprisings under dictatorial regimes. One of the means of killing not only the dreams and aspirations of people but the people themselves is Saddam’s ‘Republican Guards’ which is a very oppressive security apparatus whose job is to protect the regime and oppress people.

Those who fall down in heaps  
In front of the Guard’s cannons

.....  
Those who on their gravestones  
The cactus of forgetfulness grow abundantly  
Those whose news was eroded bit by bit  
In the crush of the city(2004, 19)

In “A Lesson in History 3”, Al-Sayegh evocatively compare people



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to the bridges who are used by the leaders and generals to cross to other sides and achieve their goals. Architecturally similar to the bridges, people humiliatingly stoop to let others pass:

We who are bent forever

Like the wooden bridges of the country sides

The buffalos,

The political Parties,

The Generals

Cross us.

The hurried vehicles

And the yawning dreams

Cross us

In these lines the immobility of the bridges is contrasted with the mobility of things around them. People, like those bridges will remain the same without any real or positive changes in their lives under the dictatorial systems.

In "A Homeland's Tale," Al-Sayegh moves a step forward in his delineation of the character of the dictator and the impact of dictatorial regimes on people. The poem contains a clear reference to the 'cult of Personality' as it ironically talks about the statues of the president Saddam Hussain who fight each other. It also alludes to one of the most humiliating and obnoxious slogans that recited by people whenever and wherever he goes. This slogan turns Iraqi people into slave whose sole goal in life is to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the dictator:

The statue of the president felt bored

So he descended from his gold pedestal

Leaving the delegations, flowers, and the children's chants

He starts walking among people who burst forth clapping their hands



Shouting:

“Our souls, blood, and lives ....at your disposal...”

“ We sacrifice them for you”

The statue feels delighted

And when the president’s other statues know of this

They too descended from their gold pedestals

To the squares

And they began to fight each other.

The people kept watching

They did not know

Who is Mr. President!

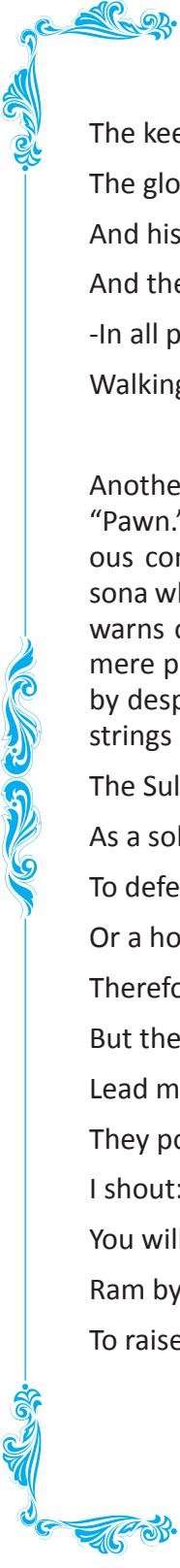
In “A Poet: To the Martyr Poet Ali Al-Rimahi,” Al-Sayegh describes what happens to the poets under the totalitarian ruling systems. Due to the absence of the freedom of expression, the poets are not allowed to give vent to their inner feeling to criticize the status quo. The only kind of poetry they are allowed to write is the eulogistic and laudatory. Poetry, like the other literary and artistic expressions, becomes a propagandistic tool in the hand of the authorities. Al-Sayegh strongly condemns such poets who succumb and contribute to the perpetuation and sham glorification of the despots. Moreover, the dedication to Al-Rimahi is significant here. Ali, as Al-Sayegh introduces him, is “a close friend, a sensitive poet, famous for his provoking and confrontational poems in the late 1970s. He was executed by the Iraqi regime in 1979.”(2004, 703) There are very few options available to the Iraqi poets: either to lose his life, to collaborate with the regime, or to go into exile. In clear contrast to Al-Sayegh, those subservient and lowly poets live like rats:

In the time of despots

The eunuch poets- like the rats-

Shrink away into the Sultan’s burrow





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The keep on singing  
The glories of his majesty  
And his bounty  
And the letters of your poems are still  
-In all places and times-  
Walking carrying the Crosses on their shoulders

Another reference to the Sultan's oppressive policies is included in "Pawn." The poem talks about the misuse of power and the dangerous consequences of launching bloody and costly wars. The persona who is persecuted because he refuses to participate in the war warns others that they will endure the same fate. All of them are mere pawns in the chessboard whose pieces are haphazardly used by despots and tyrants. The formers become mere puppets whose strings are moved by the latters.

The Sultan pawns me  
As a soldier in a war I do not understand  
To defend a chessboard? I do not know-  
Or a homeland or an arena?  
Therefore, I declared disobedience  
But the eunuch soldiers  
Lead me blindfolded to the guillotine  
They point the nozzles of their guns at me  
I shout: stop  
You will be dragged on this chessboard  
Ram by ram  
To raise the crowns on the stairs of your remains. (2004, 75)



The dictators invade even the dreams of their people. They spare no means to terrify and repress them. In "I and Hulagu Khan," Al-Sayegh narrates a nightmare he had in which he met the Mongol king Hulagu whose army conquered the last Caliph of the Abbasid dynasty, Al-Musta'sm, and destroyed and sacked the capital of the Islamic empire, Baghdad. Al-Sayegh's Hulagu is a typical tyrant. He expects the poets to praise him all the time. The poet's refusal to do so subjects him to investigation and persecution. Death is the fate of all those who refuse to fulfill the whimsical and capricious desires of Hulagu. Again the manifestations of police state are pervasive like the security Guards, the executioner, terror, horses, castles, and blood shedding:

The guards escort me to Hulagu,  
He was seated on his huge throne  
And with him a throng of ministers, poets, and female slaves.  
He asks me; "why didn't you praise me?"  
Scared stiff and frightened, I shivered: Oh! My Lord, I am a poet of prosaic poems.  
Confidently and awesomely, he smiles: "It doesn't matter..."  
He points to his black executioner lightheartedly:  
So, teach him how to write a rhymed poetry by splitting his head into  
The first hemistich and the second hemistich  
And be careful not to disturb the meter  
And be watchful of consonants and vowels.  
The black executioner holds me tightly by my trembling collar  
He swoops down with his huge sword  
On my neck  
So my head begins to roll  
And it runs into the window that spreads out because of the gravity of the shock.

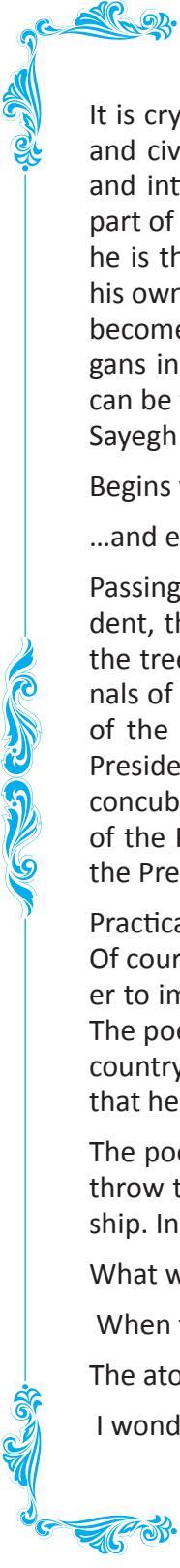


Terrified, the poet awakes dry-throated. His neck is covered with sweat. The book of the famous Arabic historian Al-Tabari was still lying heavily on his chest. The pages of the books were destroyed under the toes of the hoofs of Hulagu’s horses which wreak havoc with the kingdoms and castles. Here a clear connection is made between Hulagu, the Mongol ruthless emperor and Saddam, the former president of Iraq. Although Saddam is not mentioned by name, the reference to his televised speech which usually runs for hours and hours and more often than not is broadcasted later makes the connection gain in more significance. The implication is that just like Hulagu, Saddam wreaks havoc with Iraq and its people. Iraqis were not compelled to continue listening to Saddam as they were tightly besieged by his pervasive presence in their daily lives; in the streets, work places, insides houses, on the pages of newspapers, in the curricula, radio and TV. As the person who is reported disparaging risks death or sever retaliation in Iraq, people under the rule of Hulagu endure the same risks. The poem ends by Hulagu kicking the poet in his testicles because he had slept before finishing reading his biography in Al-Tabari’s book.

“The Second Shadow” again deals with the devastating impact of the dictatorial systems on people. Though it is primarily about the government agent or ‘informer,’ there are many details that point at the real cause of the suffering of people, i.e., the dictator. Again, the presence of the president’s pictures is blatant and suggestive at the same time. The poet feels sorry for the ‘informer’ because he, the poet believes, is one of the victims of the exploitative and tyrannical regime. The poet imagines that he shakes hand with the informer in a bar. Upon doing this, he notes that the informer’s hand was cut off by war splinters. The informer points at to the picture of his mockingly smiling executioner which occupied the newspaper front page. The president, as usual, was ornamented by eye-catching medals and decorations. He accuses the mass media like T.V., radio, and newspapers of aggrandizing and baselessly magnifying the president as he is followed by ‘mealy-mouthed, hypocrite throng, and cameras.’(2004, p.84) However, the more pictures are hanged and presented, as the poem clearly illustrates, the more people sink down in poverty, desperation and destruction.

Nowhere is the 'cult of Personality' clearer than in Al-Sayegh's poem "Crossing to Exile." As the title suggests, the poet makes a daring movement from his homeland in which he was suffering internal exile and chronic alienation to another place in which he hopes to find everything that is lacking in his original homeland; namely, freedom, dignity and good living condition. In the poem, Al-Sayegh states the reasons behind the choice of exile on the part of many Iraqis. In a series of images dribbling with pain and lamentation, Al-Sayegh tells of a homeland that is stolen by a group of criminals that is intent on destroying all manifestations of life. In an answer to a question by a girl about the reasons behind the raggedness of his hands, the poet tells her of his "homeland, the banners, the colonization, and the glories of the Nation." These things and others make the poet's homeland "Sadder than it ought to be." In his host country, i.e., Europe, the poet is determined to expose the hideous and shocking crimes committed in his dictator-controlled homeland. He says

I shall lie down on the first pavement I see in Europe  
I shall raise my legs in front of bystanders  
To show them the bastinados of the schools and detention camps  
Which drive me to exile  
What I carry in my pockets is not a passport  
But a history of oppression  
In which for fifty years, we regurgitate nothing but fodder  
And orations....  
And the rolled cigarettes  
In which we stand in front of the scaffold  
Watching our endlessly shaking corpses  
And we salute and applaud for the rulers  
Filled with fear on files of the members of our families  
Stored in the vaults of the Security.



## • “This Land (Iraq) was no Longer Suitable for Anything”

It is crystal clear that conditions of life are far from being humane and civilized in Iraq where all methods of systematic persecution and intimidation are extensively used by the authorities. The last part of the poem underlines the *prima causa* of the ordeals of Iraq: he is the President who dominates and confiscates everything for his own self-interest. Iraq becomes the President and the President becomes Iraq, as one of the very well-known and often quoted slogans in Iraq states. Iraq is, virtually speaking, obliterated; nothing can be found in in safe the President. In an incantatory manner, Al-Sayegh explains how his homeland

Begins with the speech of the president

...and ends with his speech

Passing through the streets of the President, the songs of the President, the museums of the President, the reward of the President, the trees of the President, the factories of the President, the journals of the President, the stable of the of the President, the clouds of the President, the camps of the President, the statues of the President, the kilns of the President, medals of the President, the concubine of the President, the schools of the President, the farms of the President, the weather of the President, the instructions of the President.....

Practically nothing is left for the ordinary Iraqis of their homeland. Of course, the list is longer as it is open-ended. It is left to the reader to imagine to what extent life was suffocating and bleak in Iraq. The poet believes that the question he is often asked, “From which country you came.....?” is silly since the poem states very clearly that he came from the land of death and wholesale destruction.

The poet, however, dreams of a ‘Revolution’ that will help to overthrow the president and free the Iraqis of the shackles of dictatorship. In “A Revolution,” the poet wonders

What were the servants of the palace thinking of?

When they were wiping with their peacocked tails

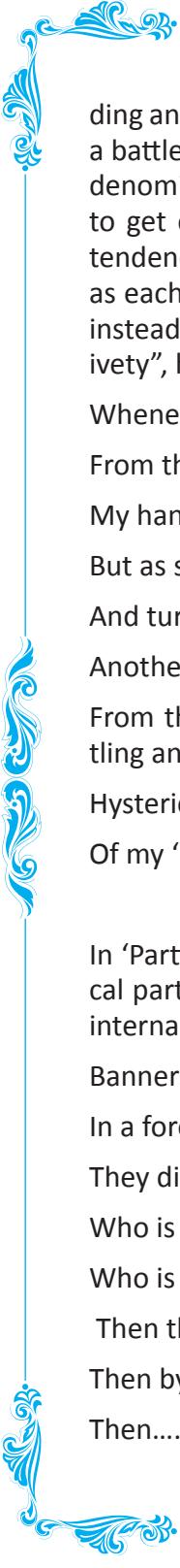
The atoms of the time fastened to his luminous beard!

I wonder what were the belles of the palace dreaming of?

When they were caressing with their hands his dead castles?  
I wonder what was the laureate poet writing  
In his elegant style?  
When the door of the presidential toilet  
Bang on the fold of his long coat?  
I wonder what was the milk woman of the Emperor's cows thinking?  
While she was scattering the fodder of her life in corners of the stable.  
I wonder on which spot in the terrains of the emperor's face  
The mercurial looks of his ministers will slide?  
In the moment when  
All of them overhear  
The sound of the first shots that smash the crystals of the palace!!  
And force its way  
-In the corridors grafted with guards and mosaic-  
In front of the clashing banners!!!

The “revolution” ultimately takes place although in a very weird and unexpected way. In 2003, the United States-led Coalition overthrew Saddam ending about forty years of dictatorial rule and thirteen years of heavy economic sanctions. It is generally agreed upon that Saddam could not have been deposed except if an external power intervenes. The Saddam-led Ba'ath regime was so ruthless and inhumane that no Iraqi ever thinks of deposing it or putting an end to its crimes even in his dreams.

The post-2003 era in Iraq, however, results in new chronic ordeals for the Iraqis most of whom were highly disillusioned as they see their own homeland further falls apart and endures a new state of disintegration and fragmentation. The era is characterized by sectarian divisions and violence, insecurity, waves of exodus, bloodshed-



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ding and various kinds of corruption. The poet’s homeland becomes a battlefield in which self-interested and unscrupulous political and denominational parties are fighting and competing with each other to get control of the economic resources. More important is the tendency of these parties to repeat the process of dictator-making as each party tries to aggrandize and idolatrise their leaders. Thus, instead of one dictator, the new Iraq has countless dictators. In “Naivety”, he tells

Whenever a dictator falls down  
From the throne of history studded with our tears  
My hands are burned by clapping  
But as soon as I come back home  
And turn on TV.  
Another dictator spills over  
From the mouths of the multitude which are a flamed with whis-  
tling and applauses  
Hysterically, I begin to laugh  
Of my ‘naivety.’(2004,190)

In ‘Parties,’ the poet comments on the wrangling among the political parties in Iraq. Iraq and its people are the biggest losers in this internal fight:

Banners are moving forward  
In a forest of slogans  
They disagree  
Who is to proceed first?  
Who is to be in the forefront?  
Then they fight with their hands  
Then by clubs  
Then....the banners fall down

We, the members of the crowd, on both sides of the road  
Saw nothing except  
A forest of rifles

Interlacingly moving forward towards us....(2004, p.29)

Regardless of their allegedly patriotic slogans and claims, those parties are self-interested. Their only goal is to serve their own aims and interests. In spite of their claims to democracy and freedom, they are not different from the dictatorial system they revolted against. Both are two sides of the same coin.

To conclude, it is crystal clear that as a human being and poet, Al-Sayegh is very sensitive to the ordeals of his fellow citizens who fall prey, like him, to the clutches of the tyrannical system that wreaked havoc in all aspects of life. Al-Sayegh's 'dictator poems' do not represent a mere desire on his part to criticize and denounce the authoritative and despotic systems, but they are an attempt to resist and fight back the feeling of alienation he often feels when thinking of his homeland. The 'dictator' in these poems turns out to be a pathetic person who is in a constant need of others to support him and aggrandize his image. The implied irony in the poems is that people never truly digest and comprehend the lessons of history as they allow the latent 'tyrannical' urges to control them, and ultimately turn them into dictators in an ongoing process of dividing the world into oppressors and oppressed.

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