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## 33. Had What Ought to Be Done Been Done?

We have discussed in the previous chapter the method by which a successor to the Holy Prophet should come to power. We have mentioned that in spite of the legitimacy and appropriateness of elective government this kind of government should not exist when it is possible to establish a government based on a Prophet's directive. We have mentioned that there are three reasons which invite us to believe that the Holy Prophet should have chosen for his followers a man to lead them after him:

1. The nature of the Islamic principles is not consonant with the election because the Islamic principles are reformatory and not desirable to people. The founder of the Islamic State who was the proclaimer of the reformatory principles should not leave the selection of his deputy to a populous election or to a partisan election.

He should choose the one whom he thinks is the best among the members of his party to become his deputy. Leaving it to election may bring to power the unqualified and endanger the reformatory principles.

- 2. The nation was about to face dangers and crises which were expected to test the faith of the believers and the Holy Prophet was aware of that. He should have chosen for the ship of the nation a navigator to lead that ship through the turbulence of the crises and not to let the navigator be chosen by election.
- 3. The nation was and is still in need of an authority after the Holy Prophet to inform the nation of the interpretations of the Holy Qur'an and the real instructions of the Holy Prophet. This is because the Holy Prophet did not leave written instructions.

The election could not secure for us the needed authority who knew the meanings of the Holy Qur'an as they are and the actual instructions of the Holy Prophet. Should the companions of the Prophet elect a person their election would not change the personality of their elect; nor would it make him completely knowledgeable in this field if he were not so.

The needed authority would not be secured except through a directive by the Holy Prophet because the

Holy Prophet knew the most knowledgeable among his companions.

It can be said that all of what these three reasons lead us to is to believe that it was expected from the Prophet to appoint a particular person who has all the needed qualifications for the leadership of the nation. But these reasons do not prove that what was expected had taken place. Had there been any directive by the Prophet concerning this matter?

We shall try in the following chapters to answer this question which actually is a combination of two important questions:

- 1. Had there been among the companions of the Prophet a man who had all the needed qualifications for the leadership including complete knowledge of the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an and the Islamic Law?
- 2. Suppose that the man with these qualifications did exist had the Holy Prophet appointed him? We find the answer to these two questions in a number of statements which the Holy Prophet pronounced at various times and places.

## 'Ali Is The Gate Of The City Of Knowledge

The Holy Prophet informed his followers of the existence of a man who was the treasurer of the knowledge of the Holy Prophet and he declared to them that if they want to reach the knowledge of the Holy Prophet they should take that knowledge from that treasurer. He said (and Ibn Abbas reported): "I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is the gate (door) of that city. Whoever wishes to enter that city he should come through its gate."

Or he said; Whoever wants that city should come to the door." Jabir Ibn Abdullah Al-Ansari reported that the Messenger said "I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate; whoever wants the knowledge should come to the gate."1

This statement shows us that the Messenger had informed the Muslims of two important matters: 1. That the knowledgeable person whom the nation needs is available and that 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib is that knowledgeable one.

2. If the Muslims want to have the knowledge of the Holy Prophet 'Ali would be the only way through which they can obtain it. It is the duty of the Muslims to try to reach that knowledge. Thus their quest of 'Ali's knowledge and his guidance would be of their most important duties. This is because knowledge has to precede the deed.

If we want to have a sound deed it has to be in accordance with the teachings of the Messenger. The continuation of the accord of our deeds with the instructions of the Holy Prophet is dependent on our knowledge of those instructions.

The hadiths which indicate that 'Ali is the gate of the city of knowledge are not the only hadiths which speak of the superiority of 'Ali's knowledge. There are many other hadiths. Some of them were mentioned before and all of them testify to the fact that 'Ali was the most knowledgeable in the Islamic teachings among the followers of the Holy Prophet.

It suffices to memion the hadith of Om Selemah wife of the Holy Prophet who said: "I heard the Messenger of God saying: 'Ali is with the Qur'an and the Qur'an is with 'Ali. They do not part with each other until they meet me at the Basin (on the Day of Judgement)."2

Al-Hakim recorded that Anas Ibn Malik reported that the Holy Prophet said to 'Ali: "You shall inform my nation about the truth and what they dispute about after me": He said this is an authentic hadith according to the stipulation of the two Sheikhs (Al-Bukhari and Muslim).3

Al-Tirmidhi in his authentic Sunan recorded that the Messenger of God said: "God have Thy mercy on 'Ali. God make the right and the truth with 'Ali in all situations."

Abu Na-eem recorded that Ibn Masud said: "The Holy Qur'an... has outward and inward meanings and 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib has the knowledge of both.5

Imam Ahmad reported that the Messenger said to his daughter Fatimah Al-Zahra: "Are you not satisfied that I have married you to the one who is the earliest in Islam among my followers their most knowledgeable and their greatest in widsom?"6

Al-Hakim recorded that Qais Ibn Abu Hazim reported that he heard Saad Ibn Abu Waqas saying to a man from Damascus who cursed 'Ali: "Man why do you curse 'Ali?

Was he not the first one who embraced Islam? Was he not the first one who prayed with the Messenger of God? Was he not the most knowledgeable among people? Then Saad said: God this man has cursed a man from the highest righteous among Thy servants. I ask Thee not to let this group leave this place until Thou show them Thy power.

The man from Damascus immediately fell from the mount of his horse on stones and his head was split and he died."

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Of course it could be said that these hadiths only indicate that 'Ali was a leader in the Shari-ah (Islamic Law) the interpretation of the Book of God and the instructions of the Holy Prophet. But they do not indicate that he was the political leader of the nation and its appointed ruler.

Thus it does not prove his immediate succession of the Holy Prophet.

The weakness of this argument would be obvious when we realize that the purpose of the Messenger from these statements is to lead his nation and to inform it of the road which secures its adherence to the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet.

The nation would not walk on that road if the affairs of the Muslims are handled by a man who is other than the man whom the Prophet trusted with his knowledge of the Islamic Law and made him the door of guidance to the Muslims.

The Muslims may walk on that road only if they have a positive attitude towards the man whom the Holy Prophet trusted with his knowledge. What took place in the history testifies to that. In spite of all these statements by the Prophet concerning 'Ali the nation did not take from the teaching of the Imam 'Ali but a little compared to what they took from the companions who were not comparable to the Imam in knowledge. We shall speak of this in details when we comment on the Hadith of Al–Thagalain.

However there are other statements which are more indicative of the appointment of the Imam 'Ali by the Holy Prophet for the leadership of the nation. Some of these statements took place before the Hijrah and some of them took place after the Hijrah. Most of them took the shape of general declarations directed to groups of people.

- 1. Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 127. Ibn Jareer reported the hadith and considered it authentic (conveyed by Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi Kanz Al-Ammal part 15 p. 13 hadith no.348-379.
- 2. Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 124.
- 3. Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 122.
- 4. Al-Tirmidhi his authentic Sunan part 5 p. 297.
- 5. Abu Na-eem Hilyat Al-ouliya' part 1 p. 65 (Al-Fairo- zabadi Fadha-il Al-Khansah)
- 6. Imam Ahmad Al-Musnad part 5 p. 26.
- 7. Al-Hakim Al-Mustadrak part 3 p. 499.

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