

## Ali is my brother

In order to indicate at which level spiritual brotherhood existed between the Prophet and Ali, to what extent Ali inherited the virtues of the Prophet, how Ali's soul acquired the colour of prophethood, how much he was loved by the Prophet and to what extent he respected and honoured the Prophet with his heart and tongue, it is necessary that a few traditions may be quoted. Only then we can conclude that in accordance with the sublime rules which became the source of strengthening the religion of Islam, the Prophet was paving the way for the caliphate of Ali. And he was doing so, because he could see his own face in the mirror of the person of Ali and the good qualities possessed by him were also possessed by Ali as will be explained later.

Tabarani has quoted Ibn Mas'ud as saying that the Prophet said: "Looking at Ali's face amounts to worship". And Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqas quotes the Prophet as saying: "Whoever hurts Ali hurts me".

Ya'qubi has quoted in parts of his history that when the Prophet was returning to Madina from the "Farewell pilgrimage" he stopped on the 18th day of Zil-Hajj at Ghadir al-Khum near Johfah, delivered a sermon and then held the hands of Ali and said: "Of whomsoever I am the master, Ali too is his master. O God! Love him who loves Ali and be inimical towards him who is inimical towards Ali".

Fakhruddin al-Razi has quoted in Tafsir al-Kabir that thereafter Umar son of Khattab greeted Ali and said to him: "O Ali! You have become my master as well as master of every Muslim man and woman".

This hadith has been quoted from sixteen companions of the Prophet by the ulema and historians like Tirmizy, Nasa'i and Ahmad bin Hanbal, and has also been verified by many poets, the foremost among them being Hassan bin Thabit Ansari. He says: "On the day of Ghadir the Prophet called the people at Khum and made his voice reach the ears of all and said: Who is your chief and master? The people did not feign ignorance and said: Your God is our master and you are our Prophet and we are not disobedient to you". Then the Prophet said to Ali: "Rise; for certainly I have chosen you to be the Imam and the guide after myself. Hence, of whomsoever I am the master this Ali, too, is his master. You should, therefore, be his true friends and supporters".

Abu Tamam Tai is one of the poets who have mentioned the event of that day. Another poet Kumait

Asadi has given a detailed account of it in his *al-Qasidah al-Ainiyya*. He says inter alia: “In the ground of Ghadir al-Khum the Prophet made an announcement about his caliphate. I wished that the Prophet's decision had been accepted. I never saw a day as important as the day of Ghadir and I never saw such a right being violated”.

Abu Sa'id Khudri has been quoted in Kitab Aal of Ibn Khalawayh as having said that the Prophet said to Ali “Love for you is faith and enmity towards you is hypocrisy” “Your friend will be the first person who will enter Paradise and your enemy will be the first person who will be thrown into Hell”.

The narrators believe that the Prophet looked at the face of Ali time and again, and said: “This is my brother”.

Abu Huraira has been quoted to have said that the Prophet addressed his companions saying: “If you want to see the knowledge of Adam, the determination of Noah, the habits of Abraham, the supplications of Moses, the piety of Jesus and the guidance of Muhammad combined in one person look at the man who is coming towards you”. When the people raised their heads they saw that it was Ali”.

Once a man complained against Ali before the Prophet. The Prophet said in reply: “What do you want from Ali? What do you want from Ali? What do you want from Ali? Ali is from me and I am from Ali and after me he is the master of all believers”.<sup>1</sup>

The Prophet sent Ali to Yemen. Some of his companions requested him to give them the camels received as alms to mount so that their own camels might take rest. Ali did not accede to their request. When all of them returned to Madina the persons whose request had been rejected by Ali complained against him to the Prophet. Sa'd son of Malik Shaheed acted as their spokesman. He said that Ali had been harsh towards them and also made a mention of the relevant incident. While he was speaking the Prophet struck his thigh with his hand and said loudly. “O Sa'd! Stop complaining against Ali. You should know that he is dedicated to the path of God”.

It appears from the above mentioned traditions as well as from many others which have not been quoted here that the Prophet considered Ali to be his brother, and Ali, too, was very much pleased with his brotherhood.

Moreover, the Prophet used to invite the attention of the people to the attributes and virtues which had concentrated in the personality of Ali so that they might know that he was the best person to carry on the Islamic mission after him. Some instances have been quoted in authentic traditions, which go to show that the natural conditions also helped in creating harmony between Muhammad and Ali, and shaped the events and the environments in such a way that Ali displayed the attributes which were not shared with him by any one.

One of those attributes was that he was born in the Ka'bah, which is the “Qibla” of the Muslims and his birth took place at a time when the Islamic call was about to be given by Muhammad and he had not

made it public. In those days he resided in the house of Ali's father Abu Talib. When Ali opened his eyes he saw Muhammad and Khadijah offering prayers. He was the first man who expressed faith in Muhammad although he was not yet fully grown up. When the people reproved him for embracing Islam without the permission of his father he replied at once: "God created me without seeking Abu Talib's agreement. Then why should I obtain my father's permission to worship God".

For quite a long time the religion of Islam remained confined in the house of Muhammad and there were then only four Muslims in the world: namely, Muhammad, his wife Khadijah, his cousin Ali and his slave Zaid bin Harith.

On the day when Muhammad invited his kinsmen to a feast and wished to address them and communicate the message of Islam to them, his uncle Abu Lahab interrupted him and incited those present against him. Consequently all of them stood up and left Muhammad's house. The Prophet invited them once again and said after meals were over: "I do not know any person in Arabia who may have brought a present which is better than the one which I have brought for you. Who from amongst you will help me?" The persons present declined to commit themselves and wanted to leave the house as before, but in the meantime Ali, who was still a boy and had not attained the age of manhood stood up and said: "O Prophet of God! I shall assist you and shall fight against anyone who opposes you". Members of Bani Hashim family laughed out and then went away ridiculing Abu Talib and Ali.

In every battle Ali was the standard-bearer of the Prophet. He dedicated his valour, blood, heart, tongue and his very life for his cousin, the Prophet, and for the success and victory of Islam. He crushed the enemies of Muhammad and showed his mettle as and when the occasion demanded. At the time of the Battle of the Ditch when the companions of the Prophet were worried and perplexed on account of the fear of the enemy, Ali stood like a rock before the chiefs of Quraysh and displayed such feats of valour that the Muslims became hopeful of their victory, and the Quraysh and their allies had to suffer defeat.

In the Battle of Khaybar Ali performed a jihad which was astonishing. The forts of Khaybar, although very strong, were conquered at his hands. This was notwithstanding the fact that very brave and experienced soldiers were assembled there and the companions of the Prophet were afraid of them. In short the siege of the fort by the Muslims was prolonged. The soldiers within were defending themselves courageously, because they knew that if they were defeated by Muhammad their power in the Arabian Peninsula would come to an end and their business and authority would go.

The Prophet sent Abu Bakr to conquer the fort. He displayed his efficiency in his own way and came back without achieving the success. On the following day he sent Umar son of Khattab, but he also returned like Abu Bakr without achieving any success and could not overcome the lofty fort and the armed soldiers. The Prophet then called Ali and ordered him to conquer the fort. Ali gladly proceeded to perform this duty for the sake of Islam.

When he approached the fort, and its inmates came to know that this time Ali son of Abu Talib, who had

not sustained defeat in any campaign, had come to join the battle, many squads of theirs came out from the fort all at once, and one of their soldiers attacked so forcefully that the shield fell down from the hand of Ali. He immediately pulled out the gate of the fort and continued to fight, using it as a shield, till the fort was conquered. And the fort was not conquered till a number of soldiers were killed, the first among whom was Harith son of Abi Zainab.

At this stage we come across a strange phenomenon. In the history of our ancestors we come across many champions who fought battles for the sake of their beliefs, but in the heart of their hearts they desired peace and wished that the problem had been solved without resorting to warfare. Besides them we also know many brave men who met martyrdom to achieve their objective. However, such battles and martyrdoms are mostly without any forethought. There are sudden occurrences which usually take place owing to eruption of enthusiasm and ardour in the presence of the onlookers. However, the case of Ali son of Abu Talib is most surprising, because in order to defend the faith of Muhammad and his own, and for the sake of brotherhood, and in the path of God he exposed himself to the gravest danger. It is an event which is unparalleled in history and abundantly proves the unity and harmony of these two great personalities.

When persecution by Quraysh reached its maximum limit and they were planning to kill Muhammad and destroy Islam, the Prophet went to the house of Abu Bakr and told him that as Quraysh were conspiring to kill him he had decided to migrate. Abu Bakr expressed his desire to accompany the Prophet and the latter acceded to his request. When both of them decided to migrate, they were certain that the Quraysh would pursue them. Muhammad therefore proposed to follow a deviated path and should leave their houses at a time at which they could not normally be expected to do so.

On the very night during which Muhammad decided to migrate the Quraysh had decided to kill him and had posted a group of experienced warriors round his house so that he might not escape under the cover of darkness. However, Muhammad asked his cousin Ali confidentially to sleep in his bed and to cover himself with his green sheet. He also asked him to stay on in Mecca till he had restored to the people the things which they had deposited with him. (i.e. with Muhammad ).

As usual Ali obeyed the orders of the Prophet very gladly. As mentioned above Quraysh had besieged the house of the Prophet. They peeped through the holes and saw a man sleeping in the bed of the Prophet. They were therefore, satisfied that the Prophet had not escaped. In the latter part of the night when the enemies imagined that the Prophet was sleeping in his bed he was actually in the house of Abu Bakr, wherefrom both of them proceeded to the Cave of Thaur. On finding a clue the Quraysh reached this place also, but God kept them hidden from the eyes of the enemies.

The examples of self-sacrifice set by Ali are very rare. One wavers between life and death and reflects whether one should sacrifice high morals, which are the capital of one's life, for the sake of the base and transitory comforts of worldly life. If, on such an occasion a person chooses martyrdom, it is a proof of the fact that in his eyes real life is eternal life and not temporary mudane life.

Of course, such devotion and self-sacrifice is very rare in the world. If Socrates and others like him welcomed death gladly, Ali son of Abu Talib also placed his life at the disposal of the Prophet of his own free will. However, to go into the battlefield and court death or to drink a cup of poison is easier as compared with the heroic act performed by Ali.

Just imagine how difficult it is for a person to sleep in the bed of one whom his enemies are bent upon to kill and it is not possible to escape from their hands, especially when they may be watching him from a distance of a few steps and making signs for a murderous attack and he may be observing their movements and hearing their words and seeing their blood thirsty swords flashing on his head and may spend the entire night in this condition.

At this dangerous stage Ali imitated the Prophet and displayed the power of resistance which he had acquired by his association with his illustrious cousin. His sleeping in the bed of the Prophet was a specimen of his jihad and effort for the promotion of the faith propagated by him. This dangerous fact unveils the nature of the Imam that his actions were not tainted with artificiality and resembled the coming out of a pearl from a shell. It also shows his strong intellect and matchless insight, because it is not possible for any other person to understand fully the reality of the Islamic call at such a young age.

This fact also shows many other traits of Ali. It shows that he did not attach any importance to worldly life. He was very faithful and sincere. He did not prefer himself to others. He was prepared even to lay down his life for the sake of the oppressed, so that they might be relieved of the oppression, and the prophetic mission of the Prophet might succeed. Fidelity, manliness, righteousness, valour and all other good qualities were concentrated in this person. The self-sacrifice displayed by him at this stage was an introduction of the heroic acts performed by him in future.

There existed a firm relationship of love and brotherhood between Muhammad and Ali and they assisted each other in connection with the Islamic call. This co-operation commenced from the time when Muhammad recognized Abu Talib and Ali recognized Muhammad i.e. from the time when these three illustrious personalities were living together in a house which was founded on piety and virtue.

It was one of the characteristics of the house of Abu Talib that it was there that Ali and Abu Talib were able to realize the greatness of Muhammad. As a result of this Abu Talib bestowed his love and kindness on Muhammad and Ali displayed obedience and devotion to him. This very recognition prepared Ali for supreme sacrifices. The Prophet also realized this reality fully well. He loved Ali beyond measure. He did not only love Ali himself but endeavoured to make others also love him, so that he might assume the responsibilities of the caliphate after him.

He wished that people might become fully aware of the qualities of Ali so that after his own death they should see in Ali the person of Muhammad himself as if Muhammad were still alive. Hence, they should select him with love and kindness of their own free will, and not because he belonged to the Family of Bani Hashim and was the cousin of the Prophet. This was so because the Prophet himself opposed

such discriminations and had strictly prohibited them. It was for this reason that just as he had himself avoided material benefits, he also kept Bani Hashim away from governmental offices which might bring worldly benefits.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>. The Prophet sent two detachments of the soldiers to Yemen – one under the command of the Imam and the other under the command of Khalid son of Walid and said that if both the contingents reached there together, the command would rest with Ali. Khalid who was perfectly imbued with the habits and sentiments of the age of ignorance was very much annoyed at this. After the completion of the assignment, therefore, he sent some persons to the Prophet to complain against Ali. The companion Buraidah, the bearer of the letter says: “I placed before the Prophet the letter which I had brought and it was read out for him. The Prophet was so much annoyed that I observed the signs of anger on his face. Then I said: “O Prophet of God! I seek refuge in you. The letter has been sent by Khalid and he ordered me to bring it to you. As he has been my commander, I obeyed his orders. The Prophet said: “Do not talk ill of Ali. He is from me and I am from him and he is your master and man of authority after me”. (Al-Musnad–Ahmad bin Hanbal, vol.5, p.356, Al-Khasais–Nasa’i, p. 24). In one of the texts of Hadith, an addition to the above– mentioned Hadith is available and it is that when Buraidah saw the behaviour and the extreme anger of the Prophet he entertained doubt in his mind about his own faith and, therefore, said to the Prophet: “I administer you an oath of the rights of companionship which exist between us that you may stretch out your hand so that I may take an oath of allegiance de novo and my sin may be forgiven”. (Majma al-Zawaid by vol.9, page 128). On the basis of this narration the Imam is the supervisor, man of authority and guardian of the Muslims, after the prophet. Viz. he enjoys exactly the same guardianship, over the life and property of the people, in the capacity of the successor of the Prophet as the Prophet himself and, of course, exercises this authority for their material and spiritual benefit as the exigencies of the circumstances demand.

<sup>2</sup>. The Prophet had declared zakat, which formed a large part of the assets of the public treasury, to be unlawful for Bani Hashim, so much so that he did not even send them to collect zakat so that the people might become aware that it was not utilized by the Prophet's Family, and was collected only to assist the indigent persons and to meet common needs of the Muslims

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