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Allamah al-Hilli on Imamate in his Kashf al-Murad, Part 4

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[Abstract](#)

This series is a list of responses to objections raised against Imamate from prominent scholar Allamah Hilli's *Kashf al-Murad*, expanded on from Nasir al-Din al-Tusi's *Tajrid al-I'tiqad* – the first treatise on Shi'i theology. *Kashf al-Murad* is one of the most widely read of Allamah al-Hilli's publications as it is the first commentary written on Allamah al-Tusi's work.

The concept of Imamate in Shi'i Islam refers to the necessity of having a divinely-appointed leader who will lead the Islamic nation after the Prophet's death. An Imam who exceeds all people in every virtue whether it be piety, knowledge, or bravery, and who justly leads the people and guides them towards morality is a grace of God.

The previous parts included discussions on the proofs for the Imamate of Ali, the rules concerning those opposed to his leadership, and the proofs for his authority over the companions that qualify him for leadership such as his extraordinary courage, deep insight, matchless asceticism and devotion, and boundless patience. This part expands on his qualifications over the companions, such as his noble character, eloquence, wisdom, and foresight.

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Allamah al-Tusi: He was of the noblest character. [1](#)

Allamah al-Hilli: Ali was the noblest in character and the most cheerful of them. 'Umar ibn al-Khattab described him as having a sense of humour in spite of his strength and awe. Sa'sa'at ibn Sawhan said,

“When he was among us, he was like any of us. He was of a gentle nature and very humble and compliant; we stood in awe of him like a bound prisoner dreading an executioner standing ready to behead him.”

Mu‘awiyah said to Qays ibn Sa‘d, “May God have mercy on Abu’l- Hasan. He was soft and cheerful with a sense of humour.” Qays ibn Sa‘d said to him, “I swear by God, in spite of his sense of humour and cheerfulness, he was more splendid than a lion with a thick mane while he is starving. Such awe results from God-wariness (taqwa) but not just as – and quite different from – the way in which the common people of Shaam (Syria) fear you. He is the best of all others in as much as he combines within himself all the opposite qualities, such as good character, cheerfulness, great bravery, great strength and participating in numerous battles.”

Allamah al-Tusi: He was the first to have believed in Islam.[2](#)

Allamah al-Hilli: Salman al-Farsi narrated from the Prophet saying, “*The first of you who will attend the Pond of Kawthar is Ali ibn Abi Talib, who is the first to have believed in Islam.*” Anas said, “The Prophet was charged with the prophetic mission on Monday, and Ali embraced Islam on Tuesday.”

The Messenger of God said to Fatimah, “*I gave you in marriage to the man who is the first to have embraced Islam and who is the most knowledgeable of all.*”

Ali said on the pulpit one day, “*I am the most truthful of all and the best at distinguishing truth from falsehood. I was a believer before Abu Bakr believed, and I embraced Islam before Abu Bakr did. He said this in the presence of a group of companions, and none of them denied it.*”

Abdullah ibn Hasan narrated saying, “*The Commander of the faithful said: ‘I am the first to have prayed and the first to have believed in God and His Messenger, and no one preceded me in prayer except the Prophet.’*”

He used to be in the house of the Messenger of God and he was extremely devoted to him. He followed his commands wholeheartedly and never opposed him. Abu Bakr was not a close associate of the Prophet; therefore, it is unlikely that Islam was proposed to Abu Bakr before it was proposed to Ali especially when the verse “***And warn your closest relatives***” (26:214) was revealed.

It is incorrect if the opponents say: Ali embraced Islam before puberty, therefore his conversion to Islam before that age is invalid.

Argument: Two premises of their argument are invalid

First premise: Ali was sixty-five or sixty-six years old when he was martyred, and the Prophet lived for twenty-three years after the commencement of his prophetic mission. Ali lived for about thirty years after the Prophet, therefore, Ali was twelve or thirteen years old at the beginning of the prophetic mission and

the descent of the revelation. It is legally possible to reach puberty at this age. Apart from its being possible, it actually happened, because the Prophet said to Fatimah: "I gave you in marriage to the man who is the first to have embraced Islam and who is the most knowledgeable of all."

Second premise: A boy may be mentally responsible (*rashid*) and fully sane (*kamil al-`aql*) before the age of puberty; therefore, he is legally accountable. For this reason, Abu Hanifah passed a verdict in favour of the validity of the conversion of a child to Islam, and if such is the case, it indicates the maturity of the child for the following reasons:

First, children are naturally born with a propensity and affection for their parents; their turning away from them and their inclination to God indicates their full maturity.

Second, the nature of children is incompatible with reflection on rational matters and religious obligations and compatible with entertainment and amusement. The avoidance of a child from that which is compatible with his nature towards that which is incompatible with it indicates his high degree of perfection. Thus, it is proven that Ali was the first to have believed in Islam as God says:

"And the Foremost Ones are the foremost ones: they are the ones brought near [to Allah]"
(56: 10-11).

Allamah al-Tusi: He was the most articulate (*afsaḥ*) of them all.[3](#)

Allamah al-Hilli: This is the tenth proof in that Ali was the most eloquent and articulate of all mankind and holds the highest status among the Arab literary men after the Messenger of God, to such an extent that the men of eloquence have said, "*His speech is below the Word of the Creator but above the speech of creatures. People learn from him different kinds of eloquence.*"

Mu'awiyah: "No one established eloquence for the Quraysh except him."

Ibn Nabatah: "I memorized a hundred of his sermons."

'Abd al-Hamid ibn Yahya: "I memorized seventy of his sermons."

Allamah al-Tusi: He possessed the soundest and most appropriate views and advice.[4](#)

Allamah al-Hilli: This is the tenth proof in that Ali used to give the most relevant and appropriate advice after the Messenger of God and he was the best of all in terms of management; he knew it better than all others when it was best to do the right thing.

It is he who advised 'Umar to desist fighting with the Romans and the Persians, and to send his representatives. He informed Uthman what was in his best interest and in the best interests of the Muslims, but he did not follow his advice, and as a result, he was killed.

Allamah al-Tusi: He was more intent than others on carrying out divinely-prescribed

punishments.[5](#)

Allamah al-Hilli: Ali did not show any consideration for anyone in this regard, even his own kin; rather, he was firm in his administration and accurately carried out those divinely prescribed punishments, as this was the command of God.

Allamah al-Tusi: He tried to preserve the Qur'an more than others did.[6](#)

Allamah al-Hilli: Ali had been trying to preserve the Qur'an during the lifetime of the Messenger of God, while no one else was occupied with preserving it. He is also known to be the first to have collected the Qur'an. It has been narrated by the majority of the Sunnis that he delayed pledging to allegiance to Abu Bakr because of being occupied with collecting it. The seven leading Qur'anic reciters, such as Abu 'Amr ibn Abi'l-'Ala', 'Asim, and others ascribe their recitation to him, because they reach back to Abi 'Abd al-Rahman al-Silmi, who was the student of Ali; therefore, Ali is superior to others in this regard.

Allamah al-Tusi: Ali predicted numerous unseen and future events.[7](#)

Allamah al-Hilli: This is the fourteenth proof in that Ali informed about many of the unseen events on many occasions, and this knowledge was not achieved by any of the companions. The following are some of his predictions:

1. The murder of Dhu al-Thadyah. When his followers did not find Dhu al-Thadyah among those who were killed, he said, "I swear by God, I did not lie nor did the Prophet lie to me about this event as foretold by him." He looked for him among those who were killed until he found him.
2. Before the beginning of the Battle of Nahrawan, his followers said the people of Nahrawan crossed the water. Ali said, "They have not crossed yet." They informed him about it once more. He still said, "They have not crossed." Then, Jundab ibn 'Abd Allah al-Azdi thought to himself: "If I find out that the people of Nahrawan have crossed the water, I will be the first to fight him," and later said, "Yet when we reached the river, we did not find that they had crossed it." Ali said, "O brother Azd, has the matter become clear to you?" And this indicates that he knew what had gone through Azd's mind.[8](#)
3. His own murder in the month of Ramadan.[9](#)
4. The rule of al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf al-Thaqafi in Kufah[10](#) and his revenge against the Kufans.[11](#)
5. That the hands and feet of Juwayriyyah ibn Musahhar would be cut off and that he would be hanged on the trunk [of a date-palm]. It was done during the lifetime of Mu'awiyah[12](#).
6. That Maytham al-Tammar would be hanged beside the house of 'Amr ibn Hurayth and that he would be the tenth one to be hanged by Ibn Ziyad]. Ali showed him the palm-date on whose trunk he would be hanged. What he said [i.e., his prophecy] came true.[13](#)

7. That Qanbar would be beheaded, and it was al-Hajjaj who beheaded him. [14](#)

8. When it was told to Ali that Khalid ibn 'Arfatah died on the Wadi'l-Qura, Ali replied, "He did not die; and he will not die until he becomes the leader of the misguided army whose standard bearer will be Habib ibn Jammaz." A man stood up at the foot of the pulpit and said, "By God, I love you and am [one of] your lovers." Ali then said, "Beware of bearing the standard; you will carry it and will enter the mosque with it through this gate (and he pointed to the gate – called Bab al-Fil – The Elephant door). When Ibn Ziyad sent 'Umar ibn Sa'd to fight Husayn, he assigned Khalid to lead the vanguard, and Habib was his standard-bearer. He set out with the standard and entered the Mosque through Bab al-fil. [15](#)

9. Once Ali said on the pulpit: "Ask me before you miss me. By God, if you ask me anything about the group who will guide a hundred people and also misguide a hundred people I will tell you who is announcing its march, who is driving it in the front and who is driving it at the rear till the Day of Resurrection."

Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas stood up and said: "Let me know how many pieces of hair there are on my head and beard."

Ali replied: "My friend, the Prophet informed me that for every piece of hair on your head, there is an angel who curses you, and for every piece of hair on your beard, there is a devil who provokes you. There is a worthless child ['Umar ibn Sa'd, who was at that time a toddler still crawling] in your house will kill the son of the Holy Prophet." When the [tragic] events in the affairs of al-Husayn occurred, he undertook [the crime of] killing [Imam] Husayn. [16](#)

And there are innumerable traditions in this regard narrated by friends and opponents.

Allamah al-Tusi: Ali's supplications were always answered.

Allamah al-Hilli: The supplications of Ali were immediately answered by God, and other than him, none of the companions were endowed with such a status, rendering Ali superior to them.

The first premise can be stated based on that which has been widely narrated from Ali in this regard.

1. When Ali called down evil upon Busr ibn Artah, he said, "O God, surely Busr sold his religion for the world. O God, take his reason away. Do not let there remain to him in his religion anything by which he would merit your mercy." His mind then became disoriented [17](#).

2. Ali accused 'Izar of giving the information about him to Mu'awiyah. When 'Izar denied it, Ali said, "If you have lied, may God blind you." Indeed, 'Izar went blind within a week. [18](#)

3. Ali called upon a group of the companions to bear witness to the Hadith of Ghadir. Twelve men from among the Helpers (al-Ansar) testified in his favour, although Anas said nothing. Ali said to him, "O Anas, what prevents you from testifying, while you heard what they heard?" He replied, "O Commander

of the faithful! I have become old and forgot that event.” Then Imam Ali said, “O God, if he has lied, afflict him with leprosy in such a way that no turban can hide it.” Thereafter, he became leprous (abras) [19](#).

Moreover, when Zayd ibn Arqam denied the Event of Ghadir he lost his eye– sight. [20](#) 2 There are many such widely transmitted narrations reported about the Imam.

Allamah al-Tusi: The miracles (extraordinary acts) worked by Ali.

Allamah al-Hilli: Many miracles (extraordinary acts) occurred by Ali, some of which have already been mentioned. None of the companions possessed this privilege except him, making him the most meritorious of them all.

- [1.](#) Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 1, p. 25.
- [2.](#) Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 13, pp. 251–227–229–251; al-Mustadrak of al-Hakim, vol. 3, p. 136; Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 1, p. 30; A detailed account of it is given in al-Ghadir, vol. 3, p. 220.
- [3.](#) Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 1, pp. 24–25
- [4.](#) Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 1, p. 28.
- [5.](#) Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 1, p. 28.
- [6.](#) Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 1, p. 27.
- [7.](#) Tarikh Baghdad, vol. 1, p. 159; and vol. 7, pp. 236 and 237; al-Irshad of al-Shaykh al-Mufid, p. 167; Qum, Manshurat Maktabah Basirati; Fada'il al-khamsah min al-sihah al-sittah, vol. 2, pp. 444.
- [8.](#) al-Irshad of al-Mufid, pp. 167–168; Tarikh Baghdad; vol. 7, p. 249; Majma' al-zawa'id of al-Bayhaqi, vol. 6, p. 241; Bihar al-anwar, vol. 41, p. 284, al-hadith no. 3.
- [9.](#) al-Sawa'iq al-muhriqah of Ibn Hajar, pp. 134–135, Maktabat al-Qahirah, Egypt; Bihar al-anwar, vol. 41, p.300, al-hadith no. 31; al-Riyaz al-nazrah of Muhibb al-Din al-Tabari, vol. 2, p. 234 and al-Irshad, p. 168.
- [10.](#) Translator's note: When the Umayyad Caliph Abdul Malik wanted to exact revenge on the people of Iraq and particularly inhabitants of the Shi'a city of Kufa he entrusted al-Hajjaj with such a mission. Al-Hajjaj who entered the mosque where the Iraqis were gathered had a turban on that he used to cover his face except for his piercing and hate filled eyes.
- [11.](#) Sharh Nahj al-balaghah of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 2, p. 289; Madinat al-ma'ajiz, vol. 2, pp. 216.
- [12.](#) al-Irshad, p. 170; Bihar al-anwar, vol. 41, p. 301; Sharh Nahj al-balaghah of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 2, pp. 290–291.
- [13.](#) al-Irshad, al-Irshad, pp. 170–171; Sharh Nahj al-balaghah of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 2, p. 291.
- [14.](#) al-Irshad, al-Irshad, p. 173; Kashf al-ghummah fi ma'rifat al-a`immah, vol. 1, p. 383.
- [15.](#) Al-Irshad, pp. 173–174; Sharh Nahj al-balaghah of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 2, pp. 286 and 287; Bihar al-anwar, vol. 41, pp. 288–289.
- [16.](#) Al-Irshad of al-Mufid, p. 174; Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 2, p. 286.
- [17.](#) Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 2, p. 18; al-Irshad of al-Mufid.
- [18.](#) Al-Irshad, pp. 184–185; Kashf al-ghummah, vol. 1, p. 390.
- [19.](#) Tarikh of Ibn `Asakir, tarjamt al-imam `Ali ibn abi Talib(the biography of Imam `Ali ibn abi Talib, peace be upon him), vol. 2, pp. 12–13, no. 508, Sharh Nahj al-balaghah of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vol. 4, p. 74; Ihqaq al-haqq, vol. 6, pp. 315–320.
- [20.](#) Tarikh of Ibn `Asakir, tarjamt al-imam `Ali (the biography of Imam `Ali , vo. 2, p. 5, no. 501, and p. 35, nos. 533 and 544; Sharh Nahj al-balaghah of Ibn Ab'il-Hadid, vo. 4, p. 74; Ihqaq al-haqq, vol. 6, pp. 315–320.

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