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## Appendix A: A Short Biography of Imam Ali (p)

A Short Biography of the Author of the Book Nahjul Balagha, Imam<sup>1</sup> Ali bin Abu Talib (p)

Ali bin Abu Talib (p) was the Caliph, the cousin, and son-in-Law of Prophet Muhammad (s).

**His birth:** He was born in 600 AD within the holy precincts of the Kaba, the house of God in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Ali's father was Abu Talib, the chief of the noble Hashemite tribe and an uncle of the Prophet Muhammad (s). His mother was Fatima bint Asad, who came from a noble clan.

**His early life:** Prophet Muhammad raised Ali as a child and thereby a strong lifelong bond was formed between the two. When Prophet Muhammad (s) received his ministry at age forty, Imam Ali, who was then twelve years of age, was the first one to accept his invitation to Islam.

In the fourth year of his ministry, Prophet (s) invited his relatives (On divine instructions) to the worship of one God and informed them that he was a prophet of God. He was met with indifference and even ridicule. Ali came forward and pledged his allegiance to the Prophet, promising to defend him and the new faith. Prophet was pleased and declared Ali to be his supporter and successor. Those in attendance laughed and ridiculed the Prophet (s) and furthermore taunted Abu Talib (his father) by saying that he had just been commanded to listen to and obey his own son.

Yet, true to his word, Ali protected, defended, and followed the Prophet (s) like a shadow, shielding him from enemies and being ever ready to give his life in the service of Islam.

To save Prophet's life, Ali slept on his bed: The idol worshippers of Mecca had plotted to kill Prophet Muhammad (s) in order to prevent his message of monotheism from spreading. The Prophet (s) was informed of the plot, and he decided to migrate (Known as Hijra, the beginning of Islamic calendar) to the neighboring city of Medina. He asked Ali, his young cousin, to sleep in his bed in order to distract and confuse the potential assassins and allow him time to leave Mecca. Imam Ali gladly accepted this responsibility, risking his life so that the Prophet's life would be saved.

City of Medina welcomes the Prophet: While Islam was taking a foothold in Medina, the Polytheists of

Mecca waged several wars against Muhammad (s) in order to root out the new religion. All was in the forefront of defending the Prophet and was a key factor in defeating the enemy (in the defensive wars). His bravery and swordsmanship became proverbial in Arabia.

The Prophet weds his daughter to Ali: Prophet (s) had refused many proposals for his daughter (Fatima) from prominent and wealthy companions. He gladly accepted Ali's proposal to his daughter. He blessed the couple and prayed to God for their happiness and success. This event further increased mutual affection and closeness between Ali and the Prophet.

**Pilgrimage of the Prophet:** In the tenth year after Hijra, when the Prophet (s) was returning from his last pilgrimage (Hajj), he halted the journey at the parting place of the caravans and called back all those who had gone ahead and waited for those still behind. He then delivered what is known as "the Last Sermon." He forewarned that his end was near. Towards the end of this sermon, he declared, "The Almighty God is my *Maula* (A comprehensive word in Arabic, meaning master, protector and friend) and the *Maula* of all those who believe, and I am similarly the *Maula* of all those who believe, and I have more right over the believers' lives than they have on their own selves." Then he asked, "Do you believe in this claim?" All of them replied in the affirmative.

At this point, he solemnly declared, "Then hear and remember: of whomsoever I am *Maula*, this Ali is also his *Maula*! He is to me what Aaron was to Moses. O God, Be a friend to him who befriends him and enemy to him who opposes him! Help those who help him and frustrate those who frustrate him!" While he was saying these words, he raised Ali so that all those in the gathering may have a look at him.

This particular event has been recorded in Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal's Musnad, verse 5, page 281, and Imam al-Ghazali's book *Sir-ul-Aalameen*. Maulana Askari Ja'fari states that 153 famous authors have recorded this event, known as Ghadeer-e-Khum, in their writings.

Ali as Caliph and Ruler: After the death of the third Caliph, Ali (p) was declared the Caliph by popular demand. During his administration, his top priority was to remove the corrupt regional governors of the Islamic empire. He demanded honesty, integrity, accountability, and compassion from the government officials. He himself adopted an extremely austere lifestyle.

When he appointed Malik-al-Ashtar as governor of Egypt, he instructed him in detail regarding his dealing with various classes of his subjects. He emphasized upon him the importance of being Godconscious, honest, just, and humble.

The famous Arab Christian scholar, jurist, and philosopher Abdul Maseeh Anthaki says that this order of Imam Ali established a far superior code of administration than the one handed down by Prophet Moses. He congratulated Ali for establishing those principles.

His code of administration, as documented in the book *Nahjul Balagha* (*Peak of Eloquence*), was quoted in the United Nations by the U.N. Secretary General in the year 2002 during a meeting of the Arab

Development Fund. He advised the rulers and government officials to follow the principles contained therein as a role model of governance.

(Please refer to Nahjul Balagha, Letter No. 53, "An Order to Malik-al-Ashtar.")

During his brief rule of about six years, Ali had to deal with corruption and rebellion by some of his Governors and officials. He fought several wars to defend his principles and to maintain the integrity of the Muslim Empire. He died at the age of sixty-three after being mortally wounded by an enemy while he was praying in the mosque. His words when he was struck with the sword were: "I thank thee, O Lord, for rewarding me with martyrdom. How kind and Gracious of Thee. May Thy Mercies further me to the Glory of Thy realm."

**His knowledge**: His close association with the Prophet (s) enabled him to gain knowledge that no other person had. His vast field of knowledge included biology, medicine, astronomy, the origin of the universe (please refer to his famous sermon number one in *Nahjul Balagha*), philosophy, Islamic jurisprudence, mathematics, rhetoric, and more. He made major contributions to developing the grammar of the Arabic language.

*Nahjul Balagha*. The title of the book means *Peak of Eloquence*. It has sermons, letters, and sayings of Imam Ali (p). It was compiled by Syed Razi, and it is said that the subject matter contained therein is next only to the Qur'an in knowledge, eloquence, and guidance. Imam Ali's teachings are not only beneficial to Muslims but also to all human beings who are searching for truth and justice, and aspire for God-consciousness.

- 1. For meanings of the word "Imam," Please refer to the section of Glossary.
- 2. His mother, Fatima bint Asad, was a noble and pious woman. Experiencing labor pains, she walked towards the holy precinct of Kaba, whose door was locked. The wall of Kaba miraculously opened and she entered the holy sanctuary and the wall then closed. This was the only case of any pregnant woman having delivered within the holy precincts of Kaba in its recorded history.

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