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Chapter 10:Let Us Be Fair In Our Judgments

The only caliph who was elected with the unanimous votes of the immigrants (Muhajirin and Ansar) was Imam Ali (as). In the history of the Islamic caliphate, this was a unique and unprecedented occurrence, which never repeated itself again.

When Muawiyyah (who had established the foundation of his empire in Syria and had severe enmity towards the Prophet's household) became aware of the fact that the Muhajirin and Ansar had elected Imam Ali (as) as the caliph, he became extremely agitated and had no intention of allying with the Imam. He not only avoided entering into allegiance with the Imam, he accused the Imam of having participated in the death plot against Othman and of supporting Othman's assassins.

In order to silence him, Imam Ali (as) in one of his letters to Muawiyyah wrote that the individuals who had entered into allegiance with Abu Bakr, Omar and Othman had also done so with him (Imam Ali). He also added that if Muawiyyah respected those caliphs, then he had to respect the Muhajirin and Ansar's votes in electing him (i.e. Imam Ali).

Now let us refer to the letter

"The same individuals who had allied with Abu Bakr, Omar and Othman have entered into allegiance with me. Thus, everyone is free to vote for another Imam. The Muhajirin and Ansar are permanent members of the council so their election for any person as Imam will be acceptable to God and will satisfy Him".

Imam Ali's objective in writing this letter was to silence Muawiyyah and to close the door to his further rationalization. Muawiyyah used to be the province governor during Omar's caliphate. He later accepted such a post in Syria under Othman. Muawiyyah used to call them God's caliphs and himself as their representative. If the election of the previous caliphs was supposed to be legal, then Imam Ali's election must have had the same legitimacy.

Imam Ali (as) condemned Muawiyyah's disagreement with his caliphate and started in the following manner:

Those who allied with Abu Bakr, Omar and Othman have allied with me. Then why would you not consider my caliphate legitimate?

The very essence of his dispute is to condemn the opponent with the issues the opponent consider respected and honorable. This letter does not approve the election of a caliph through the council of Muhajirin and Ansar. Imam(as) believes that the role of Imamate is not appointed; rather it is an issue of election.

In the following sentences, Imam says:

This is a kind of dispute against the contender (the word God does not appear in the original versions of the Nahj-ul-Balaqa, but it appears in parenthesis in the Eyptian editions. This indicates that the presence of the word "God" in the Imam's letter is doubtful).

In fact, the Imam states: If Muslims could unanimously agree on the leadership of an Imam this would be acceptable. The same thing has happened in my case. Then why do you disagree to ally with me?

The first person who has used this sermon to prove the view of the Sunnites is Ibn Abi Al-hadid, the describer of Nahj-ul-Balaqa. Being unaware of the clues in the body of the letter and other sermons, he has used this sermon as a document for the validity of the Sunnites and has taken the Imam's statements as his belief towards this issue 1.

The Shiite scholars have referred to the same topic mentioned above concerning this sermon.

It is surprising that Ahmad Kasravi has stuck to this sermon and has used it to prove that the Shiite view is wrong! It is more surprising that some others have repeated the same arguments in order to deceive others. They are not aware that Shiahs have been permanent protectors who will unveil such deceptions.

Let us be fair

We should draw conclusions only when we have read and comprehended all of Imam Ali's views in the Nahj-ul-Balagha.

The same Imam who has written: "those individuals who had entered into allegiance with three caliphs have allied with me and if Muhajirin and Ansar agree on somebody's Imamate, he should be the leader and others should comply". In the 'Shaqshaqiah' sermon states the following concerning the caliphates:

'I swear to God, that the son of Abi Qahafah put on the garment of caliphate while he was aware that I deserved such a position and that I was the very pivot of caliphate, that I was the source of knowledge and that I excelled all others in my thoughts but I dispensed with the garment of caliphate and I deliberated whether to fight for my rights with empty hands (i.e. no Army) or to be patient. Ultimately I chose the second choice and waited while I was harshly suffering the loss of my lost heritage until the day when the first caliph's (Abu Bakr) day was over; but he appointed some one else as his successor.'

It is surprising that while the Imam was alive he used to ask people for his resignation. However, he surrendered the caliphate to other individuals when they had divided caliphate between themselves.

Then the Imam continues: 'Omar, too, went his own way, although he let a group decide about the next caliph and I was included among that group2.

In a letter, the Imam reveals the way the allegiance came about and how he was treated unjustly. In answer to Muawiyyah's letter who, in turn, had said in his letter to the Imam that they had drawn Imam Ali in to allegiance with Abu Bakr in the same way that they would drawn a camel with a piece of wood in its nose, the Imam wrote:

'You had mentioned that they had drawn me to the allegiance ceremony the same way a camel is drawn with a piece of wood in its nose. I swear to God, that you had admired me while you had the intention to blame me; you wanted to betray me, but you have betrayed yourself (because you are confessing that I was treated unjustly).'

Could the Imam consider caliphate legal while he asserts that he was forced to vote for the caliph? Definitely not. There fore his intention in this letter was to dispute for his rights, as it is noted compulsory to do so in the Quran.

In another letter which the Imam sent via his province governor, Malik, to Egypt, he writes:

"By God I had not thought that Arabs would be deprived after 's death. What hurts me most is the people's hurry to ally with Abu Bakr3.

- 1. . Sharh Nahj-ul-Balaghah, Hadidi, vol. 14, p. 36.
- 2. . Sharh Nahj-ul- Balaghah, vol 1, third sermon.
- 3. Nahj-ul- Balaghah, letter No. 62.

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