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Chapter 12: The Logic Of The Ansar And The Muhajirin

So far we have read the Saqifah event fairly carefully. We must now analyze the logic behind its planning.

The significant points of this gathering could be summed up in the following manner:

1. The holy Quran orders the believers to unite and to solve their problems collectively.

The purpose behind this significant Islamic order is for the rational scholars to come together in a quiet atmosphere and discuss different affairs without prejudice.

But was the Saqifah convention really without prejudice? Did the wise members of the Islamic community gather together in this convention? Did they try to solve the problems of caliphate through discussion? The course of action was quite the opposite.

In this so-called "gathering" there were only three members of Muhajirs present and even these three had not informed the others, in order to keep them in the dark. Could then such a gathering in which great personalities of Islam, such as Ali Ibn Abi Talib (as) Salman, Abizar, Meqdad, Hozaifeh, Ibn Abi Kaab, Talhah, Zobayr and tens others, were not present, be called a counseling gathering?

Was it the right thing to convene such a short meeting on such a significant issue while the candidates for Ansar were beaten up? Or should such a vital gathering have been convened several times so that the Islamic scholars and dignitaries could have expressed their views and could have elected their true leader with more deliberation?

Abu Bakr's election for caliphate in such a hurry was so baseless and opposable that Omar was heard later to have said:

"Abu Bakr's election was nothing more than a coincidence; it was not done with deliberation."

From now on you are to kill anybody who invites you for a similar action"1.

2. Another important issue is the people's logic.

Muhajir's reasonings revolved around two issues:

One was their ability to pioneer in accepting the Prophet's religion; and the second one was their kinship with the Prophet. If these two items distinguished them from others, then Abu Bakr should not have misused Omar and Abu Obaydah in this political game because there were other dignitaries in Medina who had accepted the Prophet's religion much earlier than the two and were even closer to the Prophet than them.

Ali (as) was the first to believe in the Prophet. He was his close relative, honest disciple, and son-in-law. Could Abu-Bakr ever gain one of these peculiarities?

Omar sees Abu Bakr's priority in his wealth, his being close to the Prophet in the cave of Thur and that he prayed in the place of the Prophet.

As for the first priority, not much can be said, except that this was a misconception common to the man of the age of Ignorance when great wealth was a sign of prestige.

One of the criticisms directed at the Prophet by disbelievers was why the Quran had not been revealed unto a rich and wealthy prophet.

If we take the association with the Prophet at the cave of Thur as a sign of priority then we should give Ali (as) more credit, since he slept on the Prophet's bed on the night when the disbelievers had aimed to kill the Prophet. Ali slept in the same place where the Prophet laid so as to misguide the Prophet's assassins. All interpreters admit the following verse was revealed unto the Prophet regarding this issue

"And among men is he who sells himself to seek the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is Affectionate to the servants".2

Abu Bakr's praying instead of the Prophet, when he was ill, is quite ambiguous. We do not know whether he carried out the prayer or not; we are not sure whether or not it was done with the Prophet's consent; we do not know whether it was done due to a suggestion made by some of the Prophet's wives. (In a subsequent chapter we will study this issue).

Nevertheless, if this issue could be taken as credit for becoming caliph, we should add here that whenever the Prophet was not in town, he would always appoint a substitute for himself f and would assign him the rein of government including praying with people at congregations; the names of such people are recorded in the biographies of the Prophet.

3. The two basic requirements for an Imam, and for the Prophet's successor are thorough knowledge of the principles and the practical laws of Islam and immunity against sins and wrongdoings. But there was no mention of these two conditions in the Sagifah council.

Would it not have been appropriate for these individuals to bring up the issues of knowledge and chastity instead of other imaginary criteria such as nationality or connection with others?

4. The way these two groups reasoned shows that they only had superficial domination over people in mind and that they had ignored the Prophet's other roles and positions. For this very reason, the Ansar boasted of the great number of their tribes and considered themselves most deserving.

It is a fact that the great prophet was the leader of the people; but besides this, he possessed other virtues which did not exist in the candidates of either Mohajirs or Ansar. The Prophet presented the Shariat to the Ummah, explained Islamic principles and practical laws. He was innocent and infallible. How could the candidates then ignore the spiritual and mental issues and just focus on political and superficial supremacy, which are based on wealth and tribal power?

The reason for this ignorance is clear. If they looked at the Islamic caliphate from this point of view, they would see their ignorance in Islamic principles and practical laws. How could these candidates lay the foundations of a government which was based on knowledge, virtues, spiritual and mental perfection, and immunity against sins?

Imam Ali (as) diagnoses the logic of the people of Saqifah

Imam Ali (as) described their logic in the following manner: a reporter entered the Imam's house and informed him of the event of Saqifah, telling him that the two groups of Ansar and Mohajirs had considered themselves worthy of the position of caliphate:

Imam Ali (as) asked: why didn't you remind them of the Prophet's statement that we should remember the good ones with their good deeds and forgive their wrongdoings and that if they deserved caliphate they should recommend it to others.

Then Imam (as) asked: On what grounds did Quraysh consider themselves worthy of caliphate?

The reporter replied: they were saying they belonged to the Prophet's family genealogy and were of the same tribe as the Prophet.

The Imam (as) replied: they reasoned on the genealogy tree but spoiled its fruits. If they reason that they are the leaves of the Prophet's tree, I am the fruit of that tree then why shouldn't I deserve caliphate3?

Imam Ali's rationale for his right on the caliphate

The Saqifah meeting ended in a disgusting manner, with Abu Bakr leaving as the victor. A group of people were gathering around him asking people to utter the words of allegiance with him and the Prophet's successor in order to generalize this allegiance, they forced people to touch the caliph's hands.

After this and other scornful events, which we will not deal with now, they took Imam Ali (as) to the mosque to ally with the caliph.

In order to prove his right to the caliphate, Imam Ali (as), with his thorough knowledge of the divine book (the Holy Quran) and the Prophet's traditions and due to his firm belief in treating the Ummah justly, uttered the following speech:

"O Mohajirs, do not let the government which Muhammad (S) founded go out of his household and enter yours. I swear by God, we, the household of the Prophet, deserve it more.

Among us there are those who have a thorough knowledge of the Quranic concepts, who fully recognize the principles of Islam and its practical laws, who know the Prophet's tradition, who know how to lead the Islamic community and who can stop corruption. As long as such a person, with these qualities exists in our Islamic community, no one else is eligible for such a position. Such a qualified person lives only in the Prophet's Household. Be alert so that your desires do not cause you to fall out of the right path".4.

In accordance with the Shiite narrations, Imam Ali (as) together with some members of Bani Hashim, attended Abu Bakr's presence and proved his capability for caliphate through his thorough knowledge of the Book, his pioneering in accepting Islam, his perseverance in the Holy wars, his eloquence in speech and his bravery. Then, he added:

I deserve the position of the Prophet after his death. I am the minister and successor and his treasurer in the unknown affairs and knowledge. I am his most sincere follower. I was the first to believe in the Prophet's religion and to confirm it. I am the sturdiest of you in fighting the infidels, the most knowledgeable in the Book and the Prophet's tradition; the most learned in the principles of Islam and its practical laws; the most eloquent in speech and the bravest of you in times of conflict. Then why have you risen against me in this issue?5

In yet another sermon, Imam Ali (as) considers a caliph to be the most capable individual in a country's affairs, the one who is most knowledgeable in divine orders:

"أَيُّها النّاس إنّ أحقّ الناس بهذا الأمر أقواهم عليه وأعلمهم بأمر الله فيه فإن شغب شاغب استعتب فإن أبي قوتل"

"O people! The most appropriate ones to govern are the most aware in divine commands. If a person commits corrupt acts, he shall be punished; and if he does not repent he shall be killed.

O people! The most deserving individual for caliphate is the most capable one in the administration of the community and the most knowledgeable in divine commands". 6

Anyone, who invokes corruption and disregards the righteous shall be reproached, and if he continued to do so, shall be killed.

This is Ali's (as) logic. Some of his opponents, when they thought conscientiously, confessed to his right of the caliphate and realized that by depriving him of such a right they have made a huge mistake.

When Abu Obaydah Jarrah became aware of Ali's refusal to ally with Abu Bakr, he told the Imam:

Let Abu Bakr be the caliph. If you live longer, you will be the most deserving person for such a position. That is because everybody knows your high virtues, strong faith, vast knowledge and your relation with the Prophet7.

- 1. . Sirah Ibn Hisham, vol. 4, p.308; Ershad Mofid, p, 260.
- 2. . Quran 2:207.
- 3. Nahj-ul- Balaghah, sermon no. 68
- الله الله يا معشر المهاجرين لا تخرجوا سلطان محمد في العرب عن داره وقعر بيته الى دوركم وقعور بيوتكم ولا تدعوا أهله عن مقامه في الناس . <u>4</u> . وحقه فو الله يا معشر المهاجرين لسخن

Al-Imâmat wa Al-Sîâsat, Ibn Qutaîbah Daînawarî, t.1, p.12; Ihtiyây At-Tabrisî, t.1, p.96.

- 5. . (مَن به وصدّقه، وأحسنكم) . .5 أنا أولى برسول الله حيّاً وميّتاً وأنا وصيّه ووزيره ومستودع سرّه وعلمه، وأنا الصّدّيق الأكبر والفاروق الأعظم، أوّل من آمن به وصدّقه، وأحسنكم) . .5 بلاءً في جهاد المشركين، وأعرفكم بالكتاب والسنّة، أفقهكم في الدين وأعلمكم بعواقب الأمور وأضربكم لساناً وأثبتكم جناناً فعلام تنازعوا في هذا الملاع المسركين، وأعرفكم بالكتاب والسنّة، أفقهكم في الدين وأعلمكم بعواقب الأمور وأضربكم لساناً وأثبتكم جناناً فعلام تنازعوا في هذا المنازع المستودع المستودع
- 6. Nahj-ul- Balaghah, sermon no. 168.
- 7. . Al-Emamat va Al-Syasat, vol. 1, p. 12.

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