

## Chapter Two: 'Alawi Reformation

### 2.1 Cry of Justice and its Reverberation

62. Sharh Nahj al-Balagha – related by Abu Ja'far Iskafi: On the second day of his allegiance, which was on Monday 19th of Dhil Hajja, he [Imam Ali (a.s.)] ascended the minbar, praised and glorified Allah Almighty, and sent blessing to Muhammad (S). Then, he enumerated Allah's favors to the Muslims. After that, he talked about the world and called people to unwillingness toward it, and pointed out the Hereafter, encouraging people toward it. Then he said:

“Now then, in truth when the Prophet (S) died, people elected Abu Bakr as their caliph. After that, Abu Bakr appointed 'Umar as the caliph [after himself], who followed the way of Abu Bakr. Then he relegated caliphate to the electoral council, which led to the election of 'Uthman who committed things that were unseemly to you and you knew it. Then he was besieged and murdered. After that you came to me willingly and asked me to accept your leadership.

For sure, I am one of you whose benefit and loss are one and the same; and Allah has opened up a door between you and the people of qibla. Evils have assailed like the pieces of a dark night; and the weight of hukuma cannot be borne except by a man of forbearance, insightful, and aware of the ins and outs of ruling. I will carry you on the path of your Prophet and will implement among you what I am assigned to if you persevere by my side – and Allah has to be besought for succor.”

“Let it be known that my position in relation to the Messenger of Allah after his demise is the same as my position in his lifetime. So, be committed to what you are commanded to, and beware of what you are prohibited from. Do not make haste in anything until I clarify it for you. In truth, I have an excuse for whatever that is not to your liking.”

“Let be known that Allah from on high and on His Throne knows that I did not to rule over the umma of Muhammad (S), until you all agreed upon this unanimously; on the grounds that I heard the Holy Prophet say, 'Any ruler that takes over the hukuma after me, will be held up on the sirat. The angels will open his dossier; if he were a just ruler, Allah would salvage him because of his justice; and if he were a

tyrant, the sirat would shake him so violently that his joints would break up. Then he will be cast headlong into the (Hell) fire, and his face scorched.’ But now that you have agreed upon my rule, there is no time for withdrawal.”

Then he turned his face to his right and left and said:

“Let it be known that never should some men among you who have given themselves to worldly pleasures, appropriated gardens, caused rivers to gush out; who are riding on light-footed horses, and own good looking handmaids – which caused shame and disgrace on them – find fault with and feel aversion to me when I ban them from what they are indulged in and take them back to their recognized rights, and complain that the son of Abi Talib has deprived them of their rights.”

“Let anyone of the Muhajirun and Ansar among the companions of the Messenger of Allah, who on the grounds of their companionship with the Messenger of Allah have come to believe in their own excellence and superiority, know that the real excellence and superiority would be with Allah on the morrow, and his reward would be by Allah. Anyone, who responds to the call of Allah and His Messenger, confirms our doctrine, enters our religion and face toward our qibla, will enjoy Islamic rights and restrictions.”

“You are servants of Allah, and wealth belongs to Allah and will be equally divided among you. Nobody has superiority over others, and Allah will reward the virtuous on the morrow with the best of rewards and blessings. Allah has not allotted worldly gains as rewards for the pious; what is with Allah is the best for them.”

“By Allah’s will, come to us tomorrow morning so as I divide among you the wealth that is with us. No free Muslim is to fail to show up, be it an Arab or non-Arab, rich or poor. This was what I had to say. I ask Allah’s forgiveness for myself and you.”

Then he dismounted the minbar.

[Ibn Abi al-Hadid says:] Our master Abi Ja’far says, “This was the first speech that some did not like; they harbored a grudge against him and did not like the equal division of wealth.

The next day, Ali (a.s.) came and the people gathered to receive their portion. He then said to his secretary, ‘Ubayd Allah b. Abi Rafi’, “Start with the Muhajirun; call them and give three dinars each. Then call the Ansar, and give them the same amount. After that, call all the people present, both Arabs and non-Arabs, and give them their portion.”

Suhayl b. Hunayf said, “O Amir al Mu’minin! This man was my servant yesterday and I freed him.” Ali said, “We will give him the same portion as you.” And he gave everyone three dinars and did not give anyone superiority over another. Talha, Zubayr, ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Umar, Sa’d b. ‘As, Marwan b. Hakam, and some men from the Quraysh and other tribes refused [to accept] such division.

Abu Ja'far says, "Ubayd Allah b. Abi Rafi' heard from 'Abd Allah b. Zubayr saying to his father and Talha and Marwan and Sa'id, 'What Ali meant by his words yesterday did not remain covered to us'. Sa'id b. 'As faced toward Zayd b. Thabit, and said, "He was talking to the wall so that the door would hear!"<sup>1</sup> Then 'Ubayd Allah b. Abi Rafi' said to Sa'id and 'Abd Allah b. Zubayr, 'Allah says in His Book: ***(But most of you were averse to the truth.)***<sup>2</sup>

Then 'Ubayd Allah b. Abi Rafi' reported the event to Ali (a.s.). He said, "By Allah, if I remain safe and sound, I will take them to the bright path. May Allah kill the son of 'As! He found out from the words I said yesterday that I was talking about him and his companions; the ones who are among the perished."

He [Abu Ja'far] said, "While people were gathered in the mosque after dawn, Talha and Zubayr entered and sat in a corner away from Ali (a.s.). Then Marwan, Sa'id and Ibn Zubayr arrived and sat next to the two. Later on, a group of Quraysh joined them. They whispered together for a while.

After that, Walid b. 'Aqaba stood up, went near Ali (a.s.) and said, "O Abu al-Hasan! You killed our near of kin. As for me; you killed my father in the battle of Badr in captivity and let down my brother in the event of Yawm al-Dar. As for Sa'id; you killed his father in the battle of Badr, although he was the champion of the Quraysh. As for Marwan; you humiliated his father before 'Uthman when 'Uthman called him to join his gathering, even though we are your brothers and peers from among the children of 'Abd Manaf. Today, we swear allegiance to you on the condition that you let us keep the possessions left to us from the time of 'Uthman and kill the murderers of 'Uthman. In truth, if we are fearful of you, we will abandon you and join the Shamis."

Then Ali (a.s.) said, "As for your saying that I have killed your near of kin, the Truth did so to you; as for letting you keep your possessions, it is not permissible for me to dispense you and others with the rights of Allah; as for killing the murderers of 'Uthman, if it were incumbent on me to do it today, I would have done it yesterday. And now you have the right on me that if you are afraid of me, I would give you quarter; and if I am fearful of you, I would send you into exile."

Walid returned to his companions and talked to them. Then they scattered around with the intention to express their hostility and to spread opposition. Once their hostility became evident, 'Ammar Yasir said to his comrades, "Make a move to go to these few brothers of yours; as we heard their opposition and sarcasm toward their leader. Verily the tyrants have penetrated among them and Zubayr, and the left-handed rebel, i.e., Talha."

Abu Haytham, 'Ammar, Abu Ayyub, Sahl b. Hanif and another group stood up and went to Ali (a.s.) and said, "O Amir al-Mu'minin! See into your affair and reprimand this group of the Quraysh, since they have broken up their allegiance and promise to you, and secretly called us to abandon you – may Allah make you successful on your path. The reason is that they do not like the leader. When you treated the Arabs and the non-Arabs equally, they turned their back on you, maintained a liaison with your enemy and revered him, bringing up the vengeance for the murder of 'Uthman in order to create disunity among the

Muslims and coalition among the misguided. Whatever you say!”

Ali (a.s.) came out of his house and went up the minbar, while he was wearing a colorless shirt, clad in a Qatari coverlet, had a sword fastened on his waist, and leaning on a bow. He said then, “We praise Allah; the One who is our Lord, our Allah, our Protector, and our Benefactor; the One who granted us open and secret blessings, as His favor to us, without our power and ability, in order to test us [to see] whether we are grateful or ungrateful; the one who is grateful will receive more [blessings], and the one who ungrateful will be punished.

[Thus] The best of people in the sight of Allah in status and the closest of them to Him by [their] means are the most submissive to His commands, the most committed to obeying Him, the most obedient to the sunna of His Messenger, and the most passionate in reviving the Qur’an. Nobody is superior to us except by obedience to Allah and His Messenger. Here is the Book of Allah among us, and the covenant and the sira of the Messenger of Allah before us. No one is unaware of this fact but the ignorant defiant and denier of Truth. Allah almighty says, ***(O mankind! Indeed we created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Godwary among you.)***<sup>3</sup>

Then called out loudly, ***(Obey Allah and the Apostle, but if they turn away, indeed Allah does not like the faithless.)***<sup>4</sup>

Then he said, ***(They [Muhajirun and Ansar] count it as a favor to you that they have embraced Islam. Say, ‘Do not count it as a favor to me your embracing of Islam. Rather it is Allah who has done you a favor in that He has guided you to faith, should you be truthful.)***<sup>5</sup>

After that he said, “I am Abu al-Hasan!” (He would utter this statement when in a fury.) Then he said, “Let it be known that this world that you aspire, yearn for it, pleases you, and infuriates you is not your home and the station for which you have been created. So, let it not deceive you; and I have warned you against it. Seek the completion of Allah’s favor on you by exercising endurance in His obedience and humility before His commands, glorified be His praise.”

“In these assets, there is no superiority of someone over another. These are the assets of the Allah who concluded dividing them; and you are the servants of Allah bowing to Him (in Islam); and this is the Book of Allah that we admitted and surrendered to It which is the covenant of our Prophet among us. Whoever is not content with It, let him head for wherever he wishes. In truth, there is no fear for the one who practices obedience to Allah and who judges according to Allah’s commands.”

Then he descended from the minbar and said two rak’ats of prayers. He then sent ‘Ammar Yasir and ‘Abd al-Rahman b. Hisl Qurshi for Talha and Zubayr who were sitting in a corner of the mosque. They went to Talha and Zubayr and called them to Ali (a.s.). They rose, went to Ali (a.s.) and sat next to him.

Ali (a.s.) told them, “I swear you by Allah, did you not come to me obediently for allegiance and asked

me for allegiance, whereas I was reluctant about it?”

They said, “Yes”.

He said, “Wasn’t it that you swore your allegiance to me and entrusted your covenant to me without force and compulsion?”

They said, “Yes”.

He said, “So what has made you do such things?”

They said, “We swore allegiance to you on the condition that you do not do anything without our view, consult with us in all affairs and do not rule over us arbitrarily. Our superiority over others is evident to you. [Then why do] You divide properties, make decisions and do all these without consulting with us and informing us?”

Ali (a.s.) said, “You found some faults but left out many other things. Seek Allah’s forgiveness. Allah will forgive you. Tell me whether I prevented you from a right incumbent on you and oppressed you thereby?”

They said, “God forbid!”

He said, “Did I choose anything for myself from these assets?”

They said, “God forbid!”

He said, “Has anything happened concerning the rights of any of the Muslims or a precept [of the Faith] that I am unaware of or failed in?”

They said, “God forbid!”

He said, “So what work of mine do you dislike that made you decide to oppose me?”

They said, “You divided the properties in a different way from that of ‘Umar b. Khattab; you allotted the same portion to us as others, treating us and those who are not like us as equals in the spoils that Allah granted to us under the aegis of our swords and our lances and we laid our hand on them, on foot and on horseback, and took them back by force and compulsion from those who do not surrender except by force.

Ali (a.s.) said, “As regards what you said about consulting with you, I swear by Allah that I was not inclined to rule. You called me to it and appointed me therein. I feared that if I would refuse your proposal, disunity would arise among the umma. So, when hukuma came to me, I looked through the Book of Allah and the sunna of his Messenger and did what they guided me to do; I followed that [guidance] and I did not need for your and others’ opinions. [Yes] If something happens that is not stated

in the Book of Allah and whose proof is not present in the sunna, requiring consultation, I will consult with you.”

“As for dividing [properties] and following [not in the way of the caliphs], verily, it is not something I have initially passed a ruling about; but you and I saw that the Messenger of Allah did so and the Book of Allah, to which falsehood has no access from neither front nor back and is sent by Allah the Most Wise and the Most Praised, is saying so.”

“As for my dividing the spoils gained by swords and lances among you and others equally, in the past there were also a group who were precedent over others in Islam who contributed to it by their swords and lances, but the Messenger of Allah did not give them priority in dividing the spoils and did not grant them any advantages for their precedence in faith. Of course, Allah Almighty will reward the pioneers and mujahids (crusaders) on the Day of Resurrection. By Allah, you and others do not have anything beyond this with me. May Allah guide our hearts and yours toward the Truth and inspire patience and forbearance in you and us!”

Then he said, “May Allah have mercy on the person who sees the truth and supports it, when he sees the wrong, rejects it, and who helps the truth against him who is on the wrong.”

[Ibn Abi al-Hadid says,] Our master, Abu Ja’far, says, “It is reported that Talha and Zubayr have said at the time of allegiance, ‘We swear allegiance to you on the condition that we participate the hukuma with you.’ But Ali (a.s.) has replied to them, ‘No, but you will share the spoils with me. I do not prefer anyone to you or to a black branded slave for a dirham or less than that. Neither will I nor these two children of mine will do that. If you insist on “participation”, you would be my companions at the time of [my] weakness and need, rather than the time of strength and resistance.”

Abu Ja’far says, “They set out conditions that were not legitimate in the ‘agreement of Imamate’ (‘aqd al-imama)<sup>6</sup>, and he set conditions, which are obligatory in faith and law. It is reported that Zubayr shouted from among the crowd, ‘This is our reward from Ali! In the event of ‘Uthman, we rose up in his favor so far as ‘Uthman was killed. When he attained his goal with our help, he placed our inferiors above us.’

“And Talha said, ‘We deserve reproach. We were in a council of three people; one of us, Sa’d, disagreed and we two swore allegiance to him. What we had left at his disposal, and he withheld from us what he had in his possession. Today, we see yesterday’s hopes gone with the wind and hold out no hope of tomorrow because of today’s faults.”

[Ibn Abi al-Hadid goes on to say,] “If you say, ‘Abu Bakr also made divisions equally and nobody found fault with him as they did in the time of Amir al-Mu’minin, [so] what is the difference between these two eras?’ I would answer, ‘Abi Bakr divided the assets equally by following the Messenger of Allah as his example, and then when ‘Umar became a caliph and preferred one group to another, this turned into a habit and previous manners were forgotten and ‘Umar’s hukuma lasted too long; avarice and excessive largesse overwhelmed people’s hearts; the oppressed began to practice frugality and they got used to it.

There was no assumption for any of the two classes that this situation would change. And when ‘Uthma took over the caliphate, he followed the footsteps of ‘Umar in his running the state. Thus, people’s habit to this way of ruling was set firmer and firmer, and the one who gets accustomed to a practice, quitting it as a habit would be difficult for him.

So, when Amir al-Mu’minin took up the hukuma, he was determined to shift the way of government back to the way it was in the time of the Messenger of Allah and Abu Bakr, a way which had remained forgotten and unpracticed for 22 years. Therefore, this shift in government was intolerable for people. They repudiated it and regarded it as too much, to the extent that breaking of allegiance and disobedience followed; and to Allah belong fates that He will carry out.<sup>7</sup>

63. Al-Imam Ali (a.s.) – in his first sermon after people’s allegiance to him and the murder of ‘Uthman: “Sow now, [let it be known that] nobody cares about anyone except himself; the person before whose eyes lies the Hell is distracted from Paradise [by thinking of the Hell]. There are three groups [of people]: the hard-working struggler, the hopeful seeker, and the neglectful who is in the Fire. There are two other groups too: the angels who fly by two wings and the prophets whom Allah is holding by their arms. There is no sixth group.”

“Ruined is the one who lays a claim and tumbles who rushes. Right and left are misleading and middle way is the [right] Path; this is the bright Path on which there are the Qur’an, the sunna and the traces of the prophecy.”

“Allah has cured [the pains of] this umma by two medicines: the whip and the sword; the Imam is to have no leniency and tolerance<sup>8</sup>; hide in your houses and improve yourselves. Repentance is behind you. The one who rises to battle against the truth will be destroyed.”

“Some things happened that are not excused in my view. If I wanted to state them, I would. May Allah forgive what came to pass! Those two were gone; the third one rose up, like a raven whose concern is its belly. Woe on him! It would be better for him if his wings were clipped and his head cut off.

“Look! If you do not realize, disclaim; and if you realize, take action. There is right and wrong and there are followers for each. If wrong dominates, it has (always) in the past been so, and if truth goes down, that too has often occurred. It seldom happens that a thing that lags behind comes forward. If you return to yourselves, you will become fortunate. I fear that you remain in laxity; it has been incumbent upon me but to be diligent.”

“Let it be known that the benevolent of my family and the pure ones of them are the most tolerant in childhood, and the most knowledgeable in the adulthood. Let it be known that we are the household that have acquired our knowledge from the Divine Knowledge, we rule by Divine Command and we are committed to truthful speech. If you follow us, you will find your way by our insight; otherwise Allah will destroy you with our hands. The banner of Truth is with us. Those who follow it, will reach [us], and those who turn their back on it, will perish.”

“Let it be known that because of us the failings of the faithful will be made up for and because of us the loop of lowliness will be removed from your necks. It [Guidance] begins by us, rather than by you; and it ends by us, rather than by you.”[9](#)

64. Al-Imam Ali (a.s.) – delivered in Madina when he was sworn allegiance to: “The responsibility for what I say is guaranteed and I am answerable for it. He to whom experiences have clearly shown the past exemplary punishments (given by Allah to people) is prevented by piety from falling into doubts.”

“You should know that the same troubles have returned to you which existed when the Prophet was first sent. By Allah who sent the Prophet with faith and truth you will be severely subverted, bitterly shaken as sieving and fully mixed as by spooning in a cooking pot till your low persons become high and high ones become low, those who were behind would become backward.”

“By Allah, I have not concealed a single word or spoken any lie and I had been informed of this event and of this time. Beware that sins are like unruly horses on whom their riders have been placed and their rein have been let loose so that they would jump with them in Hell. Beware that piety is like trained horses on whom the riders have been placed with the reins in their hands, so that they would take the riders to the Heaven.”

“There is right and wrong and there are followers for each. If wrong dominates, it has (always) in the past been so, and if truth goes down that too has often occurred. It seldom happens that a thing lags behind comes forward.”[10](#)

65. Al-Imam Ali (a.s.) – after swearing allegiance to Amir al-Mu'minin, some people from among the companions of the Prophet (S) said to him, “You should punish the people who assaulted ‘Uthman.” Whereupon Al-Imam Ali (a.s.) said, “O My brothers! I am not ignorant of what you know, but how do I have the power for it while those who assaulted him are in the height of their power. They have superiority over us, not we over them.

They are now in the position that even your slaves have risen with them and Bedouin Arabs too have joined them. They are now among you and harming you as they like. Do you see any way to be able to do what you aim at? This demand is certainly that of the pre-Islamic period (al-jahiliyya). When the matter is taken up, people will have different views about it.

One group will think as you do, but another will not think as you think, and there will be still another group who will be neither this way nor that way. Be patient till people quieten down and hearts settle in their places so that rights can be achieved for people easily. Be assured from me, and see what is given to you by me. Do not do anything, which shatters your power, weakens your strength and engenders feebleness and disgrace. I shall control this affair as far as possible, but if I find it necessary the last treatment will, of course, be branding with a hot iron (through fighting).[11](#)

## 2.2 Dismissing ‘Uthman’s Administrators

66. Tarikh al-Ya’qubi: Ali (a.s.) dismissed ‘Uthman’s administrators from the cities, except Abu Musa ‘Ash’ari whom Malik al-Ashtar talked about (recommended) and he kept him (in office). [12](#)

67. Al-Ikhtisas: People gathered around Ali (a.s.) and said to him, “Appoint your opponents as governors and then dismiss them.” Ali (a.s.) said, “Double-dealing, deception and treachery are in Fire.” [13](#)

68. Al-Amali – related by Sahim: When allegiance was sworn to Amir al-Mu’minin Ali b. Abi Talib (a.s.), he was informed that Mu’awiya had refused to pledge allegiance and said, “If he reinstalls me as governor of Sham and give me back the responsibilities that ‘Uthman had assigned to me, I will swear allegiance to him.”

After this, al-Mughayra came to Amir al-Mu’minin and said, “O Amir al-Mu’minin! You know Mu’awiya very well and that the ruler before you appointed him as the governor of Sham. You appoint him to the same post too, so as to prevent the situation from setting apart. Then if you happen to change your mind, dismiss him.”

Amir al-Mu’minin said, “O Mughayra! Do you guarantee my life in the interval between his appointment and dismissal?”

He said, “NO.”

Then Ali (a.s.) said, “Would not Allah Almighty ever ask me how I installed him over two Muslims in a dark night?” (*...Nor do I take those who mislead as assistants.*) [14](#) However I would send for him and call him to what is with me from the Truth. If he complies, he is (considered as) a Muslim who has rights and duties like those of others; and if he refuses, I will complain to Allah.”

Mughayra returned while saying, “Now complain of him [to Allah]”, and sang:

“I advised Ali about the son of war,

He rejected the advice, and the chance did not return to him the second time.

He did not accept my benevolence,

Although this advice was sufficient for him.

Others expressed to him perfect and earnest benevolence,

And I said, “This benevolence will demand too high a price.” [15](#)

69. Tarikh al-Tabari – related by Ibn Abbas: “‘Uthman summoned me and appointed me as the head of

pilgrimage [affairs]. I left for Makka, directed the Hajj pilgrimage for people and read 'Uthman's letter to them. Then I returned to Madina, while Ali (a.s.) had been sworn to. I went to his house. I found Mughayra b. Shu'ba was meeting him privately. I was kept at the door until Mughayra came out. Then I asked him, 'What was Mughayra saying?'

"He said, 'He came to me once before and told me to send letters to 'Abd Allah b. 'Amir, Mu'awiya, and the 'Uthman's administrators and reinstall them to their previous posts so that he would be able to have people swear allegiance to me, since they can calm down the people in towns.' That day I rejected his proposal and said, 'By Allah, if there is only one hour left of my life, I would make attempt to maintain my notions and not to assign these and their like to the government'." [16](#)

"Then he [Ali (a.s.)] said, 'Mughayra left me and I knew that he believed that I was in the wrong. Until he came to me again this time and said, 'I did benevolence to you the previous time and you rejected it. Now I have come up with another view, and that is you do as per your own opinion and dismiss them and seek the help of your trusted figures. The Help from Allah will suffice you. They have become weaker than ever before'."

Ibn 'Abbas said, "I told Ali (a.s.) that at the first time he [Mughayra] did benevolence and at the second time he betrayed."

Ali (a.s.) said to Ibn 'Abbas, "How did he do benevolence?"

Ibn 'Abbas said, "You know that Mu'awiya and his companions are worldly-minded. If you reinstall them, they do not care who is running the hukuma. And if you dismiss them, they will say, 'He has taken the hukuma without consultation and has killed our chief.' So they will stir up people against you. Then the Shamis and the Iraqis will rise up against you, although I am not sure that Talha and Zubayr would also attack you."

Ali (a.s.) said, "As for your saying to reinstall them: by Allah, I have no doubt that this will be helpful for improvement of the transient worldly life. But in regard to what is incumbent on me by the Truth and according to my knowledge of the 'Uthman's administrators, I swear by Allah that I would never appoint any one of them to the government. If they submit to this [situation], it would be better for them; and if they turned their back, I will draw sword against them."

Ibn 'Abbas said, "Accept my words and sit in your house, go to your properties in Yanbu' [17](#), and close the door behind you; since the Arabs make a move and then disperse, then you will find no one but yourself. By Allah, if you rise up with them today, they will impose on you the vengeance for the murder of 'Uthman."

Ali (a.s.) refused and said to Ibn 'Abbas, "Leave for Sham! I appointed you as the governor of that region."

Ibn ‘Abbas said, “This is wrong. Mu’awiya belongs to the Umayyad and is ‘Uthman’s cousin and his administrator in Sham region; I will not be safe as he may behead me for the vengeance for the murder of ‘Uthman, or at the least, he may imprison me or treat me in whatever way he wishes.”

Ali (a.s.) asked him, “Why?”

Ibn ‘Abbas said, “Because of the kinship between you and me. Whatever is done to you will be done to me, too. Send a letter to Mu’awiya, do him some favor, and make promises to him.”

Ali (a.s.) said, “By Allah, this will never happen.”[18](#)

70. Sharh Nahj al-Balagha – related by al-Mada’ini reporting on the meeting in which Ibn ‘Abbas and Mu’awiya were present: “Al-Mughayra b. Shu’ba said, ‘Yet, by Allah, I gave advice to Ali (a.s.) and he preferred his own view and went on with his excessiveness. Thus it ended up to his loss, rather than to his benefit; and I suppose his people will follow his manner’.”

Ibn ‘Abbas said, “By Allah, Amir al-Mu’minin was too informed of various opinions, seats of prudence, and handling of situations to accept your council in what Allah has forbidden and disapproved of, (***You will not find a people believing in Allah and the Last Day endearing those who oppose Allah and His Apostle...***)[19](#), and he informed you of a clear mentioning and a an oft-recited verse, i.e., the words of Allah Almighty, (***...Nor do I take those who mislead as assistants***).”[20](#)

Was it permissible for him to assign people who were not trustworthy and confidential to him to the public treasury and life of the Muslims? Far from it! Far from it! He is too aware of Divine obligations and the traditions of the Messenger of Allah to harbor in his heart contrary to what he expresses, unless for the sake of precautionary dissimulation (taqiyya).

But with evident truthfulness, stability of the hearts and multitude of comrades there is no need for taqiyya. He moves on like an unsheathed sword toward implementation of Allah’s commands, preferring obedience to the Lord and being God-fearing over the views of the worldly-minded.[21](#)

## [2.3 Refunding Public Assets](#)

71. Al-Imam Ali (a.s.) – delivered when taking back the land grants made by ‘Uthman: “By Allah, even if I had found that by such money women have been married or slave-maids have been purchased I would have taken it back because there is wide scope in dispensation of justice, and he who finds it hard to act justly should find it harder to deal with injustice.”[22](#)

72. Sharh Nahj al-Balagha – al-Kalbi has attributed this sermon in the form of a marfu’a tradition[23](#) to Abi Salih who has quoted it from Ibn ‘Abbas: “On the second day of his allegiance, Ali (a.s.) gave a lecture in Madina, saying:

“Truly, any land that ‘Uthman has granted and any wealth from Allah’s property that he has given as gift will be taken back to the treasury; as nothing would nullify old rights and if I find these properties, I will restore them to their rightful place even if they are given as marriage portion to women or distributed among cities because there is wide scope in dispensation of justice, and he who finds it hard to act justly should find it harder to deal with injustice.”

This saying is interpreted as follows: if management of the affairs on the basis of justice is hard for an administrator, it would be harder on the basis of injustice, since the unjust is supposed to be prevented and averted from his injustice.

Al-Kalbi says, “Then he [Ali (a.s.)] ordered all the weapons stored in ‘Uthman’s house and used against Muslims to be taken hold of and the camels collected there as alms tax to be seized. He also ordered that his sword and shield to be confiscated, and instructed that no one should intrude upon the weapons which are not used to fight against Muslims and also avoid taking hold of his properties whether in his house or in other places. Also, he ordered that the assets given away by ‘Uthman, wherever and with whomever they are, to taken back.”

The news of this treatment reached ‘Amr b. ‘As, who was at the moment in Ayla, in Sham region, where he had fled to when people assaulted ‘Uthman. He sent a letter [from there] to Muawiya saying, “Do whatever you wish. Son of Abu Talib separated you from your wealth, just like the bark cut off from a walking stick.”<sup>24</sup>

## **2.4 Difficulty of Certain Reforms**

73. Al-Imam Ali (a.s.): “If my steps acquire firmness out of these slippery places, I would alter several things.”<sup>25</sup>

74. Al-Kafi – related by Sulaym b. Qays: “Amir al-Mu’minin gave a lecture. He praised and glorified Allah and pronounced benediction upon the Prophet (S). Then he said:

“There are two features that I am most apprehensive of about you, i.e., clinging to carnal desires and [having] high aspirations. The former bars one from the Truth, and the latter makes one oblivious of the Hereafter. Indeed, the world is turning its back and migrating [departing] and the Hereafter is upcoming and migrating, each one having its own children. You be the children of the Hereafter not the children of this world, since today is the day of action not of reckoning, and tomorrow is the day of reckoning not of action. Yet, the origins of the disturbances and crises are the carnal desires that we pursue and the ordinances that are fabricated, in which Allah is being opposed to and by which some men advocate some others.”

“Verily, if truth had not been intermingled with falsehood, there would have existed no disparities; and if falsehood had not been intermingled with the truth, it would not have been concealed from the people of

wisdom. However, some from each have been taken and intermixed. Thereby, the Satan dominates over its followers, and only those Allah has already promised benevolently will be delivered.”

“Verily, I heard the Messenger of Allah say, ‘How would you be when a sedition befalls you in which the child turns old and the old turns decrepit? People would move on according to this sedition and take it as sunna, and if a part of it is altered they would cry out that sunna is altered, and the people commit enormities! Then, adversities will mount, children will be taken captive, iniquities will overtake them like when fire overtakes dry woods and millstone rubs away the bed stone. They would acquire [religious] knowledge for the sake other than Allah, and seek worldly gains by means of otherworldly acts.’

Then, while a group of his near of kin, close companions and followers were gathered around him, he said:

“The previous governors acted in such away that they purposely opposed to the Messenger of Allah and broke their allegiance to him and altered his sunna. If I prompted people to give it up and turned it back to its original position as it was in the time of the Messenger of Allah, the troops would stay away from me, and I would be left alone or with a small group of my followers who believe in my superiority and leadership on the basis of the Book of Allah Almighty and the sunna of the Prophet (S).”

“Look! If I order the Station of Abraham to be taken back to its original place where the Messenger of Allah had laid it, to return Fadak to the inheritors of Fatima, to return the Prophet’s measure (sa‘)<sup>26</sup> to its original scale, to implement the land grants that the Prophet bestowed on some but they were not handed over to them, to return Ja’far’s house to his inheritors and separate it from the Mosque, to nullify the unjust judgments, to separate the women who have been unrightfully married to men and return them back to their husbands, to carry out Allah’s ordinances about these women, to take Taghlab’s children captive<sup>27</sup>, to take back the lands divided out in Khaybar, to close down “grants bureaus” and to provide grants equally like the time of the Messenger of Allah and prevent circulation of assets among the rich, to cancel taxes levied on lands and to promote equality in marriages, to implement the khums of the Prophet as Allah has ordained and made obligatory, to reshape the Mosque of the Prophet back to its original form, to close the opened up doors and to open the doors closed, to forbid rubbing (mash) of the shoes [instead of the feet], to administer punishment (hadd) for drinking wine, to allow the two mut‘as [mut‘atu’l Hajj and mut‘atu’l nisa], to order the [number of] takbirs [saying Allahu akbar] in funeral ceremony [prayer for the dead] to be five, to have people to recite bi-smi ’llahi ’r-Rahmani ’r-Rahim loudly in prayers, to expel from the mosque those whom the Messenger of Allah had expelled and now are lain in the mosque next to him and to let in the ones who are now expelled and the Messenger of Allah had let them in, and force people to obey Allah’s commands and divorce on the basis of the sunna, to collect all religious taxes (sadaqats) in their various types and measures, to take (the rules of) minor ablution (wudu), major ablution (ghusl) and prayer (salat) back to their original time and status and rules, to return people of Najran back to their homes, and change the way of treating captives of Persian and of other origins back to the way commanded by the Book of Allah and the sunna of the Messenger of

Allah, then the people will disperse from around me.”

“By Allah, I ordered people not to perform prayers in the month of Ramadan in congregation except for the obligatory prayers, and instructed them that congregation in supererogatory prayers is an innovation (bid‘a). All of a sudden, some troopers who were in my company shouted, ‘O People of Islam! The sunna of ‘Umar is transformed. He is preventing us from performing supererogatory prayers in Ramadan.’ I was afraid that [if I had not cancelled this order] the deviators from the right path and the leaders to the fire [of Hell] would have aroused disunity among some of my troops.

“More important than that is the share of the relatives [of the Prophet (S)] about whom Allah Almighty says, ***(Know that whatever thing you may come by, a fifth of it is for Allah and the Apostle, for the relatives and the orphans, for the needy and the traveler, If you have faith in Allah and what we sent down to Our servant on the Day of Separation, the day when the two hosts met;[and Allah has power over all things)***[28](#).

By Allah, what is meant here by ‘the relatives’ is us, whom Allah has mentioned in association with Himself and His Messenger, saying, ***(The spoils that Allah gave to His Apostle from the people of the townships, are for Allah and the Apostle, the relatives and the orphans, the needy and the traveler...)***[29](#); and has said about us, ***(...so that they do not circulate among the rich among you. Take whatever the Apostle gives you, and relinquish whatever he forbids you, and be wary of Allah)***[30](#).

He has [further] said about the injustice to the relatives of the Prophet, ***(Indeed Allah is severe in retribution)***[31](#) concerning those who do injustice to them. This is graciousness from Allah to us and richness by which He has made us free from want, and has recommended His Messenger in that respect.”

“Allah did not entitle us to share in the alms, since He deemed His Messenger and his Ahl–Bayt too honorable to provide their livelihood through people’s unclean property. They denied Allah and His Messenger, repudiated the Book of Allah that talks about our rights and refused to pay us our due that Allah has allotted to us. No prophet’s family has endured so much suffering and hardship from that prophet’s umma as we have suffered after [the demise of] our Prophet. Allah supports us against those who do injustice to us, and there is no power and no strength save in Allah, the All–exalted, the All–supreme.[32](#)

[1](#). I.e., he was indirectly addressing us.

[2](#). Al–Qur’an, 43:78.

[3](#). Al–Qur’an, 49:13.

[4](#). Cf., Al–Qur’an, 3:32.

[5](#). Al–Qur’an, 49:17.

[6](#). The original text (Sharh Nahj al–Balagha) has it as amana; however, the right word is imama which is more pertinent as per its context.

[7](#). Sharh Nahj al–Balagha: 7/36, Bihar al–Anwar: 32/16/7. Also cf. Nahj al–Balagha: Sermon 205.

8. Evidently, the holy Imam (a.s.) means special situations, as his other words in confrontation with people as well as his practical way of life prove it right. (the author)

9. Al-Irshad: 1/239, Nathr al-Durr: 1/270, Al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin: 2/50, Al-'Aqd al-Farid: 3/119.

10. Nahj al-Balagha: Sermon 16, Al-Kafi: 8/67/23. Ali b. Ri'ab and Y'qub Sarraj have in Al-Kafi quoted this sermon from Imam al-Sadiq on the authority of Ali (a.s.); however, this book contains the additional statement as follows: "Doors of paradise opened up to them who scented It's fragrance. It was said to them, 'Enter you here in peace and security! Let it be known that he whom I did not make a partner surpassed me in this affair; and I did not bestow (the hukuma) on him and he did not have a position in that, unless a prophet would be deputed – and Lo! There will be no prophet after Muhammad (S) – [for that reason] he was placed on the brink of a collapsing bank, which collapses with him into the fire of hell.

Sayyid al-Sharif al-Radi says, "In this small speech there is more beauty than can be appreciated, and the quantity of amazement aroused by it is more than the appreciation accorded to it. Despite what we have stated it has so many aspects of eloquence that cannot be expressed nor can anyone reach its depth, and no one can understand what I am saying unless one has attained this art and known its details." ¶...but no one grasps them except those who have knowledge.¶ (Al-Qur'an, 29:43).

11. Nahj al-Balagha: Sermon 168, Tarikh al-Tabari: 4/437, Ma'alim al-Fitan: 1/499.

12. Tarikh al-Ya'qubi: 2/179.

13. Al-Ikhtisas: 150, Bihar al-Anwar: 40/105.

14. Al-Qur'an, 18: 51.

15. Al-Tusi, Al-Amali: 87/133, Bishara al-Mustafa: 263, Manaqib al-Abi Talib: 3/195.

16. It is stated in Al-Kitab fi al-Tarikh as follows: I rejected his proposal and said, "I would not compromise in my faith and would not submit to disgrace in my work."

17. A small town near Madina with springs and orchards.

18. Tarikh al-Tabari: 4/439. Also cf. Muruj al-Dhahab: 2/364, Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh: 2/306.

19. Al-Qur'an, 58: 22.

20. Al-Qur'an, 18: 51.

21. Sharh Nahj al-Balagha: 6/301, Bihar al-Anwar: 42/170.

22. Nahj al-Balagha: Sermon 15, Manaqib 'Al al-Abi Talib: 2/110, Da'a'im al-Islam: 1/396.

23. A hadith interrupted in its chain of transmission.

24. Sharh Nahj al-Balagha: 1/269.

25. Nahj al-Balagha: Sermon 272, Ghurar al-Hikam: 7570, 'Uyun al-Hikam wa al-Mawa'iz: 415/7060.

26. It is a measure common among Muslims weighing four mudds (about 1.6 kg.); however, according to some hadiths, the Prophet's measure weighed five mudds. (Sharh Mulla Salih, XI, 373.)

27. They were not people of Dhimma, thus taking them captive was permissible. In the time of 'Umar, he compromised with them by exempting them from paying poll tax and pay zakat twice as much instead. (Mir'at al-'Uqul, XXV, 134.)

28. Al-Qur'an, 8: 41.

29. Al-Qur'an, 59: 07.

30. Al-Qur'an, 59: 07.

31. Al-Qur'an, 8: 13.

32. Al-Kafi: 8/58/21, Al-Ihtijaj: 1/626/146, Kitab al-Sulaym b. Qays: 2/718/18.

---

#### Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/imam-ali-ass-book-government-muhammadi-reyshahri/chapter-two-alawi-reformation#comment-0>