

Decline Of The State Of Truth

The wars of Siffin and Al-Nahrawan brought about horrific events to not only Imam Ali (‘a) but also the Muslim world. It caused the decline of the government of Imam Ali (‘a), who represented the utter truth. It also gave victory to Mu’awiyah ibn Abi-Sufyan who represented the paganism of Quraysh. Declaring his victory, Mu’awiyah is reported to have said, ‘After the Battle of Siffin, I fought against Ali without army, efforts, or equipments.’¹

Thus, Mu’awiyah had control over people and declared himself as the general ruler of Muslims. Imam Ali (‘a) became isolated from any political or military authority, since his soldiers did not obey him anymore. They became bored with fighting and lost their morale.

When Imam Ali (‘a) ordered them to reside in a place while they were on their way to fight against Mu’awiyah, they began to sneak away one after another. None of them remained with the Imam (‘a) except for a few prominent companions of him. Therefore, he had to return to Al-Kufah.²

Moreover, the majority of the officers of the Imam’s army had secret connections with Mu’awiyah who used to endue them with seductive gifts and bribes. The most prominent of these officers was Al-Ash’ath ibn Qays whom Mu’awiyah promised of fortunes and senior office in his government. He thus worked towards rallying the other officers against the Imam (‘a) and led a mutiny inside the army.

Unlike Imam Ali’s army, the army of Mu’awiyah kept on their unity and obedience to their leader. Al-Hajjaj ibn Khuzaymah once said to Mu’awiyah, ‘You can do what Ali cannot, because you have soldiers who say no word when you are silent, keep silent when you speak, and do not dare to ask when you order them. On the other hand, Ali has soldiers who answer back when he speaks and do not stop asking when he keeps silent.’³

Although Imam Ali (‘a) could have controlled the mutiny of his soldiers and bring them back under his obedience by such immoral acts like bribing the chiefs and putting to death the mutinous officers, he was too self-righteous to follow such wicked means. Declaring this fact, Imam Ali (‘a) says,

How long shall I accord your consideration that is accorded to camels with hollow hump, or to worn clothes which when stitched on one side give way on the other? Whenever a vanguard force of Syria hovers over you, everyone of you shuts his door and hides himself like the lizard in its hole or a badger in its den.

By Allah, he whom people like your support must suffer disgrace and he who throws arrows with your support is as if he throws arrows that are broken at head and tail. By Allah, within the courtyard, you are quite numerous but under the banner, you are only a few.

Certainly, I know what can improve you and how your crookedness can be straightened, but I shall not improve your condition by marring myself. Allah may disgrace your faces and destroy you. You do not understand the right as you understand the wrong and do not crush the wrong as you crush the right.[4](#)

The matter did not stop at this extent; when Mu'awiyah took root, he started invading the regions that were under the command of Imam Ali ('a). He also launched campaigns of terror to prove to the people that Imam Ali ('a) would not be able to protect them, since he had no military force to procure the security of people. Mu'awiyah thus began with Egypt, the most powerful center of the Muslim territories, and made it the victim of 'Amr ibn Al-'As.

Imam Ali ('a) had appointed Qays ibn Sa'd Al-Ansari as the deputy governor of Egypt and Qays could spread justice among the people and could eliminate all disorders and chaos that were prevalent in Egypt. He ('a) then deposed Qays and appointed Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr in this office.

When Muhammad failed to have a hold over the disorder that broke out in this region, Imam Ali ('a) deposed him and appointed Malik Al-Ashtar instead. However, while Malik was on his way to assume the new office, Mu'awiyah could assassinate him through poison.

Under the command of 'Amr ibn Al-'As, Mu'awiyah mobilized an army to occupy Egypt. Imam Ali ('a) sought the help of the people of Al-Kufah for their Egyptian brothers, but most of people refrained from responding to him except for a few number of them.

Unwillingly, these people marched towards Egypt to fight against Mu'awiyah's army, but on their way thereto, they learnt that 'Amr had occupied Egypt, killed Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr, and set his body to fire. Hence, the soldiers went back to Al-Kufah. On this occasion, the Imam ('a) delivered a vehement speech in which he criticized his soldiers for their weakness and eulogized Muhammad ibn Abi-Bakr, showing his sorrow for this great loss.

Raids On The Muslim Regions

After the conquest of Egypt, Mu'awiyah became more powerful while Imam Ali's authority became weaker and mutiny among the troops became more widespread.

Mu'awiyah then launched raids on the territories that were under the command of the Imam ('a) so as to prove that the Imam ('a) was unable to protect his people.

Raids On Al-Ijaz And Yemen

Under the commandership of the notorious terrorist Busr ibn Artah, Mu'awiyah sent a three-thousand soldier batTalibon to raid on Al-Hijaz and Yemen. When they surrounded the city of Al-Madinah, they did not face any resistance from its inhabitants; therefore, they could occupy the city effortlessly.

Busr then headed for the city of Makkah, occupied it, and made its people pay homage to Mu'awiyah. He then headed for Yemen whose deputy governor was 'Ubaydullah ibn Al-'Abbas who fled the combat and came to Al-Kufah to inform the Imam ('a) about what had happened.

When Busr entered Yemen, he searched for the two children of 'Ubaydullah ibn Al-'Abbas and killed them.⁵

Thus, Busr spread terror among the people of Yemen, committed massacres, captured their women, and committed all wicked and shameful deeds he could do.

When this news reached Imam Ali ('a), he felt great sorrow and delivered the following sermon that expresses his feelings towards such acts:

I have been informed that Busr overpowered Yemen. By Allah, I have begun thinking about these people that they would shortly snatch away the whole country through their unity on their wrong and your disunity from your own right and separation, your disobedience to your Imam in matters of right and their obedience to their leader in matters of wrong, their fulfillment of the trust in favor of their master and your betrayal, their good work in their cities and your mischief. Even if I give you charge of a wooden bowl, I fear you would run away with its handle.

O Allah, they are disgusted of me and I am disgusted of them. They are weary of me and I am weary of them. Change them for me with better ones and change me for them with worse one. O Allah, melt their hearts as salt melts in water. By Allah, I wish I had only a thousand horsemen from the tribe of Firas ibn Ghanim, as the poet says:

*If you call them, the horsemen would come to you like the summer cloud.*⁶

Raids On Iraq

Having occupied Egypt and other Muslim territories, Mu'awiyah formed four batTalibons to raid on Iraq in order to fill the hearts of the Iraqis with terror and fear and to make them understand the Imam's incapability of protecting them. He sent Al-Nu'man ibn Bashir Al-Ansari with one thousand men to invade 'Ayn Al-Tamr whose deputy governor was Malik ibn Ka'b.

Although Malik had under his command one thousand fighters, he had already permitted them to visit their families in Al-Kufah; therefore, when Mu'awiyah's batTalibon raided on the city, there were only one hundred soldiers with Malik who, yet, fought so bravely that his soldiers and he forced Mu'awiyah's soldiers to run away.

When this news reached Imam Ali ('a), he delivered a speech in which he asked the people of Al-Kufah to help their brethren in 'Ayn Al-Tamr, saying,

O people of Al-Kufah, is it true that whenever a vanguard force from the people of Syria comes upon you, each one of you closes his door and keeps himself inside his house just like a lizard and a hyena? Now, it is clear that whomever you support is really humiliated and whoever uses you as arrows will most surely miss the target.

Disgrace and shame on you! I occasionally talked to you confidentially and on other occasions called on you openly! Yet, you neither act as free men when you encounter your enemies nor do you prove yourselves as true brothers when you are called for help.⁷

Raids On Hit

Supplied with six thousand fighters, Sufyan ibn 'Awf was commissioned by Mu'awiyah to occupy Hit, a region western Iraq. Mu'awiyah ordered Sufyan to raid on Al-Anbar and Al-Mada'in afterwards. In Al-Anbar, Sufyan was encountered by a force of Imam Ali's troops and a battle took place there during which the commander of the Imam's troop was killed along with other thirty soldiers. Sufyan thus booted the city and returned to Mu'awiyah.

When Imam Ali ('a) was informed, he delivered the following speech:

Now then, surely Jihad is one of the doors of Paradise, which Allah has opened for His chief friends. It is the dress of piety and the protective armor of Allah and His trustworthy shield. Whoever abandons it, Allah covers him with the dress of disgrace and the clothes of distress. He is kicked with contempt and scorn, and his heart is veiled with screens of neglect. Truth is taken away from him because of missing Jihad. He has to suffer ignominy and justice is denied to him.

Beware! I called you insistently to fight these people night and day, secretly and openly, and exhorted you to attack them before they attacked you, because by Allah, no people have been attacked in the hearts of their houses but they suffered disgrace; but you put it off to others and forsook it until destruction befell you and your cities were occupied. The horsemen of Banu-Ghamid have reached Al-Anbar and killed Hassan ibn Hassan Al-Bakri. They have removed your horsemen from the garrison.

I have come to know that every one of them entered upon Muslim women and other women under protection of Islam and took away their ornaments from legs, arms, necks and ears and no woman could resist it except by saying such statements like: 'We are for Allah and to Him we shall return' and by

imploring for mercy.

Then, they went back laden with wealth without any wound or loss of life. If any Muslim dies of grief after all this, he is not to be blamed but rather there is justification for him before me.

How strange! How strange! By Allah, my heart sinks to see the unity of these people on their wrong and your dispersion from your right. Woe and grief befall you! You have become the target at which arrows are shot. You are being killed and you do not kill. You are being attacked but you do not attack. Allah is being disobeyed and you remain agreeable to it.

When I ask you to move against them in summer, you say, 'It is hot weather; spare us until heat subsides from us!' When I order you to march in winter, you say, 'It is severely cold; give us time until cold clears from us!' These are just excuses for evading heat and cold because if you run away from heat and cold, you would be, by Allah, running away in a greater degree from sword (i.e. war).

O you semblance of men, not men, your intelligence is that of children and your wit is that of the occupants of the curtained canopies (i.e. women kept in seclusion from the outside world). I wish I had not seen you nor known you. By Allah, this acquaintance has brought about shame and resulted in repentance. May Allah fight you! You have filled my heart with pus and loaded my bosom with rage.

You made me drink mouthful of grief one after the other. You shattered my counsel by disobeying and leaving me so much so that the people of Quraysh started saying that the son of Abu Talib is brave but he does not know tactics of war. Allah may bless them! Is any one of them fiercer in war and older in it than I am? I rose for it although yet within twenties, and here I am, have crossed over sixty, but one who is not obeyed can have no opinion.[8](#)

Raid On Waqisah

Mu'awiyah then sent Al-Dahhak ibn Qays Al-Fihri along with three thousand soldiers to raid on Waqisah and spread horror among its people. So, Al-Dahhak booted the fortunes of people and killed whomever he thought to be loyal to Imam Ali ('a). He then raided on other neighboring regions, violated all inviolable things, and committed all prohibitions.

When Imam Ali ('a) was informed about these actions, he once again called on people to face these attacks, but nobody responded to him. He thus delivered this speech:

By Allah, I wished I had one man of these (Syrian soldiers) for every eight men of you. Woe may befall you! Come out with me and then you may leave me as you like. By Allah, I never dislike meeting my Lord as long as I have this intention and this insight. In fact, this will bring me a great rest and relief from talking to you and bearing suffering because of you.[9](#)

The Imam ('a) then marched towards these regions to stand against the attacks of Mu'awiyah's troops,

but nobody joined him except Abdullah ibn Ja'far, his nephew. Upon seeing this, some people joined the Imam ('a) who led them to chase Al-Dahhak, who had earlier left.

Raid On Al-Kufah

Mu'awiyah did not stop his raids on the various regions of Iraq without facing any resistance, because he was sure of victory and ability to overthrow the government of Imam Ali ('a). He thus launched more raids near the capital, Al-Kufah, spreading horror among people, while the Imam ('a) did not have any power to protect them and procure them security.

The Mischief Of The Khawarij

In the Battle of Al-Nahrawan, Imam Ali ('a) did not terminate the Khawarij totally; rather, he exterminated a faction of them. Many of them survived that battle and went on scheming plots and conspiracies against the Imam ('a), because they learnt that he would not assault or punish them.

Making use of the Imam's leniency and care for procuring the public freedoms, the Khawarij used to challenge the Imam ('a) openly. One of them; namely, Al-Khirrit ibn Rashid Al-Sami, led thirty of his companions and said to Imam Ali ('a), 'By Allah, I will never obey any of your orders, I will never follow you in a congregational prayer, and I will leave you tomorrow.'

In reply, the Imam ('a) said nice words to and released him, but Al-Khirrit returned to his folks, Banu-Najiyah, who had been partisans of 'A'ishah in the Battle of the Camel, and they all decided to wage war against Imam Ali ('a). However, the Imam ('a) mobilized an army to make them return to obedience to him or they would encounter a war.

Many debates took place between the two parties, but to no avail. Finally, the two parties engaged in an encounter that resulted in the fleeing of Al-Khirrit and his people towards Ahwaz where he started promulgating for his faith, spreading crime, and discouraging people from following Islam. As a result, many people refrained from defraying the zakat duty and many others abandoned their faith of Islam. The Imam's army followed him to Ahwaz and could kill many of his followers and capture many others.

Imam Ali Beseches For Departure From The World

Successive ordeals and crises surrounded Imam Ali ('a), especially after he saw how Mu'awiyah became strong enough to hold sway over the entire Muslim community, while Imam Ali ('a) in Al-Kufah was surrounded by savage people who disliked his justice and criticized his policies of equality.

The other point that affected the Imam ('a) was the collapse of his army, since Mu'awiyah had bribed the majority of the officers and the Khawarij worked painstakingly towards promulgating their idea that called for deposing the Imam ('a).

Thus, Imam Ali ('a) became isolated from all authorities and his orders were not carried out at all. He once foretold his people that they, after his departure, would go through ceaseless crises and would suffer many tribulations at the hands of the coming tyrannical ruling authorities. He thus said,

Behold! After me, you shall come upon all-embracing humility, severing swords, and mortification that the wrongdoers will apply to you as a custom. Then, your congregations will be dispersed, your eyes will weep, and you will very soon hope if you would see and support me. Very soon will you all know the truth of what I am saying to you, and Allah will take far away only those who commit wrongdoings and sins.

The Imam ('a) became bored of the community to the degree that he wished for death. He frequently repeated this statement:

When will the most wretched be sent?

It is reported that Imam Ali ('a) said on the pulpit,

What prevents the most wretched person of the community from dyeing this beard with blood from above it?

It is also reported that Imam Ali ('a) preached in the month in which he was killed and said,

*The month of Ramadan has come to you. It is the lord of the months, and foremost of the year. In it, the mill of authority makes a new turn and you will make the pilgrimage of the new year in one rank without an Imam to lead you. The sign of that will be that I will no longer be among you.*¹⁰

Abu-Salih, a narrator, says, 'I saw Ali ('a) putting a copy of the Holy Quran on the head and saying this supplicatory prayer:

O Allah, I did ask them to apply to themselves what is written in this Book, but they did not respond to me. O Allah, I am now bored with them and they are bored with me. I now hate them and they hate me, and they are forcing me to do what is in violation of my manners. So, please choose for me what is better than they are, and choose for them one who is worse than I am, and please make their hearts melt as same as salt melts in water. ¹¹

Almighty Allah responded to the supplication of Imam Ali ('a) and took him to the Court of Sacredness with the prophets, veracious people, and martyrs, disburdening him from that community of ill faith and ill ideas.

^{1.} Al-Buladhari, Ansab Al-Ashraf 1:200.

^{2.} Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Al-Thaqafi, Al-Gharat 1:31.

^{3.} Al-Daynawari, Al-Akhbar Al-Tiwal, pp. 156.

^{4.} Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 68.

^{5.} Tarikh Abi'l-Fida' 1: 180.

- [6.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 25.
- [7.](#) Muhammad Baqir Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa'adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah 2:546.
- [8.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 27.
- [9.](#) Muhammad Baqir Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa'adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah 2:537.
- [10.](#) Shaykh Al-Mufid, Kitab Al-Irshad, pp. 12.
- [11.](#) Al-Buladhari, Ansab Al-Ashraf 1:200.

Source URL: <https://www.al-islam.org/life-ali-ibn-abi-talib-baqir-sharif-al-qurashi/decline-state-truth>