

Nicknames Of Imam Ali

A nickname is the name that is given to or acquired by somebody in the course of his life to express his characteristics or to confer honor upon him. In the light of this definition, Imam Ali (‘a) was given many nicknames as an honor and an expression of his distinctive characteristics.

Hereinafter, let us refer to a number of these nicknames:

[Siddiq \(Veracious\)](#)

Given to him by the Holy Prophet (S),¹ this nickname demonstrates the fact that Imam Ali (‘a) was the first to believe and have faith in the Holy Prophet (S) in all of what he conveyed from Almighty Allah. Imam Ali (‘a) embraced Islam before everyone else had done. In this regard, he declared,

I am the greatest veracious one who confirmed to the truth. I believed in Allah before Abu-Bakr had believed and I embraced Islam before he had embraced it.²

During his lifetime, Imam Ali (‘a) was famously known of this nickname. Addressing Imam Ali (‘a), Malik Al-Ashtar said,

You are the greatest veracious one.

[Wasi \(Successor Of The Prophet\)](#)

Amongst the noblest nicknames given to Imam Ali (‘a) is Wasi , which entails that he is the successor and the entrusted trustee of the Prophet (S). In many of his discourses some of which will be cited hereinafter, the Holy Prophet (S) addressed this nickname to Imam Ali (‘a):

Referring to Imam Ali (‘a), the Holy Prophet (S) said,

This is my successor, the keeper of my secrets, and the best one I may leave behind me. ³

On another occasion, the Holy Prophet (S) said,

Ali ibn Abi Talib is my successor, the keeper of my secrets, the best one I may leave behind me, and the fulfiller of my promises.[4](#)

One day, Salman Al-Farisi asked the Holy Prophet (S) to name his successor. 'Who was the successor of Moses?' Asked the Holy Prophet (S). 'He was Joshua the son of Nun,' answered Salman. The Prophet (S) then declared,

Verily, my successor and inheritor who will settle my debts and fulfill my promises is Ali ibn Abi Talib.[5](#)

Having learnt it from the Holy Prophet (S), the people over ages of the Islamic history called this nickname to Imam Ali ('a). Among such ones were poets of different ages like Khuzaymah ibn Thabit, Abd Al-Rahman Al-Jamahi, Jarir ibn Abdullah Al-Bujali, Sa'id ibn Qays, Hujr ibn 'Adi, Al-Nu'man ibn 'Ajlun, Abu'l-Aswad Al-Du'ali, Al-Fasl ibn 'Abbas, Al-Kumayt, Al-Mutanabbi, Abu-Tammam Al-ta'i, and Di'bil Al-Khuza'i.

Faruq (Distinguisher)

Meaning the discriminating between the right and the wrong, the nickname of Faruq was given to Imam Ali ('a) as derived from many Prophetic sayings some of which are as follows:

Abu-Dharr Al-Ghifari and Salman Al-Farisi reported that the Holy Prophet (S) took Imam Ali ('a) from the hand and declared,

This is the first to have believed in me and the first to shake hands with me on the Resurrection Day. This is the greatest veracious one (who confirmed to my truthfulness) and this is the distinguisher (Faruq) of this nation who discriminates the right from the wrong.[6](#)

Abu-Dharr has reported that he heard the Holy Prophet (S) saying to Imam Ali ('a),

You are the greatest veracious one and you are the distinguisher who discriminates the right from the wrong.[7](#)

Abu-Layla Al-Ghifari has reported that he heard the Holy Prophet (S) saying,

After my departure, a seditious matter will come to pass. When this takes place, you should abide by Ali ibn Abi Talib, for he is the first to have believed in me, the first to shake hands with me on the Resurrection Day, the greatest veracious one, and the distinguisher of this nation.[8](#)

Ya'sub Al-Din (The Chief Of The Religion)

In Arabic language, the word ya'sub denotes the chief of the bees. However, this word is used to express the chief of a people. The Holy Prophet (S) gave this nickname to Imam Ali ('a) and called him

so on many occasions, such as the following:

He (S) is reported to have said,

This (Ali) is the chief of the believers while money is the chief of the wrongdoers.[9](#)

On another occasion, the Holy Prophet (S) said,

Ali is the chief of the believers.

Abu-Sa'd has reported that he once visited Imam Ali ('a) and found some gold in front of him. Imam Ali ('a) thus referred to the gold and said,

I am the chief of the believers and this (gold) is the chief of the hypocrites. To me do the believers resort while to this do the hypocrites resort. [10](#)

Wali (Guardian)

Another elevated nickname that Almighty Allah has given to Imam Ali ('a) is Wali, which is a polysemous word meaning guardian, most preferred, friend, leader, and many others. Declaring Imam Ali ('a) as the guardian, or chief, of the believers, the Holy Quran states,

Exclusively, your guardian is Allah, His messenger, and those who believe, who establish worship and pay the poor-due, and bow down in prayer. (5:55)

This holy Quranic verse was revealed in praise of Imam Ali ('a) when he gave his ring as alms to a needy while he was bowing in a prayer. It has also restricted the general authority over all people to Almighty Allah, His Messenger, and the divinely designated Imam. It has also come in the plural form to express the great standing and the high rank of this authority; namely, the Imam.

Laying more stress on the significance of this restriction of authority, the verse has come in the form of a nominal clause rather than verbal. In addition, the verse begins with an article of restriction in Arabic, which is the article *innama* (only, or exclusively).

From his side, the Holy Prophet (S) imparted the name Wali to Imam Ali ('a) in a big number of his sayings, some of which are the following:

Ibn 'Abbas has reported the Holy Prophet (S) as saying to Imam Ali ('a):

You are verily the Wali (authority) over all believers after me.[11](#)

Imam Ali ('a) is reported to have quoted the Holy Prophet (S) as saying to him:

I have beseeched Allah to grant me five things with regard to you; He has thus granted me four

and rejected one: You will be the first to come out of your grave on the Resurrection Day, you will always be with me, the Standard of Praise will be held and carried by you, and you will be the Wali of the believers after me. [12](#)

Al-Nasa'i has reported through a chain of authority that some people complained to the Holy Prophet (S) against Imam Ali ('a). Agonized and deeply infuriated, the Holy Prophet (S) said,

What do you want from Ali? Verily, Ali is part of me and I am part of him. He is the Wali of all believers after me. [13](#)

In brief, Wali is the person who has authority over everyone and the one who has the right to manage the affairs of those who are under his authority.

Amir Al-Mu' Minin (The Leader Of The Believers)

This nickname is attributed to Imam Ali ('a) so commonly that whenever it is said, it must refer to him.

Dr. Zaki Mubarak says,

Amir Al-Mu'minin is the terminological nickname of Ali ibn Abi Talib. Whenever a reader of an ancient book finds this nickname unattached to a certain person, it must be known that the intended is Ali ('a).

This nickname was given to Imam Ali ('a) by the Holy Prophet (S) too:

Abu-Na'im has reported through a chain of authority that the Holy Prophet (S) once said to Anas,

The first to enter from this door is the Leader of the Believers (Amir Al- Mu'minin), the master of the Muslims, the leader of the marked and white-forehead ones, and the seal of the Prophets' successors. [14](#)

Anas said: At that moment, I prayed Allah, covertly, to make him one of the Ansar (the people of Yathrib to which Anas belonged). Immediately after that, Ali entered. 'Who is it, Anas?' asked the Prophet (S). 'It is Ali,' answered I.

Once he heard this answer, the Prophet (S) stood up with glad mien, embraced Ali, and rubbed the sweat of his face over Ali's face and the sweat of Ali's face over his face.

Upon this situation, Imam Ali ('a) said, 'O Allah's Messenger, you are doing to me a thing that you have not done before.'

The Holy Prophet (S), answering him, said, 'Why should I not do it when you are the one who will represent me? You are the only one who conveys to them my sayings and explains for them what they will disagree about after me.' [15](#)

Amin (Trustee)

Because Imam Ali ('a) was entrusted with the affairs of the religion and the secrets of the Holy Prophet (S), he was given this name by the Holy Prophet (S) who is reported to have said to him,

O Ali, you are my choicest and trustee. [16](#)

Hadi (Guide)

Imam Ali ('a) was the guide of all Muslims, the director of the pious, and the guardian of the believers. He was therefore given the nickname Hadi, which is derived from the Holy Prophet's saying to him,

I am the warner and Ali is the guide (Hadi). By your guidance, O Ali, those who follow the true guidance shall be guided. [17](#)

This tradition has been always attached to the exegesis of the following holy verse:

You are only a warner and there is a guide for every people. (13:7)

Udhun Wa'iyah (Retaining Ear)

One of the honorable nicknames of Imam Ali ('a) is the Retaining Ear, because he retained all that which was revealed from the Heavens to the Holy Prophet (S).

A reference has been made to the Retaining Ear in the Holy Quran that reads:

The retaining ear might retain it. (69: 12)

Upon receiving this holy verse, the Holy Prophet (S) said,

I have asked my Lord to make this retaining ear to be Ali's ear.

After that, Imam Ali ('a) used to say,

I have never forgotten anything after this imploration of the Holy Prophet (S) although it is improper for me to forget. [18](#)

Al-Murtadha (The Well-Pleased)

Imam Ali ('a) has been given the nickname of Al-Murtadha, because Almighty Allah has accepted him pleasingly to be the Holy Prophet's successor and vicegerent, or because Almighty Allah has accepted him pleasingly to be the husband of Lady Fatimah Al-Zahra', the doyenne of the women of the world. [19](#)

[Al-Anza' Al-Batin \(The Corpulent Baldhead\)](#)

Among his physical features, Imam Ali (‘a) lacked hair on the front part of his scalp and he had big abdomen that was not on account of gluttony.

One day, a man asked Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas, saying, ‘Please, tell me about the corpulent baldheaded man about whom the people of this nation disputed.’

Abdullah answered:

O man! You have asked me about a man better than whom no other man, except the Messenger of Allah, has ever trodden the pebbles of this earth. He was unquestionably the brother of Allah’s Messenger, his cousin, his successor, and his vicegerent among the individuals of his nation.

He was totally free from (i.e. Anza ‘) polytheism and well-versed (i.e. batin) in knowledge. I did hear the Messenger of Allah saying, **‘He that desires for deliverance in the morrow, must show full obedience to this baldheaded man (i.e. Imam Ali).’**[20](#)

According to this tradition, the word Anza’ stands for freedom from polytheism and the word batin well-versedness in knowledge.

[Al-Sharif \(The Honorable\)](#)

Imam Ali (‘a) was the most honorable in lineage, ideality, abstinence from violating Almighty Allah’s prohibitions, and piety. Even his enemies and opponents testified to his most honorableness. Historicists have related that when the army of the ‘Abbasids besieged Marwan, the last of the Umayyad rulers, he said to one of his viziers, ‘This army needs Ali.’

Objecting to this, the vizier said, ‘How come! Ali alone is an army!’ Marwan explained, ‘You have not understood what I meant. I mean that they need Ali’s honorableness and nobility. If they seize us, they will annihilate our women, children, and old people. They will leave no single one of us alive. If Ali were the commander of this army, he would never do such things to us, because his honor and nobility would prevent him from so.’[21](#)

Marwan’s words were totally true. When the ‘Abbasids came to power, they annihilated all the individuals of the Umayyad dynasty, including the bodies of the dead among them.

[Baydat Al-Balad \(The Unique Person\)](#)

Like his father who was nicknamed Baydat Makkah because he was the source of its dignity and honor, Imam Ali (‘a) was nicknamed Baydat Al- Balad for the same reasons.[22](#)

Khayr Al-Bashar (The Best Of Humankind)

This nickname was given to Imam Ali (‘a) by the Holy Prophet (S) through a big number of Prophetic traditions some of which are as follows:

Jabir ibn Abdullah reported the Holy Prophet (S) to have said,

Ali is the best of all human beings. He who doubts about it has in fact lost faith in Islam.[23](#)

Ali is the best of all human beings. He who suspects has in fact lost faith in Islam.[24](#)

Imam Ali (‘a) reported the Holy Prophet (S) to have said,

Whoever refrains from confessing that Ali is the best of all human beings has in fact had no faith in Islam.[25](#)

Sayyid Al-‘Arab (The Master Of All Arabs)

Sayyid Al-‘Arab is another nickname of Imam Ali (‘a) that was given to him by the Holy Prophet (S) who is reported to have said,

I am the master of the descendants of Adam while Ali is the master of all Arabs.[26](#)

‘A’ishah reported that the Holy Prophet (S), once, said, ‘Summon the master of the Arabs.’ ‘Is it not that you, O Allah’s Messenger, are the master of the Arabs?’ asked ‘A’ishah. The Holy Prophet (S) answered,

I am the master of the descendants of Adam while Ali is the master of all Arabs.[27](#)

Salamah ibn Kuhayl has reported that Ali ibn Abi Talib (‘a), once, passed by the Holy Prophet (S) next to him ‘A’ishah was sitting. The Holy Prophet (S) then said to ‘A’ishah,

If it pleases you to see the master of the Arabs, you may look at Ali ibn Abi Talib.

‘A’ishah answered, ‘O Allah’s Prophet! Is it not that you are the master of the Arabs?’

The Holy Prophet (S) answered,

I am the leader of the Muslims and the master of the pious ones. But if it pleases you to see the master of the Arabs, you may look at Ali ibn Abi- Talib.[28](#)

[Hujjat Allah \(The Argument Of God\)](#)

One of the greatest nicknames of Imam Ali ('a) is Hujjat Allah, because he is the argument of Almighty Allah against His creatures in the sense that he guides the creatures to the straightest path of God and illuminates the paths of true guidance before them. This nickname was also given to him by the Holy Prophet (S) who is reported to have said,

Ali and I are the arguments of Allah against His creatures.[29](#)

Anas ibn Malik has reported that he was once in the presence of the Holy Prophet (S) who, upon seeing Ali ibn Abi Talib coming, said to him (i.e. Anas),

This coming man is my argument against my people on the Resurrection Day.[30](#)

- [1.](#) Al-Diyarbakri, Tarikh Al-Khamis 2:275.
- [2.](#) Ahmad ibn Abdullah At-Tabari, Dhakha'ir Al-'Uqba fi Manaqib Dhawi'l-Qurba, pp. 58; Ibn Qutaybah, Al-Ma'arif, pp. 73; Muhibb Al-Din At-Tabari, Al-Riyad Al-Nasirah fi Fada'il Al-'Asharah 2:257.
- [3.](#) Ibn kajar, Tahdhib Al-Tahdhib 3:106.
- [4.](#) Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, Kanz Al-'Ummal 6:154.
- [5.](#) Muhibb Al-Din At-Tabari, Al-Riyad Al-Nasirah fi Fada'il Al-'Asharah 2:178.
- [6.](#) Nur Al-Din Al-Haythami, Majma' Al-Zawa'id wa Manba' Al-Fawa'id 9:102; Al-Mannawi, Fays Al-Qadir 4:358; Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, Kanz Al-'Ummal 6:156; Al-Nasa'i, Fada'il Al-Sahabah 1:296.
- [7.](#) Muhibb Al-Din At-Tabari, Al-Riyad Al-Nasirah fi Fada'il Al-'Asharah 2:655.
- [8.](#) Ibn kajar Al-'Asqalani, Al-Isabah fi Tamyiz Al-Sahabah 7:167; Ibn Al-Athir, Usd Al-Ghabah fi Ma'rifat Al-Sahabah 5:287; Ibn Abd Al-Barr, Al-Istiab 2:657.
- [9.](#) Al-Haythami, Majma' Al-Zawa'id 9:102.
- [10.](#) Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, Kanz Al-'Ummal 6:394; Ibn kajar, Al-Sawa'iq Al-Muhriqah, pp. 75. The author of Tarikh Al-Khamis states in 2:375, 'Imam Ali was nicknamed the chief of the Imams.'
- [11.](#) Sunan Abi-Dawud 1:360.
- [12.](#) Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad 4:339.
- [13.](#) Al-Nasa'i, Khasa'is Amir Al-Mu'minin, pp. 19; Muhibb Al-Din At-Tabari, Al-Riyad Al-Nasirah fi Fada'il Al-'Asharah 2:171; Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, Kanz Al-'Ummal 6:194; Abu-Na'im, Ma'rifat Al-Sahabah 1:296.
- [14.](#) Zaki Mubarak, 'Abqariyyat Al-Sharif Al-Rasi 2:228.
- [15.](#) Abu-Na'im, Hilyat Al-Awliya' 1:63.
- [16.](#) Ahmad ibn Abdullah At-Tabari, Dhakha'ir Al-'Uqba fi Manaqib Dhawi'l-Qurba, pp. 57; Al-Diyarbakri, Tarikh Al-Khamis 2:375.
- [17.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Nayshaburi, Al-Mustadrak 'Ala Al-Sahihayn 3:129; Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, Kanz Al-'Ummal 6:157.
- [18.](#) Tafsir At-Tabari 29:35; Al-Zamakhshari, Tafsir Al-Kashshaf 4:600 (Exegesis of verse 13 of Surah (Chapter) Al-kaqqah; Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, Kanz Al-'Ummal 6:108; Al-Suyuti, Al-Durr Al-Manthur 8:267.
- [19.](#) Ahmad ibn Abdullah At-Tabari, Dhakha'ir Al-'Uqba fi Manaqib Dhawi'l-Qurba, pp. 32; Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, Kanz Al-'Ummal 6:152.
- [20.](#) Hayat Amir Al-Mu'minin, pp. 45.
- [21.](#) Baqir Sharif Al-Qarashi, Hayat Al-Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (The Life of Imam Musa ibn Ja'far) 1:336.
- [22.](#) Al-Diyarbakri, Tarikh Al-Khamis 5:375; Abu-Na'im, Ma'rifat Al-Sahabah 1:297; Al-Jahis, Hayat Al-Hayawan 2:336.
- [23.](#) Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad 7:421.

- [24.](#) Al-Mannawi, Kunuz Al-Haqa'iq, pp. 92.
- [25.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Nayshaburi, Al-Mustadrak 'Ala Al-Sahihayn 3: 124; Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, Kanz Al-'Ummal 6: 157, Abu-Na'im, Hilyat Al-Awliya' 1:63.
- [26.](#) Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi, Kanz Al-'Ummal 6: 157; Abu-Na'im, Hilyat Al-Awliya' 1:63.
- [27.](#) Al-Hakim Al-Nayshaburi, Al-Mustadrak 'Ala Al-Sahihayn 3: 124.
- [28.](#) Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad 11:89.
- [29.](#) Al-Mannawi, Kunuz Al-Haqa'iq, pp. 43.
- [30.](#) Muhibb Al-Din At-Tabari, Al-Riyad Al-Nasirah fi Fada'il Al-'Asharah 2: 193.

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