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Ninth Session, Friday night, 2nd Sha'ban 1345 A.H.

Sheikh: You always fault the actions of the Sunnis but do not care about the ways of the Shi'as. You unjustly defend them although their actions are depraved.

Well-Wisher: I am accustomed to defending the truth. Our Imam, Amiru'l-Mu'minin, exhorted his sons, particularly Hasan and Husain, in these words: "Always speak the truth and perform your deeds in light of the hereafter. Be hostile to the oppressor and help the oppressed. "

If I have found fault with the opponents or defended the Shi'as, I have done so in support of the truth. What I complained of was based on logical reasoning. I will listen to your charges concerning wrongdoing of the Shi'as.

Shi'as accusing A'ysha of adultery and its reply

Sheikh: The worst thing that the Shi'as are guilty of is that they accuse Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha of adultery. It is an acknowledged fact that she had the honor of sexual intercourse with the Holy Prophet of Allah and that she was his loving wife. They do not realize what this slanderous accusation leads to. Have they not read sura an-Nur (Light) of the Holy Qur'an? Allah says:

"Bad women are for bad men and bad men are for bad women. Good women are for good men and good men are for good women." (24:26)

Well-Wisher: First the charge that the Shi'as accuse Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha of immoral actions and adultery is absolutely false. Never has such a thing been said by Shi'as. This assertion is a blatant calumny circulated centuries ago by the Nawasib and Khawarij in order to instigate confusion.

They attributed to the Shi'as what they themselves said. Subsequently others, without making inquiries, attacked the Shi'as as you are now doing. If you would study Shi'as books, you would not find anywhere

that Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha has been accused of adultery.

A'ysha's exoneration from the charge of adultery

If you read the Shi'as histories and commentaries, you will see how they have defended Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha from the charges of adultery. The fact is that such reports were made by a group of hypocrites during the time of the Holy Prophet. Some of those involved were Mista Ibn Uthatha, Hasan Ibn Thabit and Abdullah Ibn Ubayy.

Concerning A'ysha's exoneration from the false charges of the hypocrites, seven verses were revealed in the Holy Qur'an. Shi'as believe that to make a false charge of adultery or immoral action against any Muslim is unlawful, not to mention a wife of the Holy Prophet, whether she is A'ysha or Hafsa.

A husband and wife do not necessarily share the same level of attainment

Second, the Holy verse you have recited does not mean what you have said. It is not necessarily so that if a husband is a virtuous believer and worthy of Paradise that his wife will be the same. There are many instances which prove that spouses may attain different levels of virtue.

Allah says in the Sura Tahrim (The Prohibition):

***"Allah sets forth an example to those who disbelieve, the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot: they were both under two of Our righteous servants, but they were unfaithful to them, so they availed them nothing against Allah, and it was said: 'Enter the fire with those who enter.' And Allah sets forth an example to those who believe, the wife of Pharaoh when she said: 'My Lord! Build for me a house with Thee in the Garden and deliver me from Pharaoh and his doing, and deliver me from the unjust people.'"* (66: 10-11)**

Sheikh: It is strange that during this short period there appears to be a clear inconsistency in your statements.

Well-Wisher: Please tell me what you see as inconsistent.

Sheikh: At one point you say that accusing anybody of adultery is unlawful but at another you say that Noah's and Lot's wives were unfaithful to their husbands. Are these two sentences not inconsistent with each other? Is it not unbecoming of you to accuse the wives of the prophets of adultery and faithlessness?

Well-Wisher: I am sure you know you are adopting a deceptive manner. You know very well what "faithlessness" means in the Holy verse referred to earlier.

Meaning of faithlessness of Noah's and Lot's wives

It is strange of you that you mistake faithlessness to mean adultery though there is a vast difference between the two. The wives of the prophets were absolutely free from adultery. Here the discussion is about their faithlessness.

First, if a wife of a prophet acts against the instructions of her husband, she is certainly faithless. Second, I am not the one who says that they proved faithless. The Qur'an itself states it: "They were unfaithful to their husbands," and unfaithfulness was not adultery. As I have said earlier, the wives of the prophets were free from this kind of unfaithfulness. So the meaning of their unfaithfulness was disobedience.

The Prophet Noah's wife was opposed to her husband and used to insult him in public. She said: "My husband is mad. Since I am associated with him all day and night, I know his true state. Do not be deceived by him." The Prophet Lot's wife used to inform the people of every guest that came to his house. She used to create mischief by disclosing the secrets of the house to his enemies.

Faithlessness of wives does not imply impurity

According to Qur'anic commentators and also according to the statements of the infallible ones, the meaning of the verse of the sura an-Nur (Light) from which you make your point is that impure women deserve impure men and impure men are inclined towards them. Pure women deserve pure men and pure men are inclined towards them. In the same chapter in the preceding verse Allah says:

"The fornicator shall not marry any but a fornicatress or idolatress and (as for) the fornicatress, none shall marry her but a fornicator or an idolater." (24:3)

In short, the Holy verse "impure women are for impure men..." in no way proves your point.

Reference to A'ysha's conduct

The criticism of A'ysha is not due to prejudice. It is because of her wrong conduct. She committed misdeeds which no other wife of the Holy Prophet, including Hafsa, daughter of 'Umar, did. Moreover, the Shi'as' criticism is strictly within the bounds of the comments made by your own ulama', who have reported that this anxious woman committed serious wrongs.

Sheikh: Is it proper for a noble man like you to make such charges against Ummu'l-Mu'minin?

Well-Wisher: All the wives of the Holy Prophet except Ummu'l-Mu'minin Khadija, are of equal rank. Umm Salma, Suda, A'ysha, Hafsa, Maimuna, and the others in our view all are Ummu'l-Mu'minin.

But A'ysha's conduct and her words were certainly different from those of the other women. Again, this is

not merely my version, but your own prominent ulama' have written that her life was blemished. The good and bad actions of people cannot remain hidden forever. Eventually truth reveals itself.

Sheikh: Assuredly, because she opposed 'Ali, you find fault with her regarding insignificant matters.

Well-Wisher: We do not find fault regarding insignificant matters. A'ysha's opposition to Amirul-Mu'minin, Imam Hasan, Imam Husain, and the Ahlul Bayt is a separate issue. But the foundation of the ugly history of her life had been laid during the period of the Holy Prophet himself. She used to vex and torment him.

Sheikh: It is strange that you consider Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha, the beloved wife of the Holy Prophet, so morally debased that you dare to say that she vexed the Holy Prophet. How can we accept your assertion when Ummu'l-Mu'minin had definitely read the Holy Qur'an and the following verse:

"Surely (as for) those who speak evil things of Allah and His Apostle, Allah has cursed them in this world and the hereafter, and he has prepared for them a chastisement bringing disgrace."
(33:57)

So it is possible for her to vex the Holy Prophet so that she could be cursed by Allah? This is definitely one of the slanders of the Shi'as.

Well-Wisher: No it is not a lie! Regarding these Holy verses, I admit that not only Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha must have read them, but her father Abu Bakr and other eminent companions must have also read them. In the light of those reports and hadith which I have mentioned in previous nights, many truths may be revealed to us provided that we are just.

A'ysha grieved the Holy Prophet

The fact that A'ysha grieved the Holy Prophet is not only related by Shi'as ulama', but by your own eminent ulama'. Imam Ghazali in his 'Ihya'u'l-Ulum, vol. II, ch. 3, Kitab al-Adabu'n-Nika, p. 135, has reported many hadith condemning A'ysha's conduct. Among them is her quarreling with the Holy Prophet and Abu Bakr's intervention.

This event is also narrated by Mulla 'Ali Muttaqi in Kanzu'l-Ummal, vol. VII, p. 116; Abu Yala in his Musnad and Abu'sh-Sheikh in his Kitab al-Amthal. They write that when Abu Bakr went to see his daughter, he found that there was a grievance between A'ysha and the Holy Prophet. The decision was left in Abu Bakr's hands.

A'ysha used insulting language in her remarks. In the course of her conversation, she asked the Holy Prophet to be fair in his attitude. This insolent remark made Abu Bakr so indignant that he slapped her so severely in her face that blood flowed down her clothes.

Also Imam Ghazali in the same Chapter on Marriage and others, too, have narrated that once, when Abu Bakr reached his daughter's house, he found that the Holy Prophet was displeased with A'ysha. He asked them to tell him what the cause of their grievance was so that he might bring about reconciliation.

The Holy Prophet asked A'ysha if she should begin telling it. She replied, 'You may begin but you should speak the truth.' In her next sentence she added, 'You are a man who really thinks himself to be a Prophet!'

These remarks show that A'ysha did not believe that the Holy Prophet was the divinely appointed Prophet. Such degrading remarks are reported in your books in large numbers. They were the cause of great anguish to the Holy Prophet.

No such reports about other wives of the Holy Prophet

You will note that the ulama' and historians of both the sects have not recorded such things about the other wives of the Holy Prophet. They have not attributed such things even to Hafsa, daughter of 'Umar. It was only A'ysha's behavior which led to her indignity.

We related only as much as your prominent ulama' have said about her. Have you not studied Imam Ghazali's books, the histories by Tabari, Mas'udi and Ibn A'tham Kufi etc. which report that all your eminent ulama' have described her as disobedient to the Holy Prophet?

Still, you complain because I have criticized Ummu'l-Mu'minin's conduct. Can there be any clearer blot on one's character than transgression against the order of Allah and His Prophet and revolution against the Caliph of the Holy Prophet?

In the sura of al-Ahzab (The Clans), Allah has addressed the wives of the Holy Prophet:

"And stay in your houses and display not your finery like the display of the ignorance of yore."
(33:33)

Of course the other wives of the Holy Prophet complied with this order and never left their houses without an urgent reason. Even A'mash has reported this fact.

Ummu'l-mu'minin Suda did not go out even for hajj or umra

It is reported in the Sahih and other books of your traditionists and historians that people asked Suda, wife of the Holy Prophet, why she not performed the Hajj and the Umra. She replied, "It is compulsory for me to perform one Hajj and Umra and no more.

And He says: 'And stay in your houses.' So in obedience to this command, I shall not go out of my house; rather, my intention is that I will not, as far as possible, go out of the room in which the Holy

Prophet of Allah had placed me until I die." In fact she did this and it was her dead body which was taken out of the room.

Suda, A'ysha, and Umm Salma, were wives of the Holy Prophet and were mothers of the believers. Of course they differ from one another because of their conduct.

According to the community, A'ysha and Hafsa are worthy of respect, not because they were the daughters of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, though you respect them on that score, but because they were the wives of the Holy Prophet. But the wives of the Holy Prophet deserve honor when they are devout, as it is clearly stated in the Holy Qur'an.

"O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any of the other women." (33:32)

A'ysha goes out to fight against 'Ali

So Suda was a pious, obedient wife of the Holy Prophet of Allah. A'ysha was a stubborn wife who conspired with Talha and Zubair against 'Ali and went to Basra. There Uthman Ibn Hanafi, a great companion of the Prophet and governor of Basra appointed by 'Ali, was captured. His hair and beard were pulled out; he was tortured and driven out.

More than 100 innocent, helpless persons were killed. Ibn Athir, Mas'udi, Muhammad Ibn Jarir Tabari, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, and others have written in detail about this event.

After this outrage, she mounted a camel named Askar, dressed in the skin of a lion, protected by armor and entered the battlefield like a soldier. Because of her revolt, thousands of Muslims lost their lives. Was this initiative on her part not a transgression against the command of Allah and His Holy Prophet?

'Ali's virtues are beyond number

And what is more surprising is that she adopted this shameless stand against 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, whose virtues and merits have been so extensively recorded by your own distinguished ulama' that it is impossible to recount them all.

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his Masnad, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, Imam Fakhru'd-din Razi in his Tafsir al-Kabir, Katib Khawarizmi in his Manaqib, Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in his Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, Muhammad Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in Kifayatu't-Talib, ch. 62, and Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani Shafi'i in his Mawaddatu'l-Qurba, Mawadda V, narrate from the second Caliph, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab and Abdullah Ibn Abbas that the Holy Prophet said to 'Ali: "If all the oceans were ink, all the trees were pens, and all human beings were writers and all the Jinn maintained the records, even then, O Abu'l-Hasan! Your virtues could not be numbered."

When the Holy Prophet states that "all men and jinn combined cannot account for his virtues," how can

we, with our limited means, give a complete account of his merits?

Apart from the Shi'as ulama', your own ulama', for all their fanaticism, have filled their books with only part of his innumerable virtues.

Hadith in praise of 'Ali's virtues

You should study your Siha al-Sitta, the six books of hadith. Apart from these, it is stated in Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani's Mawaddatu'l-Qurba; Tabrani's Mu'ajam Kabir; Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i's Matalibu's-Su'ul; Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal's Musnad and Faza'il; Hamidi's Bainu's-Sahihain; Khawarizmi's Manaqib; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid's Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol. II, p.449; Ibn Sabbagh Maliki's Fusulu'l-Muhimma, particularly p. 124, from Hafiz Abdu'l-Aziz Ibn Al'Akhzaru'l-Janabiz, who writes in his book Ma'alimu'l-'Atratu'n-Nabawiyya that Fatima Zahra said that on the night of Arafa her father, the Holy Prophet of Allah, went to her and said:

"Allah Almighty takes pride in you people before the angels and has forgiven you all and particularly 'Ali. I, the Prophet of Allah, say without any consideration for love due to kinship that verily the most fortunate and prosperous man is he who is a friend of 'Ali during his life or after his death. The most damned of the damned is he who is an enemy of 'Ali, during his life or after death."

Also in the above books is a detailed hadith which I think I have referred to in earlier nights, from Caliph 'Umar Ibn Khattab, who said that the Holy Prophet said to 'Ali: "A liar is he who thinks that he loves me while he is your enemy. O 'Ali! He who is your friend is my friend. If somebody is my friend, Allah is his friend. If Allah is somebody's friend, He admits him to Paradise. He, who is your enemy, is my enemy. If somebody is my enemy, Allah also is his enemy and He throws him into Hell."

Friendship with 'Ali is faith and opposition to him is infidelity and hypocrisy

It is also reported from the Kitabu'l-Al of Ibn Khalawayh, narrating from Abu Sa'id Khadiri, that the Holy Prophet said to 'Ali: "O 'Ali! Friendship with you is faith and opposition to you is hypocrisy. The first person who enters Paradise shall be your friend, and the first person who is thrown into Hell shall be your enemy."

Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani Shafi'i in his Mawaddatu'l-Qurba, Mawadda III, and Hamwaini in his Fara'id report that the Holy Prophet said while among his companions: "No one loves 'Ali except one who is a believer, and no one is hostile to him except one who is an infidel." On another occasion he said: "O 'Ali! It is only the believer who loves you, and it is only the hypocrite who hates you."

‘Ali 'Best of Mankind' said the Holy Prophet– reported by A’ysha

Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in his Kifayatu't-Talib, p. 119, ch.62, quotes from Ta'rikh al-Damishqi, Muhadith al-Sham, and Muhadith al-Iraq, narrating from Hudhaifa and Jabir that the Holy Prophet said: "Ali is the best of mankind; one who refuses to accept this is an infidel."

It is also reported from Ata that people asked A'ysha about 'Ali and she said: "He is the best of mankind. No one except an infidel has any doubt of it."

He says that Hafiz Ibn Asakir in his Ta'rikh, a work comprised of 100 volumes three volumes of which are written in praise of 'Ali, has reported this hadith from A'ysha.

Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-Su'ul, p. 17, Ibn Sabbagh Makki in Fusulu'l-Muhimma, report from Tirmidhi and Nisa'i that Abu Sa'id Khudri said: "During the days of the Holy Prophet we used to recognize the hypocrites by their animosity towards 'Ali."

It is related in Fusulu'l-Muhimma that the Holy Prophet said to Amiru'l-Mu'minin 'Ali: "O 'Ali! To fight against you is to fight against me; your blood is my blood. I fight against him who fights against you; it is only the legitimate person who loves you, and it is the illegitimate one who has animosity towards you. It is only the believer who loves you, and it is only the hypocrite who is hostile to you."

Sheikh: Such hadith are not unique to 'Ali; they have also been narrated about other caliphs.

Well-Wisher: Kindly cite other such hadith by way of example.

Sheikh: Abdu'r-Rahman Ibn Malik Maghul narrates from his sources that Jabir said that the Holy Prophet of Allah said: "A believer has no animosity towards Abu Bakr and 'Umar, and a hypocrite has no love for them."

Well-Wisher: I am again surprised to hear such a thing from you. Have you forgotten our mutual agreement on the first night that we would not rely on questionable hadith. You should not quote concocted hadith, whose narrators are liars and forgers. Quote authentic hadith.

Sheikh: Your response indicates that you have decided that if you hear any hadith from us, you will reject it.

Well-Wisher: It is not I alone who has rejected it. Even your own prominent ulama' have rejected it. Refer to Mizanu'l-I'tidal of Dhahabi and Ta'rikh of Khatib al-Baghdadi, vol. X, p.236. You will find that most of the eminent commentators have written about the character of Abdu'r-Rahman Ibn Malik saying: "Verily, he was such a liar, a blasphemer, and a forger of hadith that no one has any doubt about it."

Please tell us if such a one-sided hadith narrated by a liar and forger, can be compared to those hadith which your prominent ulama' have narrated and some of which I have already mentioned. I would advise

you to consult Jami'u'l-Kabir, by Suyuti, vol. VI, p.390, Riyazu'n-Nazara, vol. IX, p.215, by Muhibu'd-din; Jami'i Tirmidhi, vol. II, p.299; Isti'ab, vol. III, p.46, by Ibn Abdu'l-Barr; Hilyatu'l-Auliya, vol. VI, p.295, by Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Matalibu's-Su'ul, p. 17, by Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i; Fusulu'l-Muhimma, p. 126, by Ibn Sabbagh Maliki.

You will find that every one of them narrated in slightly different words from Abu'dh-Dharr Ghifari who said: "During the time of the Holy Prophet we used to recognize the hypocrites by three signs: the denial of Allah and the Holy Prophet, failing to offer prayers, and animosity towards 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib." It is reported from Abi Sa'id Khudri that Abu'dh-Dharr Ghifari said: "We used to recognize the hypocrites by their enmity against 'Ali and in the time of the Holy Prophet we had no other sign of finding out the hypocrites except that they were hostile to 'Ali."

Authors who narrate Holy Prophet's hadith about hypocrites' hatred of 'Ali

In addition, the following authors narrate the hadith concerning hypocrites' hatred of 'Ali: Imam Ahmad Hanbal in Musnad, vol. I, pp.95, 138; Ibn Abdu'l-Barr in Isti'ab, vol. III, p.37; Ahmad Khatib Baghdadi in Ta'rikh al-Baghdad, vol. XIV, p.426; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol. IV, p.264; Imam Nisa'i in Sunan, vol. VIII, p.117 and Khasa'isu'l-Alawi, p. 27; Hamwaini in Fara'id, ch.22; Ibn Hajar in Isaba, vol.II, p.509; Hafiz Abu Nu'aim in Hilyatu'l-Auliya, vol.IV, p.185; Sibti Ibn Jauzi in Tadhkira, p.15; Suyuti in Jami'u'l-Kabir, pp. 152, 408; Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-Su'ul, p.17; Tirmidhi in Jami'i, vol. II, p.13, all these have reported in their books in slightly different words from Umm Salma or Ibn Abbas that the Holy Prophet said:

"O 'Ali! A hypocrite is not your friend and a believer is not your enemy. It is only the believer who loves you, and it is only the hypocrite who hates you. A hypocrite does not love 'Ali and a believer does not hate 'Ali."

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol. I, p.367, reports from Sheikh Abu'l-Qasim Balkhi, the chief of Mu'tazilites, that he said, 'All the hadith unanimously report those correct hadith and there is no doubt in the authenticity of those which say that the Holy Prophet said to 'Ali, 'No one is hostile to you except the one who is a hypocrite. No one is your friend except the one who is a believer.'

Also, in volume IV of his book, on page 264, he quotes the sermon of Amiru'l-Mu'minin, in which the Holy Imam says: "If I strike a believer with this sword in his face so that he might be hostile to me, he will never be hostile to me; but if I give the whole world to a hypocrite so that he might love me, he will never love me. And this is in accordance with the utterance of the Holy Prophet who said: 'Only believers love you, only hypocrites are hostile to you.'"

There are many hadith of this kind in your reliable books. I have cited only a few of them.

Wasn't A'ysha's revolt against 'Ali's authority a revolt against the Prophet himself? Was this fighting or her urging the people to fight against 'Ali, due to her friendship or was it due to enmity? Obviously, it was due to hostility.

In all the hadith which I have just related, the Holy Prophet said that one of the signs of infidelity is fighting against 'Ali. How would you reconcile the stand taken by Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha in fighting 'Ali with these hadith? It has just come to my mind that Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani Shafi'i in his Mawaddatu'l-Qurba, Mawadda 3, has reported from A'ysha herself that the Holy Prophet said: "Allah has pledged His word to me that whoever revolts against 'Ali is an infidel and his place is in Hell."

It is strange that when people asked her why she revolted against 'Ali having heard such a hadith from the Holy Prophet she merely replied: "I forgot this hadith on the day of the Battle of the Camel. I did not remember it until I came to Basra."

Sheikh: But how can you find fault with Ummu'l-Mu'minin, when it is obvious that to forget is but human.

Well-Wisher: Even if I admit that she forgot that hadith on the day of the Battle of the Camel, didn't she remember it when she was returning from Mecca and all her friends including the pious wives of the Holy Prophet warned her that she should not perpetrate such an action, since opposition to 'Ali was opposition to the Holy Prophet?

Your own historians who have recorded the Battle of the Camel have drawn attention to the fact that the Holy Prophet said: "O A'ysha! Fear that path on which the dogs of Haw'ab may bark at you." When however, on her way to Basra, she reached the brook of the Bani Kilab, dogs surrounded her litter and began barking. She asked the people what place it was. She was told that it was Haw'ab.

Then she remembered what the Holy Prophet had said. Why then did she walk into the trap of Talha and Zubair? Why did she proceed until she reached Basra where she created such a tumultuous uproar? Would you say that she had forgotten this also, or that she trod that path deliberately?

She deliberately transgressed the order of Allah and the Holy Prophet and, having conspired with Talha and Zubair, went to fight against the Caliph and vicegerent of the Holy Prophet, although she had herself reported that the Holy Prophet said: "One who fights against 'Ali is an infidel."

Was it not a cause of distress to the Holy Prophet that as soon as the Commander of the Faithful assumed the reins of the caliphate, disturbances were created and conspirators prepared for battle against him. I have told you earlier with authentic sources that the Holy Prophet said, "He who distresses 'Ali, verily distresses me. He who distresses me, verily distresses Allah. O people! He who distresses 'Ali shall be raised as a Jew or Christian on the day of resurrection."

Slaughter of sahaba (companions) and innocent believers in Basra by order of A'ysha

These reports can be found in your authentic books. Why then should you find fault with the Shi'as? Responsibility for the blood of innocent believers, the torture and expulsion of Uthman Ibn Hunaif, and the murder of more than 100 including the unarmed keepers of the Treasury who had no concern with the battle – forty of whom were killed in the mosque – lay squarely on the instigator of the battle. Allama Mas'udi in his Murujuz-Dhahib, vol. II, p.7, has written about this in these words:

"Besides those who were injured, seventy of the unarmed guards of baitu'l-mal (Treasury) were put to death. Of these seventy, fifty were beheaded in prison. These people were the first among the Muslims to have been tortured to death."

Among your ulama' and historians, Ibn Jarir and Ibn Athir have given detailed accounts of these events.

Shi'as say about A'ysha exactly what history shows

Perhaps you should expunge these reports from your authentic books. In fact, in the reprints of these books, some of your ulama' have changed some of this disagreeable information and in some cases have omitted it altogether. You should either refuse to accept what your notable ulama' and historians have written, or you should give up censuring the Shi'as. They say only what is recorded in your own reliable books.

No evidence that A'ysha repented

Sheikh: What you say is of course true, but Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha was only a human being; she was not infallible. Having been misguided she committed a fault. It was because of her simplicity that she fell into the trap of two prominent companions, but later she repented for her revolt. Allah excused her for that.

Well-Wisher: First, you have admitted that some of the prominent companions were sinners, although they were among those who were present "under the tree" and at Bai'atu'l-Rizwan. On previous nights you argued that the Sahaba (companions) were like stars, and should we follow any of them, we would be rightly guided.

You now admit that this is not true. Second, you have said that Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha repented of her action. It is only a hollow claim. While the revolt, battle and the slaughter of the Muslims are unanimously accepted, there is no evidence for her repentance.

A'ysha prevents burial of Imam Hasan near the Holy Prophet

Of course, it is a fact that Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha was restless. She committed many foolish mistakes. But you claim that she repented of her fault and, being ashamed, confined herself to her house. But if this were true, why did she treat the body of the grandson of the Holy Prophet so shamefully?

We have discussed how she vexed the Holy Prophet and how she subsequently went into battle mounted on a camel to fight against his successor. But later, this time mounted on a mule she stopped the corpse of the elder grandson of the Holy Prophet from moving ahead for burial near the Holy Prophet.

Your own eminent ulama' and historians, including Yusuf Sibt Ibn Jauzi in his Tadhkira Khawasu'l-Umma, p. 122; Allama Mas'udi, author of Murujuz-Dhahab, in Isbatu'l-Wasiyya, p. 136; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol. IV, p. 18, reporting from Abu'l-Faraj and Yahya Ibn Hasan, author of Kitabu'n-Nasab; Muhammad Khwawind Shah in his Rauzatu's-Safa, and many others have written that when the corpse of Imam Hasan was being transported to Medina, A'ysha, mounted on a mule and accompanied by a group of the Bani Umayya and their slaves, stopped the group with Imam Hasan's body.

They said that they would not let Imam Hasan be buried by the side of the Holy Prophet. According to the report of Mas'udi, Ibn Abbas said: "It is strange of you, A'ysha! Was not the Day of Jamal, that is, your entering the battlefield mounted on a camel, sufficient for you? Now should the people also keep in memory the Day of Baghl (mule)?"

Mounted on a mule, you have stopped the bier of the son of the Holy Prophet. One day mounted on a camel, another mounted on a mule, you have torn asunder the modesty of the Holy Prophet of Allah. Are you determined to destroy the Light of Allah? But surely Allah perfects His light however unpleasant it is to the polytheists; verily, we are Allah's and to Him shall we return."

Some people have written that Ibn Abbas said to her: "One time you mounted a camel and one time a mule. If you live longer, you will also mount an elephant (that is you will fight against Allah)! Though out of one-eighth you have one-ninth share, yet you took possession of the whole."

The Bani Hashim drew their swords and intended to drive them away. But Imam Husain intervened and said that his brother had told him that he did not want a drop of blood to be spilled because of his funeral procession. Accordingly, the corpse was taken back from there and buried in Baqi' (a cemetery in Medina still visited by pilgrims today).

A'ysha's prostration at martyrdom of Amiru'l-Mu'minin

If A'ysha repented of her revolt against Amiru'l-Mu'minin why did she perform a prostration of thanks

when she heard the news of the Holy Imam's martyrdom? Abu'l-Faraj Ispahani, author of Aghani, writing about the Holy Imam in his Maqatilu't-Talibin, says: "When A'ysha heard the news of the martyrdom of Amiru'l-Mu'minin 'Ali, she offered a prostration (of thanks)."

Later however, she asked the informant who had killed 'Ali. She was told that it was Abdu'r-Rahman Ibn Muljim of the Bani Murad clan. Instantly she recited the following couplet: "If 'Ali is away from me, the news of his death was brought by a slave, who may not have dust in his mouth."

Zainab, daughter of Umm Salma, was present at that time. She asked A'ysha if it was proper for her to express her jubilation and utter such words about 'Ali. It was a bad thing. A'ysha replied that she was not in her senses and that she uttered those words through forgetfulness. "If such a thing appears in me again and I repeat those things, you may remind me, so that I may refrain from doing that."

These facts clearly show that A'ysha did not repent later in life as you have claimed.

Contradictory statements of A'ysha about Uthman

At this time I recall another thing. You people object to the Shi'as because they criticize Caliph Uthman for his faults, faults which your own ulama' have recorded in their books.

Accordingly, you should not look with favor on Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha either because ulama' and historians, like Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol. II, p.77; Mas'udi in his Kitab al-Akhiru'z-Zaman and Ausat; Sibt Ibn Jauzi in Tadhkira Khawasu'l-umma, p.36; Ibn Jarir, Ibn Asakir, and others have written that Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha always spoke ill of Uthman, so much so that she called out:

"Kill Na'thal (the old dotard)! May Allah kill him, as he has become an infidel?" But as soon as Uthman was killed, she, because of her opposition to 'Ali, began to say: "Uthman has been killed as an oppressed one. By Allah, I will avenge his death. So rise up and help me."

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid writes, "Certainly A'ysha was the greatest enemy of Uthman. So much so that she hung the garment of the Holy Prophet in her house and used to tell the people who came there: 'This is the garment of the Holy Prophet of Allah. It has not yet become old, but Uthman has made the Holy Prophet's Sunna old and worn out.'"

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid writes that, when A'ysha heard in Mecca the news of Uthman's murder, she said, "May Allah reject him from His mercy. He committed bad actions. And Allah does not oppress His subjects." That is, if He chastises anyone, it is because of his sinful actions.

You hear these remarks from A'ysha about Uthman without any proof and yet you take no notice of it. But if the same words are used by Shi'as, you immediately call them infidels.

We should take an impartial view of things. It is an established fact that Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha bitterly opposed Imam Amiru'l-Mu'minin. When she heard that the Muslims had sworn allegiance to the Holy Imam she said: "The falling of the skies on the earth is better than the establishment of 'Ali's caliphate. Uthman has been slain as an oppressed one."

Certainly these inconsistent statements indicate an unstable mind.

Allah is merciful but the blood of innocent Muslims cannot go unquestioned

Sheikh: These inconsistencies of Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha have of course been generally reported, but two things are accepted and proved. First, that she had been deceived and that for a brief time she was not mindful of the vicegerency of 'Ali. She herself said that she had forgotten it and only remembered it at Basra. Second, she repented for her action. Certainly Allah, having forgiven her, will give her a high place in Paradise.

Well-Wisher: I will not repeat what I have already said on the question of repentance. The blood of those Muslims who were killed for no fault, the disgrace and insults they were subjected to, and the plundering of their property will not go unquestioned. It is true that at the place of forgiveness, Allah is most merciful, but at the place of chastisement He is most strict. Apart from this, she herself admitted until her death that she was responsible for all those odious events.

As your own ulama' have reported, she stipulated in her will that she could not be buried by the side of the Holy Prophet. She knew that she had sponsored many of the disturbances after him. Hakim in his Mustadrak; Ibn Qutayba in his Ma'arif, Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Zarandi in his Kitab al-A'lam bi siratu'n-Nabi and Ibnu'l-Bayya Nishapuri and others have reported that A'ysha exhorted Abdullah ibn Zubair in these words: "Bury me beside my sisters in Baqi. I brought about innovations and novelties after the Holy Prophet of Allah."

A'ysha cannot plead loss of memory because she was reminded by Umm Salma

You said she recollected the virtues of 'Ali at Basra and had forgotten what the Holy Prophet had forbidden her to do. This is not true. You should consult the authentic books of your own prominent ulama'. For example, refer to Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol. II, p.77, by Ibn Abi'l-Hadid.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid reports from the Ta'rikh al-Abi Makhnaf Lut Ibn Yahya Azadi that Umm Salma also was present in Mecca when she heard that A'ysha intended to take vengeance for the murder of Uthman and was going to Basra. She was shocked at this and began proclaiming the merits of 'Ali in all congregations. A'ysha went to Umm Salma in order to win her over to her point of view before leaving

for Basra.

Umm Salma said to her, "Until yesterday you were abusing Uthman and calling him a stupid dotard, and now you have turned against 'Ali to avenge Uthman's murder. Are you not aware of 'Ali's virtues? If you have forgotten them, I would recall them to you."

"Remember the day, when I came to your room along with the Holy Prophet of Allah? Then 'Ali came in and began talking privately with the Holy Prophet. When the private talk continued for some time, you got up to scold the Holy Prophet. I dissuaded you from doing that, but you did not pay any attention to my advice. You said to 'Ali in anger, 'Of every nine days, one is for me, and on that day too you come in and keep him engaged in talking.'

At this the Holy Prophet became so indignant with you that his face became red and he said, 'Get back! I swear by Allah that whoever has any hostility towards 'Ali, whether he belongs to my house or otherwise, is excluded from Iman (belief).' Then, being ashamed, you turned back."

A'ysha said, "Yes, I remember it."

Umm Salma said: "You may remember that one day you were washing the head of the Holy Prophet, and I was preparing 'hais' (a kind of food). The Holy Prophet raised his head and said: 'Who among you is that sinner who will mount the camel, and at whom the dogs of Haw'ab bark, and who will fall headlong from the Bridge of Sirat?' I then left the 'hais' and said, 'O Holy Prophet of Allah! I seek refuge of Allah and His Holy Prophet from such an action. After this the Holy Prophet, striking you in your back said, 'Eschew this; it is you who will do these deeds.'"

A'ysha said, "Yes, I remember it."

Umm Salma further said, "I remind you that on one of the journeys you and I were with the Holy Prophet. One day 'Ali was mending the shoes of the Holy Prophet, and we two were sitting in the shade of a tree. It so happened that your father Abu Bakr and 'Umar came, and sought permission. You and I went behind the screen. They sat down and after talking for a while said, 'O Holy Prophet of Allah! We do not know the value of your companionship. So we ask you to let us know who will be your successor and caliph, so that after you he may be our guide.'

The Holy Prophet said to them: 'I know his place, rank, and position, but if I introduce him directly, you will reject him as the Bani Israel rejected Aaron.' They both were silent and soon left. After they left we came out. I said to the Holy Prophet, 'Who will be your caliph for them?' The Holy Prophet said, 'He is mending my shoes.' We saw that there was no one except 'Ali. Then I said, 'O Holy Prophet of Allah! I did not find anybody except 'Ali.' He said, 'The same 'Ali is my caliph.'"

A'ysha said, "Yes, I remember it."

Umm Salma then said: "Since you know these hadith, where are you going?" She replied: "I am going to

make peace among the people."

It is clear, therefore, that Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha had not been merely deceived by others. She herself caused huge problems and, knowing all these things, she deliberately rose in rebellion even though Umm Salma reminded her of the hadith of the Holy Prophet. Even after admitting the rank and position of Amiru'l-Mu'minin, she left for Basra and created a violent tumult, which resulted in the killing of many Muslims.

Hadith of mending shoes is the greatest proof of the imamate and caliphate of 'Ali

The hadith of mending shoes is the greatest proof for the Imamate and caliphate of 'Ali.

The Shi'as make searching inquiries into the affairs of the past 1400 years. With knowledge of the verses of the Qur'an and the authentic books of the ulama' of both sects, they draw fair conclusions. Accordingly, we believe that, although historically 'Ali was given the fourth place, this apparently inferior position does not affect his superiority nor belittle the importance of the hadith that prove his rightful place as the Prophet's successor.

We also admit that it is a recorded fact of history that Abu Bakr (through political devices) was nominated caliph in the Saqifa in the absence of 'Ali, the Bani Hashim, and other prominent Companions, in spite of the opposition of the Khazraj clan of the Ansars. After that it was through personal dictatorship that 'Umar and Uthman occupied the seat of the caliphate.

But there is a difference. These men were caliphs of the Community; their associates made them caliphs. On the other hand Amiru'l-Mu'minin 'Ali was the caliph of the Holy Prophet and was ordained by Allah and the Holy Prophet to be the vicegerent.

Sheikh: This is unkind of you. There was no difference between them. The very people who unanimously decided to entrust the caliphate to the three caliphs, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Uthman also entrusted it to 'Ali.

Difference in mode of appointment of the first three caliphs is proof of invalidity of their caliphate

Well-Wisher: There were many clear differences in the manner of the appointments of the caliphs. First, you referred to the Ijma.' (Unanimous decision). It is unnecessary to repeat my point. I have proved the baselessness of the issue of Ijma' in the previous nights. There was in fact no unanimous decision about the caliphate of any one of them.

Other proofs for invalidity of consensus (Ijma')

Second, if you rely on consensus as the basis of the caliphate and consider it permissible from the side of Allah and the Holy Prophet then whenever a caliph died, the whole Community should have gathered together to appoint a caliph. Whoever would have been unanimously elected would have been the caliph of the people (of course not of the Holy Prophet of Allah). And this procedure should have been followed in all ages.

You must, however, acknowledge that such an Ijma or consensus has never been held. Even the incomplete consensus for which the Bani Hashim and the Ansar were not present was not held for any one except Abu Bakr Ibn Abi Qahafa. The caliphate of 'Umar, according to the opinion of all historians and traditionists of Islam, was based on the solitary verdict of Abu Bakr Ibn Qahafa.

If consensus were a requirement for the appointment of a caliph, why was it not held for entrusting the caliphate to 'Umar and why was consensus of opinion not obtained thereon?

Sheikh: It is obvious that when Abu Bakr was made the caliph through consensus, the verdict of the caliph for the appointment of his successor was quite valid. There was no need for calling another consensus. Rather, the verdict of every caliph for the appointment of the caliph after him was basically sound and sufficient. This right is vested in the caliph that he might appoint a caliph after him so that the people might not be thrown into confusion and perplexity.

Accordingly, when the acknowledged caliph, Abu Bakr, appointed through general agreement, nominated 'Umar as the next caliph, the latter became the rightful caliph of the Holy Prophet.

Holy prophet's nomination of 'Ali ignored and abu bakr's nomination of 'Umar upheld

Well-Wisher: You believe that the acknowledged caliph has the right to nominate his successor. It is his responsibility not to leave the Community confused and unguided, and his decision is sufficient for the appointment of the caliph. But if you believe this, why do you deprive the Holy Prophet of this right?

And why do you disregard all those clear indications which the Holy Prophet explicitly and repeatedly gave on different occasions, naming 'Ali as his successor, and which are all present in your authentic books. You simply sidetrack the issue and advance irrelevant interpretations just as Ibn Abi'l-Hadid has rejected the hadith of Umm Salma on ridiculous grounds.

Moreover on what basis can you claim that the first caliph, who was appointed by means of consensus, had the right to nominate his successor? Did the Holy Prophet give any such instruction? No. You also claim that when the first caliph secured his appointment through consensus, there was no need for the appointment of other of the caliphs through ijma. The same caliphs had the authority from the

Community to nominate the caliph after them.

Objection to majlis al-shura (consultative body)

If that were so, why was that principle adopted for the caliphate of 'Umar alone? For the caliphate of Uthman this principle was not followed. Instead of nominating a caliph after him, 'Umar left the question to be decided by a consultative body of six members. I do not know what you consider the principle on which the selection of a caliph is based. You know that if there are basic differences in the arguments, the real issue becomes void.

If your position is that the basis of the caliphate is consensus and the entire Community should unanimously make the decision (not to mention the fact that such a consensus was not held for the caliphate of Abu Bakr) why then was such a consensus not held for the caliphate of 'Umar?

If you consider that consensus was necessary only for the first caliphate, and for the appointment of the future caliphs the verdict of the elected caliph was sufficient, then why was this principle not followed in the case of Uthman? Why did Caliph 'Umar abandon the principle enunciated by Abu Bakr?

Why did he leave the selection of the caliph to a Majlis al-Shura (a consultative committee)? Caliph 'Umar arbitrarily nominated the committee though it should have been the representative body of the community (so that there might be some slight representation of the views of the majority).

Objection to Abdu'r-Rahman ibn Auf being arbiter

The most surprising thing is that the rights of all other members of the committee were made subservient to Abdu'r-Rahman Ibn Auf. We do not know what the basis of Abdu'r-Rahman Ibn Auf's selection was. Was it religion, reputation, knowledge, or performance? We can only note that he was a near relation of Uthman and would not support any one else except him. It was decided that what Abdu'r-Rahman said was right, and when he swore allegiance to somebody, all others must follow him.

According to the holy prophet, 'Ali should be followed in preference to all the others

When we consider the matter carefully we find that it was a dictatorial order issued under the guise of Shura (consultation). Even today we see that the principles of democracy are completely contrary to it. But the Holy Prophet repeatedly said, "Ali revolves round the truth and truth revolves around 'Ali." Also the Holy Prophet said:

"Ali is the 'Faruq' (Discriminator) of this Community and draws a distinction between right and wrong." Hakim in his Mustadrak, Hafiz Abu Nu'aim in Hilya; Tabrani in Ausat; Ibn Asakir in Ta'rikh; Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in Kifayatu't-Talib; Muhibu'd-din Tabari in Riyazu'n-Nuzra; Hamwaini in Fara'id;

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha and Suyuti in Durru'l-Mansur narrate from Ibn Abbas, Salman, Abu Dharr and Hudhaifa that the Holy Prophet said, "Soon after me a disturbance will take place.

On that occasion it will be necessary for you to attach yourselves to 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib since he is the first man who will clasp hands with me on the Day of Judgement. He is the most truthful one and is the Faruq of his Community; he draws a distinction between right and wrong, and he is the chief of the believers."

According to a hadith from Ammar Yasir (to which I have referred earlier with full details of its sources) the Holy Prophet said: "If all the people go one way and 'Ali goes the other, you should follow 'Ali and leave all the others. O Ammar! 'Ali will not misguide you and will not lead you to destruction O Ammar! Obedience to 'Ali is obedience to me, and obedience to me is obedience to Allah."

Worst injustice done by 'Umar to Amiru'l-Mu'minin's position

Even then, Caliph 'Umar, defying the instructions of the Holy Prophet, makes 'Ali subordinate to Abdu'r-Rahman in the Shura. Is that authority justified which repudiates the distinguished Companions? Respected men! Be fair! Study the historical accounts of this period, such as Isti'ab, Isaba and Hilyatu'l-Auliya. Then compare 'Ali with Abdu'r-Rahman, and see whether he deserved to have the right of veto or Amiru'l-Mu'minin. You will find that it was through political manipulation that 'Ali's right was usurped.

Moreover, if the method of selection adopted by Caliph 'Umar Ibn Khattab was worth following, that is, if the Majlis al-Shura was necessary for the appointment of the caliph, why was it not done when Amiru'l-Mu'minin was made caliph?

It is strange that for the caliphate of the four caliphs (Abu Bakr, 'Umar, Uthman, and 'Ali) four different methods were adopted. Now which of those methods was basically right and which one was void? If you say that all four methods were justified, then you must admit that you have no fundamental principle for the establishment of the caliphate.

Sheikh: Perhaps your statements are correct. You say we should deeply ponder this question. We find that the caliphate of 'Ali is also of a dubious nature since the kind of consensus, which appointed the previous caliphs, Abu Bakr, 'Umar and Uthman also elected 'Ali caliph.

Well-Wisher: What you say might be considered tenable were it not for the statement of the Holy Prophet. In fact the caliphate of 'Ali did not depend upon the ijma'(consensus) of the Community. It was ordained by Allah.

Caliphate of 'Ali was ordained by Allah

The Holy Imam assumed the caliphate by way of taking back his right. If somebody's right has been usurped, he may take it back whenever he gets the opportunity to do so. Accordingly, when there were no obstructions and the atmosphere demanded it, the Holy Imam secured his right.

If you have forgotten the points we have made previously, you may consult the newspapers, which reported information we presented regarding this issue. We have proved that 'Ali's occupying the caliphate was based on Qur'anic verses and on the hadith of the Holy Prophet.

You cannot cite a single hadith accepted by both sects in which the Holy Prophet said that Abu Bakr, 'Umar, or Uthman were his successors. Of course, apart from hadith in Shi'as books, there are a large number of hadith from the Holy Prophet recorded in your own authentic books, which show that the Holy Prophet expressly appointed 'Ali as his successor.

Sheikh: There are also hadith which show that the Holy Prophet said that Abu Bakr was his caliph.

Well-Wisher: Apparently you have forgotten my argument of previous nights which disproves the acceptability of those hadith. I will, however, reply again tonight. Sheikh Mujaddidu'din Firuzabadi, the author of *Qamusul-Lughat* says in his *Kitab al-Safaru's-Sa'adat*: "What ever has been said in praise of Abu Bakr is based on such fictitious stories that common sense does not admit them as true."

If you properly scrutinize the problem of the caliphate, you will find that there was actually no consensus for any of the four major caliphs (Abu Bakr, 'Umar, Uthman and 'Ali) or for any of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs. The whole Community was never assembled nor were representatives of the entire community gathered together to cast their vote. But, comparatively speaking, we find that 'Ali's caliphate was supported by what was very close to consensus.

Your own historians and ulama' write that for the caliphate of Abu Bakr at first only 'Umar and Abu Ubaida Jarra, the grave digger, were present. Later some of the Aus clan swore allegiance to him only because they were opposed to the Khazraj clan which had nominated Sa'd Ibn Ubaida as a candidate. Later on others through intimidation, (as I have stated in detail earlier) and another group prompted by political considerations swore allegiance to Abu Bakr. The Ansars, who followed Sa'd Ibn Ubaida, did not acknowledge the caliphate till the last moment.

Then the caliphate of 'Umar was founded only on Abu Bakr's proposal, which had nothing to do with consensus. Uthman subsequently became caliph through the decision of the *Majlis al-Shura* (consultative committee) which had been arbitrarily formed by Caliph 'Umar.

At the time of 'Ali's caliphate a majority of the representatives of most of the Islamic countries, who by chance had come to Medina to seek redress of grievances, insisted on 'Ali being the caliph.

Nawab: Did the representatives of the Islamic countries gather in Medina for the purpose of electing their caliph?

Well-Wisher: No. Caliph Uthman was still caliph. Representatives of most of the major Muslim tribes and clans assembled in Medina to complain of the atrocities of the Umayyad governors, officers, and other notables of the court, like Marwan. The result of this consensus was that Uthman, who persisted in his oppressive policies, was murdered.

It was after this affair that the people of Medina approached 'Ali and with insistent entreaties brought him to the mosque, where all the people swore allegiance to him. Such an open consensus had not been held for any of the caliphate of any of the first three caliphs. The people of Medina and the leaders of the nations swore allegiance to a particular person and acknowledged him as their caliph.

Real basis of 'Ali's caliphate is not consensus but the Holy Prophet's declarations

But despite this consensus held for Amiru'l-Mu'minin, we do not consider it the basis of his caliphate. To validate his caliphate we rely only on the Holy Qur'an and the ordinances of the Holy Prophet. It was a practice of the Prophets that they themselves, in accordance with the command of Allah, appointed their successor and caliph.

You said that there was no difference between Amiru'l-Mu'minin and other caliphs. And yet there are many indications that there was a vast difference between 'Ali and other caliphs.

'Ali was superior to all the other caliphs

The first characteristic of Amiru'l-Mu'minin which made him distinctly superior to other caliphs was that he was appointed the Prophet's successor by Allah and His Prophet. All others were appointed by small groups of people. Obviously the caliph appointed by Allah and His Holy Prophet must be superior to those who have been appointed by the people. Of course the most distinguishing characteristic of Amiru'l-Mu'minin was the superiority of his knowledge, virtue, and piety.

All the ulama' of the community (except a few Kharijis, Nasibis, and followers of Abu Bakr) are unanimous in their view that, after the Holy Prophet, 'Ali surpassed all others in knowledge, virtue, justice, nobility, and piety.

In support of this fact, I have previously quoted a number of hadith and verses from the Holy Qur'an. Now I have recalled still another hadith regarding this point.

Hadith of Holy Prophet regarding 'Ali's superiority

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in Musnad, Abu'l-Mu'ayyid Muwaffaq Ibn Ahmad Khawarizmi in the fourth chapter of the Manaqib; Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani Shafi'i in Mawaddatu'l-Qurba, Hafiz Abu Bakr Baihaqi Shafi'i in his Sunan, and many others have narrated from the Holy Prophet in slightly different words and versions that he said: "Ali among you is the most learned scholar, the most virtuous man, and the best judge. He who rejects his statement, action, or opinion, really rejects me. He who rejects me, rejects Allah, and he is within the confines of polytheism."

Moreover, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali, who is one of your eminent ulama', has written in many places in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha that the superiority of Amiru'l-Mu'minin 'Ali was the belief of many companions and followers. The Sheikhs (the chiefs) of Baghdad also acknowledged it.

Would you kindly let me know what you consider to be the virtues in man which make him superior to others?

Sheikh: In fact there are many virtues and praiseworthy qualities which can claim superiority to others, but in my opinion the most meritorious qualities after believing in Allah and the Holy Prophet are these: (1) pure ancestry (2) knowledge, and (3) piety.

Well-Wisher: Allah bless you! I will confine my discussion to these three points.

Of course every companion, whether he was the caliph or not, had some distinctive quality. But those who possessed all these virtues were definitely superior to all others. If I prove that in these three characteristics it was Amiru'l-Mu'minin who excelled all others, then you must admit this Holy man was the worthiest claimant for the caliphate. And if he was deprived of the caliphate, it was because of political contrivances.

'Ali's pure ancestry

In the matter of ancestry with the exception of the Holy Prophet, no man can compare with 'Ali. Even some of the fanatical ulama' of your sect, like Ala'u'd-din Mulla 'Ali Ibn Muhammad Ushji, Abu Uthman Amr Ibn Bahr Jahiz Nasibi, and Sa'idu'd-din Mas'ud Ibn 'Umar Taftazani have said: "We are in awe at the words of 'Ali who said, 'We are the Ahlul Bayt of the Holy Prophet. No one can bear comparison to us.'"

Also, in the second sermon of Nahju'l-Balagha, the Holy Imam after accepting the caliphate said, "No person of this Community can bear comparison with the family of Muhammad. How can those who have received blessings, knowledge, and kindness from them equal them? They are the foundation of religion and the pillars of belief.

Those who diverge from the right path turn to them, and those who lag behind, step forward to attach

themselves to them. They alone have the exclusive right of vicegerency and Imamate. It was for them alone that the Holy Prophet made his will. They were his rightful inheritors. Now the right has returned to its legitimate claimant and has again reached the place from which it had been removed."

These statements of Amiru'l-Mu'minin about his claim for the caliphate are the best proof for his right to the caliphate.

But these words were not uttered by Amiru'l-Mu'minin alone. Even his opponents have acknowledged the same thing. I have pointed out on a previous night that Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamdani reports in his Mawaddatu'l-Qurba Mawadda 7, from Abi Wa'il, who reports that Abdullah Ibn 'Umar said: "In pointing out the companions of the Holy Prophet, we mentioned the names of Abu Bakr, 'Umar and Uthman. A man asked where 'Ali's name was. We said, 'Ali belongs to the Ahlul Bayt of the Prophet, and no one can bear comparison with him; he is with the Holy Prophet of Allah in the same rank."

Also he narrates from Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Kurgi Baghdadi, who said that Abdullah Ibn Ahmad Hanbal (the Imam of the Hanbalites) about the Companions who were worthy of praise, he named Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Uthman. He then asked what he thought about 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal said, "He belongs to the Ahlul Bayt. The others cannot be compared to him."

As for the ancestry of 'Ali, it has two aspects: one of light and one of the body. So in this respect 'Ali had a unique position after the Holy Prophet of Allah.

'Ali's creation from light and his association with the Holy Prophet

From the point of view of light, Amiru'l-Mu'minin occupied the foremost place, as many of your illustrious ulama' point out. Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his Musnad, Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamdani Faqih Shafi'i in his Mawaddatu'l-Qurba; Ibn Maghazili Shafi'i in his Manaqib and Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-Su'ul Fi Manaqib al-ulu'r-Rasul narrate from the Holy Prophet that he said, "I and 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib both were a single light in the presence of Allah 14,000 years before the creation of Adam. When Allah created Adam, he deposited that light in Adam's loins. We remained together as one light until we separated in Abu'l-Muttalib's loins. Then I was endowed with Prophethood and 'Ali with the caliphate."

Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamdani Faqih Shafi'i in his Mawaddatu'l-Qurba, Mawadda VII, mentions this point. "'Ali and the Holy Prophet are from one Light. 'Ali was endowed with such qualities as were not given to any one else in the entire world."

Among hadith which have been recorded in this Mawadda, there is a report from the third Caliph, Uthman Ibn Affan, who said that the Holy Prophet said, "I and 'Ali were created from one light 4,000 years before the creation of Adam. When Allah created Adam, He deposited that light into Adam's loins. We remained as one light until we were separated in Abdu'l-Muttalib's loins. Then I was endowed with

prophethood and 'Ali with vicegerency."

In another hadith he writes that the Holy Prophet, addressing 'Ali, said: "So prophethood and messengership came to me. Vicegerency and the Imamate came to you, 'Ali."

The same hadith has been narrated by Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol.II, p.450 (printed in Egypt) from the author of Kitab al-Firdaus. Also Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi in his Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, part I, reports from Jam'u'l-Fawa'id, Manaqib of Ibn Maghazili Shafi'i, Firdaus of Dailami, Fara'idu's-Simtain of Hamwaini and Manaqib of Khawarizmi, with slight difference in wording but not in purport, that the Holy Prophet Muhammad and 'Ali were created from light thousands of years before the creation of the universe and that both of them were one light until they were separated from each other in the loins of Abdu'l-Muttalib.

One part was placed in the loins of Abdullah and through it was born the Holy Prophet. The other part was placed in the loins of Abu Talib and through it was born 'Ali. Muhammad was selected for prophethood and 'Ali for vicegerency, as was disclosed by the Holy Prophet himself.

Abu'l-Mu'ayyid Mu'affaq Ibn Ahmad Khawarizmi and many others have reported from reliable sources that the Holy Prophet said: "I and 'Ali were born of one light. We remained together until we reached the loins of Abu Talib where we were separated from each other."

'Ali's physical ancestry

So far as 'Ali's physical creation was concerned, he was evidently of the most exalted rank from both his maternal and paternal side. All of his forefathers back to Adam himself were worshipers of Allah. This light never settled in an impure loins or womb. None of the other companions can make such a claim. The lineage of 'Ali is as follows:

(1) 'Ali Ibn (2) Abu Talib Ibn (3) Abdu'l-Muttalib (4) Hashim (5) Abd al-Manaf (6) Qusai (7) Kilab (8) Murra (9) Ka'b (10) Luwai (11) Ghalib (12) Fehr (13) Malik (14) Nazr (15) Kinana (16) Khazima (17) Madreka (18) Ilyas (19) Muzar (20) Nizar (21) Ma'd (22) Adnan (23) Awwad (24) Al-Yasa' (25) Al-Hamis (26) Bunt (27) Sulayman (28) Haml (29) Qidar (30) Isma'il (31) Ibrahim Khalil-Ullah (32) Ta'rikh (33) Tahur (34) Sharu (35) Abraghu (36) Taligh (37) Abir (38) Shale' (39) Arfakhad (40) Sam (41) Noah (42) Lumuk (43) Mutu Shalkh (44) Akhnukh (45) Yarad (46) Mahla'il (47) Qinan (48) Anush (49) Seth (50) Adam Abu'l-Bashir.

Except for the Holy Prophet, no one else had such a brilliant ancestry.

Azar was Abraham's father

Sheikh: You have said that all the ancestors of 'Ali were monotheists. I think you are mistaken. Some of his ancestors were idol worshipers. For instance Abraham Khalilullah's father, Azar, worshipped idols.

The Holy Qur'an clearly says "And when Abraham said to his father, Azar: 'Do you take idols for gods? Surely I see you and your people in manifest error.'"

Well-Wisher: You repeat what your elders have said although you know that the scholars of genealogy unanimously agree that Abraham's father was Tarukh, and not Azar.

Sheikh: But this is ijtihad (reasoning based on your own judgement) in face of divine ordinance. You are putting forward the views of the scholars of genealogy in opposition to the Holy Qur'an, which clearly says that Abraham's father was Azar, who was an idol worshiper.

Well-Wisher: I never argue in opposition to divine law. My aim is to know the real interpretation of the Qur'an. In order to accomplish this, I seek guidance from those who are equal to the Holy Qur'an as sources of guidance, the Ahlul Bayt of the Holy Prophet. The word in the Holy verse has been used in the general sense because in the general sense even the uncle and the mother's husband are also called "father."

There are two views about Azar. One is that he was Abraham's uncle and the second is that in addition to being his uncle, after the death of Abraham's father, Tarukh, he married Abraham's mother. Hence Abraham used to address him as his father, since he was his uncle as well as his mother's husband.

Sheikh: We cannot ignore the explicit meaning of the Holy Qur'an, unless we find its other meaning in the Qur'an itself, clearly indicating that uncle or mother's husband are also called 'father'. If you fail to produce such evidence (and certainly you will fail), your argument will be unacceptable.

Well-Wisher: There are instances in the Holy Qur'an where words have been used in their general sense. For example, verse 133 of chapter II, Baqara (The Cow) of the Holy Qur'an supports my point. It records the questions and answers of the Prophet Jacob with his sons at the time of his death. It says:

"When he said to his sons: What will you serve after me? They said: we will serve your God and the God of your fathers, Abraham and Isma'il and Isaac, the one God only, and to Him do we submit." (2: 133)

In this verse the proof of my claim is the word Isma'il. According to the Holy Qur'an, Jacob's father was Isaac and Isma'il was his uncle, but, according to the general practice, he used to call him his father. Since the sons of Jacob also according to the general practice, called their uncle their father, they used the same word in reply to his father. God reported their question and answer as it was.

Similarly, Abraham also used to call his uncle and his mother's husband, 'father', although, according to strong evidence of historical and genealogical accounts, it is an acknowledged fact that Abraham's father was not Azar, but Tarukh.

Fathers and mothers of the Holy Prophet were not polytheists but they were all believers

The second proof of the fact that the Holy Prophet's ancestors were not polytheists and infidels is verse 219 of Chapter 26 of Shu'ara (The Poets) which says,

"And your turning over and over among those who prostrate themselves to Allah." (26:219)

Concerning the meaning of this Holy verse Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in his Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, vol.II, and many others of your ulama' have narrated from Ibn Abbas, who said, "Allah transferred particles of the being of the Holy Prophet from Adam's loins to successive prophets, one after the other, all of whom were monotheists, until He made him appear from his father's loins through nika (lawful wedlock) and not unlawfully."

There is also a well known hadith which all of your ulama' have narrated. Even Imam Tha'labi, who is called the Imam of traditionists, writes in his commentary and Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in his Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, vol. II, narrates from Ibn Abbas, that the Holy Prophet said: "Allah sent me to the earth in the loins of Adam and transferred me to the loins of Abraham. He continued transferring me from the distinguished and exalted loins to pure wombs until He created me from my father and mother, who never met unlawfully."

In another hadith he is reported to have said, "Allah never mixed in me any base element of ignorance."

In the same chapter Sulayman Balkhi reports from Ibkaru'l-Afkar of Sheikh Salahu'd-din Ibn Zainu'd-din Ibn Ahmad known as Ibnu's-Sala Halbi and from Sharh al-Kibrit al-Ahmar of Sheikh Abdu'l-Qadir narrating from Ala'u'd-Dowlat Semnani, a detailed hadith from Jabir Ibn Abdullah that the Holy Prophet was asked about what Allah created first. He answered the question in detail, which I cannot relate at this time. Towards the end of the hadith the Holy Prophet said:

"Similarly, Allah continued transferring my light from pure side to pure side, until He deposited me in my father, Abdullah Ibn Abdu'l-Muttalib. From there He brought me to the womb of my mother, Amina. Then He caused me to appear in this world and conferred upon me the title of Sayidu'l-Mursalin (the chief of the Messengers) and Khatamu'n-Nabiyyin (the Seal of the Prophets)."

The Holy Prophet's statement that he continued to be transferred from pure one to pure one proves that none of his forefathers was an infidel. According to the Holy Qur'an, which says:

"Verily, the polytheists are polluted ones," (9:28)

every infidel and polytheist is polluted. He said that he was transferred from pure wombs to pure wombs. Since idol worshipers are not pure, it follows that none of his forefathers was an idol worshiper.

In the same chapter of Yanabiu'l-Mawadda a hadith from Ibn Abbas is reported via Kabir that the Holy Prophet said: "I was not born through the unlawful wedlock of the days of ignorance. I was born through the Islamic ways of Nika."

Have you not read sermon 105 of Nahju'l-Balagha? The Commander of the Faithful says about the forefathers of the Holy Prophet: "Allah provided for them (i.e., the Prophets) the best place (the loins of their forefathers) and gave them the best placements (the Holy wombs of their mothers).

He transferred them from distinguished and respectable loins to pure wombs. When the father of any of them passed away, his son succeeded him with the religion of Allah, until Allah Almighty made Muhammad His Prophet and Messenger. So He made the source of the Holy Prophet's creation the most exalted one. The Holy Prophet's lineage included His Prophets who were of high rank."

In short, the ancestors of the Holy Prophet, back to the Prophet Adam, were all believers and monotheists. It is quite obvious that the people of the Ahlul Bayt (the Progeny) of the Holy Prophet knew more about the status of their forefathers than others knew.

'Ali's forefathers were equally free from polytheism

When it is proved that the ancestors of the Holy Prophet were believers and monotheists, it naturally follows that 'Ali's ancestors were also worshipers of Allah. I have already proved through your own books that Muhammad and 'Ali were from one light and always remained together in pure loins and wombs until they were separated from each other in the loins of Abdu'l-Muttalib. Every sensible man would admit that such a distinguished personality was the rightful claimant to the caliphate.

Misunderstanding about Abu Talib's faith clarified

Sheikh: I accept the fact that Tarukh was Abraham's father, and you have proved the purity of the Holy Prophet's ancestors. But it is not possible to find such evidence in the case of 'Ali. Even if we admit that all of his ancestors down to Abdu'l-Muttalib were monotheists, his father, Abu Talib, certainly left this world an infidel.

Well-Wisher: I admit that there are differing opinions among the community concerning Abu Talib's faith. But we should say, "O Allah! Curse the first tyrant who showed injustice to Muhammad and curse his descendants. Allah's curse be on him who fabricated hadith with the result that the Nasibis and Kharijis began to claim that Abu Talib left this world an unbeliever.

The Shi'as ulama' in general and all the members of the entire family of the Holy Prophet believe in the faith of Abu Talib. Also, many of your scholars and fair minded ulama', like Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Jalalu'd-din Suyuti, Abu'l-Qasim Balkhi, Abu Ja'far Askafi, their teachers from the Mu'tazali sect, and Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani Faqih Shafi'i – all agree that Abu Talib was a Muslim.

Shi'as consensus regarding belief of Abu Talib

The Shi'as believe that Abu Talib, from the very beginning, believed in the Holy Prophet. The Shi'as, following the Holy Ahlul Bayt, acknowledge with one accord "Abu Talib never worshipped an idol; he was one of the successors of Abraham."

The same view has also been expressed in the authentic books of your own ulama'. For instance, Ibn Athir says in his Jam'u'l-usul: "According to the Holy Ahlul Bayt among all the uncles of the Holy Prophet, only Hamza, Abbas, and Abu Talib accepted Islam."

The common agreement of the Holy Ahlul Bayt regarding a point must be considered decisive. The Hadith al-Thaqalain and other hadith which I have referred to on previous nights clearly prove that the Holy Prophet made clear statements regarding his family's infallibility. They were the parallels of the Holy Qur'an and one of the Thaqalain (two weighty things) which the Prophet left as sources of infallible guidance for his people. It is necessary for all Muslims to adhere to them so that they may not be led astray.

Second, according to the saying "The people of the house know better about family matters," this exalted family knew more about the belief of their forefathers than Mughira Ibn Sha'ba, the Bani Umayya, the Kharijis and Nasibis, or other uninformed people.

It is really surprising that your ulama' do not accept statements of the Ahlul Bayt of the Holy Prophet, including the chief of the pious, the Commander of the Faithful, to whose veracity and truthfulness Allah and the Holy Prophet testified. All say that Abu Talib died a believer. You do not believe that, but you accept the word of the confirmed liar and sinner, Mughira, some Amawis, Kharijis, and Nasibis.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali, who is one of your accredited ulama', says in his Shahr al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol.III, p.310: "There is a difference of opinion concerning the Islam of Abu Talib. The Imamiyya sect and most of the Zaidiyyas say that he left this world a Muslim. Apart from the entire Shi'as ulama', some of our own chief ulama', like Abu'l-Qasim Balkhi and Abu Ja'far Askafi hold the view that Abu Talib embraced Islam, but he did not reveal his belief so that he might give full support to the Holy Prophet and, because of his (Abu Talib's) influence, the opponents might not block the Holy Prophet's way."

Misunderstanding about concocted hadith of Zuhzah clarified

Sheikh: Apparently you are not familiar with the "Hadith of Zuhzah" which says: "Abu Talib is in the fire of Hell."

Well-Wisher: This is a fabricated hadith invented during the period of Mu'awiya Ibn Abu Sufyan by some of the enemies of the Holy Prophet. Later the Bani Umayya and their followers continued their efforts to fabricate hadith against 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib and circulated them among the people.

They did not allow Abu Talib's belief to become well known like that of Hamza and Abbas. The forger of Hadith Zuhza was one Mughira, who was a sinner and an enemy of the Commander of the Faithful.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol.III, pp 159–163; Mas'udi in Muruju'z-Dhahab and other ulama' write that Mughira committed fornication in Basra. When his witnesses were produced before Caliph 'Umar, three of them testified against him, but the fourth was tutored to say such things as made his evidence unacceptable. Accordingly, the three other witnesses had to suffer the prescribed penalty, and Mughira was acquitted.

The author of this hadith, however, was a fornicator and drunkard upon whom the penalty prescribed by religion was about to be inflicted. He invented hadith because of his opposition to the Commander of the Faithful and to flatter Mu'awiya. Mu'awiya and his followers and other Umayyads strengthened this spurious hadith and began testifying that "Abu Talib is in the fire of Hell."

Moreover, those connected with the narration of this hadith like Abdu'l-Malik Ibn 'Umar, Abdu'l-Aziz Rawandi and Sufyan Thawri, are weak and unacceptable reporters. This fact has been verified by your own eminent commentator and scholar, Zahi, who has expressed this view in his Mizanu'l-I'tidal, vol.II. So how can one rely on a hadith like this, which has been narrated by such notorious liars and weak reporters?

Evidence for Abu Talib's belief

There is plenty of evidence to prove the belief of Abu Talib.

(1) The Holy Prophet says in a hadith (joining his two fingers): "I and the supporter of the orphan are together in Paradise like these two fingers."

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid also has reported this hadith in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol.IV, p.312, where he says that it is obvious that the Holy Prophets statement does not mean all supporters of orphans, since most of the supporters of orphans are sinners. So the Holy Prophet meant by it Abu Talib and his distinguished grandfather, Abdu'l-Muttalib, who looked after the Holy Prophet. The Holy Prophet was known in Mecca as the yatim (orphan) of Abu Talib because after the passing away of Abdu'l-Muttalib, the Prophet, from the age of eight, had been in the care of Abu Talib.

(2) There is a well known hadith which both the Shi'as and Sunni sects have narrated in different ways. Some of them say that the Holy Prophet said: "Gabriel came to me and gave me good news in these words: 'Allah has definitely exempted from the fire the loins through which you appeared, the womb which sustained you, the breasts which suckled you, and the lap which supported you.'"

Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani in his Mawaddatu'l-Qurba, Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, and Qazi Shukani in his Hadith al-Qudsi have reported that the Holy Prophet said: "Gabriel came to me and said 'Allah sends greetings to you and says verily He has exempted from the fire the

loins which gave you shelter, the womb which sustained your weight, and the lap which supported you."

These reports and hadith clearly prove the faith of the Prophet's supporters, namely, Abdu'l-Muttalib, Abu Talib and his wife Fatima Bint Asad, and also the Holy Prophet's father, Abdullah, and mother, Amina Bint Wahhab, and his wet nurse, Halima.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid's couplets in praise of Abu Talib

(3) Your great scholar, Izzu'd-din Abdu'l-Hamid Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali, composed the following couplets in praise of Abu Talib. They are recorded in Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol.III, p.318: "Without Abu Talib and his son ('Ali Ibn Abi Talib), Islam would have no distinction or strength. Abu Talib protected the Holy Prophet in Mecca and supported him and 'Ali in Medina. Abda'l-Manaf (Abi Talib) by order of his father Abdu'l-Muttalib continued taking care of the Holy Prophet and 'Ali and perfected those efforts.

When Abu Talib died through Allah's will, it did not cause any loss because he left his fragrance ('Ali) as his memory. Abu Talib initiated outstanding services in the way of Allah, and 'Ali perfected them for the sake of Allah.

Abu Talib's eminence cannot be harmed by the foolish utterances of people, or by the willful suppression of his virtues (by his opponents), just as when a man calls the light of day darkness, the light will not be affected."

Couplets of Abu Talib Prove his Islam

(4) Similarly, the couplets Abu Talib himself composed in praise of the Holy Prophet are a clear proof of his faith. Some of these couplets have been recorded by Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol.III, p.316. Moreover, your prominent ulama', like Sheikh Abu'l-Qasim Balkhi and Abu Ja'far Askafi, have produced them as evidence for Abu Talib's belief.

Abu Talib wrote: "I seek shelter in Allah from those who rail at us or attribute profanity to us, from the sinner who speaks ill of us, and from the person who associates things in religion from which we are aloof.

I swear by the House of Allah that he lies who says that we shall leave Muhammad, though we have not yet fought against his enemy with the sword and lance.

We will indeed help him until we have crushed his enemy. We will offer such sacrifice that we will forget our wife and children.

His light is such that through the brightness of his face we invoke the shower of Allah's mercy.

He comes to the assistance of orphans; he is the refuge of widows. The helpless people of the Bani Hashim go to him for help and are blessed with all kinds of favors.

I swear by my life that I have a passionate love for Ahmad. I love him like a pure friend.

I found my self fit for sacrifice to him, so I helped him as he is an ornament for the people of the world, a curse for enemies, and a grace for society.

May the Creator of the World support him with His help and reveal His religion, which is the way to Allah, and in which there is not a particle of wrong."

There are some special couplets of Abu Talib which Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his *Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha*, vol.III, p.312, and others have quoted in proof of his belief. In his panegyric, he says:

"These people expect us to fight against Islam with sword and lance; they think that we will kill Muhammad. But our faces have not yet been colored with blood in his help. I swear by the House of Allah that you have told me a lie; you may fall into disaster.

Hatim and Zamzam may fill to the brim with severed heads. Injustice is being done to the Prophet, who has been sent by Allah to guide the people. He has been given the book, which has been revealed by the Lord of the Sky."

Apart from these clear evidences, which prove the faith of Abu Talib, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his *Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha*, v.III, p.315, quotes the following couplets:

"You bear witness to the existence of Allah! Bear witness that verily I follow the religion of the Prophet of Allah, namely, Ahmad. Others may be misled in their religion, but I am one of these who are guided."

Gentlemen! Be fair and tell us if the writer of such couplets can be called an infidel.

Sheikh: These couplets are not acceptable for two reasons. First, there is no continuity of narration about them. Second, it was nowhere seen that Abu Talib acknowledged Islam. Reporting some of his couplets does not conclusively prove that he was a Muslim.

Well-Wisher: Your objection about lack of continuity of narration is strange. Whenever you wish, you accept a lone report to be reliable and when you do not wish, you use the weapon of lack of continuity.

If you reflect for a moment that if these couplets have not been continuously reported by individuals, even so, taken as a whole, they prove that Abu Talib believed in the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet. There are many such things whose continuity of narration is determined in the same way.

For instance, the battles of the Commander of the Faithful and the examples of his bravery also depend upon lone reports. But taken as a whole these reports create the sense of continuity, which gives us the necessary knowledge of his valor. Hatim's generosity and Nushirwan's justice are known in the same

way.

Since you are so fond of continuity, please let us know how you would prove that the Hadith of Zuhra has been successively transmitted.

Abu Talib's acknowledgement of his belief in Allah at the time of his death

As for your second objection, my reply is quite simple. It is necessary to express one's acknowledgement of the unity of Allah, prophethood, the Day of Resurrection, etc. in prose. But if one composes couplets in which he expresses his belief, it is quite sufficient. When Abu Talib said, "You who believe in Allah! Bear witness that verily I follow the religion of the Prophet of Allah, Ahmad," it had the same effect as if he had said it in prose.

Besides this, he acknowledged his belief at the time of his death in prose as well. Sayyid Muhammad Rasuli Bazranji, Hafiz Abu Nu'aim, and Baihaqi have reported that a party of the chiefs of the Quraish, including Abu Jahl and Abdullah Ibn Abi Umayya, came to Abu Talib when he was dying. At that time the Holy Prophet said to his uncle Abu Talib: "Say that 'there is no god but Allah,' so that I may bear witness to it before Allah."

Instantly Abu Jahl and Abi Umayya said, "Abu Talib! Will you turn away from the creed of Abdu'l-Muttalib?" They repeated these words time and again until he said, "You should know that Abu Talib follows the creed of Abdu'l-Muttalib." The result was that those people went away well pleased. When the signs of death appeared on Abu Talib, his brother Abbas, who was sitting on the edge of his bed, saw that his lips were moving.

When he listened to what he said, he heard him saying: "There is no god but Allah." Abbas said to the Holy Prophet: "Nephew! I swear by Allah that my brother (Abu Talib) has said what you ordered him to say." Since Abbas had not himself embraced Islam at that time, he did not utter those words.

We have proved earlier that the ancestors of the Holy Prophet were all believers in the unity of Allah. You should know that it was expedient for Abu Talib to say that he followed the creed of Abdu'l-Muttalib. He satisfied those people, and in reality he acknowledged his faith in the unity of Allah because Abdu'l-Muttalib followed the creed of the Prophet Abraham.

Moreover, he did utter the words "There is no god but Allah." If you study the historical facts about Abu Talib, you will certainly acknowledge that he was a believer.

Holy Prophet's conversation with Abu Talib at the announcement

of his Prophethood

On the day of his bi'that (announcement of Prophethood) the Holy Prophet, along with his uncle, Abbas, went to Abu Talib and said to him: "Verily, Allah has ordered me to announce His command; verily, He has made me His Prophet; so how will you treat me?"

Abu Talib was the chief of the Quraish, the Head of the Bani Hashim, and the most veracious man in the eyes of the people of Mecca. He had reared the Holy Prophet. Had he been an infidel, he would have at once opposed him.

And if that had not proven sufficient, since the Holy Prophet had come to him to seek help to propagate his prophethood, Abu Talib seeing that it was against his religion, would have confined the Holy Prophet or at least would have turned him out of his place.

Such a rejection would have hindered the Holy Prophet from his great resolve. Abu Talib's religion (supposing it to be polytheism) would have been saved, and he would have earned the gratitude of his associates. Abu Talib could have rebuked the Holy Prophet as Azar had done to his nephew the Prophet Abraham.

Abraham's announcement of prophethood and his conversation with Azar

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah Almighty tells of the raising up of Abraham Khalilu'r-Rahman as Prophet of Allah. He said to his uncle, Azar,

"O my father! Truly knowledge has come to me which has not come to you; therefore follow me, I will guide you on a right path." (19:43)

"He said: Do you dislike my gods, O Abraham? If you do not desist, I will certainly revile you; leave me for a long time." (19:46)

Abu talib assures Holy Prophet of full support and also recites couplets in praise of Islam

But, on the contrary, when the Holy Prophet sought his help, Abu Talib said: "O my nephew! Proceed with your mission. Verily, you are high in rank, strong in your clan and the most exalted in family lineage. I swear by Allah that the tongue which speaks ill of you will be answered by me with sharp swords. By Allah, the whole Arab world will kneel down before you, as an animal humbles itself before its master."

Moreover, he composed the following verses, referring to the Prophet's mission. These have been

recorded by Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol.III, p. 306, and Sibt Ibn Jauzi in his Tadhkira, p. 5:

"I swear by Allah that those people with their partisans will never reach you, till I consign them to their graves.

So you should go on performing your duty. I give you the good news of your success. Make your eyes cool with it.

You have called me to your religion. I believe that you have guided me to the right path; you are surely the truthful one and have ever been trustworthy.

You have brought us a religion which I know is the best of all religions.

If I had no fear of taunt and reproach, you would have found me openly supporting you."

These couplets show that Abu Talib recognized Muhammad to be a messenger of Allah. There are however many other similar couplets which Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, and many other ulama', have recorded in their books.

Is a man who recites such couplets an infidel or a true believer?

Abu Talib was a supporter and guardian of the Holy Prophet

Most of your prominent ulama' have recorded this fact. You might consult Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi's Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, ch.52, in which it is reported from Abu Uthman Amr Ibn Bahr Jahiz that, writing about Abu Talib, he said, "Abu Talib was a supporter of the prophethood and messengership of the Holy Prophet. He wrote many couplets in praise of the Holy Prophet. He was the leader of the Quraish."

This clear evidence proves the sincerity of Abu Talib's faith. Of course the Bani Umayya encouraged people to curse the chief of the monotheists, the Commander of the Faithful, and the grandsons of the Holy Prophet, Hasan and Husain. They also fabricated hadith condemning the Holy imam and forged reports that his father (Abu Talib) died an infidel.

The reporter was the accursed Mughira Ibn Sha'ba, an enemy of 'Ali and friend of Mu'awiya. The Kharijīs and Nasibīs propagated the view that Abu Talib was an infidel. The simple people were led to believe that it was a correct view.

It is strange that they consider Abu Sufyan, Mu'awiya, and Yazid (May Allah's curse be upon them) believers and Muslims, even though there are countless indications to the contrary. And yet they attribute infidelity to Abu Talib in spite of clear proofs which show that he was a firm believer.

Not proper to call Mu'awiya 'khalu'l-mu'minin'

Sheikh: Is it proper for you to call the Khalu'l-Mu'minin (uncle of the believers), Mu'awiya Ibn Abu Sufyan "infidel" and always curse him. Will you let us know what evidence you have that Mu'awiya Ibn Abu Sufyan and Yazid were infidels and fit to be cursed. These two distinguished men were among the caliphs. In fact Mu'awiya was both Khalu'l-Mu'minin (uncle of the believers) and also Katib al-Wahi (scribe of revelations).

Well-Wisher: Would you please tell me how Mu'awiya merits the title Khalu'l-Mu'minin (uncles of the believers)?

Sheikh: Since Mu'awiya's sister, Umm Habiba, was the wife of the Holy Prophet and Ummu'l-Mu'minin (mother of believers), her brother Mu'awiya was Khalu'l-Mu'minin.

Well-Wisher: In your opinion was the rank of Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha greater or that of Umm Habiba, sister of Mu'awiya?

Sheikh: Although both were Ummu'l-Mu'minin, A'ysha was definitely superior to Umm Habiba.

Well-Wisher: According to your criteria, all brothers of the wives of the Holy Prophet are Khalu'l-Mu'minin. Then why don't you call Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr Khalu'l-Mu'minin? According to you his father was superior to Mu'awiya, and his sister was also superior to Mu'awiya's sister. No, Mu'awiya's being Khalu'l-Mu'minin has no reality.

Mu'awiya pronounces takbir at Imam Hasan's martyrdom

Abu'l-Faraj Ispahani in his Maqatilu't-Talibin, Ibn Abdu'l-Bar in his Isti'ab, Mas'udi in his Isbatu'l-Wasiyya, and many other ulama' have reported that Asma Ju'da, by order and promise of Mu'awiya, gave poison to Abu Muhammad Hasan Ibn 'Ali. Ibn Abdu'l-Bar and Muhammad Ibn Jarir Tabari have also reported that when Mu'awiya was informed of the demise of the Holy imam, he shouted the takbir ("Allah is Great."). Of course, such a damned person should be called Khalu'l-Mu'minin according to you!

Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr was killed thirsty and burnt to ashes for love of Ahlul Bayt

But look at Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr, who was brought up by the Commander of the Faithful and was one of the staunchest friends of the Holy Ahlul Bayt!

Addressing this illustrious family he says: "O descendants of Fatima! You are a place of safety for me and my guardian. It is through you that on the Day of Judgement, the significance of my good actions will be greater. Since my love for you is sincere, I do not mind if somebody barks near me."

Although he was the son of the first caliph, Abu Bakr, and the brother of Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha, he was not call Khalu'l-Mu'minin. He was abused and deprived of his father's legacy!

When Amr Ibn As and Mu'awiya Ibn Khadij conquered Egypt, the supply of water was cut off to Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr. When he had nearly died of thirst, he was killed. He was then enclosed in the skin of an ass and the bundle was thrown into a fire. When Mu'awiya learned of this, he was very pleased.

Hearing these facts, you do not question why these damned people treated Abu Bakr's son, Khalu'l-Mu'minin Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr, so cruelly. But when Mu'awiya is cursed, you immediately become angry. So you see the opposition to the progeny of the Holy Prophet, and it continues today.

Since Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr was one of the friends of the descendants of the Holy Prophet, you neither call him Khalu'l-Mu'minin nor regret his murder. Since Mu'awiya was the bitterest enemy of the Ahlul Bayt of the Holy Prophet, you call him Khalu'l-Mu'minin. Allah save us from such fanatical perversity!

Mu'awiya was not a scribe of wahi (revelation) but only of letters

Second, Mu'awiya was not the writer of Wahi. He embraced Islam in the tenth year of the Hijra when revelation was complete. In fact he was the scribe who wrote letters. He caused immense trouble for the Holy Prophet. In the eighth year of the Hijra when Mecca was conquered and Abu Sufyan embraced Islam, Mu'awiya wrote many letters to his father railing at him because he had accepted Islam.

When, however, the whole Arabian Peninsula and beyond came under the influence of Islam, Mu'awiya was himself forced to embrace Islam. In doing so he lost all his prestige. Abbas then asked the Holy Prophet to assign Mu'awiya some position so that he might no longer feel humiliated. In view of the recommendation of his uncle, the Holy Prophet appointed him as scribe for the writing of letters.

Evidence for Mu'awiya's infidelity

Third, there are many suras of the Qur'an and hadith proving that he was an infidel and worthy of curses.

Sheikh: I would like very much to hear these suras and hadith.

Well-Wisher: Only a few will be pointed out. If I narrate them all, it would form a complete book. Muslim, in his Sahih, reports Mu'awiya was a scribe of the Holy Prophet. Mada'ini says: "Sa'id Ibn Thabit was the Wahi (revelation) and Mu'awiya used to write the letters of the Holy Prophet to other Arabs."

Evidence from suras of the Holy Qur'an and hadith Mu'awiya and Yazid are cursed

(1) Please refer to ayat 60 of Sura 17 (Bani Israel). Commentators from your own ulama', like Tha'labi, Imam Fakhru'd-din Razi, and others say that the Holy Prophet saw in a dream that the Bani Umayya, like monkeys, ascended and descended his pulpit.

Thereafter Gabriel brought this Holy ayat:

"And when We said to you: Surely your Lord encompasses men. And we did not create the vision which We showed you except as a trial for men and the cursed tree in the Qur'an as well. And we cause them to fear, but it only adds to their grievous transgression." (17:60)

Allah Almighty has called the Bani Umayya, whose leaders were Abu Sufyan and Mu'awiya, the "cursed tree" in the Holy Qur'an. Mu'awiya, who was a strong limb of this tree, was definitely accursed.

(2) Again Allah Almighty says,

"But if you held command, you would surely make mischief in the land and cut off the ties of kinship. Those it is whom Allah has cursed so He has made them deaf and blinded their eyes." (47:22-23)

In this verse those who make mischief in the earth and sever the ties of kinship are cursed by Allah. Who was a greater mischief monger than Mu'awiya, whose caliphate was notorious for its evil practices? Besides this, he severed the ties of kinship.

(3) Also Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

"Surely as for those who speak evil things of Allah and His Apostle, Allah has cursed them in this world and in the hereafter, and He has prepared them for a chastisement bringing disgrace." (33:57)

Certainly tormenting the Commander of the Faithful and the two grandsons of the Holy Prophet Hasan and Husain as well as Ammar al-Yasir and other distinguished companions of the Holy Prophet was the equivalent of tormenting the Holy Prophet himself.

Since Mu'awiya did torment these pious people, he was, according to the explicit wordings of the verse, definitely accursed in this world and in the hereafter.

(4) In sura Mu'min (The Believer), Allah says:

"The day on which their excuse shall not benefit the unjust, and for them is a curse and for them is an evil abode." (40:52)

(5) In the sura Hud, He says:

"Now surely the curse of Allah is on the unjust." (11:18)

(6) In the sura Al-A'raf (The Elevated Places) Allah says:

"Then a crier will cry out among them that the curse of Allah is on the unjust." (7:44)

Similarly, in many other verses revealed about the unjust ones, it is clear that every unjust one is accursed. I do not think any of you would deny the open injustices perpetrated by Mu'awiya.

So the very fact that he was unjust proves that he deserved Allah's curse in the light of these clear indications we too can curse the one who deserves Allah's curse.

(7) In the sura Nisa (The Women) Allah says:

"And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his punishment is Hell; he shall abide in it, and Allah will send His wrath on him and curse him and prepare for him a painful chastisement." (4:93)

Murder of prominent believers, like Imam Hasan, Ammar Hajar ibn Adi Malik Ashtar, and Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, by order of Mu'awiya

This Holy verse explicitly says that if a man kills a single believer intentionally, he deserves Allah's curse and his abode is in Hell. Wasn't Mu'awiya associated with the murder of believers? Did he not order the killing of Hajar Ibn Adi and his seven companions? Did he not order that Abdu'r-Rahman Ibn Hasan Al-Ghanzi be buried alive?

Ibn Asakir and Yaqub Ibn Sufyan in their Histories; Baihaqi in his Dala'il; Ibn Abdu'l-Bar in Isti'ab; and Ibn Athir in Kamil have reported that Hajar Ibn Adi was one of the eminent companions who, along with seven companions was brutally murdered by Mu'awiya. Their crime was refusing to curse 'Ali.

Imam Hasan was the elder grandson of the Holy Prophet. Was he not included in Ashab al-Kisa (people of the mantle)? Was he not one of the two leaders of the youths of Paradise and a believer of exalted rank?

According to the reports of Mas'udi, Ibn Abdu'l-Bar, Abu'l-Faraj Ispahani, Tabaqa of Muhammad Ibn Sa'd, Tadhkira of Sibt Ibn Jauzi, and other accredited ulama' of the Sunnis, Mu'awiya sent poison to Asma' Ju'da and promised her that if she killed Hasan Ibn 'Ali, he would give her 100,000 dirhams and would marry her to his son Yazid.

After the martyrdom of Imam Hasan, he gave her 100,000 dirhams but refused to marry her to Yazid.

Would you hesitate to call Mu'awiya accursed? Is it not a fact that in the Battle of Siffin the great companion of the Holy Prophet, Ammar Yasir, was martyred by Mu'awiya's order?

All your prominent ulama' say with one accord that the Holy Prophet said to Ammar Yasir: "It will not be long before you will be killed by a rebellious and misguided group."

Have you any doubt that thousands of devout believers were killed by Mu'awiya's subordinates? Wasn't the pure and valiant warrior, Malik Ashtar, poisoned by Mu'awiya's order? Can you deny that Mu'awiya's chief officials, Amr Ibn As and Mu'awiya Ibn Khadij, brutally martyred the Commander of the Faithful's governor, the pious Muhammad Ibn Abi Bakr?

Not content with that, they put his body into the carcass of a donkey and set it on fire. If I were to give you the details about the believers killed by Mu'awiya and his officials, it would require not one night, but several.

Murder of 30,000 believers by Busr ibn Artat on order of Mu'awiya

The greatest atrocity was that of Busr Ibn Artat who killed thousands of believers on Mu'awiya's orders.

Abu'l-Faraj Ispahani and Allama Samhudi in Ta'rikhu'l-Medina, Ibn Khallikan, Ibn Asakir and Tabari in their histories; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol.I, and many others of your notable ulama' have written that Mu'awiya ordered Busr to attack San'a and Yemen from Medina and Mecca. He gave a similar order to Zuhak Ibn Qais Al-Fahri and others. Abu'l-Faraj reports it in these words:

"Whoever from the companions and Shi'as of 'Ali is found should be killed; even women and children should not be spared." With these strict orders, they set out with a force of 3000 and attacked Medina, San'a', Yemen, Ta'if, and Najran. When they reached Yemen, the governor, Ubaidullah Ibn Abbas, was out of the city. They entered his house and slaughtered his two sons Sulayman and Dawud in the lap of their mother.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid writes in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol.I, p. 121, that in this raid 30,000 people were killed, excluding those who were burnt alive.

Do you gentlemen still doubt that Mu'awiya deserves to be cursed?

Mu'awiya ordered that 'Ali be cursed

Among the many clear proofs that Mu'awiya was an infidel and deserved damnation was his public rejection of the Commander of the Faithful and his ordering the people to recite imprecations against the Holy Imam in their qunuts (supplication in daily prayers). This fact is acknowledged by both you and us.

Even the historians of other nations have recorded that this vile practice was openly pursued and that many people were put to death because they did not utter the curses. This outrage was discontinued by the Umayyia Caliph, 'Umar ibn Abdu'l-Aziz.

Obviously, one who curses the brother of the Holy Prophet, the husband of Fatima, the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, and who orders others to do it is definitely damned. This fact has been recorded by all your eminent ulama' in their authentic books.

For instance, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his Musnad, Imam Abu Abdu'r-Rahman Nisa'i in his Khasa'isu'l-Alawi, Imam Tha'labi and Imam Fakhru'd-in Razi in their Tafsir (commentary), Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in his Kifayatu't-Talib, Sibti Ibn Jauzi in his Tadhkira, Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani in his Mawaddatu'l-Qurba.

Dailami in his Firdaus, Muslim Ibn Hajjaj in his Sahih, Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in his Matalibu's-Su'ul, Ibn Sabbagh Maliki in his Fusulu'l-Muhimma, Hakim in his Mustadrak, Khatib Khawarizmi in his Manaqib, Abraham Hamwaini in his Fara'id, Ibn Maghazili Shafi'i in his Manaqib, Imamu'l-haram in his Dhakha'iru'l-Uquba, Ibn Hajar in his Sawa'iq, and your other prominent ulama' have, in slightly different words, reported that the Holy Prophet said: "One who reviles 'Ali, really reviles me; who reviles me, really reviles Allah."

Dailami in his Firdaus, Sulayman Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda have reported that the Holy Prophet said: "One who gives pain to 'Ali, really gives pain to me, and the curse of Allah is upon him who causes pain to me." Ibn Hajar Makki in his Sawa'iq narrates a hadith concerning the consequence to one who curses against any of the progeny of the Holy Prophet.

He reports that the Holy Prophet said: "If anyone curses my Ahlul Bayt, there is nothing for him but exclusion from Islam. If anyone injures me concerning my Ahlul Bayt, may Allah's curse be upon him."

Therefore Mu'awiya was certainly cursed. As reported by Ibn Athir in his Kamil, Mu'awiya used to curse 'Ali, the grandsons of the Holy Prophet, Hasan and Husain and also Abbas and Malik Ashtar in the qunut of his daily prayers.

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal reports in his Musnad from a number of sources that the Holy Prophet of Allah said: "If any one injures 'Ali he shall be treated as a Jew or Christian on the Day of Judgement." Certainly you must know that it is one of the tenets of Islam that to call Allah and the Holy Prophet by ill names leads to infidelity.

Muhammad Ibn Ganji Shafi'i in his Kifayatu't-Talib, part X, reports that once Abdullah Ibn Abbas and Sa'id Ibn Jabir saw on the brink of Zamzam a group of Syrians railing at 'Ali. They went to them and said:

"Who among you was abusing the Holy Prophet of Allah?" They replied: "None of us was abusing the Holy Prophet of Allah." Then they said: "Well, who among you was abusing 'Ali?" They said: "Yes, we have been abusing 'Ali."

Then Abdullah and Sa'id said: "You should bear witness that we heard the Holy Prophet saying to 'Ali, 'One who abuses you really abuses me; one who abuses me, really abuses Allah. If someone abuses Allah, He will throw him headlong into the fire of Hell.'"

The companions of the Prophet were at different levels of understanding

Sheikh: Is it proper for a man of your caliber to condemn such an able and dignified companion of the Holy Prophet? Is it not a fact that Allah Almighty revealed a number of verses in praise of the companions of the Holy Prophet and gave them the good tidings of their deliverance?

And Khalu'l-Mu'minin Mu'awiya, who was definitely a distinguished companion, deserved the praise contained in the Holy verse. Doesn't insulting the companions amount to insulting Allah and the Holy Prophet?

Well-Wisher: Perhaps you have forgotten what I have already told you on previous nights. No one denies that verses have been revealed in praise of the companions. But if you understand the meaning of the sahaba or companions, you will admit that the verses revealed in praise of the companions are not generally applicable to all. We cannot regard all of them as entirely pure.

Respected man! You know full well that "sahaba" literally means the joining together of persons. So it may mean living together or, as is commonly understood, helping or giving assistance to others.

According to Arab lexicography, the Qur'an, and the hadith, a companion of the Holy Prophet refers to one who has spent his life in the company of the Holy Prophet, whether he was a Muslim or an infidel. So your interpretation that all the companions deserve Paradise is not correct. This contradicts common sense as well as the hadith.

In the words of the holy Qur'an "sahab" and "sahaba," meaning "companions", have no reverential significance

I will submit additional Qur'anic verses and authentic hadith from Sunni scholars so that you will not be mistaken about the word "companion." This word was used for all companions, whether they were Muslims or not.

(1) In the sura Najm (the Star), Allah says to the Polytheists:

"Your companion does not err, nor does he go astray." (53:2)

(2) In the sura of Saba (Sheba), Allah says:

"Say: I exhort you only to one thing, that you rise up for Allah's sake in pairs and singly, then ponder: your companion is not possessed." (34:46)

(3) In the sura of Kahf (The Cave), Allah says:

"and said he to his companion while he disputed with him: I have greater wealth than you and am mightier in followers." (18:34)

(4) In the same sura, Allah says:

"His companion said to him while disputing with him: Do you disbelieve in Him Who created you from dust, then from a sperm drop, then He made you a perfect man." (18:37)

(5) In the sura of A'raf (The Elevated Places), Allah says:

"Do they not reflect that their companion had not unsoundness in mind? He is only a plain warner." (7: 184)

(6) In the sura of An'am (The Cattle), Allah says:

"Say: Shall we call on that besides Allah, which does not benefit us nor harm us, and shall we be returned back on our heels after Allah has guided us, like him whom the devils have made to fall down perplexed on the earth. He has companions who call him to the right way, (saying): 'Come to us.' Say: Surely the guidance of Allah, that is the (true) guidance, and we are commanded that we should submit to the Lord of the worlds." (6:71)

(7) In the sura of Yusuf (Joseph) He says: (Yusuf addressing his two fellow prisoners who were polytheists)

"O my two Companions of the prison! Are many lords better or Allah, the One, the Supreme?" (12:39)

These are a few verses, which I have quoted by way of example. It is clear that the words "sahaba," "sahib," "musahib" and "ashab" have no special relationship to Muslims. They are used in reference to Muslims and polytheists alike.

As I have said, a man who has a social dealing with another man is called his musahib or ashbab. The companions of the Holy Prophet refer to those who had social dealings with him.

Certainly among the companions of the Holy Prophet and among those who sat in his company, were all

sorts of people, good and bad, believers as well as hypocrites. The verses revealed in praise of the companions cannot be attributed to all of them. They refer only to the good companions.

It is also true that none of these exalted prophets of the past had companions as distinguished as those of our Holy Prophet. For instance, the companions of Badr, Uhud, and Hunain were such as stood the test of time. They helped the Holy Prophet and were firm in their resolve.

But among his companions were also a number of men of debased character, enemies of the Holy Prophet and his Ahlul Bayt, men like Abdullah Ibn Ubayy, Abu Sufyan, Hakam Ibn As, Abu Huraira, Tha'labi, Yazid Ibn Sufyan, Walid Ibn Aqaba, Habib Ibn Musailima, Samra Ibn Jundab, Amr Ibn As, Busr Ibn Artat (a tyrant and bloodthirsty man), Mughira Ibn Sha'ba, Mu'awiya Ibn Abi Sufyan, and Dhu's-Sadiyya.

These men, both during the life time of the Holy Prophet and after his death, caused great tumult among the people. One such man was Mu'awiya, whom the Holy Prophet cursed in his own time. After the death of the Holy Prophet, when Mu'awiya got an opportunity, he rose in revolt in the name of seeking vengeance for Uthman's murder and caused the blood shed of many Muslims.

In this slaughter, many respected companions of the Holy Prophet, like Ammar Yasir, were martyred. The Holy Prophet himself foretold his martyrdom. I have already mentioned some hadith regarding this event.

Holy Qur'an praises good companions but also condemns bad companions

There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an and hadith in praise of distinguished companions and pious believers. And there are also many verses and hadith condemning those companions who were sinners.

Sheikh: How can you claim that the companions of the Holy Prophet caused social disturbances?

Well-Wisher: This is not merely my claim. Allah Almighty in the sura of Ahlul Imran (the House of Imran) says:

"If then he (Muhammad) dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels?" (3: 144)

Apart from this and other verses of the Holy Qur'an, your own ulama', including Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn Asakir, Yaqub Ibn Sufyan, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Abdu'l-Bar, and others have recorded a number of reports and hadith concerning the condemnation of some of the companions. I will refer to only two hadith.

Bukhari reports from Sahl Ibn Sa'd and Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud that the Holy Prophet of Allah said, "I shall be waiting for you at the fountain of Kauthar. When a group of you goes astray from my way, I will say,

'O Allah! These were my companions!' Then a reply from Him will come to me: 'You do not know what innovations they introduced after you.'"

Again Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his Musnad, Tabrani in his Kabir, and Abu Nasr Sakhri in his Ibana narrate from Ibn Abbas that the Holy Prophet said: "I want to save you from the chastisement of Hell. I ask you to fear Hell and to make no changes in the religion of Allah. When I die and am separated from you, I shall be present at the Fountain of Kauthar.

Whoever reaches me there is saved. At the end of time when I find a large number of people caught in divine chastisement, I shall say: 'O Allah! These are the people of my Community.' The reply shall come, 'Verily, these people returned to their old creed after you.'" According to Tabrani's report in Kabir, the reply shall be: "You do not know what innovations they introduced after you. They adopted their former religion of ignorance."

Abu Talib was a firm believer

You insist that Mu'awiya and Yazid are Muslims even though their many atrocities are recorded in your own books. Some of the Sunni ulama' have written complete books in their condemnation, but you stubbornly insist that they were praiseworthy and that Abu Talib a sincere believer was an infidel!

It is quite evident that this foolish talk is the product of enmity against the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali. You try to refute the arguments which prove the infidelity and hypocrisy of Mu'awiya and Yazid. And yet you reject Abu Talib's open pronouncements regarding his belief in Allah and the Holy Prophet.

Additional proof of Abu Talib's belief

Is it not a fact that the Holy Prophet's Ahlul Bayt have said that Abu Talib was a believer and that he died a believer? Has not Asbagh Ibn Nabuta, a highly trusted man, narrated from the Commander of the Faithful that he said, "I swear by Allah that my father, Abu Talib, my grandfather, Abdu'l-Muttalib Hashim, and Abdu'l-Manaf never worshipped idols."

Is it proper that you should reject the statements of 'Ali and the Holy Ahlul Bayt and give credence to the statements of the cursed Mughira, Amawis, Kharijis, Nasibis, and other enemies of the Commander of the Faithful?

Ja'far Tayyar's embracing Islam by his father's order

Moreover, many of your ulama', including Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, have written that one day Abu Talib came to the mosque and saw that the Holy Prophet was offering prayers. 'Ali was offering prayers on the right side of the Holy Prophet.

Abu Talib ordered his son Ja'far (Tayyar) who was with him and had not yet embraced Islam, "Stand on the side of your cousin and perform the prayers with him." Ja'far moved forward and, standing on the left side of the Holy Prophet, began to say his prayers. At that time Abu Talib composed these lines of poetry:

"Verily 'Ali and Ja'far are my strength and solace in my distress and disappointment. O 'Ali and Ja'far! Never leave the company of your cousin and my nephew, but help him. I swear that I will never leave the Holy Prophet. Can anyone leave the company of a Prophet of such noble family?"

So it is the unanimous view of your own ulama' that Ja'far's embracing Islam and his performing the prayers with the Holy Prophet were at the order of Abu Talib.

The Holy Prophet wept bitterly at Abu Talib's death and invoked Allah's blessings on him

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha and Ibn Jauzi in Tadhkirat al-Khawasu'l-Umma report from Tabaqat al-Muhammad Ibn Sa'd, who reports from Waqidi and Allama Sayyid Muhammad Ibn Sayyid Rasul Barzanji in his Kitabu'l-Islam Fi'l-'am-o-Aba' al-Sayyidu'l-An'am, a report from Ibn Sa'd and Ibn Asakir, who report on authentic sources from Muhammad Ibn Ishaq that 'Ali said:

"When Abu Talib died, and I informed the Holy Prophet of Allah about it, he wept bitterly. Then he said to me, 'Go and wash his body in preparation for burial, wrap his body in a shroud, and bury him. May Allah bless him and have mercy upon him!'"

Is it permitted by Islam to perform the burial rituals for a polytheist? Is it right for us to say that the Holy Prophet invoked the blessings of Allah upon an infidel and a polytheist? The Holy Prophet did not leave his house for several days and continued praying to Allah for Abu Talib's eternal peace.

'Ali's elegy for his father, Abu Talib

If you consult the Tadhkira of Sibti Ibn Jauzi, p.6 you will see what the Commander of the Faithful said in his eulogy for his father. "O Abu Talib! You were a haven for the seeker of refuge, a rain of mercy for dry lands, and a light which penetrated the darkness. Your death has toppled the pillars of safety.

Now the real Benefactor has bestowed mercy upon you. Allah Almighty has attached you to His Court. Verily, you were the best uncle of the Holy Prophet."

Can it be believed that a man who was the embodiment of monotheism would write such a eulogy for a person who died an infidel?

Abu Talib concealed his faith while Hamza and Abbas proclaimed theirs

Sheikh: If Abu Talib was a believer, why did he not reveal his faith as his brothers, Hamza and Abbas did?

Well-Wisher: There was a great difference between Abbas, Hamza, and Abu Talib. Hamza was so fearless and formidable that all Meccans dreaded him. His embracing Islam proved a great help to the Holy Prophet.

Abbas, however, did not announce his Islam immediately. Ibn Abdu'l-Bar writes in his Isti'ab that Abbas embraced Islam while he was in Mecca, but he concealed his faith from the people. When the Holy Prophet migrated from Mecca, Abbas also intended to be with him. But the Holy Prophet wrote to him that his stay in Mecca would be useful to him (the Holy Prophet).

Accordingly, he remained in Mecca and used to send the Holy Prophet news from there. The idolaters brought him with them to the Battle of Badr. When the infidels were defeated, he was taken prisoner. On the day of the conquest of Khaibar he was finally allowed to reveal his faith.

Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in his Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, ch.56, p.226 reports from the Dhakha'iru'l-Uquba of Imamu'l-Haram Abu Ja'far Ahmad Ibn Abdullah Tabari Shafi'i, who reports from Faza'il of Abu'l-Qasim Ilahi that scholars know that Abbas had embraced Islam in the beginning but that he kept it secret. In the Battle of Badr, when he came along with the infidels, the Holy Prophet told his men:

"Whoever sees Abbas should not kill him because he unwillingly accompanied the infidels. He was ready to migrate, but I wrote to him that he should remain there and give me information about the idolaters." On the day Abu Rafi'i informed the Holy Prophet that Abbas proclaimed his acceptance of Islam, the Holy Prophet set Abu Rafi'i free.

Why Abu Talib concealed his faith

If Abu Talib had revealed his faith, all of the Quraish and the entire Arab nation would have united against the Bani Hashim. Abu Talib understood the expedience of concealing his Islam. He pretended to be loyal to the Quraish in order to thwart the activities of the enemy.

So long as Abu Talib remained alive the same condition continued, and the Holy Prophet was protected. But at the death of Abu Talib, the Angel Gabriel appeared before the Holy Prophet and said: "Now you should leave Mecca. After Abu Talib, you have no helper here."

Sheikh: Was the Islam of Abu Talib known during the time of the Holy Prophet of Allah, and did the community believe in it?

Well-Wisher: Yes, it was commonly known to the people and they pronounced his name with full reverence.

Abu Talib's faith was commonly known during the time of the Holy Prophet

Sheikh: How is it possible that during the time of the Holy Prophet a thing was so much spoken of and commonly known to all, but after a period of thirty years, a contrary view gained credence because of a false hadith?

Well-Wisher: This was not a unique instance. Often what was accepted during the time of the Holy Prophet completely changed its form after a few years because of a forged hadith. Other religious orders and practices in force during the life of the Prophet were abandoned after some years due to the influence of the people.

Mut'a marriage and hajj Nisa were lawful up to Abu Bakr's time but made unlawful by 'Umar

Sheikh: Kindly cite one example of such a change.

Well-Wisher: There are many examples; two should suffice to make my point. I will discuss mut'a (temporary marriage) and hajj nisa. Both sects agree that these two practices were common during the time of the Prophet. Moreover, they were practiced during Abu Bakr's caliphate and also during part of 'Umar's caliphate. But Caliph 'Umar brought about a complete reversal of the Qur'anic order.

He said, "Two mut'as were in effect during the time of the Holy Prophet. I now decree both of them unlawful and will punish those who engage in this practice."

What was made lawful by Allah was suddenly abrogated. 'Umar's decree was so widely promulgated and so blindly followed that the original law soon fell into oblivion. Even today many of our Sunni brothers regard mut'a as an innovation of the Shi'as.

If 'Umar's whim could overturn the clear ordinance of Allah and the historical fact that mut'a was practiced, can you doubt that Abu Talib's well known belief could also be denied?

Sheikh: Are you saying that millions of Muslims have violated the injunctions of the Qur'an and the sunna of the Prophet? Remember, the whole world calls us Sunnis, i.e., followers of the sunna. The Shi'as are called Rafizis, i.e., those who stray from the sunna of the Prophet.

Sunnis are really rafizis and Shi'as are Sunni

Well-Wisher: In reality the Shi'as are Sunnis, that is, they follow the Holy Qur'an and the Sunna of the Holy Prophet. You people are Rafizis because you violate the injunctions of the Holy Qur'an and the commands of the Prophet.

Sheikh: This is strange indeed! You have transformed millions of pure Muslims into Rafizis! Can you advance any argument to support this?

Well-Wisher: I have already told you during previous nights that the Holy Prophet instructed us that after him we should follow the Holy Qur'an and his progeny. But you people deliberately abandoned the progeny of the Prophet and followed others. You rejected the practices of the Holy Prophet. You left those people by order of your two sheikhs and then call the real followers of the Sunna of the Holy Prophet Rafizis.

Among such orders there is another explicit injunction in the Holy Qur'an which says,

"And know that whatever thing you gain, a fifth of it is for Allah and for the Apostle and for the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the way fairer." (8:41)

The Holy Prophet observed this order and gave khums (1/5) of the wealth acquired from the enemy to his relatives and kinsmen. But you people opposed this practice.

The practice of mut'a is another case in point. It was in accordance with Allah's command. It was sanctioned by the Prophet and his companions. The practice continued during Abu Bakr's caliphate and also during a part of 'Umar's caliphate. But at the command of 'Umar you people have made unlawful what Allah made lawful. Moreover, you have rejected the Sunna of the Holy Prophet. And yet you call yourselves Sunnis and call us Rafizis.

Caliph 'Umar himself did not advance any reason for his revoking the divine order. The Sunni ulama' have tried in vain to prove that Caliph 'Umar's decision was just.

Arguments for lawfulness of mut'a

Sheikh: Can you prove the lawfulness of mut'a? Can you prove that Caliph 'Umar violated the Qur'anic injunction and the Sunna of the Holy Prophet?

Well-Wisher: The strongest proof is furnished by the Holy Qur'an. In the sura of Nisa (The Women) Allah says:

"...then as to those by whom you benefited (from mut'a), give them their dowries as appointed..." (4:24)

Obviously the Holy Qur'an's command is obligatory forever unless it is abrogated by the Qur'an, itself. Since it has not been abrogated, this command holds good forever.

Sheikh: How is this verse not related to permanent wedlock? It is this same verse that gives instruction about paying back dowry.

Well-Wisher: You have confused the main point. Your own prominent ulama', like Tabari in his Tafsir al-Kabir, part V and Imam Fakhru'd-din Razi in his Tafsir al-Mafatihul-Ghaib, part III, have confirmed that this verse refers to mut'a.

Apart from the explicit interpretation of your ulama' and commentators, you are also aware that throughout the entire sura of Nisa, several kinds of marriage and wedlock have been mentioned: nika (permanent marriage), mut'a (temporary marriage), and marriage with mulk al-Yamin (servants).

For permanent marriage the Holy Qur'an says in the sura of Nisa:

"Then marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and four; but if you fear that you will not do justice (between them), then only one or what your right hands possess." (4:3)

About Mulk al-yamin (servants), Allah says:

"And whoever among you has not within his power ample means to marry free believing women, then (he may marry) of those whom your right hands possess from among your believing maidens; and Allah knows best your faith: you are sprung the one from the other; so marry them with the permission of their masters and give them their dowries justly." (4:25)

The command in verse 4 of sura Nisa to the effect that: "...as to those by whom you benefitted (from mut'a), give them their dowries as appointed...." was for mut'a, or temporary marriage. It could not be for permanent wedlock, for otherwise, it would mean that in the same chapter the decree regarding permanent wedlock has been repeated twice, which is against the rule, and if it is for mut'a, then it evidently is a permanent and separate decree.

Second, not only Shi'as but all Muslims agree that mut'a was practiced during the early days of Islam. The distinguished companions practiced it in the time of the Holy Prophet. If this verse refers to permanent wedlock then which is the verse for mut'a? Evidently this is the verse regarding mut'a, which your own commentators have accepted. There is no verse in the Holy Qur'an which abrogates this command.

Ahlul Sunna regarding lawfulness of mut'a

It is reported in Sahih of Bukhari and the Musnad of Imam Ibn Hanbal from Abu Raja on the authority of Imran Ibn Hasin that "...the verse of mut'a was revealed in the Book of Allah. So we acted in accordance

with it during the time of the Holy Prophet. No verse was revealed to make it unlawful, nor did the Holy Prophet ever prohibit it." One man decided to change this law. Bukhari says that the man was 'Umar.

Muslim in his Sahih, part I, in the chapter of Nikatu'l-Mut'a, says "Hasan Halwa'i reported to us that he was told by Abdu'r-Razzaq, who was informed by Ibn Jarir, who was told by 'Ata that Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari came to Mecca for the Umra and they went to him at his residence. People asked him many questions.

When they came to the question of mut'a he said, 'Yes, we used to practice mut'a during the time of the Holy Prophet and during the caliphate of Abu Bakr and 'Umar.'" Also in the same book in part I, in the chapter of al-Mut'a Bi'l-Hajj wa'l-Umra, it is narrated on the authority of Abu Nazara that he said: "I was in the company of Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari when a man came and said:

"There is a difference of opinion between Ibn Abbas and Ibn Zubair concerning the two mut'as, Mut'atu'n-Nisa and Mut'atu'l-Hajj.' Then Jabir said, 'We have performed both of these during the time of the Holy Prophet. Thereafter, when 'Umar forbade it, we could not do it.'"

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his Musnad, part I, p.25, narrates Abu Nazara's report in another way. Also both narrate another report from Jabir that he said: "In the days of the Holy Prophet and Abu Bakr, we used to practice mut'a for the consideration of a handful of dates and flour until 'Umar forbade it in the case of Amr Ibn Harith."

Hamidi, in his Jam' al-Bainu's-Sahihain, narrates from Abdullah Ibn Abbas that he said: "We used to practice mut'a during the time of the Holy Prophet. When 'Umar was caliph, he said that 'Allah Almighty made lawful whatever He liked for His Holy Prophet. Now he is dead, and the Qur'an takes his place. So when you begin the Hajj or the Umra, you should complete them as Allah has ordered you. You should repent of and abstain from mut'a. Bring him who has practiced mut'a to me so that I may stone him."

There are many such reports in your own reliable books showing that mut'a was permissible during the days of the Holy Prophet. The companions practiced it until 'Umar made it unlawful.

Besides these reports, some of the companions, like Ubayy Ibn Ka'b, Ibn Abbas, Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, Sa'id Ibn Jabir and Sa'd have recited the verse of mut'a in this way, "And as such of them you had mut'a with until such time as was fixed."

Jarullah Zamakhshari reports in his Kashshaf from Ibn Abbas and also Muhammad Ibn Jarir Tabari in his Tafsir al-Kabir and Imam Fakhru'd-din Razi in his Tafsir al-Mafatihul-Ghaib, vol.III, writing about this Holy verse and Imam Nuwi in his Sharh al-Muslim, chapter I, Nikatu'l-Mut'a report from Nazari that Qazi Ayaz stated that "Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, the writer of wahi (i.e., recorder of revelations), used to recite this verse in the same way, that is, 'until such time as has been fixed.'"

Imam Fakhru'd-din Razi, after quoting the statement of Ubayy Ibn Ka'b and Ibn Abbas, said: "The

community did not reject their recitation of the verse in this way, so what we have said has been accepted through consensus." Again on the next page he argues in this way: "This reading evidently proves that mut'a had the sanction of religion. We have no difference of opinion that mut'a was permitted in the time of the Holy Prophet."

Command permitting mut'a was not repealed

Sheikh: Can you prove that it was lawful during the days of the Holy Prophet but was not repealed later?

Well-Wisher: There is plenty of proof that it was not annulled. The most convincing argument is that mut'a had been permitted from the time of the Holy Prophet until the middle of the caliphate of 'Umar.

Caliph 'Umar's own statement has been generally reported by your ulama'. They have written that he went to the pulpit and said, "In the time of the Prophet two mut'as were permitted. I make both of them unlawful, and if any one does it, I will punish him."

Sheikh: What you say is correct, but my point is that there are many orders, which were current earlier in the time of the Holy Prophet but were repealed later. Mut'a was also permitted in the beginning, but later it was forbidden.

Well-Wisher: Since the basis and foundation of religion is the Holy Qur'an, if any ordinance is present in the Holy Qur'an and is abrogated, its abrogation must also be present in it. Now please let me know where in the Holy Qur'an this order has been repealed.

Sheikh: In sura 23, Mu'minin (The Believers), verse 6 repeals this order. It says

"Except before their mates or those whom their right hands possess, for surely they are not blameworthy." (22:6)

This verse lays down two conditions for conjugal relations: marriage or intercourse with slaves. So this verse proves that the ordinance of mut'a has been repealed.

Well-Wisher: This verse does not in any way prove that mut'a was repealed; it confirms it. The woman united by mut'a is the real wife of the man. Had she not been his real wife, Allah would not have ordered her mehr (dowry) to be paid.

Moreover, the sura of The Believers was revealed while the Prophet was in Mecca, the sura of Women while he was in Medina. Obviously the Meccan chapters preceded the Medinan chapter. Can verse A abrogate verse B, if verse A came before B?

Distinguished companions and Imam Malik insist that the ordinance of mut'a was not abrogated

Abdullah Ibn Abbas, Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari, Salama Ibn Akwa', Abu'dh-Dharr Ghifari, Subra Ibn Ma'bad, Akwa' Ibn Abdullah Al-Aslami and Imran Ibn Hasin have stated that the ordinance of mut'a was not abrogated. Moreover, your eminent ulama' have also held that it was not abrogated.

For instance, Jarullah Zamakhshari, in his Tafsir al-Kashshaf regarding Abdullah Ibn Abbas's statement that the verse of mut'a was one of the clear ordinances of the Holy Qur'an, says that this verse was not repealed. Imam Malik Ibn Anas also said that the permissibility of mut'a had not been repealed.

Mulla Sa'idu'd-din Taftazani in Sharh al-Maqasid, Burhanu'd-din Hanafi in his Hidayah, Ibn Hajar Asqalani in his Fathu'l-Bari and others also have reported the statement and verdict of Malik who says: "Mut'a is lawful. It is permitted by religion. Its lawfulness, as confirmed by Ibn Abbas, is quite well known and most of his companions from Yeman and Mecca have practiced it.

At another place he says: "Mut'a is lawful since it has been permitted and its lawfulness and permissibility hold good unless it is repealed." You will notice that until Malik's death there was no evidence that the ordinance of mut'a had been annulled.

Moreover, your prominent commentators, like Zamakhshari, Baghawi, and Imam Tha'labi have adhered to the position of Ibn Abbas and other distinguished companions and have believed in the lawfulness of mut'a.

All conditions of wedlock are fulfilled by mut'a

Sheikh: Since there are no provisions for a woman united by mut'a, such as inheritance, divorce, after divorce (waiting period) and maintenance, as are necessary for a wife, she cannot be a real wife.

Well-Wisher: A woman joined with a man through mut'a is protected by all the provisions of any wife except those which have been reasonably excluded. Mut'a is a kind of nika (marriage), which entitles a woman to wifedom. Of course for the convenience of the community and to save them from lawlessness, some of its conditions and formalities have been waived.

As for its conditions, first, it is not proved that inheritance is a necessary condition of marriage. Many women, in spite of being wives, do not receive an inheritance from their husbands. For example, disobedient wives or those who murder are deprived of inheritance.

Second, it is not definitely established whether a woman united by mut'a is deprived of her right of inheritance. The jurists differ in their opinions about it, and such differences exist among you also.

Third, the Imamiyya ulama' unanimously hold the view that a woman united by mut'a must also observe 'idda (waiting period before re-marriage). Its shortest period has been fixed as 45 days. If the husband dies, she should observe the usual 'idda of four months and ten days, whether she had had sexual intercourse with her husband or not, or whether she has passed the age of menstruation or not.

Fourth, the right of maintenance is not a necessary condition attached to marriage. There are a number of wives who are not entitled to maintenance, such as those who are disobedient or who murder their husbands.

Fifth, the expiration of the agreed upon period is itself her divorce. Similarly, with the consent of her husband, she may be divorced before the expiration date.

Therefore none of the conditions that you have mentioned has any force. A renowned Shi'as scholar, Allama Jamalu'd-Din Hilli (Hasan Ibn Yusuf Ibn 'Ali Ibn Mutahhar), has given in detail the same arguments in reply to the views of your prominent ulama'. I have referred to them briefly. Anyone who wants to study it in detail may consult Allama Hilli's Mabahithat al-Sunniyya wa Ma'rifat al-Nussairiyya.

Was qur'anic command for mut'a abrogated by the Holy Prophet?

Sheikh: Besides the Holy verse there are also a large number of hadith which say that the ordinance concerning mut'a had been abrogated during the time of the Holy Prophet.

Well-Wisher: Kindly let us know about that order of abrogation.

Sheikh: It has been narrated with some variations. Some reporters say that it was decreed on the day of the conquest of Khaibar, some say it happened on the day of conquest of Mecca, some reports say that it was on the occasion of the Last Pilgrimage, and some say that it was on the day of Tabuk. Others, however, are of the opinion that the order of nullity was revealed on the occasion of Umratu'l-Qaza (The Farewell Pilgrimage).

Arguments concerning its abrogation during the time of the Holy Prophet

Well-Wisher: The contradictory reports clearly prove that there was no such order of abrogation. And how can those reports be relied upon when, on the contrary, there are many hadith reported in Sahih al-Sitta, Jam' al-Bainu's-Sahihain, Jam' al-Bainu's-Sahih al-Sitta, Musnad, etc, from distinguished companions which prove that this verse was not abrogated until the caliphate of 'Umar.

The most compelling argument that your own ulama' have themselves cited is the statement of Caliph 'Umar, who said: "I make both those two mut'as which were current in the days of the Holy Prophet,

unlawful." Had there been any verse, or order of the Holy Prophet, the caliph would have said:

"According to the instructions of the Holy Prophet, which is supported by the Qur'anic verse, if any one committed the unlawful act in violation of the abrogated ordinance, I will punish him." Such a statement would have been more impressive for the people. But he merely said: "Two mut'as were permitted in the time of the Holy Prophet, I make them unlawful."

If, however, your claim is correct and the verse of mut'a was abrogated, why didn't the pupils of the Holy Prophet, like Abdullah Ibn Abbas, Imran Ibn Hashim and other companions act upon it? Your own great traditionists and historians, including Bukhari and Muslim, have recorded this fact. All these things clearly prove that from the time of the Holy Prophet to the caliphate of 'Umar the companions followed this ordinance.

Could caliph 'Umar abrogate mut'a?

So it is clear that mut'a shall continue to be lawful forever. Abu Isa Muhammad Ibn Sawratu't-Tirmidhi in his Sunan, which is regarded as one of the six Sahih by you, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his Musnad, PART II, p.95, and Ibn Athir in his Jam'u'l-Usul have reported that a Syrian man asked Abdullah Ibn 'Umar Ibn Khattab what he considered about Mut'a al-Nisa. He said: "Of course, it is lawful."

The man said again, "But your father, the caliph, forbade the people to do it." He said, "It was ordered by the Holy Prophet; so if it has been prohibited by my father that order cannot supersede the order of the Holy Prophet. I am the follower of the Holy Prophet's order."

For the reports which have been narrated, perhaps people later forged hadith in order to support Caliph 'Umar's statement. The matter is too clear to call for any further elucidation. The fact is that you have no real evidence for the unlawfulness of mut'a except the statement of Caliph 'Umar.

Sheikh: Caliph 'Umar's statement in itself is the strongest evidence for Muslims, and they must follow it. If he had not heard it from the Holy Prophet, he would not have said that.

Well-Wisher: Is Caliph 'Umar's statement so compelling that Muslims must follow it? I have not seen a single hadith in your books, in which the Holy Prophet said that 'Umar Ibn Khattab's statement was a confirmed source or that Muslims should follow it.

On the other hand your books are filled with reliable hadith saying that we should follow the descendants of the Holy Prophet, particularly 'Ali. I have referred to some of these hadith on previous nights. The Ahlul Bayt of the Holy Prophet have said that the ordinance of mut'a was not abrogated.

You said that had Caliph 'Umar not heard about the order of cancellation from the Holy Prophet, he would not have said what he did. But this is easily disproved. First, if Caliph 'Umar had heard of the cancellation of the order of mut'a from the Holy Prophet, he should have spoken about it during the life of

the Holy Prophet up to the period of his own caliphate.

This would have been especially important since he saw prominent companions had been practicing it, and it was his duty to tell the people that the practice of mut'a had been annulled. Why did he not perform the duty of prevention of evil?

Second, the practice, which had been current among the community by order of the Holy Prophet, could only be nullified by the Holy Prophet. There should have been no delay in this case. Does it stand to reason that if an order for the Community had been circulated and was later abrogated, would the Holy Prophet have spoken about it to no one except 'Umar?

And would it have made sense that 'Umar would not have told anybody about it until late in his own caliphate? During all this period when the community continued to follow this (so-called) abrogated order, did no responsibility lie with 'Umar?

You say that the prohibition of "nullified and irreligious" practice could not be made known to others and therefore the community continued to follow it. Can anybody else except the Holy Prophet be held responsible for not proclaiming the abrogation of an order, having told only 'Umar of it?

Is it not infidelity to say that the Holy Prophet neglected to perform his mission and that the community because of its ignorance, continued acting upon an abrogated order for a long time?

Third, if the order of mut'a had been annulled during the time of the Holy Prophet and 'Umar had heard of this from the Holy Prophet, 'Umar could have said when he prohibited it that he had himself heard the Holy Prophet say that the practice of mut'a had been banned.

Obviously, if he had referred to the Holy Prophet's statement, the community would have been much impressed by it. But he said, "During the time of the Holy Prophet, two mut'as were permitted, but I make them unlawful. Now I will stone those who do it." Is it not the duty of the Holy Prophet to declare things lawful or unlawful? Or, can it be the right of a caliph who has been appointed by the people?

I don't understand on what basis 'Umar declared unlawful what Allah made lawful. How strange it is that the Holy Prophet never said that he made a certain thing lawful or unlawful. Whenever he announced any order, he said that Allah had ordered him to convey it to the people. How bold 'Umar is when he says: "Two mut'as were permitted in the time of the Holy Prophet. I make both of them unlawful. I will punish those who commit those acts."

Command of Allah or of the Holy Prophet may not be abrogated by a caliph

Sheikh: Certainly you are aware that some of our scholars of high learning believe that since the Holy Prophet was a mujtahid (authority) in the matter of religious orders, another mujtahid, by virtue of his

own findings, may set aside the former order. It was on this basis that 'Umar said, "I make those two things unlawful."

Well-Wisher: In an attempt to set right one wrong, you perpetrate many others. Does ijtiḥad have any significance in contradicting an injunction of the Holy Qur'an? Is not your statement quite absurd and opposed to the Qur'anic verses?

Allah Almighty says in the sura of Jonah:

"Say: It is not proper for me that I should change it myself. I follow naught but what is revealed to me." (10:15)

If it is true that the Holy Prophet could not make any changes in religious order unless he was ordered by Allah to do so, how could 'Umar, who had no knowledge of revelation, have the authority to make unlawful what Allah had made lawful?

In the sura of Najm (The Star) Allah says:

"Nor does he speak out of caprice. It is naught but revelation that is revealed." (53:3-4)

In the sura of Ahqaf (The Sand Dunes), Allah says:

"Say: I am not the first of the apostles, and I do not know what will be done with me or with you. I do not follow anything but what has been revealed to me." (46:9)

Obedience to the Holy Prophet is obligatory. No one, 'Umar or anyone else, has the right to interfere with divine orders and make unlawful what Allah made lawful.

Expediency not grounds for abrogation

Sheikh: 'Umar definitely thought it expedient and considered it in the best interest of the people to abrogate that order. We find these days that some people take a woman in mut'a for the sake of pleasure for an hour, a month, or a year. Later, regardless of whether she is pregnant or not, they leave her.

Well-Wisher: This is ridiculous! What does the lawfulness of this Islamic command have to do with people's indulgence in illicit sexual relations? If we followed your reasoning, perhaps permanent wedlock should be made unlawful.

After all, people marry noble girls for their money or their beauty and later leave them, without giving them any financial support. Since some people do this, do you think that permanent wedlock should be abrogated?

No. We should encourage people to be honest and give them proper religious instruction. If a righteous man does not find in himself the capacity to shoulder the responsibility of having a permanent wife, and if he wishes to avoid an unlawful action, he would, in compliance with the code of religion, wish to take a woman in mut'a or temporary wedlock.

Accordingly, he would like to know the conditions of mut'a because he knows that for every order there are certain conditions. At the time of mutual agreement, he would provide the amount of mehr (dower) for the woman which would be sufficient for her maintenance during her 'idda, which is 45 days, after the term of the period of mut'a.

Second, after the separation, he would look after the woman during the entire period of 'idda. If she were pregnant, he would take proper care of the mother so that he might take his child after it is born. If some people fail to honor these conditions, it does not follow that a valid order of lawfulness has been abrogated.

The welfare of the community was better understood by Allah and the Holy Prophet than by 'Umar. And they did not prohibit mut'a. If they didn't prohibit it, no caliph or imam, or any other man, even one divinely commissioned, can of his own accord make unlawful what Allah has made lawful. So your claim, that it was in the best interest of the community that people give up mut'a, is untenable.

Mut'a was not the cause of the spread of lawlessness; rather it was the banning of it which spread lewdness. Those young men and women, who cannot afford to join in permanent wedlock if they cannot control and restrain their sexual appetite, will indulge in illicit sex. And of course widespread adultery and fornication destroy the moral character of entire nations.

Imam Tha'labi and Tabari in their Tafsir and Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his Musnad, writing in connection with the verse of mut'a, narrate from Amiru'l-Mu'minin 'Ali that he said: "If 'Umar had not put a restraint on mut'a, no one, except an unfortunate man, would have committed fornication."

Also Ibn Jarir and Amr Ibn Dinar report from Abdullah Ibn Abbas who said: "Mut'a was really a mercy of Allah, which He gave to the community of Muhammad. If 'Umar had not banned it, no one except an unlucky man would have committed adultery."

So according to the views of the companions of the Holy Prophet, the cause of the prevalence of adultery was the prohibition of mut'a, rather than the practice of it. In fact all the divine commands regarding lawful and unlawful acts which have been transmitted to the community through the Holy Prophet were intended for the welfare of the people. They continue to benefit them today.

Abu Talib's faith was well known during the time of the Holy

Prophet

Our topic of discussion was not this, but I wanted to remove your doubt since you said that what was known in the time of the Holy Prophet could be set at naught through forged hadith. Similarly there is no validity in your objection regarding the faith of Abu Talib.

His faith during the time of the Holy Prophet was also well known and regarded with respect. But by forging the hadith of Zahza, some people spread just the opposite report. The uninformed people, blindly following their elders accepted this false report.

In short, what I have said amply proves that 'Ali belonged to such a distinguished family that no one of the eminent companions could match him.

'Ali's birthplace was the Ka'ba

Another indication of 'Ali's special merit was his birthplace. No one else, from Adam down through all the prophets, possessed such a distinction. Of all human beings, he alone was born in the sacred precinct of the Ka'ba. At the time of the birth of the Prophet Jesus his illustrious mother was forced to leave the Holy House. A voice said to her: "O Mary! Leave the Baitu'l-Muqaddas, since it is the place of worship and not of childbirth."

But when the time of 'Ali's birth approached, his mother, Fatima Bint Asad, was asked to enter the Ka'ba. And this was not an accidental affair as if a woman was in the mosque and suddenly she was delivered of a child. She was expressly called to enter the Ka'ba, the door of which was locked. Some uninformed people think that Fatima Bint Asad was in the Holy Mosque when she felt labor pains, could not go out, and gave birth to the child.

The fact was otherwise. It was the month of Fatima Bint Asad's confinement. She went to the Masjidul-Haram, where she felt labor pains. She prayed to Allah in the precinct of the Ka'ba, saying: "O Allah! I pray to you in the name of your honor and awe, to put me at my ease in this labor." Suddenly, the wall of the Ka'ba, which was locked, opened.

Another report says that a voice was heard saying: "O Fatima! Enter the House." Fatima went into the House of Allah in front of a crowd of people who were sitting round that place and the wall returned to its original condition. The people were greatly astonished. Abbas was also there. When he saw what had happened, he immediately told Abu Talib because he had the key to the door.

He instantly came there and tried his best to unlock the door, but the door did not open. For three days Fatima Bint Asad remained inside the Ka'ba, apparently without sustenance of any kind. This unusual event was the talk of the town.

At last, on the third day, the passage through which she had entered again opened, and Fatima came

out. The people saw that she had in her hands a lovely child. Both sects (Shi'as and Sunnis) agree that no one else had ever been given such distinction.

Hakim in his Mustadrak and Nuru'd-din Ibn Sabbagh Maliki in his Fusulu'l- Muhimma, Fasl I, p. 14, say: "No one before 'Ali was born in the Ka'ba. This was a distinction given to 'Ali in order to enhance his honor, rank, and dignity."

The origin of 'Ali's name was the unseen world

Another indication of 'Ali's special merit was that his name had its origin in the unseen world.

Sheikh: You have said a novel thing. This means that Abu Talib was a prophet who named 'Ali through divine inspiration. Your statement is one of those lies which the Shi'as have invented in their extreme love (ghulu') for 'Ali. But it is farcical to say that Allah ordered that the child should be named 'Ali. 'Ali was an ordinary name which the parents, of their own will proposed. It had nothing to do with the unseen world.

Well-Wisher: What I said had nothing novel in it. Your astonishment is due to your lack of knowledge about the merits of wilaya (vicegerency).

First, you think that the child was given the name after his birth, though it was not so. In all the heavenly books, the names of Muhammad and 'Ali have been mentioned. Allah Almighty gave names to them thousands of years prior to their creation. The names were written on the skies, on the gates of heaven and on the arsh (the highest heavens). It had nothing to do with Abu Talib's time.

Sheikh: Surely this statement is an example of excessive love for 'Ali. You have raised him so high that you claim his name was written long before the creation of the universe. The result of such statements is that your jurists consider pronouncing the name of 'Ali after the name of the Holy Prophet in the call to prayer.

Well-Wisher: No, sir. My statement has nothing to do with excessive love. And it is not I who has written his name in the heavens. Allah ordered 'Ali's name to be written along with His own name and the name of His Prophet.

Sheikh: Kindly refer to any of those hadith.

After the names of Allah and the Holy Prophet, 'Ali's name is written on Arsh

Well-Wisher: Muhammad Ibn Jarir Tabari in his Tafsir, Ibn Asakir in his Ta'rikh, Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i, in his Kifayatu't-Talib, ch.62, Hafiz Abu Nu'aim, in Hilyatu'l-Auliya, and Sheikh Sulayman

Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, p.238, ch. 56, hadith 52, narrate from Dhakha'iru'l-Uqba of Imamu'l-Haram Ahmad Ibn Abdullah Tabari Shafi'i on the authority of Abu Huraira (with a slight variation in wording) that the Holy Prophet said:

"It is written on the arsh that 'There is no god but Allah, the One Who has no associate; and Muhammad is my servant and Prophet, whom I helped through 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib.'"

Also in Jalalu'd-din Suyuti's Khasa'isu'l-Kubra, vol.I, p.10 and Tafsir al-Durr al-Mansur, beginning of the chapter of Isra'il, it is reported from Ibn Adi and Ibn Asakir, who narrate from Ana's Ibn Malik, that the Holy Prophet of Allah said that he had seen written on the arsh, "There is no god but Allah; Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah; I have given him support through 'Ali."

In Yanabiu'l-Mawadda it is narrated from Dhakha'iru'l-Uqba of Imamu'l-Haram Tabari, according to the report of Sirat al-Mullah that the Holy Prophet of Allah said: "On the night of the Mi'raj, when I was taken to the highest heaven, I saw written there on the right side of the arsh: 'Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah. I have given him help and support through 'Ali.'"

It is reported in Yanabi, Hadith 19, from Kitabu's-Sabi'in of Imamu'l-Haram Tabari, quoting from the Manaqib of Faqih Wasti Ibn Maghazili Shafi'i, and also Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani Shafi'i writes in his Mawadda VI from Mawaddatu'l-Qurba two hadith; Khatib Khawarizmi in Manaqib, Ibn Shirwaih in Firdaus, and Ibn Maghazili Shafi'i in Manaqib narrating from Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari that the Holy Prophet said:

"It is written on the gate of Paradise that 'There is no god but Allah, Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah, and 'Ali is the Wali (vicegerent) of Allah and brother of the Holy Prophet of Allah.' This was written 2,000 years before the creation of the skies and the world."

I recall another hadith. Mir Sayyid 'Ali Faqih Shafi'i writes in Mawadda VIII of Mawaddatu'l-Qurba that the Holy Prophet said to 'Ali: "I have seen your name coupled with mine in four places:

(1) On the night of the Mi'raj (ascension) when I reached the Baitu'l-Muqaddas (The Dome of the Rock), I saw written on the rock: 'There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah whom I gave support through his vizier (deputy) 'Ali.'"

(2) When I reached Sidratu'l-Muntaha (the loftiest place), I saw the words: 'Verily I am Allah; There is no god but Me, the One, and Muhammad among all my creation is My loved one. I gave him support through his vizier, 'Ali.'

(3) When I reached the arsh' (the highest heaven) of Almighty Allah, I saw there written on its pillars: 'Verily, I am Allah, and there is no god except Me.: Of all my creation Muhammad is my loved one. I have supported him through his vizier, 'Ali.'

(4) When I reached Paradise, I saw written on its gate: 'There is no god but Me. Of all my creation

Muhammad is my loved one. I gave him help and support through his vizier, 'Ali."

Imam Tha'labi in his Tafsir Kashfu'l-Bayan and Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, chapter 24, reporting from Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Ispahani, Muhammad Ibn Jarir in his Tafsir and Ibn Asakir in his Ta'rikh, narrate from Ibn Abbas and Abu Huraira that verse 64 of the sura of Anfal (The Accessions) of the Holy Qur'an, namely:

"He it is Who strengthened you with His help and with the believers." (8:62)

Then they say that the Holy Prophet said: "I saw written on the arsh' that There is no god but Allah, the One, Who has no partner, and Muhammad is My servant and Prophet; I strengthened him with 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib."

Then they narrate other hadith of this kind from Kitab al-Sifa and Manaqib. The source of the names of Muhammad and 'Ali is Allah Himself.

Words used by Adam for acceptance of his repentance were the names of the five pure ones

Also Imam Tha'labi in Tafsir Kashfu'l-Bayan and Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabi, chapter 24, reporting from Faqih Wasti Ibn Maghazili Shafi'i are a commentary on verse 37 of sura 2 of the Holy Qur'an, namely:

"Then Adam received (some) words from his Lord, so He turned to him mercifully; surely He is oft-returning (to mercy), the Merciful." (2:37)

Sa'id Ibn Jabir reported from Ibn Abbas, who said: "The Holy Prophet was asked about the words which the Prophet Adam had learned and which led to the acceptance of his repentance. The Prophet said: 'He invoked Allah in the names of Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husain. So Allah accepted his repentance and forgave him.'"

Wahi (revelation) and ilham (intuition) bestowed on persons other than Prophets, even on animals

In regard to the granting of wahi and prophethood to Abu Talib, you are again mistaken. Wahi and Ilham have stages which are not peculiar to the rank of prophethood alone. These terms refer to a being's ability to understand hidden knowledge directly. This knowledge is granted to special people as well as to animals.

Was the bee a prophet to whom Allah sent wahi? A verse of the Holy Qur'an in sura Nahl (The Ants) clearly says:

"And your Lord revealed to the bee, saying: Make hives in the mountains and in the trees and in what they build." (16:68)

Do you think that Nukhabuz (or, according to some commentators, Yukhabuz), the mother of the Prophet Moses was a prophet? In the sura of Qasas (The Narratives) is clearly stated that she had been given two commands, two prohibitory edicts, two pieces of information and two good tidings through wahi, Allah says:

"And we revealed to Moses' mother, saying: Give him suck; then when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear nor grieve; surely We will bring him; back to you and make him one of the apostles." (28:7)

Apart from these facts, it is not necessary for the guidance of the people that all instructions and commands of Allah should be communicated through wahi. Sometimes He guides the people through a voice. It has repeatedly happened and the Holy Qur'an bears testimony to this fact. In sura Maryam (Mary), He says how He guided Mary:

"Then (a voice) called out to her from beneath her: Grieve not, surely your Lord has made a stream to flow beneath you. Shake toward you the trunk of the palm tree; it will drop for you fresh, ripe dates. So eat and drink and refresh the eye. Then if you see any mortal, say: 'Surely I have vowed a fast to the Beneficent God, so I shall not speak to any man today.'" (19:24-26)

Abu Talib was guided by Allah to name his son 'Ali

In the same way that the bee, the mother of Moses, and the mother of Jesus were instructed by Allah, though none of them was a prophet, Abu Talib was also instructed to give a name to his son.

Moreover, no one has ever said that Abu Talib was a prophet or that wahi (revelation) was granted to him. A heavenly voice and a tablet contained the instruction to name the child. Your own ulama' have written this fact in their books.

Sheikh: Where have our ulama' stated this?

Well-Wisher: There are many such books.

Revelation of lawh (tablet) to Abu Talib

Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani Faqih Shafi'i, in his Mawaddatu'l-Qurba, Mawadda VIII, from the report of Abbas Ibn Abdu'l-Muttalib, which Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi also quotes in his Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, chapter 56, and Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in his Kifayatu't-Talib narrate with slight variation in wording, that when 'Ali was born, his mother Fatima Bint Asad named him after her father, Asad.

Abu Talib did not agree with her and said: "O Fatima! Let us go to the Qubais hills, and invoke Allah (some reporters say that he said they should go to the Masjidul-Haram). He may tell us the name of this child."

It was night when they reached the Abu Qubais hills (or the Masjidul-Haram) and began their invocations. Abu Talib prayed: "O Creator of this dark night and bright moon, let us know Your will regarding this child's name."

At that time a voice came from the sky. When Abu Talib raised his head, he saw a tablet like a green jewel, with four lines written on it. He took the tablet and clasped it to his chest. When he read it, he found these verses written on it: "I have conferred a special honor on you both by giving you a pure, distinguished son. He has been given the name 'Ali' from the side of Allah. It is derived from 'Ali' (The Exalted)."

Ganji Shafi'i writes in Kifayatu't-Talib that a voice came in reply to the verses of Abu Talib reciting these two couplets: "O people of the exalted Prophet's House! I have distinguished you with a pure child. Verily, he has been named 'Ali' from the side of Allah Almighty. This name is derived from Allah's own Name, Al-'Ali."

Abu Talib was immensely pleased and fell down in prostration before Allah. As a token of thanksgiving for this great event, he sacrificed ten camels. He hung the tablet in the Masjidul-Haram. The Bani Hashim used to take pride in it before the Quraish. The tablet remained hanging there until it disappeared in the time of war between Abdullah Ibn Zubair and Hajjaj.

This report also supports the previously mentioned hadith which say that from the very beginning Abu Talib had been a believer. He implored Allah Almighty to name the child. When he saw Allah's merciful bounty, he fell down in prostration before Him. Is this the behavior of an unbeliever?

'Ali's name is not a part of the adhan and iqama (calls for prayers)

You have claimed that Shi'a jurists insist that the name of 'Ali is considered compulsory in the Adhan and Iqama (calls for prayer). In fact not a single Shi'a jurist has stated that the name of 'Ali is an integral part of the Adhan or the Iqama. In all the books of jurisprudence Shi'a jurists invariably say that bearing witness to the vicegerency of Amirul-Mu'minin is not part of the Adhan or Iqama.

To say it in the Adhan and the Iqama with that intention is unlawful. If, at the time of beginning prayers, the intention is that the name of the Holy Imam is an integral part of the prayers, the performance becomes void.

But of course after mentioning the name of the Holy Prophet, to mention the name of 'Ali without

considering it essential to the purpose, but merely for the sake of grace and blessedness, is desirable. Allah has mentioned his name at every place after the name of the Holy Prophet as I have already said before.

Now we come to our main point: no one among the distinguished companions had as exalted lineage as 'Ali did.

'Ali's piety

As for 'Ali's piety, no one else compared to him. Both his friends and his foes agree that, after the Holy Prophet, no one was as pious as 'Ali was.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha and Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-Su'ul, report from 'Umar Ibn Abdu'l-Aziz that the Holy Imam was superior in piety to all of mankind. He says: "We do not know anyone in the community after the Holy Prophet who was more devout and pious than 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib."

Mullah 'Ali Qushachi, for all his extreme intolerance, writes that human beings are at a loss to comprehend the merits of 'Ali. In his Sharh al-Tajrid he says: "Men are astounded when they hear of the practices of 'Ali's life."

Abdullah ibn Rafi'i's report

Abdullah Ibn Rafi'i says that at the end of a fast day, he went to Amiru'l-Mu'minin. He saw that a sealed bag was brought to him. When 'Ali opened it, it was found to contain unsifted flour. The Imam took three handfuls of flour, ate it, drank a little water, and offered thanks to Allah. Abdullah Ibn Rafi'i said:

"O Abu'l-Hasan! Why have you sealed the mouth of the bag?" The Imam replied: "It is so that my sons, who love me, may not mix olive oil or sugar with the flour, which would cause 'Ali's self to relish its taste."

So 'Ali used to keep himself aloof from delicious foods so that he might not be subdued by them. Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi has also cited this hadith in his Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, chapter 51, from Ahnaf Ibn Qais.

Suwaid ibn Ghafila's report

Moreover, the Sheikh, in his Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-Su'ul, Khatib Khawarizmi in Manaqib, and Tabari in his Ta'rikh have reported from Suwaid Ibn Ghafila that he said: "One day I had the honor of visiting Amiru'l-Mu'minin. I saw before him a cup of milk which was so sour that I could smell its foulness. The Imam had dry bread in his hand. It was so dry that it could hardly be broken.

The Imam broke it by putting it under his knee and, after making it soft in the sour milk, ate it. He asked me to eat with him. I told him that I was fasting. The Imam said: 'I have heard from my friend, the Prophet of Allah that if one is observing a fast and has an inclination for some food, but does not eat it for the sake of Allah, then Allah will give him heavenly foods.'

Suwaid continued: "Seeing the condition of 'Ali, I was astounded. I asked the Imam's servant, Fizza, who was standing near me, why she did not fear Allah, that is, why had she cooked the barley bread without removing its husk. Fizza said on oath that 'Ali himself had ordered her not to remove its husk.

The Imam asked me what I was saying to Fizza. I told him that I had asked her why she did not sift the flour. 'Ali said: 'May my father and mother be sacrificed to the Holy Prophet! The Holy Prophet never removed the husk; he never satisfied his hunger with wheat bread for three consecutive days. I follow the practice of the Holy Prophet.'

'Ali's abstaining from eating halwa

Muwaffaq Ibn Ahmad Khawarizmi and Ibn Maghazili Faqih Shafi'i write in their Manaqib that one day during the time of 'Ali's caliphate, some halwa (a sweet dish) was brought to him. He picked up a little of it, smelled it, and said: "How appealing and sweet-smelling it is! But 'Ali does not know its taste. I have never yet eaten halwa."

The narrator said to him: "O 'Ali! Is halwa unlawful for you?" The Imam said: "What Allah has made lawful can never be unlawful. But can I be content to fill my stomach while there are starving people in the country?

Should I sleep with my stomach full when people throughout the Hijaz are dying of hunger? How can I content myself with my name being Amiru'l-Mu'minin? Why should I not be associating myself with the people in their penury and sufferings?"

Also Khawarizmi reports from Abi Ibn Thabit that one day 'faluda' (a delicious syrup) was brought before 'Ali, but he suppressed his desire and did not drink it.

These are some examples of his practice regarding eating and drinking. He ate dry barley bread sometimes with vinegar or salt and sometimes with a little vegetable or milk. There were never two kinds of food on his table cloth.

In the year 40 A.H. on the night of the 19th Ramadhan, when Abdu'r-Rahman Ibn Muljim Muradi inflicted the fatal wound, he was a guest at the house of his daughter, Umm Kulthum, to end his fast. When bread, milk and salt were put on the table cloth, 'Ali who had great affection for his daughter, Umm Kulthum, angrily said: "I have never seen a girl being so unkind to her father."

Umm Kulthum said: "Father! What wrong have I done?" 'Ali said: "Have you ever seen your father having

two kinds of food together on the table cloth?" Then he ordered that the milk be removed. However he ate a few morsels of bread with salt and then said: "We shall have to give account for all the lawful things; for unlawful acts there is chastisement."

'Ali's dress

'Ali's dress was very simple. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, Ibn Maghazili Shafi'i in Manaqib, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in Musnad, Sibti Ibn Jauzi in Tadhkira, and others of your ulama' have written that: "His dress was of coarse cloth, purchased for five dirhams." He patched his clothes.

The patches were of hide or palm leaves. His shoes were also made of palm leaves. Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-Su'ul, Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, and Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali in Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha have written that 'Ali had so many patches on his clothing that when during the time of his caliphate, his cousin, Abdullah Ibn Abbas, saw them and felt sad.

'Ali said: "I have so many patches on my clothes that now I feel shy of the patcher. What has 'Ali to do with worldly adornment? How should I be content with the pleasure which is to fade away, and the blessing which is not to last?"

Another person objected to 'Ali's appearance saying: "Why do you patch clothes even during the days of your caliphate and supremacy? It makes the enemy look down upon you." 'Ali said: "This is the kind of dress which subdues our passions, removes the sense of pride in man, and is adopted by a believer."

Muhammad Ibn Talha in his Matalibu's-Su'ul, Khawarizmi in his Manaqib, Ibn Athir in his Kamil, and Sulayman Balkhi in his Yanabiu'l-Mawadda have reported that 'Ali and his servant had identical clothing. He purchased two pieces of cloth of the same kind and price. One he wore himself and the other he gave to his servant, Qanbar.

These were 'Ali's customs regarding food and clothing. He himself ate dry barley bread and gave bread made of wheat, sugar, honey and dates to the beggars and orphans. He wore the patched clothes himself but gave fine clothes to orphans and widows.

Zurar's conversation with Mu'awiya concerning 'Ali

There are many examples of 'Ali's rejection of the world. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Isfahani in Hilyatu'l-Auliya, vol. I, p.84, Sheikh Abdullah Ibn Amir Shabrawi Shafi'i in Kitabu'l-I'ttihad Ibn Hubbi'l-Ashraf, p.8; Muhammad Ibn Talha in Matalibu's-Su'ul, p.33; Nuru'd-din Ibn Sabbagh Maliki in Fusulu'l-Muhimma, p. 128; Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, chapter 51; Sibti Ibn Jauzi in Tadhkira Khawasu'l-Umma at the end of chapter 5, and many others of your accredited ulama' and historians have recorded in detail the conversation between Mu'awiya and Zurar Ibn Zumra.

At the end of his talk with Mu'awiya, Zurar praised 'Ali in these words: "On some occasions I have seen 'Ali at night when the stars were scattered over the sky, holding his beard and writhing like one bitten by a snake, crying as in intense pain, saying: 'O World! Deceive somebody else instead of me. Do you fold me in your arms and are you fond of me? This can't be.

I have given you three divorces, after which union is not possible. Your time is short lived, the fear you bring is great, and your pleasure is very insulting. May Allah save us from the paucity of means of travelling, the remoteness of the destination, and the perils of the way!'

Then Mu'awiya began to weep and said, 'May Allah be merciful to Abu'l-Hasan. By Allah, he was just like that.' Mu'awiya also said, 'Women are unable to beget a man like 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib.'"

The Prophet's recognition of 'Ali's piety

The Prophet himself recognized 'Ali's outstanding piety. Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in his Kifayatu'l-Talib, chapter 46, reports from Ammar Yasir, who said that he heard from the Holy Prophet that he said to 'Ali:

"Verily, Allah Almighty granted you adornment the like of which He has not given to any one else whom He loved. And that is your piety in this world. He has made you such that you neither take benefit from the world, nor can it make you inclined towards it. He bestowed upon you the love for the poor and the needy.

So they were pleased with your Imamate, and I was also pleased with them on account of their following you. Blessed is he who befriends you and acknowledges you; and woe be to him who is hostile to you. Those who love you and acknowledge you shall be your neighbors in Paradise and shall be your companions in your palace. Those who have been opposed to you shall be reckoned as liars by Allah on the Day of Judgement and shall be granted their due chastisement."

Allah and the Holy Prophet called 'Ali imamu'l-muttaqin (chief of the pious)

He reached such a high stage of piety that friends and enemies alike called him Imamu'l-Muttaqin (the Chief of the Pious). In fact the first person to address him with this title was the Holy Prophet himself.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol.II, p.450; Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Ispahani in Hilyatu'l-Auliya, Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani in Mawaddatu'l-Qurba and Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in his Kifayatu'l-Talib, chapter 54, report from Anas Ibn Malik that one day the Holy Prophet asked him to bring water to him for ablution.

When he had brought water, the Holy Prophet performed his ablution and then performed two rak'ats of

prayer. Then he said to him: "O Anas! The next person to enter this door is the chief of the pious ones, the leader of the Muslims, the sovereign of the believers, and the seal of the successors, who will lead people with bright faces and hands to Paradise."

Anas says: "I prayed within myself to Allah that He might send an Ansar through the door, but I kept my invocation secret. Suddenly, I saw 'Ali entering the door. The Holy Prophet asked who he was. I replied that he was 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib. Then the Holy Prophet happily got up to greet 'Ali. He folded him in his arms and wiped the sweat from his face. 'Ali said, 'O Holy Prophet! You are treating me today as you have never done before!'

The Holy Prophet said, 'Why shouldn't I do that when you will convey my prophethood to the community, will make them hear my voice, and will explain to them those things concerning which they have differences of opinion.'"

Also Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in *Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha*, vol II, and Hafiz Abu Nu'aim in *Hilyatu'l-Auliya* write that one day 'Ali came to the Prophet. The Prophet said to him: "Welcome, leader of the Muslims and the Chief of the Pious Ones!"

'Ali said: "I praise Allah for the blessing which He has bestowed upon me, and I implore His munificence to me." Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i also narrates this hadith at the end of section IV; part I, of his *Matalibu's-Su'ul* and through it proves that 'Ali was the Imam of all the pious ones.

Hakim, in his *Mustadrak*, part III, p.38 and Bukhari and Muslim, each in his *Sahih*, report that the Holy Prophet said: "Allah sent me revelations about 'Ali concerning three things: (1) he is the master and chief of Muslims; (2) he is the chief of the pious ones; and (3) he is the guide who will lead the people with bright faces and hands (to Paradise)."

Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i reports in his *Kifayatu'l-Talib*, chapter 45, on the authority of Abdullah Ibn Asad Ibn Zurara that the Prophet said: "On the night of Mi'raj (ascension), when I was taken to the heavens, I was allowed to enter a palace of pearls, whose floor was of sparkling gold.

Then revelation was sent to me, and I was told three things about 'Ali: (1) that he is certainly the master and chief of the Muslims; (2) that he is the Imam and chief of the pious ones; and (3) that he is the guide who will lead people with bright faces and hands (to Paradise)."

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal writes in his *Musnad* that one day the Holy Prophet addressed 'Ali thus: "O 'Ali! to cast a look at your face is worship; verily you are the chief of the pious ones and leader of the believers. He who is a friend of yours is a friend of mine, and he who is a friend of mine is surely a friend of Allah. He who has ill will against you, has ill will against me, and he who has ill will against me, certainly has ill will against Allah."

So it is sufficient for the exalted rank of 'Ali that the Holy Prophet insisted that 'Ali surpassed all the

companions in piety. He alone had been given the title of Imamu'l-Muttaqin (chief of the pious ones) and the Holy Prophet repeatedly referred to him as such.

As Imamu'l-muttaqin 'Ali had no inclination for self-indulgence or authority

Sheikh: One cannot say too much in praise of 'Ali. Of course, Mu'awiya said the right thing: the women of the world are unable to give birth to a man like 'Ali.

Well-Wisher: Now it is clear that among the venerable companions 'Ali was the chief of the pious ones. An idea has just struck me. If you permit, I will ask you one thing.

Sheikh: Yes, please do.

Well-Wisher: After acknowledging that among the distinguished companions 'Ali had the exclusive merit of being the chief of the pious ones, would you assume that he had any inclination for self-indulgence or power?

Sheikh: It is impossible to assume such a thing about him. You have pointed out the well known fact that 'Ali gave three divorces to the world. Having proved his aloofness from the world how could he be inclined to it. Besides this, his rank is so exalted that it is impossible to entertain such a false notion of him.

Well-Wisher: So it follows that all the actions of such an embodiment of piety were definitely for Allah. He never swerved an inch from the right path.

Sheikh: It is obvious that we don't deny these things about 'Ali.

'Ali's refusal to pay allegiance to Abu Bakr proves the method of his appointment as caliph was not right

Well-Wisher: When the Holy Prophet died, 'Ali, according to the will of the Holy Prophet, performed the burial rituals. Some people, assembling at Saqifa al-Bani Sa'ida, swore allegiance to Abu Bakr. Later, when 'Ali was called, why did he refuse allegiance?

If the manner in which Abu Bakr was elected caliph was right and the question of Ijma' (consensus) was proved to be just, then 'Ali, being so pious should not have deviated from the truth. You will recall the hadith which I mentioned on previous nights, in which the Holy Prophet said: "Ali is with the truth and truth is with 'Ali."

If the proceedings at the Saqifa were based on justice and the appointment of Abu Bakr as Caliph were

valid, the Imam should have welcomed them and acknowledged Abu Bakr as the rightful caliph. But in fact he firmly opposed the election. The opposition of 'Ali must have been based on one of two things. Either 'Ali was going against the right path, and he violated the order of the Holy Prophet, or he considered the consensus to be a farce.

As for the first possibility, it is out of the question to assume that 'Ali could deny the truth. According to the Holy Prophet "Ali is with the truth and the truth revolves around 'Ali." Moreover, no one has ever claimed that he was interested in worldly power. He divorced the world three times.

He had no wish to gain political ascendancy. It was the second condition which prompted him to refuse to acknowledge the caliphate of Abu Bakr. He knew it contradicted the will of Allah and the Holy Prophet.

Sheikh: It is strange of you to say that 'Ali did not swear allegiance to Abu Bakr. References in your and our books of history prove that 'Ali did pay allegiance to Caliph Abu Bakr and did not oppose the consensus.

Well-Wisher: Have you forgotten all our previous discussions in which I gave full details of the statements of your prominent ulama'? Even Bukhari and Muslim have written each in his Sahih that 'Ali did not offer allegiance at that time. Your ulama' have generally admitted that on the first day, when the Holy Imam was forcibly and insultingly dragged from his house to the mosque (as has been stated earlier) he did not swear allegiance but returned home.

Ibrahim Ibn Sa'd Saqafi (died 283 A.H.), Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Tabari, and others have written that 'Ali offered allegiance after six months (that is, after the death of Fatima). Even if we admit, by way of supposition, that the Imam offered allegiance, why did he wait for six months before doing so?

Sheikh: Certainly there must have been some reason for that. He alone knew it. But why should we worry about the mutual discord of our elders? Why should we pry into their differences after 1300 years? (Loud laughter from the audience.)

Well-Wisher: When you cannot find a reasonable answer to prove your point, you depend upon such a reply. But before all fair minded people, the matter is too clear to require any elucidation or proof.

As for your assertion that we need not interfere in the differences of our predecessors, of course you are right, insofar as their affairs have no bearing on us. But in the present case you are mistaken because it is the duty of every sensible Muslim to have faith based on reason, not on blind following. In making inquiries regarding religion, we study the common history of the Muslims.

We find that, after the death of the Holy Prophet, two sects appeared. Therefore, we should make thorough inquiries in order to understand which of the two sects is rightly guided. Obviously we should not blindly follow our predecessors.

Sheikh: Certainly your point is that Abu Bakr's caliphate was not just. But if Abu Bakr was not the rightful

Caliph, and if it was the right of 'Ali to occupy that position, why did he not use his special strength and courage to establish justice? He used to attend the prayers also and often gave useful advice to the distinguished caliphs in important matters.

Silence of holy prophets

Well-Wisher: First, the Prophets and their successors acted according to the will of Allah Almighty. Accordingly we cannot raise any objection as to why they did not wage war, or why they adopted silence before the enemy, or why they suffered defeat.

If you study the historical facts regarding the lives of the Holy prophets and their successors, you will find many similar instances of acquiescence. The Holy Qur'an has narrated some of those events. In the sura of Qamar (The Moon), the Holy Qur'an relates what the Prophet Noah said when his people rejected him:

"Verily, I am overcome (by these people), so give help." (54: 11)

In the sura of Maryam (Mary), the Qur'an tells us of the silence of Abraham when he sought his uncle Azar's help and received a disappointing reply:

"And I will withdraw from you and what you call upon besides Allah, and I will call upon my Lord." (19:48)

So just as Abraham withdrew from the people when he did not receive support from his uncle Azar, 'Ali also must have withdrawn from the people and gone into seclusion.

Sheikh: I think this isolation signifies withdrawal of the heart. That is, he withdrew and kept aloof from them but did not assume physical seclusion.

Well-Wisher: If you study the commentaries of both sects, you will find that his withdrawal from people was physical, not merely psychological. I recall that Imam Fakhru'd-din Razi says in his Tafsir al-Kabir, vol.V, p.809: "Isolation from something means keeping aloof from it. What Abraham meant was that he wanted to keep aloof from them, both from the physical and religious point of view."

The chronicles report that after this rejection Abraham migrated from Babylon to Kuhistan in Fars and lived a solitary life in those mountainous surroundings for seven years. He then returned to Babylon and again publicly proclaimed Allah's message and broke the people's idols. At this the people flung him into the fire.

Allah Almighty made the fire cool and safe for him, and so his prophethood was firmly established. In the sura of Qasas (The Narratives), the story about Moses running away in fear of his life has been narrated in this way:

"So he went forth, fearing, awaiting, (and) he said: My Lord, deliver me from the unjust people." (28:21)

In the sura of A'raf (The Elevated Places), the Holy Qur'an tells us of Aaron's plight when Moses had left him in charge of the Bani Israel. The people immediately began to worship the golden calf and, because Aaron had no one to support him; he remained silent. The Qur'an says:

"And he (Moses) seized his brother by the head, dragging him towards him. He (Aaron) said: Son of my mother! Surely the people reckoned me weak and had well nigh slain me." (7: 150)

'Ali's situation similar to Aaron's

So according to the Holy Qur'an Aaron did not draw the sword against the people. He assumed silence when they adopted Samiri's Golden Calf as the object of worship because he (Aaron) recognized that he was outnumbered.

Similarly, 'Ali, whom the Holy Prophet pronounced to be the counterpart of Aaron (as we have discussed in detail earlier), was also perfectly justified in assuming patience and forbearance when he had been left alone.

The Holy Imam was forcibly brought to the mosque and an open sword was put on his head to force him to swear allegiance. Later he went to the tomb of the Holy Prophet and repeated the same words which Allah Almighty has related through the tongue of Aaron. Aaron had said to Moses: "Surely the people had reckoned me weak and had well nigh slain me."

Acquiescence of prophets

The Prophet Muhammad's example regarding this point is of course most instructive. We should consider why he maintained complete silence for thirteen years in the face of hostile activities of the enemy in Mecca until finally he had to abandon his native city in the darkness of the night. The reason was that he had no helpers. In fact, even during the days of his authority, he could not do away with some innovations.

Sheikh: How can it be you say that the Holy Prophet failed to do away with innovations?

The Holy Prophet could not effect drastic changes for fear of people

Well-Wisher: It has been reported by Hamidi in his Jam'i Bainu's-Sahihain and by Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in Musnad from Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha that the Holy Prophet said to her: "Had these people not been near the age of infidelity and ignorance, and had I not the fear that it would destroy their faith, I

would have ordered the House of the Ka'ba to be demolished and whatever had been taken out of it to be restored. Having levelled it, I would have erected two doors towards its east and west as it was in the days of the Prophet Abraham, and I would have rebuilt it on the foundations set up by Abraham."

Certainly if the Holy Prophet himself was unable to oppose major innovations, 'Ali was justified in observing the same principle when he faced a similar challenge.

The great jurist, Wasiti Ibn Maghazili Shafi'i, and Khatib Khawarizmi report in their Manaqib that the Holy Prophet said to 'Ali: "The community has a strong grudge against you. Shortly after my death they will deceive you and reveal what they have in their hearts. I order you to be patient and control yourself at that time so that Allah may give you its reward and a good recompense."

After the death of the Holy Prophet 'Ali's patience was for the sake of Allah

Second, Amiru'l-Mu'minin never looked to himself but was always mindful of Allah. He was completely absorbed in Allah. He resigned himself and his people to the will of Allah. Hence, his patience and forbearance in gaining his right were for Allah's sake so that there might not be discord among the Muslims and that people might not return to their previous infidelity.

When Fatima's property was taken from her, she came home, depressed and dismayed. She said to 'Ali: "You have receded like a foetus. You have retired from the world like an accused person and have broken your hawk-like wings. Now the weak wings of a bird do not support you.

This Ibn Qahafa (Abu Bakr) is forcibly snatching away from me my father's gift and my children's means of subsistence. In fact these people abused me with open ill will and railed at me." She spoke for a long time.

The Holy Imam listened to Fatima until she was silent. Then he gave her a short reply which satisfied her. He said: "O Fatima! In the matter of religion and preaching truth, I have never been inactive. Do you wish that this sacred religion remains secure and that your Holy Father's name is called in mosques until eternity?" She said: "Yes, that is my most ardent desire."

'Ali said: "Then you should be patient. Your father has given me instructions regarding this situation, and I know that I should be forbearing. Otherwise, I have such strength that I could subdue the enemy and take back your right from them. But you should know that in that case the religion would be destroyed. So, for the sake of Allah and for the security of Allah's religion, be patient. The recompense in the hereafter for you is better than your right which has been usurped."

It was for this reason that Amiru'l-Mu'minin made patience his custom. He assumed forbearance and silence for the safety of Islam. In many of his sermons he has referred to this point.

'Ali's statements on the expediency of his silence after the demise of the Holy Prophet

Ibrahim Ibn Muhammad Saqafi, who is one of the trustworthy ulama' of the Sunnis, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, and 'Ali Ibn Muhammad Hamadani report that when Talha and Zubair broke their allegiances and left for Basra, 'Ali ordered the people to assemble in the mosque. Then after praising Allah Almighty he said:

"After the death of the Holy Prophet, we said that we were his Ahlul Bayt, his successors, and the rightful people to receive his heritage. No one except us could claim the right of rulership after him. But a group of the hypocrites snatched away our Holy Prophet's rulership from us and entrusted it to those who were our opponents. By Allah, our hearts and eyes wept for it. By Allah, we were full of grief and indignation.

I swear by Allah that if there were no fear that the Muslim community would be shattered, we would have overturned the caliphate. They occupied the seat of power until they reached their end. Now Allah has returned the caliphate to me. And these two men (Talha and Zubair) also swore allegiance to me. Now they have proceeded to Basra intending to cause dissension among the people."

Among your great scholars, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid and Kalbi, have reported that at the time of his setting out for Basra 'Ali addressed the people. He said: "When the Holy Prophet of Allah died, the Quraish swooped down upon us and deprived us of the right which we deserved more than anyone else. So I thought that it was better to adopt patience at that time, rather than allow the Muslims to disintegrate and their blood to be spilled, for they had embraced Islam only recently."

'Ali's silence and his abstaining from challenging the caliphate of Abu Bakr and 'Umar was not due to his concurrence with them. It was because he wanted to avoid causing bitter conflict among the people and because he wanted to save the religion from annihilation.

So after six months of silence and disapproval, then, as stated by your ulama', he offered allegiance and cooperated with them. In a letter sent to the people of Egypt through Malik Ashtar, he clearly writes that his silence was for the sake of preserving Islam.

The original text of 'Ali's letter, which Ibn Abi'l-Hadid has recorded in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol.IV, p. 164, is as follows:

Amiru'l-Mu'minin's letter to the people of Egypt explaining his silence when deprived of the caliphate

"Allah Almighty sent Muhammad as a witness of the prophets to warn the people. So when the Holy Prophet died the Muslims disputed among themselves as to who should succeed him. I swear by Allah that I never thought or believed, nor were there the least signs of it, that the people of Arabia would take

away the right of succession from the Ahlul Bayt and give it to others after him.

It was unimaginable that after the death of the Holy Prophet, in spite of his clear decree, they would deprive me of that right.

I was greatly distressed that the people ran to a certain person (Abu Bakr) and swore allegiance to him. So I withdrew myself until I saw that a group of people diverged from Islam and intended to destroy Islam. Then I feared that if I did not help Islam and the Muslims, Islam would suffer such destruction as would be more painful to me than the snatching away of the caliphate.

Of course political power cannot last long. It must dissipate like the clouds. It was under these conditions that I had to rise, so that paganism would become weak and Islam becomes firm."

Amiru'l-Mu'minin's sermon after martyrdom of Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol.II, p.35, reports from Kitabu'l-Gharat of Ibrahim Ibn Sa'd Ibn Hilal Saqafi, who reports from Abdu'r-Rahman Ibn Jundab, who reports from his father that when the enemy occupied Egypt and Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr was martyred, Amiru'l-Mu'minin gave a sermon in which he expressed his bitter feelings against the attitude the Muslims had adopted after the death of the Holy Prophet.

He wrote his remarks in a letter to the people of Egypt. The Holy Imam said: "A man said to me 'O son of Abu Talib! How greedy you are for the caliphate.'"

I said to him: 'You are greedier than I and are far removed from that position. Who is the greedier between us? Is it I, who am demanding my right, for which Allah and His Holy Prophet have made me the most rightful claimant, or you, who have debarred me from that right and have created obstruction between me and my right?'

They were all dumbfounded and could not utter a word. Verily, Allah does not help the oppressors."

This account and other sermons of Imam 'Ali show that the reason the Holy Imam did not confront the enemy, but assumed silence and (as alleged by your ulama') offered allegiance after six months, was not that he concurred with them in their decision concerning the caliphate. It was because he feared that Islam would perish and that the Muslims would be divided.

If 'Ali had risen to secure his right, some of the people would certainly have supported him (many had urged him to come forward) and civil war would have started.

The Holy Prophet had only recently died. The Muslims were quite close to the age of infidelity, and the roots of belief had not been securely established. The Jews, the Christians, the idol worshipers, and the

hypocrites, who were the worst enemies, would have had an opportunity to destroy the honor of the Muslims. Consequently, Islam would have collapsed.

Amirul-Mu'minin understood these matters. Moreover, the Holy Prophet had told him that the basis of Islam would not be destroyed and that religion was like the sun, which could be concealed for some time under the clouds of ignorance and hostility but would eventually come out, shedding its light everywhere.

In short, he claimed his right for six months and proved the righteousness of his cause in a number of congregations and assemblies, but did not swear allegiance. Though he did not resort to fighting, he continued claiming his right through arguments and protests.

Sermon of Shiqshiqayya also explains 'Ali's silence

The Holy Imam begins his sermon of Shiqshiqayya with the same point. "By Allah! The son of Abu Qahafa (Abu Bakr) dressed himself with it (caliphate) though he certainly knew that my relation to it was the same as the position of the axis in relation to the mill. The flood water flows down from me, and no one can reach the height of my knowledge. I kept myself detached from the caliphate.

Then I began to consider whether I should take my right by force or calmly endure the darkness, wherein the mature are enfeebled, the young grow old, and the true believer acts under strain until he meets Allah (at death). I found that endurance was a wiser course to adopt.

So I was patient although there was pricking in the eye and suffocation in the throat. I watched the plundering of my inheritance until the first one went his way. But he handed over the caliphate to Ibn Khattab ('Umar) after himself."

This sermon is filled with the powerful emotions of 'Ali. But this much is sufficient to prove our point.

Doubt about the Sermon of Shiqshiqayya

Sheikh: In the first place this sermon does not prove the displeasure of the Imam. Second, this sermon does not concern 'Ali. In fact, it is the work of Sayyid Sharif Razi, who has included it in the sermons of 'Ali. In fact, 'Ali has no complaint against the caliphs. Rather, he was quite pleased with them.

Well-Wisher: This statement of yours is based on extreme prejudice. What 'Ali stated and complained of has already been narrated earlier. The Holy Imam's grievances are not confined to this sermon.

Your allegation that the author of this sermon was the pious and distinguished scholar, Sayyid Razi'd-din, is inaccurate. Your eminent scholars, like Izzu'd-din Abdu'l-Hamid Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sheikh Muhammad Abduh, Mufti of Egypt, and Sheikh Muhammad Khizari (in Muhazirat al-Ta'rikhu'l-Uma'imu'l-Islamiyya, page 127, have declared that this sermon is 'Ali's.

Your own scholars have written commentaries on it. Some of your fanatical ulama' of the later age made passionate efforts to create doubts about its authenticity, but none of the more than forty prominent Sunni and Shi'as ulama', who have written commentaries on Nahju'l-Balagha, has said such a fantastic thing.

Sayyid Razi

Of course the piety of the great scholar, Sayyid Raziu'd-din, would preclude his attributing one of his own sermons to 'Ali. Moreover, experts in the Arabic language and its literature, who have studied the sermons of Nahju'l-Balagha, have decided that, in view of the excellent style and profound thoughts, the work is inimitable.

Your distinguished ulama', like Izzu'd-din Abdu'l-Hamid Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali and Sheikh Muhammad Abduh, have admitted that the beauty and deep knowledge of the sermons of 'Ali prove that this work is inferior in merit only to the words of Allah and the Holy Prophet.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid reports Musaddiq Ibn Shabbib as saying that the famous Ibn Khashshab said: "It is impossible for Razi or for anyone else to produce such a composition. We have gone through Razi's works; they stand no comparison to these writings and Holy sermons."

Sermon of Shiqshiqayya recorded long before the birth of Sayyid Razi

Ignoring all other aspects of the question, many scholars, traditionists, and historians (both Shi'as and Sunnis) have recorded the existence of this sermon before the births of the great scholar Sayyid Razi and his father Abu Ahmad Naqibu't-Talibin.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha writes that he found this sermon in the books of his Sheikh, Abu'l-Qasim Balkhi Imam al-Mu'tazila, who lived in the time of Muqtadir Billah Abbasi. Obviously, Sayyid Razi was born long after him.

He also writes that he has seen this sermon in the Kitabu'l-Insaf, of the well known preacher, Abu Ja'far Ibn Qubba, who was one of the pupils of Sheikh Abu'l-Qasim Balkhi, and who died before the birth of Sayyid Razi.

Also Sheikh Abu Abdullah Ibn Ahmad, commonly known as Ibn Khashshab, is reported to have said: "I have seen this sermon in books written 200 years before Sayyid Razi was born. I have also seen this sermon in the works of literary scholars who wrote them before the birth of Sayyid Razi's father, Ahmad Naqibu't-Talibin."

As for your claim that 'Ali was pleased with his opponents, this of course ignores countless statements to

the contrary made by your ulama', which I have cited previously. I will cite still another example.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol.II, p.561, records 'Ali as having said: "I remained with the Holy Prophet from the beginning until his death. The Holy Prophet breathed his last on my chest. It was I who washed his body with the help of the angels, performed his funeral prayers, and buried him. So there was no one nearer, or a more rightful successor, to him than I."

Towards the end of his sermon he refers to his opponents in these words: "I swear by Allah, the One, that I am on the right path and that my opponents are on the wrong path."

But you claim that 'Ali considered his opponents on the right path. I wish you could seriously look into the verse of the Holy Qur'an, which says: "They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, and Allah will not permit aught but the perfection of His light, though the unbelievers are averse." (9:32)

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