

Sermon 3: By Allah, the son of Abu Quhafah....

*Known as the Sermon of ash-Shiqshiqiyah*¹

ومن خطبة له (عليه السلام) المعروفة بالشفقة بالشفقة

وتشتمل على الشكوى من أمر الخلافة ثم ترجيح صبره عنها ثم مبايعة الناس له

Beware! By Allah, the son of Abu Quhafah (Abu Bakr)² dressed himself with it (the caliphate) and he certainly knew that my position in relation to it was the same as the position of the axis in relation to the hand-mill. The flood water flows down from me and the bird cannot fly upto me. I put a curtain against the caliphate and kept myself detached from it.

Then I began to think whether I should assault or endure calmly the blinding darkness of tribulations wherein the grown up are made feeble and the young grow old and the true believer acts under strain till he meets Allah (on his death).

أما والله لقد تَقَمَّصَهَا ابْنُ أَبِي قُحَافَةَ ، وَإِنَّهُ لَيَعْلَمُ أَنَّ مَحَلِّي مِنْهَا مَحَلُّ الْفُطْبِ مِنَ الرَّحَا ، يَنْحَدِرُ عَنِّي السَّيْلُ ، وَلَا يَرْقَى
إِلَى الطَّيْرِ ، فَسَدَلْتُ دُونَهَا ثَوْبًا ، وَطَوَيْتُ عَنْهَا كَشْحًا ، وَطَفِقتُ أَرْتِي بَيْنَ أَنْ أَصُولَ بِيَدِ جَدَاءٍ ، أَوْ أَصْبِرَ عَلَى طَخِيَةِ
عَمِيَاءَ ، يَهْرَمُ فِيهَا الْكَبِيرُ ، وَيَشِيْبُ فِيهَا الصَّغِيرُ ، وَيَكْدَحُ فِيهَا مُؤْمِنٌ حَتَّى يَلْقَى رَبَّهُ

Proposes Patience in Absence of Supporters

ترجیح الصبر علی فقد الاعوان

I found that endurance thereon was wiser. So I adopted patience although there was pricking in the eye and suffocation (of mortification) in the throat. I watched the plundering of my inheritance till the first one

went his way but handed over the Caliphate to Ibn al-Khattab after himself.

(Then he quoted al-A'sha's verse):

My days are now passed on the camel's back (in difficulty) while there were days (of ease) when I enjoyed the company of Jabir's brother Hayyan. [3](#)

فَرَأَيْتُ أَنَّ الصَّبْرَ عَلَى هَاتَا أَحَجَى، فَصَبِرْتُ وَفِي الْعَيْنِ قَدَى، وَفِي الْحَلْقِ شَجَا، أَرَى تُرَاثِي نَهْبًا، حَتَّى مَضَى الْأَوَّلُ
(لِسَبِيلِهِ، فَأَدُلِّي بِهَا إِلَى ابْنِ الْخَطَّابِ بَعْدَهُ.) ثم تمثل بقول الاعشى

شَتَّانَ مَا يَوْمِي عَاى كُورِهَا * وَ يَوْمٌ حَيَّانَ أَخِي جَابِرِ

It is strange that during his lifetime he wished to be released from the caliphate but he confirmed it for the other one after his death. No doubt these two shared its udders strictly among themselves. This one put the Caliphate in a tough enclosure where the utterance was haughty and the touch was rough. Mistakes were in plenty and so also the excuses therefore. One in contact with it was like the rider of an unruly camel. If he pulled up its rein the very nostril would be slit, but if he let it loose he would be thrown. Consequently, by Allah people got involved in recklessness, wickedness, unsteadiness and deviation.

فَيَا عَجَبًا!! بَيْنَا هُوَ يَسْتَقْبِلُهَا فِي حَيَاتِهِ إِذْ عَقَدَهَا لِأَخْرَ بَعْدَ وَفَاتِهِ - لَشَدَّ مَا تَشَطَّرَا ضَرَعَيْهَا ! - فَصَبِرَهَا فِي حَوْزَةِ
خَشَنَاءَ، يَغْلُظُ كَلْمُهَا، وَيَخْشَنُ مَسُّهَا، وَيَكْتُرُ الْعِنَارُ فِيهَا وَالْأَعْتَدَارُ مِنْهَا، فَصَاحِبُهَا كَرَاحِبِ الصَّعْبَةِ، إِنْ أَشْتَقَ لَهَا
حَرَمَ، وَإِنْ أَسْلَسَ لَهَا تَقَحَّمَ، فَمَنِي النَّاسُ - لَعَمْرُ اللَّهِ - بِخَبْطِ وَشِمَاسِ، وَتَلَوْنُ وَاعْتِرَاضِ

Nevertheless, I remained patient despite length of period and stiffness of trial, till when he went his way (of death) he put the matter (of Caliphate) in a group⁴ and regarded me to be one of them. But good Heavens! What had I to do with this “consultation”? Where was any doubt about me with regard to the first of them that I was now considered akin to these ones? But I remained low when they were low and flew high when they flew high.

One of them turned against me because of his hatred and the other got inclined the other way due to his in-law relationship and this thing and that thing, till the third man of these people stood up with heaving breasts between his dung and fodder. With him his children of his grand-father, (Umayyah) also stood up swallowing up Allah's wealth⁵ like a camel devouring the foliage of spring, till his rope broke down, his actions finished him and his gluttony brought him down prostrate.

فَصَبِرْتُ عَلَى طُولِ الْمُدَّةِ، وَشِدَّةِ الْمُحَنَّةِ، حَتَّى إِذَا مَضَى لِسَبِيلِهِ جَعَلَهَا فِي جَمَاعَةٍ زَعَمَ أَنِّي أَحَدُهُمْ. فَيَا لَللَّشُورَى!
مَتَى اعْتَرَضَ الرَّيْبُ فِيَّ مَعَ الْأَوَّلِ مِنْهُمْ، حَتَّى صِرْتُ أُفْرَنُ إِلَى هَذِهِ النَّظَائِرِ! لَكِنِّي أَسْفَقْتُ إِذْ أَسْفُوا، وَطَرْتُ إِذْ

طَارُوا، فَصَعَا رَجُلٌ مِنْهُمْ لِضِعْفِهِ، وَمَالَ الْأَخْرُ لِصِيْهِرِهِ، مَعَ هَنٍ وَهَنٍ. إِلَى أَنْ قَامَ ثَالِثُ الْقَوْمِ، نَافِجًا حِضْنَيْهِ بَيْنَ نَيْلِهِ وَمُعْتَلِفِهِ، وَقَامَ مَعَهُ بَنُو أَبِيهِ يَخْضُمُونَ مَالَ اللَّهِ خَضْمَ الْأَيْلِ نَبْتَةَ الرَّبِيعِ، إِلَى أَنْ انْتَكَتْ عَلَيْهِ فَتْلُهُ، وَأَجْهَزَ عَلَيْهِ عَمَلُهُ، وَكَبَّتْ بِهِ بِطْنَتَهُ.

Allegiance paid to ‘Ali

(مبايعة علي (عليه السلام

At that moment, nothing took me by surprise, but the crowd of people rushing to me. It advanced towards me from every side like the mane of the hyena so much so that Hasan and Husayn were getting crushed and both the ends of my shoulder garment were torn. They collected around me like a herd of sheep and goats. When I took up the reins of government one party broke away and another turned disobedient while the rest began acting wrongfully as if they had not heard the word of Allah saying:

That abode in the hereafter, We assign it for those who intend not to exult themselves in the earth, nor (to make) mischief (therein); and the end is (best) for the pious ones. (Qur’an, 28:83)

فَمَا رَاعِنِي إِلَّا وَالنَّاسُ إِلَيَّ كَعُرْفِ الضَّبُعِ، يَنْتَالُونَ عَلَيَّ مِنْ كُلِّ جَانِبٍ، حَتَّى لَقَدُ وُطِيَءَ الْحَسَنَانَ، وَشَقَّ عِطْفَائِي، مُجْتَمِعِينَ حَوْلِي كَرَبِيضَةِ الْغَنَمِ. فَلَمَّا نَهَضْتُ بِالْأَمْرِ نَكَتَتْ طَائِفَةٌ، وَمَرَقَتْ أُخْرَى، وَفَسَقَ [وقسط] آخَرُونَ كَأَنَّهُمْ لَمْ يَسْمَعُوا اللَّهَ سُبْحَانَهُ يَقُولُ: (تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فُسَادًا وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

Yes, by Allah, they had heard it and understood it but the world appeared glittering in their eyes and its embellishments seduced them. Behold, by Him who split the grain (to grow) and created living beings, if people had not come to me and supporters had not exhausted the argument and if there had been no pledge of Allah with the learned to the effect that they should not acquiesce in the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed I would have cast the rope of Caliphate on its own shoulders, and would have given the last one the same treatment as to the first one. Then you would have seen that in my view this world of yours is no better than the sneezing of a goat.

بَلَى! وَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ سَمِعُوهَا وَوَعَوْهَا، وَلَكِنَّهُمْ حَلَبَتِ الدُّنْيَا فِي أَعْيُنِهِمْ، وَرَأَوْهُمْ زَبْرَجُهَا! أَمَّا وَالَّذِي فَلَقَ الْحَبَّةَ، وَبَرَأَ النَّسَمَةَ، لَوْلَا حُضُورُ الْحَاضِرِ، وَقِيَامُ الْحُجَّةِ بِوُجُودِ النَّاصِرِ، وَمَا أَخَذَ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْعُلَمَاءِ إِلَّا يُقَارُوا عَلَى كِظَّةِ ظَالِمٍ، وَلَا سَعَبٍ مَظْلُومٍ، لَأَلْقَيْتُ حَبْلَهَا عَلَى غَارِبِهَا، وَأَسْقَيْتُ آخِرَهَا بِكَأْسِ أَوْلِيهَا، وَلَا لَفَيْتُمْ دُنْيَاكُمْ هَذِهِ أَزْهَدَ عِنْدِي مِنْ عَقْطَةِ عَنَزٍ

(It is said that when Amir al-mu'minin reached here in his sermon a man of Iraq stood up and handed him over a writing. Amir al-mu'minin began looking at it, when Ibn 'Abbas said, "O' Amir al-mu'minin, I wish you resumed your Sermon from where you broke it." Thereupon he replied, "O' Ibn 'Abbas it was like the foam of a Camel which gushed out but subsided." Ibn 'Abbas says that he never grieved over

any utterance as he did over this one because Amir al-mu'minin could not finish it as he wished to.)

قالوا: وقام إليه رجل من أهل السواد عند بلوغه إلى هذا الموضع من خطبته، فناوله كتاباً، فأقبل ينظر فيه، فلما فرغ من قراءته قال له ابن عباس: يا أمير المؤمنين، لو اطردت مقلتك من حيث أفضيت! فقال (عليه السلام): هيئات يابن عباس! تلك شقشقة هدرت ثم قرئت! قال ابن عباس: فوالله ما أسفت على كلام قط كأسفي على ذلك الكلام إلا يكون أمير المؤمنين (عليه السلام) بلغ منه حيث أراد.

Al-Sharif al-Radi says: The words in this sermon “like the rider of a camel” mean to convey that when a camel rider is stiff in drawing up the rein then in this scuffle the nostril gets bruised, but if he lets it loose in spite of the camel’s unruliness, it would throw him somewhere and would get out of control. “*ashnaq an-naqah*” is used when the rider holds up the rein and raises the camel’s head upwards. In the same sense the word “*shanaqa an-naqah*” is used. Ibn as-Sikkit has mentioned this in *Islah al-Mantiq*.

Amir al-mu'minin has said “*ashnaqa laha*” instead of “*ashnaqaha*”, this is because he has used this word in harmony with “*aslasa laha*” and harmony could be retained only by using both in the same form. Thus, Amir al-mu'minin has used “*ashnaqa laha*” as though in place of “*in rafa'a laha ra'saha*”, that is, “if he stops it by holding up the reins.”

قال الشريف الرضي: قوله (عليه السلام) في هذه الخطبة: «كراكب الصعبة إن أشنق لها خرم، وإن أسلس لها تقم» يريد: أنه إذا شدد عليها في جذب الزمام وهي تنازعه رأسها خرم أنفها، وإن أرخى لها شيئاً مع صعوبتها تقممت به فلم يملكها، يقال: أشنق الناقة، إذا جذب رأسها بالزمام فرفعه، وشنقها أيضاً: ذكر ذلك ابن السكيت في «إصلاح المنطق». وإنما قال (عليه السلام): «أشنق لها» ولم يقل: «أشنقها»، لأنه جعله في مقابلة قوله: «أسلس لها». فكأنه (عليه السلام) قال: إن رفع لها رأسها يعني أمسكه عليها بالزمام.

[Alternative Sources for Sermon 3](#)

- (1) Al-Mufid, al-Jamal, 62;
- (2) Ibn Qubbaḥ, al-ʿInsaf, see Ibn Abi al-Ḥadid, Sharḥ, I, 69, see also ‘Abd al-Zahra’, I, 309–310;
- (3) al-Saduq, Ma’ani, 344;
- (4) al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Abd Allah al-ʿAskari, from him al-Saduq in Ma’ani;
- (5) Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, al-ʿIqd, IV, see ‘Abd al-Zahra’, I, 311–312 and al-Majlisi, Bihar, vol.8, 160;
- (6) al-Ka’bi (d.319/931) – see Ibn Abi al-Ḥadid, Sharḥ, I, 69;
- (7) Ibn al-Jawzi, al-Manaqib, see Bihar, vol.8, 160; and ‘Abd al-Zahra’, I, 310–11;

- (8) al-Mufid, al-'Irshad, 135;
- (9) al-Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar, al-Mughni, see al-Ghadir, VII, 83;
- (10) al-Saduq, 'Ilal, bab al-'illat allati min ajliha taraka Amir al-Mu'minin (A) mujahadat ahl al-khilaf;
- (11) Abu Sa'id al-'Abi, Nathr al-durar and Nuzhat al-'adib, see 'Abd al-Zahra', I, 313;
- (12) al-Murtada, al-Shafi, 203, 204;
- (13) al-Haffar, al-'Insaf from him al-Tusi in al-'Amali;
- (14) al-Tusi, al-'Amali, I, 392;
- (15) Qutb al-Din Rawandi, Sharh, from Ibn Mardawayh and al-Tabarani;
- (16) Sibt ibn al-Jawzi, Tadhkirah, 133;
- (17) al-Harrani, Tuhaf, 313;
- (18) al-Murtada, Sharh al-Khutbat al-Shiqshiqiyah, see A'yan al-Shi'ah, vol. 41, p. 195;
- (19) al-Tabarsi, al-'Ihtijaj; I, 95; for a detailed discussion of sources, see 'Abd al-Zahra', I, 309-324.

1. This sermon is known as the sermon of ash-Shiqshiqiyah, and is counted among the most famous sermons of Amir al-mu'minin. It was delivered at ar-Rahbah. Although some people have denied it to be Amir al-mu'minin's utterance and by attributing it to as-Sayyid ar-Radi (or ash-Sharif ar-Radi) have laid blame on his acknowledged integrity, yet truth-loving scholars have denied its veracity. Nor can there be any ground for this denial because `Ali's (p.b.u.h.) difference of view in the matter of Caliphate is not a secret matter, so that such hints should be regarded as something alien. And the events which have been alluded to in this sermon are preserved in the annals of history which testifies them word by word and sentence by sentence.

If the same events which are related by history are recounted by Amir al-mu'minin then what is the ground for denying them? If the memory of discouraging circumstances faced by him soon after the death of the Prophet appeared unpalatable to him it should not be surprising. No doubt this sermon hits at the prestige of certain personalities and gives a set back to the faith and belief in them but this cannot be sustained by denying the sermon to be Amir al-mu'minin's utterance, unless the true events are analysed and truth unveiled; otherwise just denying it to be Amir al-mu'minin's utterance because it contains disparagement of certain individuals carries no weight, when similar criticism has been related by other historians as well. Thus (Abu `Uthman) `Amr ibn Bahr al-Jahiz has recorded the following words of a sermon of Amir al-mu'minin and they are not less weighty than the criticism in the "Sermon of ash-Shiqshiqiyah."

Those two passed away and the third one rose like the crow whose courage is confined to the belly. It would have been better if both his wings had been cut and his head severed.

Consequently, the idea that it is the production of as-Sayyid ar-Radi is far from truth and a result of partisanship and partiality. Or else if it is the result of some research it should be brought out. Otherwise, remaining in such wishful illusion does not alter the truth, nor can the force of decisive arguments be curbed down by mere disagreement and displeasure.

Now we set forth the evidence of those scholars and traditionists who have clearly held it to be Amir al-mu'minin's

production, so that its historical importance should become known. Among these scholars some are those before as-Sayyid ar-Radi's period, some are his contemporaries and some are those who came after him but they all related it through their own chain of authority.

1) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid al-Mu'tazili writes that his master Abu'l-Khayr Musaddiq ibn Shabib al-Wasiti (d. 605 A.H.) stated that he heard this sermon from ash-Shaykh Abu Muhammad `Abdullah ibn Ahmad al-Baghdadi (d. 567 A.H.) known as Ibn al-Khashshab and when he reached where Ibn `Abbas expressed sorrow for this sermon having remained incomplete Ibn al-Khashshab said to him that if he had heard the expression of sorrow from Ibn `Abbas he would have certainly asked him if there had remained with his cousin any further unsatisfied desire because excepting the Prophet he had already spared neither the predecessors nor followers and had uttered all that he wished to utter. Why should therefore be any sorrow that he could not say what he wished?

Musaddiq says that Ibn al-Khashshab was a man of jolly heart and decent taste. I inquired from him whether he also regarded the sermon to be a fabrication when he replied "By Allah, I believe it to be Amir al-mu'minin's word as I believe you to be Musaddiq ibn Shabib." I said that some people regard it to be as-Sayyid ar-Radi's production when he replied: "How can ar-Radi have such guts or such style of writing. I have seen as-Sayyid ar-Radi's writings and know his style of composition. Nowhere does his writing match with this one and I have already seen it in books written two hundred years before the birth of as-Sayyid ar-Radi, and I have seen it in familiar writings about which I know by which scholars or men of letters they were compiled. At that time not only ar-Radi but even his father Abu Ahmad an-Naqib has not been born."

2) Thereafter Ibn Abi'l-Hadid writes that he saw this sermon in the compilations of his master Abu'l-Qasim (`Abdullah ibn Ahmad) al-Balkhi (d. 317 A.H.). He was the Imam of the Mu'tazilites in the reign of al-Muqtadir Billah while al-Muqtadir's period was far earlier than the birth of as-Sayyid ar-Radi.

3) He further writes that he saw this sermon in Abu Ja'far (Muhammad ibn `Abd ar-Rahman), Ibn Qibah's book al-Insaf. He was the pupil of Abu'l-Qasim al-Balkhi and a theologian of Imamiyyah (Shi'ite) sect. (Sharh of Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol. 1, pp.205-206)

4) Ibn Maytham al-Bahrani (d. 679 A.H.) writes in his commentary that he had seen one such copy of this sermon which bore writing of al-Muqtadir Billah's minister Abu'l-Hasan `Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Furat (d. 312 A.H.). (Sharh al-balaghah, vol. 1., pp.252-253)

5) al-`Allamah Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi has related the following chain of authority about this Sermon from ash-Shaykh Qutbu'd-Din ar-Rawandi's compilation Minhaj al-bara`ah fi Sharh Nahjul Balaghah: Ash-Shaykh Abu Nasr al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim informed me from al-Hajib Abu'l-Wafa' Muhammad ibn Badi`, al-Husayn ibn Ahmad ibn Badi` and al-Husayn ibn Ahmad ibn `Abd ar-Rahman and they from al-Hafiz Abu Bakr (Ahmad ibn Musa) ibn Marduwayh al-Isbahani (d. 416 A.H.) and he from al-Hafiz Abu'l-Qasim Sulayman ibn Ahmad at-Tabarani (d. 360 A.H.) and he from Ahmad ibn `Ali al-Abbar and he from Is'haq ibn Sa'id Abu Salamah ad-Dimashqi and he from Khulayd ibn Da'laj and he from `Ata' ibn Abi Rabah and he from Ibn `Abbas. (Bihar al-anwar, 1st ed. vol.8, pp. 160-161)

6) In the context al-`Allamah al-Majlisi has written that this sermon is also contained in the compilations of Abu `Ali (Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab) al-Jubba'i (d. 303 A.H.) .

7) In connection with this very authenticity al-`Allamah al-Majlisi writes: Al-Qadi `Abd al-Jabbar ibn Ahmad al-Asad'abadi (d. 415A.H.) who was a strict Mu'tazilite explains some expressions of this sermon in his book al-Mughni and tries to prove that it does not strike against any preceding caliph but does not deny it to be Amir al-mu'minin's composition. (ibid., p. 161)

8) Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn `Ali, Ibn Babawayh (d. 381 A.H.) writes: Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Is'haq at-Talaqani told us that `Abd al-`Aziz ibn Yahya al-Jaludi (d. 332 A.H.) told him that Abu `Abdillah Ahmad ibn `Ammar ibn Khalid told him that Yahya ibn `Abd al-Hamid al-Himmani (d. 228 A.H.) told him that `Isa ibn Rashid related this sermon from `Ali ibn Hudhayfah and he from `Ikrimah and he from Ibn `Abbas. (`Ilal ash-shara'i`, vol. 1, chap. 122, p.144; Ma`ani al-akhbar, chap.22, pp.360-361)

9) Then Ibn Babawayh records the following chain of authorities :- Muhammad ibn `Ali Majilawayh related this sermon to us and he took it from his uncle Muhammad ibn Abi'l-Qasim and he from Ahmad ibn Abi `Abdillah (Muhammad ibn Khalid) al-Barqi and he from his father and he from (Muhammad) Ibn Abi `Umayr and he from Aban ibn `Uthman and he from Aban ibn Taghlib and he from `Ikrimah and he from Ibn `Abbas. (`Ilal ash-shara'i`, vol. 1, chap. 122, p.146; Ma`ani al-akhbar, chap.22, p.361)

10) Abu Ahmad al-Hasan ibn `Abdillah ibn Sa`id al-`Askari (d.382 A.H.) who counts among great scholars of the Sunnis has written commentary and explanation of this sermon that has been recorded by Ibn Babawayh in `Ilal ash-shara'i` and Ma`ani al-akhbar.

11) as-Sayyid Ni`matullah al-Jaza'iri writes: The author of Kitab al-gharat Abu Is'haq, Ibrahim ibn Muhammad ath-Thaqafi al-Kufi (d. 283 A.H.) has related this sermon through his own chain of authorities. The date of completion of writing this book is Tuesday the 13th Shawwal 255 A.H. and in the same year, Murtada al-Musawi was born. He was older in age than his brother as-Sayyid ar-Radi. (Anwar an-Nu`maniyyah, p.37)

12) as-Sayyid Radi ad-Din Abu'l-Qasim `Ali ibn Musa, Ibn Tawus al-Husayni al-Hulli (d. 664 A.H.) has related this sermon from Kitab al-gharat with the following chain of authorities:- This sermon was related to us by Muhammad ibn Yusuf who related it from al-Hasan ibn `Ali ibn `Abd al-Karim az-Za`farani and he from Muhammad ibn Zakariyyah al-Ghallabi and he from Ya`qub ibn Ja`far ibn Sulayman and he from his father and he from his grand-father and he from Ibn `Abbas. (Translation of at-Tara'if, p.202)

13) Shaykh at-Ta'ifah, Muhammad ibn al- Hasan at-Tusi (d. 460 A.H.) writes: (Abu'l-Fath Hilal ibn Muhammad ibn Ja`far) al-Haffar related this sermon to us. He related it from Abu'l-Qasim (Isma`il ibn `Ali ibn `Ali) ad-Di`bili and he from his father and he from his brother Di`bil (ibn `Ali al-Kuza`i) and he from Muhammad ibn Salamah ash-Shami and he from Zurarah ibn A`yan and he from Abu Ja`far Muhammad ibn `Ali and he from Ibn `Abbas. (al-Amali, p.237)

14) ash-Shaykh al-Mufid (Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn an-Nu`man, d. 413 A.H.) who was the teacher of as-Sayyid ar-Radi writes about the chain of authorities of this sermon: A number of relaters of traditions have related this sermon from Ibn `Abbas through numerous chains. (al-Irshad, p. 135)

15) `Alam al-Huda (emblem of guidance) as-Sayyid al-Murtada who was the elder brother of as-Sayyid ar-Radi has recorded it on pp. 203,204 of his book ash-Shafi.

16) Abu Mansur at-Tabarsi writes: A number of relaters have given an account of this sermon from Ibn `Abbas through various chains. Ibn `Abbas said that he was in the audience of Amir al-mu'minin at ar-Rahbah (a place in Kufah) when conversation turned to Caliphate and those who had preceded him as Caliphs, when Amir al-mu'minin breathed a sigh and delivered this sermon. (al-Ihtijaj, p. 101)

17) Abu'l-Muzaffar Yusuf ibn `Abdillah and Sibti ibn al-Jawzi al-Hanafi (d. 654 A.H.) writes: Our ash-Shaykh Abu'l-Qasim an-Nafis al-Anbari related this sermon to us through his chain of authorities that ends with Ibn `Abbas, who said that after allegiance had been paid to Amir al-mu'minin as Caliph he was sitting on the pulpit when a man from the audience enquired why he had remained quiet till then whereupon Amir al-mu'minin delivered this sermon extempore. (Tadhkarat khawass al-ummah, p.73)

18) al-Qadi Ahmad ibn Muhammad, ash-Shihab al-Khafaji (d. 1069 A.H.) writes with regard to its authenticity: It is stated in the utterances of Amir al-mu'minin `Ali (Allah may be pleased with him) that "It is strange during life time he (Abu Bakr) wanted to give up the Caliphate but he strengthened its foundation for the other one after his death." (Sharh durrat al-ghawwas, p. 17)

19) ash-Shaykh `Ala ad-Dawlah as-Simnani writes: Amir al-mu'minin Sayyid al-`Arifin `Ali (p.b.u.h.) has stated in one of his brilliant Sermons "this is the Shiqshiqah that burst forth." (al-`Urwah li ahl al-khalwah wa'l-jalwah, p3, manuscript in Nasiriah Library, Lucknow, India)

20) Abu'l-Fadl Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Maydani (d. 518 A.H.) has written in connection with the word Shiqshiqah: One sermon of Amir al-mu'minin `Ali is known as Khutbah ash-Shiqshiqiyah (the sermon of the Camel's Foam). (Majma` al-amthal, vol. 1, p.369)

21) In fifteen places in an-Nihayah while explaining the words of this sermon Abu's-Sa`adat Mubarak ibn Muhammad, Ibn al-Athir al-Jazari (d. 606 A.H.) has acknowledged it to be Amir al-mu'minin's utterance.

22) Shaykh Muhammad Tahir Patni while explaining the same words in Majma` bihar al-anwar testifies this sermon to be

Amir al-mu'minin's by saying, "Ali says so."

23) Abu'l-Fadl ibn Manzur (d. 711 A.H.) has acknowledged it as Amir al-mu'minin's utterance in Lisan al-'Arab, vol. 12, p.54 by saying, "In the sayings of 'Ali in his sermon 'It is the camel's foam that burst forth then subsided."

24) Majdu'd-Din al-Firuz'abadi (d. 816/817 A.H.) has recorded under the word "Shiqshiqah" in his lexicon (al-Qamus, vol.3, p.251): Khutbah ash-Shiqshiqiyah is by 'Ali so named because when Ibn 'Abbas asked him to resume it where he had left it, he said "O' Ibn 'Abbas! it was the foam of a camel that burst forth then subsided."

25) The compiler of Muntaha al-adab writes: Khutbah ash-Shiqshiqiyah of 'Ali is attributed to 'Ali (Allah may honour his face).

26) ash-Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh, Mufti of Egypt, recognising it as Amir al-mu'minin's utterance, has written its explanations.

27) Muhammad Muhyi'd-Din 'Abd al-Hamid, Professor in the Faculty of Arabic Language, al-Azhar University has written annotations on Nahjul Balaghah adding a foreword in the beginning wherein he recognises all such sermons which contain disparaging remarks to be the utterances of Amir al-mu'minin.

In the face of these evidences and undeniable proofs is there any scope to hold that it is not Amir al-mu'minin's production and that as-Sayyid ar-Radi prepared it himself?

2. Amir al-mu'minin has referred to Abu Bakr's accession to the Caliphate metaphorically as having dressed himself with it. This was a common metaphor. Thus, when 'Uthman was called to give up the Caliphate he replied, "I shall not put off this shirt which Allah has put on me." No doubt Amir al-mu'minin has not attributed this dressing of Caliphate to Allah but to Abu Bakr himself because according to unanimous opinion his Caliphate was not from Allah but his own affair. That is why Amir al-mu'minin said that Abu Bakr dressed himself with the Caliphate.

He knew that this dress had been stitched for his own body and his position with relation to the Caliphate was that of the axis in the hand-mill which cannot retain its central position without it nor be of any use. Similarly, he held "I was the central pivot of the Caliphate, were I not there, its entire system would have gone astray from the pivot. It was I who acted as a guard for its organisation and order and guided it through all difficulties. Currents of learning flowed from my bosom and watered it on all sides. My position was high beyond imagination but lust of world seekers for government became a tumbling stone for me and I had to confine myself to seclusion. Blinding darkness prevailed all round and there was intense gloom everywhere. The young grew old and the old departed for the graves but this patience-breaking period would not end. I kept watching with my eyes the plundering of my own inheritance and saw the passing of Caliphate from one hand to the other but remained patient as I could not stop their high-handedness for lack of means."

Need For The Prophet's Caliph And The Mode Of His Appointment

After the Prophet of Islam the presence of such a personality was inevitable who could stop the community from disintegration and guard the religious law against change, alteration and interference by those who wanted to twist it to suit their own desires. If this very need is denied then there is no sense in attaching so much importance to the succession of the Prophet that the assemblage in Saqifah of Banu Sa'idah should have been considered more important than the burial of the Prophet.

If the need is recognised, the question is whether or not the Prophet too realised it. If it is held he could not attend to it and appreciate its need or absence of need it would be the biggest proof for regarding the Prophet's mind to be blank for thinking of means to stop the evils of innovations and apostasy in spite of having given warnings about them. If it is said that he did realise it but had to live it unresolved on account of some advantage then instead of keeping it hidden the advantage should be clearly indicated otherwise silence without purpose would constitute delinquency in the discharge of the obligations of Prophethood. If there was some impediment, it should be disclosed otherwise we should agree that just as the Prophet did not leave any item of religion incomplete he did not leave this matter either and did propose such a course of action for it, that if it was acted upon religion would have remained safe against the interference of others.

The question now is what was that course of action. If it is taken to be the consensus of opinion of the community then it

cannot truly take place as in such consensus acquiescence of every individual is necessary; but taking into account the difference in human temperaments it seems impossible that they would agree on any single point. Nor is there any example where on such matters there has been no single voice of dissent. How then can such a fundamental need be made dependent on the occurrence of such an impossible event – need on which converges the future of Islam and the good of the Muslims. Therefore, the mind is not prepared to accept this criterion. Nor is tradition in harmony with it, as al-Qadi `Adud ad-Din al-Ijji has written in Sharh al-mawaqif: ‘You should know that Caliphate cannot depend upon unanimity of election because no logical or traditional argument can be advanced for it’.

In fact when the advocates of unanimous election found that unanimity of all votes is difficult they adopted the agreement of the majority as a substitute for unanimity, ignoring the difference of the minority. In such a case also it often happens that the force of fair and foul or correct and incorrect ways turns the flow of the majority opinion in the direction where there is neither individual distinction nor personal merit as a result of which competent persons remain hidden while incompetent individuals stand forward.

When capabilities remain so curbed and personal ends stand in the way as hurdles, how can there be expectation for the election of correct person. Even if it is assumed that all voters have an independent unbiased view, that none of them has his own objective and that none has any other consideration, it is not necessary that every verdict of the majority should be correct, and that it cannot go astray. Experience shows that after experiment the majority has held its own verdict to be wrong.

If every verdict of the majority is correct then its first verdict should be wrong because the verdict which holds it wrong is also that of the majority. In this circumstances if the election of the Caliph goes wrong who would be responsible for the mistake, and who should face the blame for the ruination of the Islamic polity. Similarly on whom would be the liability for the bloodshed and slaughter following the turmoil and activity of the elections. When it has been seen that even those who sat in the audience of the Holy Prophet could not be free of mutual quarrel and strife how can others avoid it.

If with a view to avoid mischief it is left to the people of authority to choose anyone they like then here too the same friction and conflict would prevail because here again convergence of human temperaments on one point is not necessary nor can they be assumed to rise above personal ends. In fact here the chances of conflict and collision would be stronger because if not all at least most of them would themselves be candidates for that position and would not spare any effort to defeat their opponent, creating impediments in his way as best as possible. Its inevitable consequence would be mutual struggle and mischief-mongering.

Thus, it would not be possible to ward off the mischief for which this device was adopted, and instead of finding a proper individual the community would just become an instrument for the achievement of personal benefits of the others. Again, what would be the criterion for these people in authority? The same as has usually been, namely whoever collects a few supporters and is able to create commotion in any meeting by use of forceful words would count among the people of authority. Or would capabilities also be judged? If the mode of judging the capabilities is again this very common vote then the same complications and conflicts would arise here too, to avoid which this way was adopted.

If there is some other standard, then instead of judging the capabilities of the voters by it why not judge the person who is considered suitable for the position in view. Further, how many persons in authority would be enough to give a verdict? Apparently a verdict once accepted would be precedent for good and the number that would give this verdict would become the criterion for future. al-Qadi `Adud ad-Din al-Ijji writes: ‘Rather the nomination of one or two individuals by the people in authority is enough because we know that the companions who were strict in religion deemed it enough as the nomination of Abu Bakr by `Umar and of `Uthman by `Abd ar-Rahman’. (Sharh al-mawaqif, p.351)

This is the account of the "unanimous election" in the Hall of Bani Sa`idah and the activity of the consultative assembly: that is, one man's action has been given the name of unanimous election and one individual's deed given the name of consultative assembly. Abu Bakr had well understood this reality that election means the vote of a person or two only which is to be attributed to common simple people.

That is why he ignored the requirements of unanimous election, majority vote or method of choosing through electoral assembly and appointed `Umar by nomination. `A'ishah also considered that leaving the question of caliphate to the vote of a few particular individuals meant inviting mischief and trouble. She sent a word to `Umar on his death saying: Do not leave the Islamic community without a chief. Nominate a Caliph for it and leave it not without an authority as otherwise I apprehend mischief and trouble.

When the election by those in authority proved futile it was given up and only "might is right" became the criteria—namely whoever subdues others and binds them under his sway and control is accepted as the Caliph of the Prophet and his true successor. These are those self-adopted principles in the face of which all the Prophet's sayings uttered in the "Feast of the Relatives," on the night of hijrah, at the battle of Tabuk, on the occasion of conveying the Qur'anic chapter "al-Bara'ah" (at-Tawbah, chap.9) and at Ghadir (the spring of) Khumm.

The strange thing is that when each of the first three caliphates is based on one individual's choice how can this very right to choose be denied to the Prophet himself, particularly when this was the only way to end all the dissension, namely that the Prophet should have himself settled it and saved the community from future disturbances and spared it from leaving this decision in the hands of people who were themselves involved in personal aims and objects. This is the correct procedure which stands to reason and which has also the support of the Prophet's definite sayings.

3. Hayyan ibn as-Samin al-Hanafi of Yamamah was the chief of the tribe Banu Hanifah and the master of fort and army. Jabir is the name of his younger brother while al-A'sha whose real name was Maymun ibn Qays ibn Jandal enjoyed the position of being his bosom friend and led a decent happy life through his bounty. In this verse he has compared his current life with the previous one that is the days when he roamed about in search of livelihood and those when he led a happy life in Hayyan's company.

Generally Amir al-mu'minin's quoting of this verse has been taken to compare this troubled period with the peaceful days passed under the care and protection of the Prophet when he was free from all sorts of troubles and enjoyed mental peace. But taking into account the occasion for making this comparison and the subject matter of the verse it would not be far fetched if it is taken to indicate the difference between the unimportant position of those in power during the Prophet's life time and the authority and power enjoyed by them after him, that is, at one time in the days of the Prophet no heed was paid to them because of `Ali's personality but now the time had so changed that the same people were masters of the affairs of the Muslim world.

4. When `Umar was wounded by Abu Lu'lu'ah and he saw that it was difficult for him to survive because of the deep wound, he formed a consultative committee and nominated for it `Ali ibn Abi Talib, `Uthman ibn `Affan, `Abd ar-Rahman ibn `Awf, az-Zubayr ibn al-`Awwam, Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas, and Talhah ibn `Ubaydillah and bound them that after three days of his death they should select one of themselves as the Caliph while for those three days Suhayb should act as Caliph. On receipt of these instructions some members of the committee requested him to indicate what ideas he had about each of them to enable them to proceed further in their light. `Umar therefore disclosed his own view about each individual.

He said that Sa`d was harsh-tempered and hot headed; `Abd ar-Rahman was the Pharaoh of the community; az-Zubayr was, if pleased, a true believer but if displeased an unbeliever; Talhah was the embodiment of pride and haughtiness, if he was made caliph he would put the ring of the caliphate on his wife's finger while `Uthman did not see beyond his kinsmen. As regards `Ali he is enamoured of the Caliphate although I know that he alone can run it on right lines. Nevertheless, despite this admission, he thought it necessary to constitute the consultative Committee and in selecting its members and laying down the working procedure he made sure that the Caliphate would take the direction in which he wished to turn it.

Thus, a man of ordinary prudence can draw the conclusion that all the factors for `Uthman's success were present therein. If we look at its members we see that one of them namely `Abd ar-Rahman ibn `Awf is the husband of `Uthman's sister, next Sa`d ibn Abi Waqqas besides bearing malice towards `Ali is a relation and kinsman of `Abd ar-Rahman. Neither of them can be taken to go against `Uthman. The third Talhah ibn `Ubaydillah about whom Prof. Muhammad `Abduh writes in his annotation on Nahjul Balaghah:

Talhah was inclined towards `Uthman and the reason for it was no less than that he was against `Ali, because he himself was at at-Taymi and Abu Bakr's accession to the Caliphate had created bad blood between Bani Taym and Banu Hashim.

As regards az-Zubayr, even if he had voted for `Ali, what could his single vote achieve. According to at-Tabari's statement Talhah was not present in Medina at that time but his absence did not stand in the way of `Uthman's success. Rather even if he were present, as he did actually reach at the meeting (of the Committee), and he is taken to be `Ali's supporter, still there could be no doubt in `Uthman's success because `Umar's sagacious mind had set the working procedure that:

If two agree about one and the other two about another then `Abdullah ibn `Umar should act as the arbitrator. The group whom he orders should choose the Caliph from among themselves. If they do not accept `Abdullah ibn `Umar's verdict, support should be given to the group which includes `Abd ar-Rahman ibn `Awf, but if the others do not agree they should be beheaded for opposing this verdict. (at-Tabari, vol. 1, pp.2779-2780; Ibn al-Athir, vol.3, p.67).

Here disagreement with the verdict of `Abdullah ibn `Umar has no meaning since he was directed to support the group which included `Abd ar-Rahman ibn `Awf. He had ordered his son `Abdullah and Suhayb that: 'If the people differ, you should side with the majority, but if three of them are on one side and the other three on the other, you should side with the group including `Abd ar-Rahman ibn `Awf'. (at-Tabari, vol. 1, pp.2725,2780; Ibn al-Athir, vol.3, pp.51,67).

In this instruction the agreement with the majority also means support of `Abd ar-Rahman because the majority could not be on any other side since fifty blood-thirsty swords had been put on the heads of the opposition group with orders to fall on their heads on `Abd ar-Rahman's behest. Amir al-mu'minin's eye had fore-read it at that very moment that the Caliphate was going to `Uthman as appears from his following words which he spoke to al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib:

"The Caliphate has been turned away from us." al-`Abbas asked how could he know it. Then he replied, "Uthman has also been coupled with me and it has been laid down that the majority should be supported; but if two agree on one and two on the other, then support should be given to the group which includes `Abd ar-Rahman ibn `Awf. Now Sa'd will support his cousin `Abd ar-Rahman who is of course the husband of `Uthman's sister." (ibid)

However, after `Umar's death this meeting took place in the room of `A'ishah and on its door stood Abu Talhah al-Ansari with fifty men having drawn swords in their hands. Talhah started the proceedings and inviting all others to be witness said that he gave his right of vote to `Uthman. This touched az-Zubayr's sense of honour as his mother Safiyyah daughter of `Abd al-Muttalib was the sister of Prophet's father. So he gave his right of vote to `Ali.

Thereafter Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas made his right of vote to `Abd ar-Rahman. This left three members of the consultative committee out of whom `Abd ar-Rahman said that he was willing to give up his own right of vote if `Ali (p.b.u.h.) and `Uthman gave him the right to choose one of them or one of these two should acquire this right by withdrawing. This was a trap in which `Ali had been entangled from all sides namely that either he should abandon his own right or else allow `Abd ar-Rahman to do as he wished. The first case was not possible for him; that is, to give up his own right and elect `Uthman or `Abd ar-Rahman.

So, he clung to his right, while `Abd ar-Rahman separating himself from it assumed this power and said to Amir al-mu'minin, "I pay you allegiance on your following the Book of Allah, the sunnah of the Prophet and the conduct of the two Shaykhs, (Abu Bakr and `Umar). `Ali replied, "Rather on following the Book of Allah, the sunnah of the Prophet and my own findings." When he got the same reply even after repeating the question thrice he turned to `Uthman saying, "Do you accept these conditions." He had no reason to refuse and so he agreed to the conditions and allegiance was paid to him. When Amir al mu'minin saw his rights being thus trampled he said: "This is not the first day when you behaved against us. I have only to keep good patience. Allah is the Helper against whatever you say. By Allah, you have not made `Uthman Caliph but in the hope that he would give back the Caliphate to you."

After recording the events of ash-Shura (consultative committee), Ibn Abi'l-Hadid has written that when allegiance had been paid to `Uthman, `Ali addressed `Uthman and `Abd ar-Rahman saying, "May Allah sow the seed of dissension among you," and so it happened that each turned a bitter enemy of the other and `Abd ar-Rahman did not ever after speak to

`Uthman till death. Even on death bed he turned his face on seeing him.

On seeing these events the question arises whether ash-Shura (consultative committee) means confining the matter to six persons, thereafter to three and finally to one only. Also whether the condition of following the conduct of the two Shaykhs for Caliphate was put by `Umar or it was just a hurdle put by `Abd ar-Rahman between `Ali (p.b.u.h.) and the Caliphate, although the first Caliph did not put forth this condition at the time of nominating the second Caliph, namely that he should follow the former's footsteps. What then was the occasion for this condition here?

However, Amir al-mu'minin had agreed to participate in it in order to avoid mischief and to put an end to arguing so that others should be silenced and should not be able to claim that they would have voted in his favour and that he himself evaded the consultative committee and did not give them an opportunity of selecting him.

5. About the reign of the third Caliph, Amir al-mu'minin says that soon on `Uthman's coming to power Banu Umayyah got ground and began plundering the Bayt al-mal (public fund), and just as cattle on seeing green grass after drought trample it away, they recklessly fell upon Allah's money and devoured it. At last this self-indulgence and nepotism brought him to the stage when people besieged his house, put him to sword and made him vomit all that he had swallowed.

The maladministration that took place in this period was such that no Muslim can remain unmoved to see that Companions of high position were lying uncared for, they were stricken with poverty and surrounded by pennilessness while control over Bayt al-mal (public fund) was that of Banu Umayyah, government positions were occupied by their young and inexperienced persons, special Muslim properties were owned by them, meadows provided grazing but to their cattle, houses were built but by them, and orchards were but for them. If any compassionate person spoke about these excesses his ribs were broken, and if someone agitated this capitalism he was externed from the city. The uses to which zakat and charities which were meant for the poor and the wretched and the public fund which was the common property of the Muslims were put may be observed from the following few illustrations;

1) al-Hakam ibn Abi'l-`As who had been exiled from Medina by the Prophet was allowed back in the city not only against the Prophet's sunnah but also against the conduct of the first two Caliphs and he was paid three hundred thousand Dirhams from the public fund. (Ansab al-ashraf, vol.5, pp.27, 28, 125)

2) al-Walid ibn `Uqbah who has been named hypocrite in the Qur'an was paid one hundred thousand Dirhams from the Muslim's public fund. (al-`Iqd al-farid, vol.3, p.94)

3) The Caliph married his own daughter Umm Aban to Marwan ibn al-Hakam and paid him one hundred thousand Dirhams from the public fund. (Sharh of Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol. 1, pp. 198-199).

4) He married his daughter `A'ishah to Harith ibn al-Hakam and granted him one hundred thousand Dirhams from the public fund. (ibid.)

5) `Abdullah ibn Khalid was paid four hundred thousand Dirhams. (al-Ma`arif of Ibn Qutaybah, p.84)

6) Allowed the khums (one fifth religious duty) from Africa (amounting to five hundred thousand Dinars) to Marwan ibn al-Hakam. (ibid)

7) Fadak which was withheld from the angelic daughter of the Prophet on the ground of being general charity was given as a royal favour to Marwan ibn al-Hakam. (ibid.)

8) Mahzur a place in the commercial area of Medina which had been declared a public trust by the Prophet was gifted to Harith ibn al-Hakam. (ibid.)

9) In the meadows around Medina no camel except those of Banu Umayyah were allowed to graze. (Sharh of Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol.I, p.199)

10) After his death (`Uthman's) one hundred and fifty thousand Dinars (gold coins) and one million Dirhams (silver coins)

were found in his house. There was no limit to tax free lands; and the total value of the landed estate he owned in Wadi al-Qura and Hunayn was one hundred thousand Dinars. There were countless camels and horses. (Muruj adh-dhahab, vol.I, p.435)

11) The Caliph's relations ruled all the principal cities. Thus, at Kufah, al-Walid ibn `Uqbah was the governor but when in the state of intoxication of wine he led the morning prayer in four instead of two rak'ah and people agitated he was removed, but the Caliph put in his place a hypocrite like Sa'id ibn al-`As. In Egypt `Abdullah ibn Sa'd ibn Abi Sarh, in Syria Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, and in Basrah, `Abdullah ibn `Amir were the governors appointed by him (ibid.)

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