

The Rebellion Of Mu'awiyah

As has previously been cited in this book, it was 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab who gave Mu'awiyah free hand to have authority over Muslims and to create for himself a great power that he then used against Imam Ali ('a).

Accordingly, Mu'awiyah, in his capacity as the deputy governor of Syria, used the fortunes of this large district for supporting his sovereignty economically and politically. He purchased the loyalties of many people, bestowed the tribal chiefs with huge funds, and spread ignorance and illiteracy among the people of Syria so that they would never revolt or support his enemy against him.

Due to his familiarity with the political program of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, Mu'awiyah was sure that 'Uthman would be killed and his government would collapse. He therefore did not set to support him; rather, he left him alone facing the swords of the insurgents. He then took the blood and shirt of 'Uthman as a winning card to seize power.

'A'ishah also played a positive role in this issue and paved the way for Mu'awiyah to lead an armed mutiny against Imam Ali ('a). What's more, Mu'awiyah knew for sure that Imam Ali ('a) would never keep him in that position even for a moment and that he would most certainly divest him of all fortunes that he had collected from the drudgery of the poor people.

Mu'awiyah Deceives The Prominent Personalities

Mu'awiyah wrote a letter to Al-Zubayr and Talhah, seducing them into the position of caliphate. They thus believed his trickery and mutinied against Imam Ali ('a).

When Mu'awiyah learnt about Abdullah ibn 'Umar's refraining from pledging allegiance to Imam Ali ('a), he wrote him a letter in which he awakened his desire for caliphate and sought his help in going up against Imam Ali ('a).

However, Abdullah ibn 'Umar wrote back, declaring his refusal to join Mu'awiyah and trying to make

justifications for his refraining from pledging allegiance to Imam Ali (‘a). [1](#)

Mu’awiyah then wrote another letter to Sa’d ibn Abi-Waqqas, asking him to rise up and demand with the blood of ‘Uthman. He also raised in him hopes for being the caliph.

Sa’d wrote back a letter to Mu’awiyah in which he confessed that Imam Ali(‘a) was always the worthiest of caliphate, but some matters deterred him from holding this position since the first day. Sa’d also refused to respond to Mu’awiyah.[2](#)

Mu’awiyah then concluded that he would not be able to challenge Imam Ali (‘a) unless ‘Amr ibn Al-’As, the sliest of all Arabs, would join his party. He thus wrote a letter to ‘Amr and asked him to come to Damascus.

When he received Mu’awiyah’s letter, ‘Amr hesitated to interfere in this clash. He therefore sought advice from his two sons Abdullah and Muhammad. The earlier suggested that his father should retire to his home and refrain from answering Mu’awiyah, while the latter, like the other youths of Quraysh who had desires for wealth and reputation, suggested to his father that he should find himself a good place in this dispute and join Mu’awiyah.

To his son Abdullah, ‘Amr said, ‘You have ordered me to follow what is in the benefit of my religion, while your brother has ordered me to follow what is in the benefit of my worldly life.’

‘Amr could not sleep at that night, because he was thinking of the matter. Unfortunately, before sunrise, he had preferred his worldly life to his religion and decided to join Mu’awiyah. Once he entered the city of Damascus, ‘Amr started weeping heavily before the people of Syria and raising his voice with these words: ‘Oh, for ‘Uthman! I declare the death of modesty and piety!’

It is worth mentioning that ‘Amr ibn Al-’As incited all people against ‘Uthman and exerted all his efforts to overthrow him. He even encouraged the shepherds he would meet in his way to shed the blood of ‘Uthman.

When Mu’awiyah met with ‘Amr, he asked him to join his party and help him wage a war against Imam Ali (‘a). Expressing his opinion frankly, ‘Amr said, ‘Listen, Mu’awiyah! By Allah, the Arabs would never compare you to Ali in anything. Besides, Ali is unbeatable in armed clashes. If we want to match him up with any person from Quraysh, we will certainly wrong him.’

Mu’awiyah answered, ‘This is true. However, we can fight him for maintaining what we are now having in possession and we will claim that he has killed ‘Uthman!’

When ‘Uthman’s name was intruded in the issue, ‘Amr laughed sarcastically and informed Mu’awiyah that the persons whom should be most responsible for the assassination of ‘Uthman were Mu’awiyah and himself.[3](#)

Mu'awiyah realized that 'Amr would not respond to him unless he would give him something big in return. So, he surprised him with this question, 'O 'Amr, do you love me?'

Scornfully, 'Amr said, 'Why should I love you? Should I love you for an otherworldly benefit? By Allah, nothing of the otherworldly affairs is with you. Should I love you for this worldly benefit? By Allah, this will not be before you give me a share with you.'

Mu'awiyah, complying with 'Amr's request, said, 'You are my partner in this.'

To guarantee his share, 'Amr said, 'You should now pledge to appoint me as the governor of Egypt and the surrounding villages.'

Mu'awiyah said, 'You will have my word.'

Starting his mission as the assistant of Mu'awiyah, 'Amr advised him to write a letter to the people of Al-Madinah, accusing Imam Ali ('a) of having a role in the assassination of 'Uthman and promising that the new caliph would be subjected to a process of election.

However, this trick of Mu'awiyah did not work with the people of Al-Madinah who answered him back with violent language and reminded him of his origin, since his father and he were the archenemies of Islam.[4](#)

Mu'awiyah sent a similar letter to Qays ibn Sa'd asking for his assistance and promising that he would appoint him as the governor of Iraq and Al-Hijaz. However, Qays wrote back to Mu'awiyah a letter full of words of reproach and scolding.

When Mu'awiyah read the letter of Qays, he deceptively informed the people of Syria that Qays had responded to his call and would be ready to fight against the one who had killed 'Uthman.[5](#)

Of course, the nave people of Syria believed this lie and let themselves be carried away by Mu'awiyah.

When the courier of Imam Ali ('a); namely, Jarir Al-Bajali, was present before Mu'awiyah to invite him to swear allegiance to the Imam ('a), Mu'awiyah played a trick on the most prominent personality in Syria, Shurahbil Al-Kindi.

He agreed with some persons of his followers to meet Shurahbil separately and convince him that Imam Ali ('a) killed 'Uthman. Starting the trick, Mu'awiyah summoned Shurahbil and informed him that Jarir was there to convey to him the order of Imam Ali ('a) to pay homage to him. He thus claimed that he would not make this decision before he would consult the people of Syria since, as he claimed, he was one of them.

However, when Shurahbil was informed by these followers of Mu'awiyah that Imam Ali ('a) was the killer of 'Uthman, he believed them. Hurrying to Mu'awiyah, Shurahbil said, 'Where are the people? Ali has

killed 'Uthman!

If you, Mu'awiyah, pledge allegiance to Ali, we will certainly take you out of Syria!⁶

In brief, Mu'awiyah could establish his rule on such fabrications.

Correspondence Between Imam Ali And Mu'awiyah

Before entering into warfare, Imam Ali ('a) sent a big number of letters to Mu'awiyah advising him to pledge allegiance to him, to obey him like all Muslims did, and to avoid disuniting the community. However, Mu'awiyah the cunning and hypocrite did not respond to the Imam ('a); rather, he raised the slogan of demanding with 'Uthman's blood.

When the Imam ('a) was consensually selected as the caliph and homage was paid to him, he wrote this letter to Mu'awiyah:

People killed 'Uthman before they had taken counsel with me and they then pledged allegiance to me after they had taken counsel with each other and agreed unanimously on so. Once you receive this letter of mine, you may pay homage to me and delegate the chief personalities of Syria to me.

When he received this letter, Mu'awiyah wrote back that Imam Ali ('a) had nothing with him but strikes of swords and cutting off of heads.⁷

After Imam Ali ('a) had finished with the Battle of the Camel and had the affairs back under his control, he sent this letter to Mu'awiyah:

In effect, the predetermination and unmistakable act of God are poured down from the heavens like raindrops. Thus are the ordains of the Almighty and All-majestic Lord put into effect and His will is enforced even though the created beings do not consent to and the human beings do not satisfy with it.

You have had an idea about the assassination of 'Uthman, the general pledge of allegiance to me by all people, and the killing of those who breached their homage to me. So, submit to what people have submitted; otherwise, you know who I am and you know those who are surrounding me.⁸

In reply to this letter, Mu'awiyah sent a blank sheet on which he wrote nothing but the exordial statement of **'In the Name of Allah the All- beneficent, the All-merciful.'**

Imam Ali ('a) understood from this letter that Mu'awiyah was determined to fight him.

Through Jarir ibn Abdullah Al-Bajali, Imam Ali ('a) sent the following letter to Mu'awiyah:

The pledge of allegiance to me that took place in Al-Madinah keeps you under obligation even if you are in Syrian. This is so because those who swore allegiance to Abu-Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman have sworn

allegiance to me on the same basis on which they swore allegiance to them. On this basis, he who was present has no choice to consider, and he who was absent has no right to reject; and consultation is confined to the Muhajirun and the Ansar.

If they agree on a certain person and take him to be the caliph, it will be deemed to mean Allah's pleasure. If any one keeps away by way of objection or innovation, they will return him to the position from where he kept away. If he refuses, they will fight him for following a course other than that of the believers and Allah will put him back from where he had run away and make him enter hell; and it is an evil resort.[9](#)

Talhah and Al-Zubayr had pledged allegiance to me before they breached their allegiance. So, their breach was like their apostasy. I therefore fought them because of that until the truth came and the commandment of Allah manifested itself although they were averse from it.

Now, you must agree to that to which all people have agreed, for the most desirable thing to me about you is that you will gain security unless you expose yourself to tribulation. If you do, I will fight and seek Allah's help against you. You have spoken too much about the assassins of 'Uthman; so, resign yourself to what the people have accepted.

Then, you can sue the assassins of 'Uthman and I will judge between you according to (the laws of) the Book of Allah. However, as for that thing, which you try to gain (i.e. caliphate), it is only like playing trickery on a child to avert him from milk.

By my life, if you see with your brain without any passion, you will find me the most innocent of all of the people of Quraysh in respect of shedding 'Uthman's blood. I have sent to you Jarir ibn Abdullah Al-Bajali, one of the people of true faith and one of those who migrated for the sake of Islam, to take your pledge of allegiance to me. So, swear allegiance to me.

There is no might and no power save with Allah.[10](#)

Having received this letter, Mu'awiyah tried to postpone his reply until Jarir became bored with the situation. He said to Mu'awiyah, 'Listen, Mu'awiyah! A hypocrite delays performing a prayer until he finds that there is no other way. I do not think that you will swear allegiance until you find that there is no other way left for you.'

Mu'awiyah answered, 'In fact, this is not 'playing trickery on a child to avert him from milk;' rather, it is an issue of many future dimensions.'

Mu'awiyah then recited before Jarir some poetic verses to make him understand that he was determined to fight Imam Ali ('a), because the people of Syria were obeying him completely.

Finally, Mu'awiyah decided to write back to Imam Ali ('a), including his letter with worthless sophisms and declaring his rebel and insistence on fighting against the Imam ('a). He sealed his letter with some

poetic verses revealing animosity between the people of Iraq and the people of Syria. [11](#)

When he received Mu'awiyah's letter, Imam Ali ('a) decided to write him back another one, which was as follows:

From Ali ibn Abi Talib,

To Mu'awiyah ibn Sakhr:

I have received your letter, which is suggestive of a character of a person who lacks any discernment that may lead him to the true guidance and has no leader that may direct him correctly. When fancy called at him, he responded, and when it was in the lead of him, he followed. You have claimed that what prevented you from swearing allegiance to me was the breach of my covenant with 'Uthman!

By my life, I, in this issue, was not different from any other man from the Muhajirun; I entered where they entered and came out wherefrom they came out. Allah will never gather them on a deviational matter and will never strike them with blindness. Furthermore, I have not ordered of killing 'Uthman so that the sin of this order might chase me, nor have I killed him with my own hands so that I might fear for myself the reTalibation of killing.

You claim that the people of Syria are rulers over the people of Al-Hijaz! Can you bring me one Qurayshite man from Syria whose opinion can be admitted by the people of consultation or can be accepted as caliph? If you mention the name of anyone, then you will be belied by the Muhajirun and the Ansar. In turn, we can bring you such a Qurayshite man from Al-Hijaz.

You also claim that I must send to you the assassins of 'Uthman! What is your role in this issue? The sons of 'Uthman are here and they are worthier than you are of demanding with the killers of 'Uthman. If you then claim that you are more powerful than they are in demanding with 'Uthman's blood, then you may commit to the homage that you are binding to do and then you may sue these people before me.

As for your discrimination between the people of Syria and the people of Al-Basrah and between Talhah and Al-Zubayr and you, I swear it by my life that the matter is the same, because the pledge of allegiance to me was so general that none has the right to reconsider it or to resume the choice of it.

As for my family relationship to the Messenger of Allah (S) and my precedence to Islam, if you had been able to cancel it, you would certainly have done. [12](#)

Mu'awiyah then sent to Imam Ali ('a) a letter full of lies and hypocrisy, accusing him of dependence upon the people of Al-Hijaz, Iraq, and Egypt and accusing him over again of killing 'Uthman, Talhah, and Al-Zubayr and of displacing 'A'ishah. He then threatened the Imam ('a) with the people of Syria.

In reply to this letter, Imam Ali ('a) wrote back the following:

You should weigh up all affairs according to the criterion of one who considers his own affairs apart from his troops and who avoids saying trivial things. By my life, if I derive my power from the people of Iraq more than I do from Allah and more than my recognition of Him, then he who is so lacks any trust in Allah the All-exalted.

So, talk to yourself confidentially in such a serious way that makes you dispense with trifling, for there is always much space in wording, and one like you will not be excused with regard to that for which real men inspire.

You claim that you and we were one hand! This is true. You and we were such, but there is still a big difference between you and us; when Allah decided that His messenger would be one of us, we believed in him, but you disbelieved.

You also claim that I have killed Talhah and Al-Zubayr! You were absent from this issue and you could not present yourself there. If you were there, you would have familiarity with the case. So, do not intrude in such cases, because you have no justifiable reason to do so.

You then claim that you, leading the Muhajirun, will visit me (in warfare)! In fact, hijrah (migration) stopped on that day when your brother was taken as captive. [13](#) So, if you feel some hastiness in yourself, you must then slow down and have a rest! If I overcome you, then it must be that Allah has sent me to punish you. [14](#)

Moreover, Imam Ali (‘a) sent another letter to Mu’awiyah in which he exhorted and warned him against the chastisement and punishment of Almighty Allah for his rebellion. The letter read as follows:

From the servant of Allah, Ali, the Leader of the Believers,

To Mu’awiyah ibn Abi-Sufyan:

Verily, this world is an abode of trading, and its profit or loss will be seen in the Hereafter. The true happy is thus the one whose merchandise is the righteous deeds and who sees this world from its own viewpoint and weighs it up according to its own criterion. I only want to exhort you although I have already had familiarity with the unstoppable destiny of you.

However, Allah the All-exalted has put the scholars under the obligation of fulfilling their trusts and giving advice to the aberrant and to the followers of the right guidance. So, fear Allah and do not be of those who do not hope dignity for Allah and those against whom the sentence of chastisement is due, for Allah verily is always on a watchtower and your world will turn away from you and bring upon you nothing but regret.

So, quit error and deviation you are now in, despite your old age and the imminent termination of your lifetime. Today, your manner is just like the manner of a shabby dress that whenever one of its sides is sewn, another side is ripped open.

You have already caused perdition to a big number of people whom you have seduced into your aberrance and cast in the waves of your ocean, exposing them to be covered by utter darkness and collided by spurious matters. Thus, they turned aside from the true path, recoiled on their heels, shrank on their backs, and depended on their ancestries.

Excepted from these are the people of intuition who separated from you, after they had recognized your reality, and who ran hurriedly towards Allah from supporting you, because you had made them ride on untamed animals and diverted from the straight path.

O Mu'awiyah, fear Allah with regard to yourself and pull your leash from the hand of Satan, for this world will in the long run slip away from you while the Hereafter is very nigh. [15](#)

However, Mu'awiyah did not care for the Imam's advice; rather, he wrote back a letter full of revilement and threat.

Imam Ali ('a) therefore replied to his letter as follows:

The deviational statements you have mentioned in your letter are not unlike what your family members and folks had come with, since their atheism and desire for unachievable things made them begrudge Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his Household, and led them to die the way with which you have already had familiarity.

They could neither defend an inviolable matter nor protect themselves against the befalling of a big misfortune. At these situations, it was I who faced them bravely, suffered the heat of their wars, notched the sharpness of their weapons, and cut off their heads and the heads of the chiefs of deviation; and, Allah willing, I will attach their descendants to them. How miserable the descendants are when they follow their ancestors whose destiny and final abode is Hellfire. [16](#)

Mu'awiyah replied to the Imam's letter with statements of impudence and threat with the people of Syria.

Imam Ali ('a) thus answered in a letter,

How strange that which I received from you is! How familiar I am with what you are about to pass through! My respite in facing you is only because I am waiting for what you believe to be untrue but I believe to be true. Tomorrow, I see coming that you will clamor because of war just like the clamor of the overburdened camels. You and your followers will then have to call on me to accept as arbitrator the Book that you only revere by your tongues while you disbelieve in it in your hearts. [17](#)

The last statement in Imam Ali's letter carries his prediction that Mu'awiyah and his gang will be defeated in the war and will have no other trick to make than calling on accepting the Holy Quran as arbitrator, although they do not believe in it.

Mu'awiyah sent back a letter to Imam Ali ('a) in which he belittled Imam Ali's prediction and considered it

to be one of the fables, accusing the Imam ('a) of leading his followers to the wrong course. [18](#)

In reply to Mu'awiyah, Imam Ali ('a) wrote back the following letter:

You and your followers, who are the followers of the accursed Satan, have so many times described the truth as the fables of the ancients, cast it behind your backs, and exerted all of your efforts to extinguish the light of Allah with your hands and mouths. However, Allah will perfect His light, though the unbelievers may be averse.

By my life, the light will be perfect though you may be averse, knowledge will be made prevalent to bring about lowliness to you, and you will be punished for your misdeeds. So, make mischief in your imminently transient world as much as you like, for your wrong will very soon come to an end and your deed will plunge. Then, your destined abode will be Laza (i.e. the flaming fire), while Allah will not wrong you at all. Verily, your Lord is not in the least unjust to the servants.

You have expatiated upon mentioning 'Uthman lengthily while none killed him but you and none disappointed him save you. You had always awaited the befalling of defeat upon him and you have hoped for bad things to come upon him, for you coveted to attain what you have now shown and what your current deed demonstrates.

I have a great hope for attaching you to him while you will be committing a greater sin and a graver wrongdoing than his. I am the son of Abd Al-Muttalib the owner of the sharpest sword whose grip is still in my hand. You have already known those whom I killed among the heroes of the Banu-'Abd Shams, and the tyrants of Banu-Sahm, Jumah, and Makhzum whose sons were orphaned at my hand and whose women were widowed by me.

I also remind you of what you never forget; remember the day when I killed your brother Hanzalah and pulled him from the leg into the well. On that day too, I took your brother 'Amr as captive and tied his neck to his two legs. When I chased you, you flew farting! Had it not been that I do not follow an absconder, you would certainly have been the third of these two.

I now take an oath before you by Allah; an oath that is applicable and never breakable; if any vicissitude of time gathers you and me face to face, I will make you a parable that will not fall from the tongues of people forever; and I will straighten your own place on you until Allah judges between you and me, and He is the best of all judges.

If Allah prolongs my lifetime, I will rally the detachments of Muslims against you and I will rise up against you with a legion of the Muhajirun and the Ansar. Then, I will not admit any of your excuses or intercession and I will not respond to any of your requests or appeals. You will then have to return to your vacillation, hesitation, and turning right and left.

You have witnessed, perceived, and seen how the clouds of death were poured down on you until you

resorted to a Book that your father and you were the first to disbelieve in it and to give the lie to its revelation. However, I had looked fixedly at it and wished that you would only do it (i.e. apostasy from Islam). Yet, what had bygone of these had bygone and your plots in it had gone away.

Now, when this letter reaches your hand, I will march towards you. So, choose for yourself, consider it carefully, and make use of this opportunity. If you keep on transgression, aberrance, and reckless behavior until the servants of Allah will tramp on you, your affairs will be at chaos and a matter that may be accepted from you this day will no longer be admitted in the morrow.

O son of Harb, your importunate dispute—on holding this position—with its real people is in reality foolishness. So, do not let the people of deviation awaken your desire for it and do not let the foolishness of the ignorant ones destroy you. I swear by the One Who grasps Ali's soul in His hand, if only one spark of Dhu'l-Faqar flashes in your face, you will be struck such a strike that you will not recover consciousness up to the day when the trumpet will be blown the blow that you despaired of it just like the unbelievers despaired of those in tombs. [19](#)

Mu'awiyah replied to Imam Ali's letter with words of threat with war and readiness to fight against the Imam ('a).

In reply, Imam Ali ('a) wrote the following letter:

Your offenses, along with what Allah the All-exalted knows about you, have made Him stop improving your affairs or making your heart respond to the truth.

O son of the accursed Sakhr, [20](#) you claim that your clemency is as weighty as mountains and your knowledge is so vast that it can decide between the people of suspicion! In reality, you are rude, hypocrite, hollow-hearted, weak-minded, coward, and vile.

If you are true in what you have written, although the nephew of Banu-Sahm [21](#) is helping you write down these lines, then leave people behind you and set up for fighting and ready yourself for receiving blows. You may then save the two parties from fighting. Only then, it will be known which one of us is rusty-hearted and out of sight. I am Abu'l-Hasan who killed your grandfather, brother, and maternal uncle; and you are not far away from them. [22](#)

Before the Imam ('a) marched towards Siffin, Mu'awiyah had written a letter to him, which was carried by Abu-Muslim Al-Khawlani. In this letter, Mu'awiyah had nothing new to add; rather, he referred to the same issue of killing 'Uthman.

Imam Ali ('a), replying to his letter, wrote the following lines to Mu'awiyah:

From the servant of Allah, Ali, the Leader of the Believers,

To Mu'awiyah ibn Abi-Sufyan:

The brother of the (tribe of) Khawlan has carried for me a letter from you, in which you mention Muhammad, may Allah bless him and his Household, and Allah's bestowals on him with the true guidance and the revelation. All praise be to Allah Who has fulfilled His promise to him, perfected victory to him, given him power on the lands, made him prevail on the people of enmity and hatred from amongst his folks who had jumped on him, detested him, given the lie to him, encountered him with hostility, helped each other to banish him, his companions, and his family members, rallied the Arabs against him, combined their forces to theirs to wage war against him, exerted all their efforts to stand against him, and raised difficulties for him [23](#) until the truth came and the decree of Allah was made manifest, though they were loath. The people who most rallied others against him were his relatives and the next except those whom Allah has protected.

O son of Hind, [24](#) time has hidden for us wonders from you! You have started telling us of Allah's trials for us, and His bounties to us through our Prophet. In this matter, you are like the person who carries dates to Hajar, [25](#) or who challenges his own master to a duel in archery.

Then, you have mentioned that Allah selected from among the Muslims aides through whom He aided His Prophet. So, their positions with Allah are congruent with their excellent deeds in Islam. You have then claimed that the Caliph was the best of all those in Islam and the most sincere to Allah and to His Prophet, followed by his successor.

By my life, the standing of these two in Islam is great and our misfortune for losing them is in reality a big injury for Islam. May Allah show them mercy and award them the best rewarding.

Then, you have claimed that 'Uthman occupied the third rank in virtue. However, if 'Uthman was good-doer, then Allah will reward him out of His compassion, and if he was wrongdoer, then he will meet a forgiving Lord Who is too great to discard forgiving any sin.

By Allah, when Allah rewards all people according to their virtuous deeds in Islam and their sincerity to Him and to His Prophet, I expect that the share of us—the Ahl Al-Bayt—will be the greatest.

When Muhammad, peace of Allah be upon him and his Household, invited to belief in Allah and to monotheism, we—the Ahl Al-Bayt—were the first to believe and give credence to what he had come with. For many years, none in any quarter of the Arabs worshipped Allah except us. Our people (i.e. the folks of our tribe, Quraysh) then were set to kill our Prophet and eradicate our root. They begot on us all misfortunes and did to us various actions.

They thus prevented us from provisions, withheld water from us, and imposed fear upon us, commissioned emissaries and spies to watch over us, forced us to resort to a rough mountain, kindled the fire of war against us, and concluded an agreement among them that they would not allow us to eat, drink, marry women from them, purchase anything from them, or be secured from their attacks unless we would give up the Prophet, peace of Allah be upon him and his Household, so that they would be able to kill or punish him severely.

We remained unsafe from their evils except for one time a year; that is during the season of pilgrimage. Then, Allah decided for us that we should protect him, defend his yard, fight others in defense of his inviolability, and unsheathe our swords to safeguard him at the hours of nights and days. So, the believer of us did so in desire for winning the reward, and the unbeliever of us also did so; yet, in protection of the root.

As for the people of Quraysh who accepted Islam thereafter, none of them ever suffered any of these tribulations because some of them were protected by the clans they had allied or defended by the clans to which they had belonged. So, none could intercept them the way our people had intercepted us. As a result, they were on a height secured from being killed. Then, what Allah had decided to take place took place.

Then, Allah ordered His Messenger to emigrate after which He permitted him to fight the polytheists. When fighting attained their climax and he (i.e. the Holy Prophet) was challenged, he always submitted his family members to fight and to protect his companions from the heat of spearheads and swords. In consequence, 'Ubaydah was killed on that day of the Battle of Badr, Hamzah on that day of the Battle of Uhud, and Ja'far and Zayd on the day of the Battle of Mu'tah.

By Allah, the one whom I can mention by name if I want (i.e. Ali ibn Abi Talib) wanted martyrdom with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his Household, more than once as same as these persons did, but the termination of their lifetimes was expedited while his death was postponed. Allah is the patron of rewarding them excellently and He is the best to bestow upon them with favors for the righteous deeds they had done.

I have neither heard of nor seen anyone more sincere to Allah with regard to their obedience to His Messenger, more obedient to His Messenger with regard to His obedience to his Lord, or more steadfast against hardships, misfortunes, and in times of conflicts and situations of affliction with the Holy Prophet, may Allah bless him and his Household, than these men whom I have mentioned were. The Muhajirun are also sources of much virtue that we have recognized from them. May Allah reward them for the best of their deeds!

You have also claimed that I was envious to the caliphs, reluctant to respond to them, and oppressive to them. As for oppression, God forbid it!

As for my reluctance and disagreement to their matter (i.e. caliphate), I do not apologize to people about that, because when Allah—may His mention be elevated—grasped the soul of His Prophet, may Allah bless him and his Household, to Him, the people of Quraysh said, 'The leader should be from us.' The Ansar answered, 'Rather, the leader should be from us.'

The people of Quraysh then argued, 'Muhammad the Messenger of Allah, peace of Allah be upon him and his Household, was one of us; therefore, we are worthier of taking his place than you, the Ansar, are.' The Ansar submitted to this fact and acquiesced to the matter that leadership and authority should

be for the people of Quraysh.

Now, if the people of Quraysh were more deserving to hold the position of leadership than the Ansar because of Muhammad, peace of Allah be upon him and his Household, then the closest of all people to Muhammad, peace of Allah be upon him and his Household, should be more entitled to this leadership than they were; otherwise, the Ansar had the greatest share of leadership among all of the Arabs.

I now do not know whether my acquaintances confessed that they had seized my entitled right, or the Ansar were wrong in their situation. Rather, I knew for sure that the thing they had taken was my right. Nevertheless, I left it for them. May Allah excuse them!

As for your claim about the case of 'Uthman, my rupture of family relationship with him, and my rallying people against him, 'Uthman had done what you have heard about; therefore, people did what you saw. You certainly know that I had already secluded myself from 'Uthman. If you claim that you did not know this, then you are surely laying the blame unjustly on me. So, accuse me falsely of any matter you wish!

As for your words about the assassigators of 'Uthman, I have investigated the matter so precisely and, as a result, I concluded that I do not have the right to give them up to neither you nor anyone else.

By my life, if you will not retreat your error and mutiny, you will very soon see them go in pursuit of you, and this matter will not require you to chase them in a land, an ocean, a mountain, or a plain.

When people gave Abu-Bakr this position, your father came to me and said, 'You are the most entitled to this position after Muhammad (peace of Allah be upon him and his Household) and I am ready to be the chief of this matter against those who have opposed you. So, stretch out your hand so that I will pay homage to you.' However, I did not.

Now, you know that your father wanted this matter and offered it to me, but I refused, because the people were not far away enough from disbelief. I thus anticipated disunity among Muslims. So, your father was more enthusiastic about my holding this position than I was. If you now recognize my right in the same way as your father did, then you will hit the point of truth, but if you do not, then Allah will make me dispense with you.[26](#)

Mu'awiyah sent another letter with Abu-Umamah Al-Bahili. As usual, he filled in this letter with fallacies, forgeries, and untruths.

In reply, Imam Ali ('a) wrote the following letter:

Now, your letter has reached me wherein you recall that Allah chose Muhammad, peace of Allah be upon him and his Household, for His religion and helped him through those companions who supported him. Strange things about you have remained concealed (by the irony of fate) from us, since you have started telling us of Allah's trials for us and His bounties to us through our Prophet. In this matter, you are like the person who carries dates to Hajar or who challenges his own master to a duel in archery.

You think that so-and-so and so-and-so [27](#) are the most distinguished persons in Islam. You have said such a thing which if it be true, you have nothing to do with it, but if it be not so, then its defect will not affect you. What are you to do with the question of who is better and who is worse, or who is the ruler and who is the ruled?

What have the Released Ones and their sons to do with distinguishing between the first Muhajirun and determining their position or defining their ranks? What a pity! The sound of an arrow is being produced by what is not a real arrow, and he against whom the judgment is to be passed is sitting in judgment. O man!

Why do you not see your own lameness and remain within bounds? Why do you not realize the shortness of your measure and stay back where destiny has placed you? You have no concern with the defeat of the defeated or the victory of the victor.

You are wandering in bewilderment and straying from the right path. Do you not realize it? I am not giving you any news: I am just recounting Allah's bounty, namely that a number of people from among the Muhajirun and the Ansar fell as martyrs in the way of Allah the Sublime, and that each of them is distinguished (on that account), but when one of us secured martyrdom, he was named the chief of all martyrs, [28](#) and the Messenger of Allah, peace of Allah be upon him and his Household, gave him the peculiar honor of repeating seventy times the statement of allahu- akbar (Allah is the Most Great) during his funeral prayer.

Do you not know that a number of people lost their hands in the way of Allah, and that everyone is distinguished (on that account), but when the same thing occurred to one of us, he was given the name: the flier in Paradise and: the two-winged. [29](#) If Allah had not forbidden self-praise, the writer would have mentioned numerous distinctions, which the believer knows well and which the ears of hearers do not wish to forget.

Better, leave those whose arrows miss the mark. We are the direct recipients of our Lord's favors while others receive favors from us after that. In spite of our old established honor and our well-known superiority over your people, we did not stay away from mixing with you and married and got married (among you) like equals although you were not so.

And how could you be so when (the position is that) among us is the Prophet while among you is the believer, [30](#) among us is the lion of Allah while among you is the lion of the opposing groups, [31](#) among us are the two masters of the youths of Paradise [32](#) while among you are the children of Hell, [33](#) among us is the choicest of all the women of the worlds [34](#) while among you is the bearer of firewood, [35](#) and many more distinctions on our side and shortcomings on your side?

Our Islam is well-known and our (greatness in the) pre-Islamic period too cannot be denied. Whatever remains has been mentioned in the words of Allah the Glorified and Sublime:

'And blood relations have the better claim in respect of one to the other, according to the Book of Allah. (33:6)'

He (Allah) the Sublime also says:

'Verily, of men the nearest to Abraham are surely those who followed him and this (Our) Prophet (Muhammad) and those who believe; and verily, Allah is the Guardian of the faithful. (3:68)'

Thus, we are superior firstly because of kinship and secondly because of obedience. When, under the shed (Saqifah of Banu-Sa'idah), the Muhajirun contended kinship with the Messenger of Allah, peace of Allah be upon him and his Household, against the Ansar, they scored over them. If that success were based on kinship, then the right would be ours better than yours. Otherwise, the Ansar's contention stands.

You think that I have been jealous of the caliphs, and I have revolted against them. Even if this were so, it is not an offense against you and therefore no explanation is due to you. 'This is a matter for which no blame comes to you.'

You have said that I was dragged like a camel with a nose string to swear allegiance (to Abu-Bakr). By the Eternal Allah, you had intended to revile me but you have praised me, and to humiliate me but have yourself been humiliated. What humiliation does it mean for a Muslim to be the victim of oppression so long as he does not entertain any doubt in his religion nor any misgiving in his firm belief! This argument of mine is intended for others, but I have stated it to you only in so far as it was appropriate.

Then you have recalled my position vis-a-vis 'Uthman; and in this matter, an answer is due to you because of your kinship with him. So (now tell me), which of us was more inimical towards 'Uthman and who did more to bring about his killing; or who offered him his support but he made him sit down and stopped him; or who was he whom he called for help but who turned his face from him and drew his death near him until ill his fate overtook him? No, no; by Allah:

"Indeed knows Allah those who hinder others among you and those who say unto their brethren, 'Come here unto us!' And they come not to fight but a little." (33: 18)

I am not going to offer my excuse for reproving him for some of his innovations, for if my good counsel and guidance to him was a sin, then very often a person who is blamed has no sin and sometimes the only reward a counselor [36](#) reaps is suspicion of evil. I desired naught but reform what I am able to do; and my guidance is not but with Allah. On Him alone do I rely and unto Him alone do I turn.

You have mentioned that for me and for my followers, you have only the sword. This makes even a weeping person laugh. Did you ever see the descendants of Abd Al-Muttalib running away from battle, or being frightened by swords?

'Wait a little until Hamal joins the battle.'

Shortly, he whom you are seeking will seek you and he whom you think to be far away will approach near you. I am shortly speeding towards you with a force of the Muhajirun, the Ansar, and those who follow them in virtue. Their number will be great and their dust will spread all round.

They will be wearing their shrouds and their most coveted desire is to meet Allah. They will be accompanied by the descendants of those who took part in the Battle of Badr, and they will have Hashimite swords whose cuttings you have already seen in the case of your brother, maternal uncle, your grandfather, and your kinsmen. Nor are they far distant from the unjust ones. [37](#)

Preparations For The War

All means that Imam Ali ('a) used for preventing bloodshed and uniting the Muslims fell short, because Mu'awiyah had already decided to revolt against Imam Ali's government and declare mutiny and armed disobedience. He had put two conditions:

(1) The Imam must hand the assassins of 'Uthman over to him so that he would reTalibate over them, and

(2) The Imam's government must be disbanded and the issue of caliphate must be subjected to the consultation system so that Muslims would select someone as their leader.

In fact, Mu'awiyah put these two impossible conditions so that he would wage war against the Imam ('a).

Thus, the two parties prepared against each other all possible equipments and weapons.

Imam Ali's Correspondences With His Deputy Governors

Imam Ali ('a) sent some letters to his deputy governors calling them to support and join him in this war against the enemy who had opposed the unanimity of Muslims and gone against the legal ruler.

To Mikhnaf ibn Qays, the deputy governor of Isfahan and Hamadan, Imam Ali ('a) sent this letter:

To struggle against one who has turned away from the truth deliberately and chosen the stupor of blindness and deviation willingly is a duty incumbent upon the people of true recognition.

Verily, Allah is pleased with whoever pleases Him, but wrathful with whoever acts disobediently towards Him. We are now determined to march towards these people who have acted towards the servants of Allah in a way contradictory to what Allah has revealed. They have also misappropriated the spoils, dispensed with the religious punishments, muffled the right, made corruption prevail on the earth, and taken as adherents the sinful people rather than the faithful believers.

If a saint of Allah deemed horrible their misdeeds, they would hate, eliminate, and deprive him of his rights. If, on the other hand, a wrongdoer helped them proceed in their offenses, they would love, draw

near, and treated him kindly. Thus have they insisted on wrongdoing and agreed commonly on violation. In fact, they had very often deterred people from following the truth, helped each other in committing sins, and acted wrongly.

Once you receive this letter of mine, you may commission the most trustful person in your view to replace you in carrying out your jobs and come to us, perchance you, along with us, will face this violating enemy and you will then enjoin the right, forbid the wrong, agree with the rightful, and oppose the wrongful. In fact, we cannot dispense with you and you must not dispense with the reward for jihad. Allah is sufficient to us and He is the most excellent Protector.

Mikhnaf thus appointed Al-Harth ibn Abi'l-Harth ibn Al-Rabi' as his representative on Isfahan and Sa'id ibn Wahab on Hamadan, and he came hurriedly to join Imam Ali ('a) in the Battle of Siffin.[38](#)

Imam Ali ('a) wrote another letter to the commanders-in-chief of the army, asking them to support him in this conflict:

I release myself before you all from the errors of your soldiers; so, spare people from wrongdoing and transgression, impose restrictions on the foolish ones among you, and beware lest you commit things due to which Allah will not admit our and your prayers, for He the All-exalted says, 'My Lord would not care for you were it not for your prayer.' Verily, if Allah the All-exalted detests some people in the heavens, they will perish on the earth.

Do not fall short of doing kind acts, do not make your soldiers stop acting in the best way, do not prevent the subjects from your help, and do not fall short of strengthening the religion of Allah. Strive earnestly for the sake of Allah according to the manner you are obliged to do, for Allah the All-glorified has made it obligatory upon you and us to thank Him practically through our efforts and to support Him with the utmost of our strengths. There is no might and no power except with Allah the All-high and All-great.[39](#)

Imam Ali ('a) wrote a third letter to the people of Quraysh, including Mu'awiyah, calling them to stop bloodshed and agree on one word. He thus wrote to them the following lines:

Peace be upon you. I praise Allah save Whom there is no god. Verily, Allah the All-exalted has some servants who believed in the revelation, recognized the interpretation (of the revelations), and understood the religious questions; and Allah has demonstrated their virtue in the Wise Quran.

In the meantime, you were the enemies of Allah's Messenger; you gave the lie to the Book and agreed unanimously on waging war against the Muslims. You used to detain, torture, or kill any Muslim you would chance upon. When Allah decided to give dominance to His religion and make it manifestly prevalent, the Arabs started converting to this religion in big groups and this community surrendered to it willingly or unwillingly.

You were among those who embraced this religion either desirably or because you feared the otherwise,

whereas the people of precedence had won due to their precedence and the Muhajirun due to their virtue. It is not proper that one who does not have the like of these unprecedented acts in the religion and the like of their virtues in Islam to dispute with them on the matter that they only deserve it; otherwise, that one will be sinful and wrongdoer.

One endowed with insight ought not to ignore his actual worth, overstep his actual bound, and exhaust himself by seeking for what he is not competent enough to have. Verily, the worthiest of running the affairs of this community have always been the closest to the Messenger, the most knowledgeable with the Book, the most versed in the religious questions, the foremost to embracing Islam, the best in jihad, and the most powerful to manage the affairs of this community with regard to its leaders.

So, fear Allah to Whom you shall be returned and do not mix up the truth with the falsehood nor hide the truth while you know it. Be it known to all of you that the most virtuous servants of Allah are those who act upon what they know, while the wickedest are the ignorant ones who dispute with the people of knowledge on the strength of their ignorance.

Verily, a knowledgeable one has superiority due to his knowledge while an ignorant who disputes with the knowledgeable increases nothing but more ignorance. Behold! I now call you to follow the Book of Allah and the practice of His Prophet, and to spare this community from bloodshed.

If you accept, you will have then been in the right and you will have been guided to your fortuity, but if you insist on sowing disunity among Muslims and stirring up discord among the people of this community, then you will increase nothing but aloofness from Allah and the Lord will increase nothing but wrath with you. [40](#)

When this letter reached his hand, Mu'awiyah answered back with a letter that contained one poetic verse, involving that nothing but fighting and beheading would Imam Ali ('a) have from him (i.e. Mu'awiyah).

When the Imam ('a) read Mu'awiyah's reply, he recited this holy Quranic verse:

Surely, you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He pleases; and He knows best the followers of the right way. (28:56)

Having gained all means of waging war against Imam Ali ('a), Mu'awiyah, due to his cunning and evil schemes, could persuade the people of Syria into this war. He used to raise the blood-stained shirt of 'Uthman to deceive people that Imam Ali ('a) had killed 'Uthman and the people of Syria would then raise their voices with weeping and cries.

When these cries would calm down, 'Amr, in a sarcastic manner, would say to Mu'awiyah, 'Shake its baby before its eyes so that it would show sympathy!' Then, Mu'awiyah would raise 'Uthman's shirt so that people would start a new wave of weeping.

These people were so fooled that they swore not to let water touch their bodies and women come near them before they would kill the assassins of 'Uthman. [41](#) It is historically known that the people of Syria, unlike the people of Iraq, were extremely obedient to and humble before any one who would assume their leadership.[42](#)

Leading such naive people, Mu'awiyah marched for waging war against Imam Ali ('a). He made them reside in a place called Siffin, which was very close to the River Euphrates and ordered a brigade to occupy the entire river. Thousands of soldiers surrounded the two banks of the river, considering this process to be the first sign of victory, because they would prevent their enemy from having water.

On the other front, Imam Ali ('a), having despaired of any peaceful solution, had to prepare his soldiers and himself for encountering the enemy. Preachers thus started encouraging people on participating in this war and on jihad, especially that they had recently achieved victory in the Battle of the Camel.

Imam Al-Hasan ('a) also delivered an enthusiastic speech in which he could flare up the emotions through statements of invitation to jihad and standing in the face of the enemies who had plotted evil schemes against Islam and Muslims. The masses responded to Imam Al-Hasan ('a) and set out with him to fight the transgressing party.

Imam Ali ('a) ordered the vanguards to start moving forward and to keep close to the River Euphrates until they would receive further command. He also ordered them not to start fighting until he would join them.

When the army of Imam Ali ('a) arrived in Siffin, the soldiers could not find any spring from which they would supply themselves with water, because all sources of water had been already occupied by Mu'awiyah's troops who would never allow them even a single drop of water. As a consequence, Imam Ali ('a) delegated some of his companions to Mu'awiyah, asking him to evacuate a place from which his soldiers would supply themselves with water.

When Mu'awiyah presented the request before some of his retinue, they refused and claimed that they would deprive the Imam's army of water as same as they did with 'Uthman ibn 'Affan. The Imam's delegation returned unsuccessful and informed the Imam ('a) about the insistence of the Syrians on preventing them from water.

When thirst attacked the Imam's army heavily, Al-Ash'ath ibn Qays advanced to the Imam ('a) and asked him permission to fight against the enemies so that he would force them away from the sources of water. The Imam ('a) had no other solution than responding to Al-Ash'ath's request. Al-Ash'ath then went out, shouting, 'Whoever wants water or death must meet me the next morning, for I am determined to fetch water.' Twelve thousand persons responded to Al-Ash'ath's call.

The next morning, Al-Ash'ath, leading these men who carried their swords on their shoulders, advanced towards the army of Mu'awiyah. When the two armies were face to face, Al-Ash'ath introduced himself

to Mu'awiyah's troops and shouted, 'Leave your sites near the source of water.' Abu'l-A'war Al-Sulmi, from Mu'awiyah's army, replied, 'By Allah, you will never drink from the water before swords overtake us and you.'

Imam Ali ('a) had ordered Malik Al-Ashtar to support Al-Ash'ath; he therefore ordered his horsemen to attack Mu'awiyah's troops causing them heavy losses and forcing them to abscond, followed by disgrace.[43](#)

When the troops of Imam Ali ('a) had full control over the sources of water, some of them suggested to the Imam ('a) that they would prevent Mu'awiyah's troops from water and to return like for like. However, Imam Ali ('a) refused this suggestion and ordered his soldiers to allow the enemy to supply themselves with water. Of course, such honorable and noble traits cannot be found with Mu'awiyah and his likes.

A man from Syria came to Imam Ali ('a) in Siffin and asked, 'O Amir Al-Mu'minin, please inform me if our going to fight against the Syrians destined by Allah.'

The Imam ('a) answered,

O Syrian brother, yes it is. I swear by Him Who has split the grain and created the souls, whatever a valley we cross or a height we climb is by the predetermination and act of Allah.

The Syrian man said, 'Then, I must relegate all my sufferings in this march to Allah. I do not believe that I will deserve any reward for my efforts, since all of them have been already predetermined and decided by Allah.'

Explaining the idea, Imam Ali ('a) said,

Why is that? Almighty Allah will grant you abundant reward for climbing any height and will grant you abundant reward for coming down, as long as you have not been compelled to do so nor have been obliged to do it.

The Syrian man asked, 'How can it be, when the predetermined destiny is driving us to do whatever we do?'

Imam Ali ('a), giving further explanation, said,

O Syrian brother, you seem to have taken it as a final and unavoidable destiny according to which we are bound to act! If it were so, there would be no question of reward or chastisement and there would be no sense in Allah's promises, warnings, obligations, and prohibitions.

It would not be that the good-doer is worthier of receiving the reward of good deeds than the evil doer or the evil doer worthier of being sentenced to the punishments of evil doing than the good-doer. This is the statement of the idol-worshippers, the party of Satan, the rivals of the All-beneficent Lord, the

abjurers, the faTalibsts and magi of this nation.

Allah the All-exalted has ordered His creatures to act by free will, cautioned them, and prohibited them against evil doings. He has placed easy obligations on them and has not put heavy obligations. He gives them much reward in return for little action. He is disobeyed, not because He is overpowered.

He is obeyed but not under force. He has not sent prophets just for fun. He has not sent down the Book for the people without purpose. He did not create the skies, the earth, and all that is in between them in vain. That is the imagination of those who disbelieve; then woe to those who disbelieve because of the fire.

The Syrian asked, 'Then, what is the predetermination and act of Allah due to which we have taken this course?'

The Imam ('a) answered,

The measurement and decision in such matters are relegated to Allah alone. 'And the command of Allah is a decree that is made absolute.'

Having been convinced by the explanations of the Imam ('a), the Syrian man expressed, 'You have relieved a big concern of mine. May Allah relieve all your concerns!'

Couriers Of Peace

Trying all means of peace possible, Imam Ali ('a) sent a number of his companions to Mu'awiyah to call him for preventing bloodshed and to warn against the bad consequences of any military conflict.

First of all, Imam Ali ('a) sent the prominent Companion, 'Adi ibn Hatam, who said to Mu'awiyah, 'We have come to you to invite you for a solution by which Allah may unite our word and community and spare the lives of Muslims. We thus call you to respond to the one who was the foremost to accept Islam and the owner of the best deeds. Having been guided by Almighty Allah to the truth, all people agreed unanimously on choosing him (i.e. Imam Ali) as their leader, and none remained except your acquaintances and you.

So, O Mu'awiyah, accept his leadership before Allah inflicts upon your followers and you what he had inflicted upon those who opposed him in the Battle of the Camel.'

Mu'awiyah did not respond to 'Adi's call; rather, he insisted on mutiny and war.

Yazid ibn Qays Al-Arhabi and Shabath ibn Rab'i said similar words to Mu'awiyah, but he insisted on his situation.[44](#)

Imam Ali ('a) then had no other means than engaging in that war. He therefore instructed his army, saying,

Do not fight them unless they initiate the fighting, because, by the grace of Allah, you are in the right and to leave them until they begin fighting will be another point from your side against them. If, by the will of Allah, the enemy is defeated, then do not kill the runner away, do not strike a helpless person, do not finish off the wounded, and do not inflict pain on women even though they may attack your honor with filthy words and abuse your officers, because they are weak in character, mind, and intelligence.

We have been ordered to desist from them although they may be unbelievers. Even in the pre-Islamic era, if a man struck a woman with a stone or a stick, he was rebuked along with his posteriors after him.[45](#)

The Imam (‘a) then had a look at the Muslim armies with deep sadness, because they had been prepared to face one another. He thus uttered these supplicatory words, praying to Almighty Allah to keep his army away from arrogance and sedition. He thus said,

O Allah, O Lord of this canopy that is raised high, bordered, and safeguarded; which You have decided to be the cause of the darkness of night and the light of the day, and You have made it the source of the course of the sun and the moon and the mansions of the planets and stars, and You have made groups of angels, who never become bored of worshipping You, inhabit there!

O Lord of the earth that You have made resting-place for people, beasts, and pests as well as what we know and what we do not know, and what we can see and what we cannot see from your great creation!

O Lord of the mountains that You have made act as projections for the earth and as abode for the creatures!

O Lord of the ocean that is filled with swell and is surrounding the world!

O Lord of the clouds that are made subservient between the heaven and the earth!

O Lord of the ships that run upon the sea with that which is of use to men; please, if You grant us victory over our enemy, then keep us away from pride and direct us towards the true guidance. If you grant them victory over us, then please endue us with martyrdom and safeguard the rest of my followers from falling into seditious matters.[46](#)

The Encounter

Preparing himself for the war, Imam Ali (‘a) put on the war uniform and went out to the battlefield. Abdullah ibn Badil Al-Khuza’i was the commander of the right wing and Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas the commander of the left wing of the army, which also contained such prominent persons like ‘Ammar ibn Yasir and his likes.

Encountered by the armies of Syria, the army of the Imam (‘a) engaged in an intense fighting and the people of Iraq did very well, implanting horror and fear in the hearts of Mu’awiyah’s army. This conflict lasted for a long time and did not stop before the beginning of the sacred month of Muharram.

Mu'awiyah ordered his commanders and horsemen to kill Imam Ali ('a). He thus asked, 'Ali will advance within the horsemen. Which one of you can encounter and kill him?' Some people advanced to do the mission, but Mu'awiyah agreed upon 'Amr ibn Al-Husayn Al-Sakuni.

As usual, Imam Ali ('a) was in the center of the battlefield when Al-Sakuni waylaid him. When he was about to stab the Imam from the rear, Sa'id ibn Qays Al-Hamdani intercepted and could stab him to death. This incident aggrieved Mu'awiyah very much.

When the sacred month of Muharram elapsed, military processions were resumed, yet interruptedly. The two armies were fed up with such episodic raids; they therefore asked for a general encounter. So, the two armies were mobilized for a general encounter and they were then engaged in such a horrible fighting that caused numerous casualties and great fatigue.

The right wing of the Imam's army was about to be stricken by the enemies, but Imam Ali ('a) and his two sons Al-Hasan and Al-Husayn fought so bravely that they could control the situation.[47](#)

Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of Malik Al-Ashtar, the two wings of the Imam's army held together and fought violently against the enemies.

Imam Ali ('a) then stood in the middle of the battlefield and raised his voice with a call on Mu'awiyah. However, Mu'awiyah was too coward to answer the Imam ('a); he therefore asked his companions to see what the Imam ('a) wanted from him.

The Imam ('a) said, 'I want him to come out and listen to one word from me.'

Mu'awiyah had to appear before the Imam ('a), but he and 'Amr ibn Al-'As were in the middle of many soldiers when they faced the Imam ('a), who thus said,

Woe to you! What for are these peoples killing and striking one another? Encounter me man to man! Whoever kills the other will be considered the triumphant and will hold leadership.

Mu'awiyah consulted 'Amr, and the latter said, 'This is fair!'

This word angered Mu'awiyah so intensely that he answered 'Amr, saying, 'I cannot be cheated by such words. By Allah, the son of Abu Talib has wetted the ground with the blood of whomever had the courage to encounter him.'

When Mu'awiyah accused 'Amr of trying to send him to death, 'Amr answered, 'Mu'awiyah, you are too coward to compete in a contest with your rival; so, you should not doubt the advice I have given you!'

One day of the war, 'Amr ibn Al-'As was in the battlefield when Imam Ali ('a), having recognized him, followed him. However, 'Amr could not have any means to save himself from the Imam's sword except exposing his anus so that the Imam ('a) would leave him. So, the Imam ('a), because of his high moral standards and shyness left 'Amr. When he went back, Mu'awiyah said to 'Amr, 'You should thank Allah

and your anus!' [48](#)

The same act was done by Busr ibn Artah when Imam Ali ('a) was about to kill him. Thus are the politicians of the Umayyad dynasty!

On another day of the Battle of Siffin, 'Ammar ibn Yasir, who was about ninety years old, woke up earlier than usual and asked Imam Ali ('a) to permit him to go to the battlefield. The Imam ('a) did not permit him, but 'Ammar insisted and showed that he was eager to meet the Holy Prophet (S); so, the Imam ('a) had to give him permission.

'Ammar fought so bravely that Mu'awiyah encouraged his army to encounter 'Ammar. One of the filthy soldiers of Mu'awiyah; namely, Abu'l-'Adiyah, attacked 'Ammar and stabbed him so heavily that he fell to the ground.

Bleeding and in the last sparks of life, 'Ammar asked for a drink; and a woman fetched him a cup of milk. When he saw the cup, 'Ammar smiled and said, 'The Messenger of Allah told me that the last drink I would have in this world would be a cup of milk. He (S) also told me that I would be killed by the transgressing party.'

Before long, 'Ammar departed from this world as martyr.

Imam Ali ('a) threw himself on 'Ammar's dead body and kissed it very much. He then said,

Indeed, on the wrong way is he who does not deem serious the killing of 'Ammar and who does not consider this to be a painful misfortune. May Allah show 'Ammar mercy on the day when he embraced Islam! May Allah show 'Ammar mercy on the day when he was killed! May Allah show 'Ammar mercy on the day when he will be resurrected and raised from the dead!

Whenever four persons from the companions of Allah's Messenger would be mentioned, 'Ammar would certainly be the fourth; and whenever five persons from them would be mentioned, 'Ammar would certainly be the fifth. None of the companions of Allah's Messenger has ever doubted the fact that 'Ammar deserved Paradise for more than one situation of him. Congratulations to 'Ammar, for he has won Paradise. [49](#)

When the news of 'Ammar's martyrdom was circulated among the troops of Mu'awiyah's army, they were shocked, because they have heard about the Holy Prophet's prediction that 'Ammar would be killed by the transgressing party. Besides, this Prophetic tradition was reported by 'Amr ibn Al-'As himself. Therefore, some soldiers withdrew the battle.

Mu'awiyah thus reproached 'Amr, saying, 'You have spoiled the people of Syria! You should not have reported whatever you had heard from Allah's Messenger.'

'Amr answered, 'Should I have known the future? I reported this tradition when I did not know that the

battle of Siffin would take place.’

To amend the situation, ‘Amr, due to his cunning and deceptive means, misled the troops of Mu’awiyah, saying, ‘The killer of ‘Ammar must be the one who had allowed him to come to the battlefield!’

Unfortunately, these words deceived the feeble-minded soldiers of Mu’awiyah.

When Imam Ali (‘a) learnt about this, he said,

According to this criterion, it must be that Allah’s Messenger was the one who killed Hamzah and Ja’far, because he sent them to the battlefield!

The Night Of The Growl

The most violent encounter in the Battle of Siffin is known as laylat Al-harir, because the two armies issued sounds like growling. At this night, the two armies advanced towards each other and shot each other with arrows and stones until they expired. They then stabbed each other with spears until they broke into pieces.

They then faced each other with swords and iron instruments and no sound could be heard at that night except the sound of iron. The encounter lasted for about twenty-four hours during which about seventy thousand persons from the two armies were killed. As a result, the military forces of Mu’awiyah’s army were crushed so violently that Mu’awiyah himself was about to run away.

Imam Ali (‘a) then delivered this speech to his army:

O people, the matter with your enemy and you has attained a climax that you are witnessing. None of them remained except the last breaths. When matters become in the benefit of some people, their final results must be assessed to their starting points. These people have stood up against you although they follow no true faith; therefore, we could do to them what we did. This morning, I will attack them to execute the laws of Allah the Almighty and All-exalted on them.[50](#)

The battle was resumed and the army of Imam Ali (‘a) was very close to achieving the final victory.

The Farce Of Raising The Quranic Copies

Having seen the imminent defeat of his army, Mu’awiyah ran towards ‘Amr ibn Al-’As and sought his advice. ‘Amr thus suggested, ‘Your men will not be able to face Ali’s men nor are you like him; he is fighting for something and you are fighting for something else. You want to survive this battle, but it does not matter for him if he loses his life for achieving his goal.

The people of Iraq will fight lest you overcome them, but the people of Syria are not fearful if Ali overcomes you. However, you must face them with a matter that will create discrepancy among them

whether they accept or refuse it. You must call them to the Book of Allah to be the arbitrator among them and you. If you do it, you will attain your aim. In fact, I have already had this idea in my mind, but I postponed it to the time of urgency.'

This wicked idea was received by Mu'awiyah gladly; therefore, he ordered his soldiers to raise copies of the Holy Quran before the soldiers of Imam Ali ('a). As a result, about five hundred copies were raised on the spearheads and the people of Syria shouted in one voice,

'O people of Iraq, this Book of Allah must be the arbitrator between you and us. Who will protect the borders of Syria if its people will be killed in this battle? And who will protect the borders of Iraq if its people will be killed? Who will then protect the Muslims against the Romans, the Turks, and the atheists?'

This trick worked with the soldiers of Imam Ali ('a) who were turned upside and down. However, the Imam ('a) had nothing to say but to express his deep grief. He did not stop bewaring his soldiers of the tricks of Mu'awiyah, but he received no response.

About twenty thousand soldiers, headed by Mis'ar ibn Fadaki, Zayd ibn Husayn, and other famous personalities, came to the Imam ('a) and called him by name, saying, 'O Ali, respond to the call of these people and accept the Book of Allah as the arbitrator. If you do it not, we will surely kill you in the same was as we did with 'Uthman ibn 'Affan.'

Grief-stricken, the Imam ('a) answered,

Behold! I was the first to call for the Book of Allah and the first to respond to it. I am neither allowed nor permitted according to my faith to refuse any invitation to the Book of Allah. I have fought against these people only because I wanted them to submit to the judgment of the Quran, after they had disobeyed the order of Allah, broken their covenants to Him, and abandoned His Book. Now, I tell you that these people are playing trickery on you and they have nothing to do with the acting upon the Quran.[51](#)

Unfortunately, the Imam's soldiers did not respond to him; rather, they raised their voices in his face, demanding him to respond to Mu'awiyah's troops and threatening him with death.

Al-Ash'ath ibn Qays, who had good connections with 'Amr ibn Al-'As, was the most vehement in calling for the so-called arbitration of the Holy Quran and the response to the invitation of the people of Syria.

Having had no other solution, the Imam ('a) had to issue his orders of ceasing the military processes, although this matter caused him great sadness, because it was the first step towards the devastation of the government of the truth and the victory of the wrong powers. He also felt that the blood that was shed in this battle had gone to no avail.

The mutinous people also insisted on the Imam ('a) to order Malik Al-Ashtar to withdraw although what lied between Malik and final victory was no more than a few steps.

Having been coerced to do so, Imam Ali ('a) sent Yazid ibn Hani' to call Malik back. When Malik heard this order, he was bewildered; he thus said, 'Please, tell him that this is not the occasion to leave the position. He may wait a bit then I will come to his audience with the tidings of victory.'

Hani' conveyed this message on return, but people shouted that Imam Ali ('a) must have sent word to him secretly to continue. The Imam ('a) said that he never got any occasion to send any secret message to him. Whatever he said was said before them. People said that he should be sent again and that if Malik delayed his return, the Imam ('a) should forsake his life.

The Imam ('a) again sent Yazid ibn Hani' and sent word that rebellion had occurred, he should return in whatever condition he was. So, Hani' went and said to Malik, 'You hold victory dear or the life of Imam Ali? If his life is dearer to you, you should now raise hands off the battle and go to him.'

Leaving the chances of victory, Malik stood up and came to these mutinous people with grief and disappointment. Chaos raged there. He rebuked them very much, but matters had taken such a turn that could not be corrected.

Malik then asked Imam Ali ('a) to wage war against these mutinous people, but the Imam ('a) refused, because they were the overwhelming majority; and if he would do so, they would be preyed on by the troops of Mu'awiyah.

The Imam ('a) then nodded his head down with grief and did not say a single word to these people, but they started shouting, 'Ali has accepted the arbitration of the Quran!'

The Imam ('a), having predicted the future, said,

O people, matters between you and me went as I wished until war exhausted you. By Allah, it has overtaken some of you and left others, and has completely weakened your enemy. Until yesterday, I was giving orders, but today I am being given orders, and until yesterday I was dissuading people (from wrong acts), but today I am being dissuaded. You have now shown liking to live in this world, and it is not for me to bring you to what you dislike.[52](#)

[The Arbitration](#)

When the surviving forces of the Syrians lost ground and were ready to run away from the field, Mu'awiyah changed the whole phase of the battle by using the Quran as his instrument of strategy, and succeeded in creating such a division among the Iraqis that, despite Imam Ali's efforts at counseling, they were not prepared to take any forward step, but insisted on stopping the war, whereupon Imam Ali ('a) too had to agree to arbitration.

Among these people, some had actually been duped and they believed that they were being asked to abide by the Holy Quran but there were others who had become weary of the long period of war and had

lost courage. Then, people seized a good opportunity to stop the war, and so they cried hoarse for its postponement.

There were others who had accompanied Imam Ali ('a) because of his temporal authority but did not support him by heart, nor did they aim at victory for him. There were some people who had expectations with Mu'awiyah, and had started attaching hopes to him for this, while there were some who were, from the very beginning, in league with him.

In these circumstances and with this type of the army, it was really due to Imam Ali's political ability and competence of military control and administration that he carried the war up to this stage, and if Mu'awiyah had not adopted this trick, there could have been no doubt in Imam Ali's victory because the military power of the Syrian forces had been exhausted and defeat was hovering over its head.

In this connection, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid writes, 'Malik Al-Ashtar had reached Mu'awiyah and grabbed him by the neck. The entire might of the Syrians had been smashed. Only so much movement was discernible in them as remains in the tail of a lizard which is killed, but the tail continues hopping right and left.'⁵³

This situation delighted Mu'awiyah incredibly. He wrote a letter to Imam Ali ('a), which was full of lies. He said that he only intended to enjoin the right and forbid the wrong and he only invited for the arbitration of the Holy Quran because he wanted to live under its shade!

Imam Ali ('a), however, sent a letter to 'Amr ibn Al-'As, inviting him to the true guidance. He thus wrote the following:

So now, this world turns away from the next one. He who is devoted to it achieves nothing from it except that it increases his greed and coveting for it. He who is devoted to it is not satisfied with what he obtains from it because of what he has not obtained. Eventually, there is separation from what has been amassed, and a breaking of what has been strengthened.

*If you take a lesson from the past, you can be safe in the future; and that is an end to the matter. So, Abu-'Abdullah, do not shatter your reward and do not keep pace with Mu'awiyah in his wrong situation.'*⁵⁴

However, 'Amr did not respond to the Imam ('a); rather, he insisted on transgression, hoping that he would gain worldly benefits from Mu'awiyah.

The catastrophic matter was the choosing of Abu-Musa Al-Ash'ari, the notorious hypocrite, to be the Imam's representative in the farce of arbitration. Al-Ash'ath ibn Qays plotted a conspiracy with other officers in the Imam's army to select Abu-Musa. Like a dog, Al-Ash'ath came running towards Imam Ali ('a) and said to him,

'All people have now consented to the arbitration and they are pleased to respond to the Syrians about the judgment of the Quran. If you please, you may come to Mu'awiyah and discuss the question.'

The Imam ('a) could not find a way to reject this request; rather, he said to Al- Ash'ath, 'If you wish, you may go to Mu'awiyah.'

This agent ran towards Mu'awiyah and exchanged talks with him, although the two had already plotted this scheme.

Al-Ash'ath asked, 'Mu'awiyah, for what reason have you raised the Quranic copies?'

Mu'awiyah answered, 'The reason is that you and we should follow what Allah ordered in his Book. So, send a man whom you accept on your part and we will send one whom we accept on our part and we will then put them under the obligation of acting upon what is in the Book of Allah. Then, we must agree to what the two agree upon.'

Al-Ash'ath shouted, 'This is the truth.'

He then went back to Imam Ali ('a) and declared openly what Mu'awiyah had said to him.

The soldiers of Imam Ali ('a) went on saying, 'We accept! We consent to this!'

Thus, Imam Ali ('a) had no role at all in the issue.

Then, the Syrians shouted, 'We consent to and choose 'Amr ibn Al-'As.'

The Iraqis surrounded the Imam ('a) and shouted, 'We consent to and choose Abu-Musa Al-Ash'ari.'

The Imam ('a) reproached them for this ill choice. He said,

Mu'awiyah would never choose for this matter any one whom he trusts and depends on his opinion than 'Amr ibn Al-'As. Verily, a man from Quraysh cannot be faced except by another man from Quraysh. Therefore, you should choose Abdullah ibn 'Abbas to face 'Amr, because 'Amr would not fasten any tie but that Abdullah would be able to untie it and 'Amr would not be able to determine any issue but that Abdullah would revoke it.

Answering back, Al-Ash'ath shouted, 'No! Two men from (the descendants of) Musar will never judge our issues before the coming of the Hour! You must entrust this issue with a man from Yemen, because they have chosen one from Musar.'

The Imam ('a) said,

I only fear lest that man would deceive your man of Yemen, because 'Amr never considers Allah at the least when a matter is related to his personal whims.

Nevertheless, these people refrained relentlessly from choosing Abdullah ibn 'Abbas as their representative; rather, they insisted on Abu-Musa Al-Ash'ari. Abu'l-Aswad Al-Du'ali, warning against

choosing Abu-Musa, said to Imam Ali ('a), 'O Amir Al-Mu'minin, do not consent to Abu-Musa! When I examined and kneaded this man, I found his bottom very nigh in addition to his being from Yemen.'⁵⁵

After the selection of the two referees, when Abdullah ibn Rafi' started writing down the terms of reference, he wrote the following words as a preamble to the document. 'Amir Al-Mu'minin Ali and Mu'awiyah ibn Abi-Sufyan has decided that" 'Amr ibn Al-'As objected to the word 'Amir Al- Mu'minin' and said that he might be the Emir of others but not theirs! He therefore asked the word to be deleted from the document.

Only his name and the father's name are entered. Al-Ahnaf ibn Qays told the Imam ('a) that he should not agree to the deletion of the word Amir Al-Mu'minin even if it caused renewal of the conflict. He added that if this word were deleted today, the leadership would not ever come back to him. Al-Ash'ath ibn Qays and his supporters insisted that the word be deleted.

In utter unconcern, the Imam ('a) was sitting quietly in his place and seeing the reflection of the Treaty of Al- Hodaybiyah in the events of the day. After a few moments of quiet, he said, 'When I drafted the agreement of the Treaty of Al-Hudaybiyah, I wrote the word 'Rasulullah (Allah's Messenger)' in the preamble when the representative of the Quraysh, Suhayl, said that they did not recognize him as Allah's Messenger and wanted me to delete the word and to enter 'Muhammad ibn Abdullah' instead. I was hesitant to score away the word 'Rasulullah,' But the Prophet (S) said:

Write what he wants. One day, you too will face a similar situation and you will be helpless.⁵⁶

At this, 'Amr said angrily that he considered them infidel like those people. The Imam ('a) replied:

*O son of Al-Nabighah! At which time were you not the friend of the transgressors and the enemy of the Muslims? You are like the mother who bore you!*⁵⁷

Ibn Al-'As said, 'After today, we shall never sit together nor see each other's face.'

The Imam ('a) replied,

I too wish so! May Allah keep my company free of persons like you!

When the word 'Amir Al-Mu'minin' was struck off and the writing of the document was re-commenced, the Imam ('a) was asked if he considered Mu'awiyah and the people of Syria Muslims ? He said:

*I do not accept Mu'awiyah and his companions as Muslims and believers. But Mu'awiyah is free to write what he wants about himself and his men, admit whatever he wishes to admit, and suggest whatever name he wants to suggest.*⁵⁸

At last, the agreement was drafted that had the following terms:

(1) It will be binding on the referees on both sides that their decision will be based on the Quran. If they

are unable to arrive at a decision through the Book, they will make access to the Traditions of the Prophet (S) that are acceptable to both.

(2) The decision made by the referees shall be binding on both the parties, provided the decision is based on the Quran and the Prophetic traditions.

(3) The referees are to give their verdict within the current month of Ramadan. If they felt the need to extend the duration, they could mutually decide to do that.

(4) If the referees require evidences for arriving at a decision, they will be arranged.

(5) There will be no hostility until the referees come to a final conclusion about the dispute. Both the parties will ensure safety of the lives and properties of the referees. There will be no restriction on the movement of the parties to the dispute.

(6) If, before the verdict, any of the two referees die, his party can nominate another referee in his place.

(7) The verdict will be announced at a place that lies between Iraq and Syria. Most of the terms of this agreement concern the administrative requirements, and the basic requirement was that the verdict of the referees had to be in accordance to the Quran and the Prophetic traditions and that they had no right to arrive at any decision on their personal intuition and thinking.

If they did not follow this condition, their arbitration will be void. The earlier events are a proof that making claim for reTalibation and raising the Quran was with the purpose of misleading the people and the demand for arbitration too was an evil subterfuge of the Syrians. The referees neither referred to the Quran nor did they talk about the relevant traditions of the Prophet (S). One referee tried to defeat the other with futile arguments.

The Imam Returns To Al-Kufah

Overburdened by grief and distress, Imam Ali ('a) returned to Al-Kufah after he had been sure that Mu'awiyah could control the situation, which meant that the Imam's government declined and his army mutinied against him due to the sedition aroused by Mu'awiyah and 'Amr.

On his way back to Al- Kufah, some people faced the Imam ('a) with such cruel words like: 'You have killed the Muslims for no reason, flattered in the command of Allah, sought after sovereignty, and made ordinary men judge in the religion of Allah. There is no verdict but Allah's.'

Answering them, the Imam ('a) said,

The verdict of Allah is in your necks (i.e. you are the ones whom should be answerable for the application of Allah's verdict).

Meeting Of The Arbitrators

The term on which the two arbitrators had agreed terminated. During this term, Mu'awiyah could band together his forces. He thus sent a messenger to Imam Ali ('a), asking for fulfillment of the agreement on arbitration. Mu'awiyah hurried to demand with the arbitration, because he knew for sure that Imam Ali's army was exposed to disunity and debility and the process of arbitration would come with his benefit, since Al-Ash'ari, whom the Iraqis had selected to represent them in this arbitration, was one of the bitterest enemies of Imam Ali ('a) and he would not do anything for the good of the Imam ('a).

The Iraqis thus sent Al-Ash'ari along with four hundred persons among whom was Abdullah ibn 'Abbas while the Syrians sent 'Amr ibn Al-'As the cunning along with four hundred persons. They met in an area between Iraq and Syria and 'Amr ordered that Al-Ash'ari would be given a special place and be served with the best kinds of food and drink.

Thus, 'Amr could bribe Al-Ash'ari. For three days, 'Amr did not discuss the matter with Al-Ash'ari until he became sure that Al-Ash'ari had become just like a toy in his hand. In his discourse with him, 'Amr used nice and honoring words. He once said to him, 'O Abu-Musa, you are the chief of Muhammad's companions, the most virtuous among them, and the foremost in honor.

You have seen how this community fell into a horrible seditious matter that might put an end to these people. Can you be the blessing of this community and then Allah will spare the lives through you? About the sparing of one life, Allah says,

'And whoever keeps it (i.e. a soul) alive, it is as though he kept alive all men.'

The matter must be greater for one who keeps alive the souls of all these people.'

Deceived by this false honoring, Al-Ash'ari went on discussing the means of reforming the matter and sparing the lives of the community. 'Amr said, 'You may depose Ali ibn Abi Talib, and I will depose Mu'awiyah ibn Abi-Sufyan. The next step will be that we choose another person who has not been engaged in this sedition.'

Al-Ash'ari asked, 'Whom do you mean?'

'Amr answered, 'I mean Abdullah ibn 'Umar!'

'Amr had already known that Al-Ash'ari did not like Imam Ali ('a) while he liked Abdullah ibn 'Umar very much.

This suggestion delighted Al-Ash'ari who asked for covenants and oaths from 'Amr. Of course, 'Amr was

too dissolute to refrain from making any covenant and taking any oath that would please Al-Ash'ari. He thus said to him, 'O Abu-Musa, ***'Surely, by Allah's remembrance are the hearts set at rest.'*** (13:28) You may take any covenant you want from me.'

Thus, Al-Ash'ari consented to 'Amr and asked for a date at which they both would declare what they had just agreed upon. When the time of declaring their agreement came, 'Amr and Al-Ash'ari advanced towards the stage to speak. 'Amr thus asked Al-Ash'ari to go first and declare his decision, and Al-Ash'ari was deceived by the nice language of 'Amr and decided to do so.[60](#)

Abdullah ibn 'Abbas had already said to Abu-Musa, 'I feel that 'Amr will not abide by the decision you have mutually arrived at. He is a very cunning person and he will certainly trick you. Therefore, you must ask him to talk first and then you must make your announcement. If you do not take this caution, remember, he will trick you in such a manner that you will not be in a position to show your face to anyone.'

Unfortunately, Al-Ash'ari did not care for these words; so, he ran towards the stage to make his announcement. He thus said, 'In view of the welfare of the Muslim community, we have decided, after much deliberation, that we both shall depose Ali and Mu'awiyah and hand over the matter of the selection of the caliph to the shura system.

Therefore, I now remove Ali in the same way as I am removing this turban from my head. We also agreed that we would choose for the leadership a man who had accompanied Allah's Messenger and whose father, too, had accompanied him; namely, Abdullah ibn 'Umar![61](#)

When Al-Ash'ari came down, 'Amr ibn Al-'As hurried to the stage and said, 'O people, Abu-Musa Al-Ash'ari has just removed Ali and taken him out of the affair of caliphate. He better knows him than I am. As for me, I too remove Ali and fix Mu'awiyah in this position; therefore, I now declare Mu'awiyah as my and your leader!'

Astounded by this trickery, Abu-Musa ran towards 'Amr and said, 'What is the matter with you? Curse of Allah be upon you! You are only a dog; if you attack it, it lolls out its tongue; and if you leave it alone, it lolls out its tongue.'

Reproaching him, 'Amr said, 'You are like a donkey bearing books!'

Thus, Abu-Musa the foolish and lowly had control over the destiny of Muslims and removed from leadership the greatest person, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (a) who was really the father of social justice and whose geniuses and talents covered all spaces of life. Instead, he nominated Abdullah ibn 'Umar whose father had described him as too imprudent to know how to divorce his wife!

However, 'Amr ibn Al-'As was true when he likened Abu-Musa to a donkey and Abu-Musa was true when he likened 'Amr to a dog!

This farce of arbitration led the Muslim community to unsolvable difficulties and problems. The soldiers of Imam Ali ('a), after this incident, entered into a long series of seditions although it was they who had forced the Imam ('a) to accept this farce.

When he realized that 'Amr had deceived him, Al-Ash'ari flew to Makkah accompanied by disgrace and shame for his offspring [62](#) and himself as well as those who had nominated him for the farce of arbitration.

As for 'Amr ibn Al-'As, he used to take pride in his ignominious act, thinking that he had achieved a great victory. He sent a letter to Mu'awiyah congratulating him for this result and belittling Abu-Musa and his lack of sagacity.

The people of Syria also rejoiced at this result and gloated over the people of Iraq.

When this news reached Imam Ali ('a), waves of sorrow and pain surrounded him. He thus gathered people and delivered this sermon:

All praise is due to Allah even though time has brought (for us) crushing calamity and great occurrence. I stand witness that there is no god but Allah the One; there is no partner for Him nor is there with Him any god other than Himself, and that Muhammad is His slave and His Prophet (May Allah's blessing and greeting be upon him and his progeny).

So now, certainly the disobedience of sympathetic counselor who has knowledge as well as experience brings about disappointment and result in repentance. I had given you my orders about this arbitration and put before you my hidden view, if Qasir's [63](#) orders were fulfilled but you rejected it (i.e. my orders) like rough opponents and disobedient insurgents until the counselor himself fell in doubt about his counsel and the flint (of his wit) ceased to give flame.

Consequently, your and mine position became as the poet of (the tribe of) Hawazin says: 'I gave you my orders at Mun'araj Al-Liwa, but you did not see the good of my counsel until the noon of next day when it was too late.'[64](#)

Behold! The two men you had nominated as arbitrators threw the judgment of the Book behind their backs and depended upon their own opinions. They thus killed what the Quran had revived and then disagreed with one another with regard to their judgment. Both of them could neither lead to orthodoxy nor guide to the truth.

So, Allah, His Messenger, and the Righteous Believer repudiated them. Now, you must ready yourselves for warfare and for marching. On Monday, you may be present in the camp, by the will of Allah.[65](#)

After this incident, ordeals attacked Imam Ali ('a) successively; his government started falling down and his army refused to obey him anymore. Mu'awiyah bribed the officers of the Imam's army and could make them take sides by him against the Imam ('a). Besides, the faction of Khawarij issued forth, calling

people to insurgence and mutiny.

Mutiny Of The Apostates

When the soldiers of Mu'awiyah raised copies of the Holy Quran on spearheads and demanded deceptively that the judgment of the Quran should be the arbitrator between the two parties, Imam Ali ('a) warned his soldiers against this trick and ordered them to keep on fighting. However, his soldiers surrounded him with unsheathed swords and forced him to accept the so-called arbitration.

He reproached them and proved that the matter was no more than a trick, but they shun his proofs and insisted on the arbitration. The Imam ('a) thus had to comply with their desire, but he suggested that they should nominate Abdullah ibn 'Abbas to be their representative in this arbitration. However, they refused and insisted on nominating the feeble-minded Abu-Musa Al-Ash'ari.

Once again, the Imam ('a) warned them against the consequences of this ill nomination, but they insistently refused. When the arbitration ended with the defeat of Abu-Musa, the soldiers of the Imam ('a) felt sorry at a time when regret was a waste of time! They then mutinied against Imam Ali ('a) and held him responsible for what had happened, raising the false slogan of **'there is no verdict but Allah's.'** Commenting on this slogan, the Imam ('a) said,

It is a true word, but its purport is false.

When Imam Ali ('a) prepared his forces to wage a war against the army of Mu'awiyah, he received the news of the mutiny of a faction (i.e. Khawarij) who had declared armed insurgence and resided in Al-Nahrawan. They made mischief in the lands, shed the blood of Muslims, and declared the atheism of every one who would not follow their faith.

For instance, Abdullah the son of the Prophet's companion Al-Khabbab ibn Al-Aratt came across the Khawarij, carrying a copy of the Quran tied to his neck and accompanying his wife. They asked who he was. He said that he was the son of the Companion Al-Khabbab.

They said that if he was frightened coming across them, he should chase away the fear. They also said that they wanted to hear the traditions narrated by his father. Abdullah said that his father had heard the Holy Prophet (S) saying,

'A mischief will rise when the hearts of men will be dead and the bodies inanimate; men will be faithful believers the evening and by the morning they will be disbelievers. Again by the evening, they will become believers.' [66](#)

They then asked him, 'Now, tell us what you say about Ali when he accepted the idea of the arbitration.'

He replied, 'He understands Allah more than you do and he is very careful in the matters of the religion

and has a perfect vision.’

They said, ‘You are a worshipper of personalities, and instead of deeds, you look for names. By Allah, we shall punish you for following the demands of your psyche! We shall kill you in such a manner that none else was ever killed that way.’

Saying this, they tied him up with ropes. Then, they took him and his pregnant wife near a date–palm tree. One date fell down from that tree, which one of them picked and put in his mouth. The others shouted, ‘This is illegal!’ The person immediately threw away the date.

Then, a pig passed that way and one of them killed it. The others said that what he had just done was mischief and until they convinced the owner of the pig, they were restless. When Abdullah saw this attitude of the Khawarij, he said, ‘When you exercise such great care in small matters, I have no fear of harm from you, because I am a Muslim and I have not committed any crime to deserve to be killed!’

However, they did not pay any heed to his words and, throwing him to the ground, killed him heartlessly. They slit the stomach of his pregnant wife and killed her too.

They also killed three women of Banu’l-Ta’i and Ummu–Sinan Al– Saydawiyyah. After these heartless murders, they wanted to buy the fruits of a date–palm tree from a Christian. He said that he did not need any payment and they could take the fruits if they wanted. They said that they would not take a Dhimmi’s material without paying for it. The Christian said that he was surprised that they had killed a good person like Abdullah ibn Khabbab for no sin of his and do not want at the same time to even take the fruits of a tree without paying for it!

Imam Ali’s companions and soldiers did not want to march for fighting Mu’awiyah’s army and leave the Khawarij behind them, because they feared lest these people would violate the properties and chastity of Muslims. The Imam (‘a) complied with them and led the army towards Al–Nahrawan.[67](#)

He then sent a messenger to them, asking them to give up the persons who had murdered Abdullah ibn Khabbab in order that he would execute them to the religious punishment. However, the Khawarij answered, ‘Nothing between Ali and us but swords, unless he admits that he committed disbelief and declares repentance as same as we did!’

Replying to them, the Imam (‘a) said,

Storm may overtake you while there may be none to prick you for reforms. Shall I be witness to my becoming heretic after acceptance of the faith and fighting in the company of the Prophet? In that case, I shall be misguided and I shall not be on the right path.

So, you should return to your evil places and get back on the traces of your heels. Beware! Certainly, you will meet, after me, overwhelming disgrace and sharp sword and tradition that will be adopted by the oppressors as a norm towards you.[68](#)

When the army moved towards Al-Nahrawan, they learned that the Khawarij had crossed the canal of Tabristan somewhere between Halwan and Baghdad. When Imam Ali ('a) knew about this, he said, 'It cannot be! They are still on this side of the river and they will be killed on the land of Rumaylah.'

At that moment, a trooper of the advance guard came running and said, 'I have seen with my own eyes those men crossing the bridge.'

The Imam ('a) asked for his confirmation thrice; and every time, he swore by God that he had seen the Khawarij crossing the bridge to the other side. The Imam ('a) then said:

By Allah, they have not crossed the bridge! Their place of death is this side of the bridge! By Allah, less than ten of your men will be killed and less than ten of them (the Khawarij) will survive.[69](#)

On the one hand, there were messages that the Khawarij had crossed over to the other side and here Imam Ali ('a) insisted that they would meet their end only this side of the canal. With these exchanges, some people started doubting the Imam's words. One youth knitted his brows and said, 'If the Khawarij have already crossed the canal, I shall aim my spear at the chest of the Imam! Now he has started predicting about the things to come!'

When Imam Ali ('a) saw this state of mind of the people, he spurred his horse and galloped fast towards the canal. When he reached near the bank, he found the Khawarij camping this side of the canal. In that time, the army too reached the spot. When they found the Khawarij on their side of the bank, they raised their voices with the statement of *allahu-akbar* (**Allah is the Most Great**)! The Imam ('a) addressed his army, saying,

By Allah, I have neither told a lie nor was a wrong message at all given to me! [70](#)

The Imam ('a) established his camp at a distance of three miles away from the camp of the Khawarij. When the Khawarij saw the Imam's army, they started raising slogans of 'there is no verdict but Allah's.' They sent a word to the Imam ('a) that he still had the time to repent, and then they would enter into allegiance to him.

As a second alternative, he should demit his office as caliph to enable them to select a leader of their choice. The Imam ('a) sent them word to hand over the killers of his men; otherwise, his army would claim for reTalibation for their blood. He also informed them that if they agreed to this offer, they would be left alone until the army returned from Syria.

In that time, they could think over and decide to seek forgiveness for their past misbehavior. The Khawarij replied, 'We have all killed your men. We all consider it legitimate to shed their and your blood!'

Instead of being angry over this reply, Imam Ali ('a) tried to make them see reason by sending Qays ibn Sa'd Al-Ansari to ask them to shun mischief. He reached the camp of the Khawarij and said to them, 'O people, you are committing a grave sin. Unnecessarily, you are calling us infidels. Beware of thoughtless

killing of men!

Join with us in this jihad against the enemy.’ At this, Abdullah ibn Shajarah Al–Salami said, ‘Now, the curtains have been raised from our eyes! The darkness of vice has vanished! The radiance of the truth is everywhere. We cannot cooperate with you now at any cost!’

Qays said, ‘I plead with you in the name of Allah! Do not indulge in mischief and do not cause your own deaths!’

After him, Abu–Ayyub Al–Ansari went to their camp and tried to stop them from doing mischief. He said, ‘We do not understand what the cause of your enmity for us is. Why are you determined on fighting and battling? If you are so fond of fighting, come and we shall together fight against our common enemy!’

The Khawarij replied, ‘If we side with you, you may once again impose on us the arbitration.’

Abu–Ayyub said, ‘You must first look to the present and then you can bother about the future!’

However, the Khawarij remained adamant. All efforts at putting sense in them went futile. In the end, Imam Ali (‘a) himself went to their camp and said,

O people, for lack of vision and understanding, you have veered away from us. Because of your false emotions, you have gone astray from the Right Path. I want to warn you! You will be killed in this valley and its turnings! The Muslim community will demean you and there will be comments against you from all sides. Your stand was certainly wrong and your ire is unreasonable.

You might remember that I had warned you against accepting the arbitration and said that it was a trick, but you did not listen to my repeated appeals and, instead, you stopped fighting. If I accepted the arbitration, it was under pressure from your people. Even then, I did not accept it with closed eyes. I had taken a commitment from the referees that their verdict should be only in the light of the Holy Quran and the Prophet’s traditions. However, they ruled against the Holy Book and the Prophet’s traditions. Therefore, we have rejected their verdict.

The Khawarij answered, ‘No doubt! We did accept the arbitration and because of that act, we rendered ourselves infidel. Yet, we have repented. You too must express penitence for accepting the arbitration and thereby becoming an infidel. Then, we shall enter under our allegiance to you and fight against the enemy.’

The Imam (‘a) said,

After embracing the faith with the Holy Prophet (S), migrating from Makkah with him, taking part with him in the campaigns that he fought, do you now want me to accept that I committed an act of infidelity? How is it possible?

At this juncture, Khuraj raised noises and said, 'If you do not confess that you committed an act of infidelity, we do not want to talk any more with you!'

The Imam ('a) said,

By making senseless noises, matters cannot be resolved! Let us decide in this manner. You send a representative to me to discuss the matter. If he convinces me, I shall agree that the act of accepting the arbitration was infidelity and I express repentance for that. Otherwise, if I convince him, then you must shun the adamant attitude.

In the beginning, the Khawarij were reluctant, but in the end, they relented. They appointed Abdullah ibn Al-Kawwa' as their mouthpiece. The Imam ('a) asked Ibn Al-Kawwa,

On what matter are you upset that earlier you had very willingly owed your allegiance to me? You also fought with my opponents in the Battle of the Camel.

He answered, 'At that point, the need for the arbitration had not arisen.'

The Imam ('a) said,

O Ibn Al-Kawwa! Is my decision more correct or that of the Prophet (S)?

Ibn Al-Kawwa said, 'Certainly, the Prophet's decision is more correct!'

Then, the Imam ('a) asked,

You must have heard these words of Allah:

'But whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our near people and your near people, then let us be earnest in prayer, and pray for the curse of Allah on the liars. (3:61)'

Did Allah ask the Prophet (S) to participate in the mutual imprecation of God's curse on the lying party (i.e. Mubalah) because he had any doubt about the Prophet (S) being truthful and those Christians the liars and He wanted to remove the doubt?

Ibn Al-Kawwa said, 'Neither Allah nor His Prophet had any doubt about it. It was just a protest against the Christians.'

The Imam ('a) said,

Then, the arbitration too was a protest.

Ibn Al-Kawwa said, 'Your agreeing to the appointment of the referees was a proof that you had a doubt

whether you are on the right or not, although the war was fought on the basis that you were on the right and the Syrians were wrong. Therefore, you had said in clear terms to Mu'awiyah,

'If the Book of Allah decides in our favor, you follow us, and if it decides in your favor, we shall follow you.' What other meaning could be attached to this that you yourself were doubtful whether you were right or not. When you yourself had a doubt, then we too are justified to doubt about you.'

The Imam ('a) said,

This agreement was conditional. When an agreement is conditional, there is no question of our doubting the stand we had taken. Even the Prophet (S) had made such conditional agreements. Therefore, the Holy Quran says,

'Say: Then bring some other book from Allah which is a better guide than both of them that I may follow it, if you are truthful. (28:49)'

Ibn Al-Kawwa said, 'This is true. But by agreeing to the appointment of the referees, you had entrusted Allah's work to others and thus you committed infidelity.'

The Imam ('a) said,

I had only appointed Abu-Musa as the referee.

Ibn Al-Kawwa said, 'Abu-Musa is an infidel!'

The Imam ('a) asked,

Since when was he an infidel? When he was appointed a referee for the arbitration or when he gave his verdict?

Ibn Al-Kawwa said, 'It was so since he gave the verdict!'

The Imam ('a) said,

Then, you have accepted that when he was appointed as a referee, he was a Muslim and you had expected that he would give the verdict according of the commands revealed by Allah. Therefore, it was right to appoint him as a referee.

Ibn Al-Kawwa said, 'But when he gave the verdict, he did become an infidel!'

The Imam ('a) said,

If the Prophet (S) sent a Muslim to some infidels to invite them to the religion and, instead of preaching Islam, he started preaching them wrong things, will the Prophet (S) be responsible for the person's act?

Ibn Al-Kawwa said, 'No!'

The Imam ('a) added,

Then, if Abu-Musa turned an infidel, why do you blame me? What justification do you have to keep the swords over your shoulders and keep killing the Muslims? As far as the second referee 'Amr ibn Al-'As is concerned, he was appointed by Mu'awiyah. How could I name him arbitrator? If 'Amr ibn Al-'As had his way, he would even kill me.

Ibn Al-Kawwa asked, 'Then, how did you agree to one Muslim and the other infidel referee in the arbitration?'

The Imam ('a) said,

Allah has said the following permitting appointment of an arbitrator in the matters of dispute between a husband and a wife:

'And if you fear a breach between the two, then appoint judge from his people and a judge from her people. (4:35)'

If a Muslim man marries a Jewish or Christian woman and differences arise between them, it is then natural that the man will have a Muslim referee from his family and the woman a non-Muslim referee from her family! Then, from the Holy Quran, is it not proved that while one referee is a Muslim, the other can be a non-Muslim?

When the Khawarij saw that Ibn Al-Kawwa¹ was not able to give satisfactory arguments, they sent word to him to terminate the discussion and go back. He therefore left the talks halfway and went back to his people. Although Imam Ali ('a) proved his point, there was no change in the adamant attitude of the Khawarij.

Thus, there was no other alternative than fighting with them. The Imam ('a) arranged his troops in proper formations and the right flank was in the command of Hujr ibn 'Adi and the left under Shabath ibn Rab'i. The cavalry was under Abu-Ayyub Al-Ansari and the footmen under Abu-Qutadah Al-Ansari.

The men from Al-Madinah, who were seven or eight hundred in number, were put under Qays ibn Sa'd Al-Ansari. Imam Ali ('a) himself took position at the heart of the formation.

The Khawarij too organized their rows.

When rows were arranging opposite rows, the Imam ('a) gave a white banner to Abu-Ayyub Al-Ansari and sent him with a contingent of two thousand men to go towards the Khawarij. He went ahead with his men and announced, 'O people, the Leader of the Believers says that those of you who decide to come under this banner or return to Al-Kufah or Al-Mada'in or leave company of that group, there is amnesty

for them!’

The effect this announcement had was that Farwah ibn Nawfal Al-Ashja’i, who was among the elite of the Khawarij, started telling his tribesmen, ‘By Allah, I do not know with what justification we have decided to confront Ali ibn Abi Talib? Neither we have any proof to justify this conflict nor is there any reasonable justification for fighting. We shall stay away from these people and can later on decide on our course of action!’

Saying this, he moved away from the Khawarij with his five hundred tribesmen and went to Bandnajin.

Another group went towards Al-Kufah. One hundred persons came under the flag of Abu-Ayyub joining the Imam’s army. This was a proof of the decent stand of the Imam (‘a) and his spirit of forbearance and peace.

The Imam (‘a) talked to the rest of the Khawarij about the terrifying effects of war, but they were adamant on their stand. Now, only the Khawarij had to make their initial strike for the battle to commence, because the Imam (‘a) had instructed that his men should not be the first to start fighting.

At last, one of the Khawarij came out and killed three men from the Imam’s army. The Imam (‘a) moved forward and attacked him. When the sword hit him, the man said, ‘How sweet going to the Heaven is!’

When Abdullah ibn Wahab heard this, he said, ‘By Allah, I do not know if you are going to Heaven or Hell!’

When another man from the Khawarij heard this, he said, ‘I have come here at the temptation of Abdullah ibn Wahab and even he does not know whether our stand is right or not and is not sure whether by fighting for this cause we go to Heaven or Hell?’

Then, along with the men from his tribe of Banu-Sa’d, he moved away from the ranks of the Khawarij. Instead of combating man-to-man, the Khawarij very soon started general fighting. Therefore, they broke the sheaths of their swords, put arrows in their bows, put up the spears, and, shouting the slogan: **‘there is no verdict but Allah’s,’** started a concerted attack. It was such a severe attack that the feet of the cavalry were uprooted.

They moved back a little and consolidated their positions once again. Imam Ali (‘a) said to his men,

O youths, move forward and fight like tigers!

Saying this, he (‘a) too stood up. Now, when the army attacked as a single unit under his command, there was blood everywhere. With this concerted attack, the rows of the enemy troops were uprooted. The Imam’s sword was twisted with the intensity of use. He had to straighten it putting on his knee.

His army was moving forward and killing the enemy troops until they surrounded the Khawarij from all

sides. Now, there was no way of escape for them. Four hundred persons of the Khawarij were severely wounded and not fit for fighting. Nine persons escaped and saved their lives. The rest of the Khawarij were killed.

When the battle was over, a search was made for a person; namely, Dhul- Thadiyah, [71](#) from the ranks of the Khawarij because Imam Ali ('a) used to say before their rebellion,

One group will veer away from the religion in a manner the arrow goes piercing through the game. Their sign is that among them there will be a person with a maimed hand.[72](#)

Some persons searched for him among the dead, but were unable to find his body. They returned to the Imam ('a) and said, 'We have searched all over and have failed to find the body of the person.'

The Imam ('a) said,

By Allah, his body is there among the dead!

Saying this, he took Sulayman ibn Thumamah Al-Hanafi and Rayyan ibn Sabrah to search for the dead body. When they reached the bank of the canal, about fifty bodies were lying in a ditch. When they removed some of the bodies, they found the body of Dhul-Thadiyah.

The Imam ('a) said,

Allah is the Most Great! I neither told a lie nor was false information given to me. If I had not had the doubt that you would turn your faces from action, I would have informed you about those who fought invisibly with the Khawarij and the right on which we are, they recognize it. I would have also informed you of the blessings that Allah has promised through the Prophet, peace of Allah be upon him and his Household.[73](#)

While returning through the piles of the dead Khawarij, the Imam ('a) said,

Pity on you! One who beguiled you has harmed you!

People asked, 'O Amir Al-Mu'minin! Who has beguiled them?'

The Imam ('a) replied,

Satan and their baser instincts did! These two had spread the web of guile for them and given them false hopes. It was etched on their minds that they would succeed in their nefarious designs.

After success in this battle, the Imam ('a) reminded his men of the astrologer's forecast that the moment of their departure for the campaign was inauspicious. The Imam ('a) thus said,

If we had started at the moment the astrologer had recommended, the ignorant people would say that

the victory had come because of the astrologer's advice![74](#)

The attitude of the Khawarij was very surprising. In the battle of Siffin, they put down their swords almost at the moment of victory and paved the way for the swords to kill them ultimately. They themselves insisted on the arbitration and they turned against it. They shattered the unity of people through mischief. Imam Ali ('a), who was a paragon of virtue, closeness with him was termed infidelity by the Khawarij.

They wanted him to break the agreement of the arbitration and fight with Mu'awiyah. If that had been their intent, they should have fought in the Battle of Siffin instead of supporting the idea of the arbitration initially and then turning against it immediately once an agreement was reached.

The intention of the Khawarij was only to oppose Imam Ali ('a). They created mischief and rebellion against him and made all sorts of false accusations. The Imam ('a) tried his best to reform them. He neither caused them any hardships nor did he stop the stipends to their families.

However, when they went out of control totally and started harming and killing innocent persons, action against them became necessarily inevitable. Even in the battleground, the Imam ('a) made a final effort to bring them back to the right path, but to no avail.

During this battle, and even earlier, the Imam ('a) had made several predictions that proved true. All these were matters about which he had received information from the Holy Prophet (S). [75](#) It was as if his eyes were piercing through the future and seeing the events that were to take place. Here some of his predictions are mentioned:

(1) The Imam ('a) told Zara'ah ibn Buruj Al-Ta'i that he would be killed and told Rabi'ah ibn Shaddad Al-Qasimi that his cadaver would be trampled under the hoofs of horses. Therefore, both these persons were killed during the battle and Rabi'ah's cadaver was trampled under the hoofs of horses.

Kubaysah says that when he saw that Rabi'ah's face and head were trampled under the hoofs of horses, he remembered Imam Ali's word, saying, 'What to say of Abu'l-Hasan's virtues that whenever he said any thing, it would come true!'

(2) About the Khawarij, the Imam ('a) said that they would die on a certain side of the canal and would not cross it to the other side. Therefore, they met their end on the side of the canal that is called Rumaylah.

(3) The Imam ('a) informed that no more than ten persons from his army would be killed in the battle and not even ten would survive death from the army of the Khawarij. Therefore, eight persons died from his army and nine persons from the Khawarij escaped alive.

(4) The Imam ('a) said about Dhul-Thadiyah that he would certainly be killed and his body was found lying in a heap of the dead enemies.

(5) The Imam ('a) had said that the Khawarij were not totally finished and that they would raise their heads again. Therefore, after the Battle of Al-Nahrawan, they continued their minor skirmishes. They again rose during the Umayyad and 'Abbasid regimes and Al-Muhallab ibn Safrah kept fighting with them for twelve years and creating rifts amongst their rank and file rendered them very weak. They scattered and went towards Oman and parts of Africa. They are still there in Muscat and Zanzibar.

(6) The Imam ('a) predicted that they would keep raising their heads like brigands and dacoits. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid writes:

'This prediction of Imam Ali ('a) was proved true that the Khawarij would end up as brigands and highwaymen. Therefore, the movement of the Khawarij became weak and their youths were exterminated. Their condition deteriorated so much that their new generations became highway robbers who used to commit evil acts and cause mischief.'⁷⁶

In brief, Imam Ali ('a) sent many letters and said many words to the Khawarij that a big number of them returned to Al-Kufah, another number joined the Imam's army, and a third group decided to withdraw. Then, only three thousand persons headed by Abdullah ibn Wahab Al-Rasibi remained and insisted on fighting against the Imam ('a).

However, when the Imam ('a) despaired of taking them back to the truth, he mobilized his army and ordered them not to start fighting these people before they would do. Seeing this, the Khawarij prepared themselves for fighting and attacked the Imam's army, shouting, 'There is no verdict but Allah's.' It did not take more than one hour when Imam Ali's army could kill them all except nine persons who could survive that battle.

When the Imam ('a) was informed that all of the Khawarij were killed, he expressed that they still existed in the loins of men and wombs of women. Whenever a chief would appear from among them, he would be cut down until the last men of them would turn thieves and robbers. ⁷⁷

About Dhul-Thadyah the head of the Khawarij, Imam Ali ('a) said to his companions,

The Messenger of Allah (S) said to me, 'A people will appear who speak the words of truth, but their words do not go beyond their throats. They will depart from the truth as fast as an arrow departs a bow. Their mark is that one of them has a hand that is shorter than the other and on the palm of his hand there are a few black hairs.' If he is among the killed ones, then you have killed the wickedest of all people. ⁷⁸

Imam Ali ('a) then buried the killed persons from both the parties, distributed among his followers the weapons of the Khawarij, and took back their luggage and slaves to their owners.

The Battle of Al-Nahrawan was the result of the farce of raising the copies of the Holy Quran and it gave rise to forming a violent revolutionary party that rebelled against all the governments of the Islamic State

and caused the bloodshed of many people and the spread of mischief and discrepancy among Muslims.

- [1.](#) Ibn Qutaybah, Al-Imamah wa'l-Siyasah 1:102.
- [2.](#) Ibn Qutaybah, Al-Imamah wa'l-Siyasah 1:103.
- [3.](#) Tarikh Al-Ya'qubi 2:162.
- [4.](#) Ibn Qutaybah, Al-Imamah wa'l-Siyasah 1:118.
- [5.](#) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 1:129.
- [6.](#) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 1:77.
- [7.](#) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 1:77.
- [8.](#) Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa'adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah 4:89.
- [9.](#) When all the people of Al-Madinah unanimously swore allegiance to Imam Ali ('a), Mu'awiyah refused to acquiesce apprehending danger for his own power, and in order to contest the Imam's caliphate, he concocted the excuse that it had not been agreed to unanimously and that therefore after canceling it, there should be another general election, although caliphate from which the process of election was started was the result of a timely situation. There was no question of the common vote therein so that it could be called the result of the people's election. However, it was imposed on the people and assumed to be their verdict.

From then, it became a principle that whomever the nobles of Al-Madinah elected would be deemed to represent the entire world of Islam and no person would be allowed to question it, whether he was present at the time of election or not. In any case, after the establishment of the principle, Mu'awiyah had no right to propose a re-election nor to refuse allegiance when he had in practice recognized these caliphates which, it was alleged, had been settled by the important people of Al-Madinah.

That is why when he held this election to be invalid and refused allegiance, Imam Ali ('a) pointed out to him the (recognized) way of election and demolished his argument. It was a method known as arguing with the adversary on the basis of his wrong premises so as to demolish his argument, since Imam Ali ('a) never at any state regarded consultation (with chiefs) or the common vote to be the criterion of validity of caliphate.

Otherwise, in connection with the caliphate about which it is alleged that they were based on the unanimity of the Muhajirun and the Ansar, he would have regarded that unanimity of vote as a good authority and held them as valid; but his refusal for allegiance in the very first period, which cannot be denied by anyone, is a proof of the fact that he did not regard these self-concocted methods as the criterion of the validity of caliphate. That is why at all times he continued pressing his own case for caliphate, which was also established on the basis of the Holy Prophet's words and deeds.

However, to place it before Mu'awiyah meant opening the door to questions and answers. He therefore attempted to convince him with his own premises and beliefs so that there could be no scope for interpretation or for confusing the matter. In fact, Mu'awiyah's real aim was to prolong the matter so that at some point his own authority he might get support. (Quoted from Nahj Al-Balaghah in the English version) [Translator]

- [10.](#) Ibn Abd-Rabbih Al-Andalusi, Al-'Iqd Al-Farid 2:233; Ibn Qutaybah, Al-Imamah wa'l-Siyasah 1:71; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 3:300.
- [11.](#) Muhammad ibn Yazid Al-Mubarrad, Al-Kamil 1:155; Ibn Abd-Rabbih Al-Andalusi, Al-'Iqd Al-Farid 2:233; Ibn Qutaybah, Al-Imamah wa'l-Siyasah 1:77; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 1:202.
- [12.](#) Muhammad ibn Yazid Al-Mubarrad, Al-Kamil 1:155; Ibn Abd-Rabbih Al-Andalusi, Al-'Iqd Al-Farid 2:233; Ibn Qutaybah, Al-Imamah wa'l-Siyasah 1:77; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 1:202.
- [13.](#) On the day of the Conquest of Makkah, Yazid ibn Abi-Sufyan, Mu'awiyah's brother, led an armed group of Quraysh to fight the Muslims and prevent them from entering Makkah. In this conflict, some people were killed and some others were taken as prisoners. Yazid was one of those whom were taken as captives on that day. Ironically, the same Yazid was appointed by Abu-Bakr as the deputy governor of Syria. On his way to Syria to practice his official missions, Yazid ibn Abi-Sufyan was riding on an animal while Abu-Bakr was seeing him off walking!

- [14.](#) Ibn Qutsaybah, Al-Imamah wa'l-Siyasah 1:62.
- [15.](#) Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa'adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah 4:200-1.
- [16.](#) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 4:50; Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa'adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah 4:203.
- [17.](#) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 4:50; Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa'adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah 4:204.
- [18.](#) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 4:50.
- [19.](#) Ahmad Zaki Safwat, Jamharat Rasa'il Al-'Arab 1:424-7; Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa'adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah 4:210-3.
- [20.](#) One day, the Holy Prophet (S) saw Abu-Sufyan riding a camel while his son Yazid was grasping its bridle and Mu'awiyah driving it. Upon this scene, the Holy Prophet (S) imprecated Allah's curse upon the three, saying, O Allah, please pour Your curses upon the rider, the grasper, and the driver. Tarikh At-Tabari 11:357; Nasr ibn Muzahim, Waq'at Siffin, pp. 344.
- [21.](#) The nephew of Banu-Sahm is 'Amr ibn Al-'As, Mu'awiyah's assistant. 'Amr's mother was notorious prostitute.
- [22.](#) Ahmad Zaki Safwat, Jamharat Rasa'il Al-'Arab 1:427.
- [23.](#) By this statement, Imam Ali ('a) refers to the deeds that the people of Quraysh, headed by Abu-Sufyan (Mu'awiyah's father), did against the Holy Prophet (S). The same people of Quraysh then refused that caliphate and Prophethood should come together in the same family. (Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 12:9)
- [24.](#) When the Battle of Uhud ended with the defeat of the Muslims' army, Hind, Mu'awiyah's mother, hurried to the dead body of the martyr kamzah ibn Abd Al-MutTalibb and mutilated it so maliciously. She took out the liver and chewed it. She then cut off some of his body parts and used them as necklace! She is thus known as the liver-eater. Likewise, Abu-Sufyan stopped at the dead body of kamzah, kicked it, and showed rejoicing and gloating. (Baqir Sharif Al-Qarashi, Mu'tamar Al-Saqifah [the English version, entitled The Saqifah Conspiracy, translated by Badr Shahin, published by the Ahl Al-Bayt World Assembly - 2010], pp. 31) [Translator]
- [25.](#) Hajar is a region in the Arabia Peninsula known for producing the best kind of dates.
- [26.](#) Ibn Abd-Rabbih Al-Andalusi, Al-'Iqd Al-Farid 2:234; Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa'adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah 4:177-85.
- [27.](#) i.e. Abu-Bakr and 'Umar.
- [28.](#) 'The Chief of Martyrs' is the epithet of the martyr Hamzah ibn Abi Talib, the uncle of the Holy Prophet (S) and Imam Ali ('a).
- [29.](#) 'The Flier in Paradise' and 'The Two-Winged' are two epithets of Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, the cousin of the Holy Prophet (S) and the brother of Imam Ali ('a).
- [30.](#) The belier (mukadhdhib) from the members of the Umayyah clan is the chief of hypocrites and the head of deviation; namely, Abu-Sufyan.
- [31.](#) 'The lion of the opposing groups' (i.e. the chief of the enemies of Islam) is the epithet of 'Utbah ibn Rabi'ah.
- [32.](#) i.e. Imam Al-Hasan and Imam Al-Husayn.
- [33.](#) 'The children of Hell' is the epithet of the children of the Umayyah clan.
- [34.](#) i.e. Lady Fatimah Al-Zahra' ('a).
- [35.](#) 'The bearer of firewood' is Ummu-Jamil, the paternal aunt of Mu'awiyah. This wicked woman used to put thorns in the way the Holy Prophet (S) used to take.
- [36.](#) The meaning is that the person who goes too far in counseling others will be thought to have his personal ends in so doing, even though his counsel may well be based on sincerity of intention and selflessness. This line is used as a proverb on such occasions.
- [37.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 28; Al-Qalqashandi, Subh Al-A'sha 1:229; Al-Nuwayri, Nihayat Al-Irab 7:233.
- [38.](#) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 1:282.
- [39.](#) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 1:282.
- [40.](#) Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa'adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah 4:220; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 3:210; Nasr ibn Muzahim, Waq'at Siffin, pp. 151.
- [41.](#) Ibn Al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi'l-Tarikh 3:141.

[42.](#) Al-Tha'alibi, Lata'if Al-Ma'arif, pp. 158.

[43.](#) Nasr ibn Muzahim, Waq'at Siffin, pp. 185.

[44.](#) Nasr ibn Muzahim, Waq'at Siffin, pp. 221-4.

[45.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 14.

[46.](#) Nasr ibn Muzahim, Waq'at Siffin, pp. 232.

[47.](#) Al-Buladhari, Ansab Al-Ashraf 1:305.

[48.](#) To this disgraceful event, many poets and men of letters referred sarcastically. For instance, Abu-Firas Al-Hamadani, a famous Arab poet, says in one of his most famous poems:

It is worthless to fend off death by means of humility. Thus did 'Amr do when he warded off death from himself via his anus!

[Translator]

[49.](#) Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa'adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah 2:239.

[50.](#) Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa'adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah 2:241.

[51.](#) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 2:217.

[52.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Aphorism No. 208.

[53.](#) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 11:30-31.

[54.](#) Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa'adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah 4:268.

[55.](#) Sharif Al-Murtadha, Al-Amali 1:292.

[56.](#) Al-Sirah Al-Halabiyyah, 3:33.

[57.](#) Tarikh At-Tabari, 4:37.

[58.](#) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 1:110.

[59.](#) Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Al-Thaqafi, Al-Gharat 1:30.

[60.](#) Ibn Abd-Rabbih Al-Andalusi, Al-'Iqd Al-Farid 3:315.

[61.](#) Tarikh At-Tabari 6:39.

Commenting on this announcement, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, in Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 13:315, states: Suwayd ibn Ghafiah has reported that he, once, was with Abu-Musa Al-Ash'ari on the bank of the River Euphrates during the reign of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan when Abu-Musa reported to him that the Holy Prophet (S) had said, 'The Israelites were engaged in discrepancy that lasted for a long time until the two parties of the discrepancy agreed on appointing two misleading referees to judge in the question. So, because they were devious and aberrant, these two referees misled those who accepted their verdicts. My community will fall in such discrepancy and they will appoint two devious referees who will mislead whoever follows them.' Suwayd, having heard these Prophetic words from Al-Ash'ari, said to him, 'O Abu-Musa, beware lest you will be one of these devious referees.' Abu-Musa took off his shirt and said, 'I disavow being so before Allah as same as this shirt of mine has disavowed my body!'

[62.](#) People all over history did not stop disgracing the descendants of Abu-Musa Al-Ash'ari for his disappointment in the farce of arbitration. Al-Farazdaq, a famous Arab poet, once heard Abu-Baradah the son of Al-Ash'ari saying, 'I am too proud, because I am the son of one of the two arbitrators!' Al-Farazdaq answered, 'One of these two arbitrators was thoughtless and the other was sinful. Now, you can choose one of them to be your father!' (Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 19:353)

On another occasion, a man looked at one of the descendants of Abu-Musa Al-Ash'ari strutting boastfully. He thus said, 'Look how this man walks, as if it was his father who had deceived 'Amr ibn Al-'A●, but not the otherwise!'

[63.](#) This is a proverb used on an occasion when the advice of a sincere and well-wishing counselor is rejected and afterwards it is repented.

[64.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 35.

[65.](#) Al-Buladhari, Ansab Al-Ashraf, pp. 366.

[66.](#) Ibn Al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi'l-Tarikh 3:172.

[67.](#) When the army of the Imam ('a) started its journey, an astrologer said, 'O Amir Al-Mu'minin, I know about the movement of the stars and this is not auspicious time to start the journey. There may be great harm in store for us!'

The Imam ('a) said, 'Can you tell me what is inside the belly of my horse?'

He said, 'I can calculate and say!'

The Imam (‘a) said, ‘One who believes in what you say, will be denying the writ of the Holy Quran. The Holy Book says:

‘Surely, Allah is He with Whom is the knowledge of the hour, and He sends down the rain and He knows what is in the wombs; and no one knows what he shall earn on the morrow; and no one knows in what land he shall die. Surely, Allah is Knowing, Aware. (31:34)’

Then the Imam (‘a) chided the astrologer and told his troops that they should not give any cognizance to such words of superstition and trust on Allah.

[68.](#) History corroborates that after Imam Ali’s passing away, the Khawarij had to face all sorts of ignominy and disgrace and wherever they raised their heads for creating trouble, they were met with swords and spears. Thus, Ziyad ibn Abih, ‘Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad, Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, Mus’ab ibn Al-Zubayr, and Al-Muhallab ibn Abi-Sufrah left no stone unturned in annihilating them from the surface of the globe, particularly Al-Muhallab chased them for nineteen years, routed them thoroughly, and rested only after completing their destruction.

Al-Tabari, an Arab historicist, writes that when ten thousand persons of the Khawarij gathered on a mountain near Ahwaz (currently, southern Iran) where Al-Muhallab faced them so steadfastly that he killed seven thousand of them, while the remaining three thousand fled towards Kirman for life. When the governor of Persia noticed their rebellious activities, he surrounded them in a region called Sabur and killed a good number of them.

Those remained again fled to Isfahan and Kirman. From there, they again formed a contingent and advanced towards Al-Kufah via Al-Basrah. Al-Harith ibn Abi-Rabi’ah Al-Makhzumi and Abd Al-Rahman ibn Mikhnaf Al-Azdi stood up with six thousand combatants to stop their advance, and turned them out of Iraq’s boundaries. In this way, successive encounters completely trampled their military power and turning them out of cities compelled them to roam about in the deserts. Afterwards also, when they rose in the form of groups, they were crushed. (Tarikh At-Tabari 2/580-591; Ibn Al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi’l-Tarikh 4/196-206).

[69.](#) Ibn Al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi’l-Tarikh 3: 174.

[70.](#) Ibn Al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi’l-Tarikh 3: 174.

[71.](#) The following narration is quoted from Ibn kajar Al-’Asqalani, Al-I’abah fi Tamyiz Al-Sahabah 1:484 under the title: Biography of Anas ibn Malik:

Anas said that a man lived in the time of the Holy Prophet (S) whom we admired his piety and devotion very much. When we mentioned that man before the Holy Prophet (S), he could not recognize him. In the meantime, the man appeared before us and we said to the Holy Prophet (S), ‘This is the man we intend.’

The Holy Prophet (S) looked at him and said, ‘You are referring to a man whose face carries a satanic sign!’ The man came towards us. When he was close enough, he stood up and did not greet us. Immediately, the Holy Prophet (S) said to him, ‘I adjure you by Allah; when you stopped here, you said to yourself, ‘No one of this group is better or more favorable than I am.’ Have you not said so?’ The man admitted, and then entered the mosque to offer a prayer. The Holy Prophet (S) asked, ‘Which one of you will do the mission of killing this man?’ Abu-Bakr volunteered and went to do the mission, but he found the man offering a prayer and said, ‘This will be strange! How can I kill a man in a state of offering a prayer while the Messenger of Allah (S) has warned us against killing men who perform prayers?’ He thus went back. The Prophet (S) asked, ‘What have you done?’

Abu-Bakr answered, ‘I did not want to kill him while he was offering a prayer, because you warned us against so.’ The Holy Prophet (S) then said to his companions, ‘Which one of you will go and kill the man?’ ‘Umar said, ‘I will.’ However, ‘Umar found the man offering prayer and in the posture of prostration; so, he said to himself, ‘Abu-Bakr is better than I am.’ He thus left without doing the mission. The Holy Prophet (S) asked ‘Umar, ‘What have you done?’ ‘Umar apologized that he found the man in a state of prostration and could not kill him.’ Once again, the Holy Prophet (S) asked, ‘Who will kill the man?’ Imam Ali (‘a) said, ‘I will.’ The Holy Prophet (S) said, ‘Yes, you can do this mission if only you can catch him.’ Hence, the Imam (‘a) left towards the man and found that he had left the place. He returned to the Holy Prophet (S) and informed

him about the matter, and the Holy Prophet (S) commented, 'If this man was killed, no two men from my community would ever disagree, and the first of them would be just like the last.'

[72.](#) Ibn Al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi'l-Tarikh 3:175.

[73.](#) Tarikh Al-Tabari 4:366.

[74.](#) Ibn Al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi'l-Tarikh 3:173.

[75.](#) Zayd ibn Ali reported his father on the authority of Imam Al-Husayn ibn Ali ('a) on the authority of his father ('a) who quoted the Holy Prophet (S) as saying:

Almighty Allah has ordered me to choose you (Ali) as my brother and my legate. You are my vicegerent and successor during my life and after I die. Whoever obeys you is deemed to have obeyed me and whoever disobeys you is deemed to have disobeyed me. Whoever refutes you has in fact refuted me, and whoever oppresses you is deemed to have oppressed me. O Ali, you are from me and I am from you. Had you not been there 'the People of the River' would not have been slain.

Imam Ali ('a) asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, who are the People of the River?'

The Holy Prophet (S) replied,

They are a group of people called Khawarij who would rebel and renounce Islam as fast as an arrow leaves the bow.

(Shaykh Al-tusi, Al-Amali 1:203)

[76.](#) The details of the Battle of Al-Nahrawan have been quoted from Biography of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib; English translation of Sirat Amir Al-Mu'minin by Mufti Ja'far Husayn; translated into English by Sayyid Tahir Bilgrami.

[77.](#) This prophecy of Imam Ali ('a) proved true word by word. Every chief of the Khawarij who rose was put to sword. Two of the nine persons who could survive the Battle of Al-Nahrawan fled to Oman, two others to Kirman, two others to Sajistan, two others to the Arabian Peninsula, and one to Tell-Mawzun. They started promulgating for the faith of the Khawarij at these places. (Al-Shahristani, Al-Milal wa'l-NihAI 1:159)

[78.](#) Muhammad Baqir Al-Mahmudi, Nahj Al-Sa'adah fi Mustadrak Nahj Al-Balaghah 2:400.

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