

The Reign Of Imam 'Ali

Imam Ali ('a) received the news of 'Uthman's assassination with much anxiety, because he had known the consequences of this incident. He knew that the Umayyads and the perverted powers would play with the card of 'Uthman's bloodshed in order to seize power and usurp the fortunes of the Muslim State.

Another reason for Imam Ali's concern was that he knew that he was the first candidate to caliphate; and if he came to power, he would follow a policy based on truth and pure justice and he would apply the laws of the Holy Quran and the practices of the Holy Prophet (S) to people, which meant that he would set aside the greedy and the thieves from the governmental offices. As a result, the perverted powers would revolt against him and work toward frustrating his reformative plans.

Imam Ali Refuses Caliphate

Most certainly, Imam Ali ('a) did not have any desire for holding the position of caliphate as long as it means arrogance, fondness of authority, and gaining the fortunes of the country, because such goals were forbidden and illegal in the Imam's view, since his one and only goal was to put into action all nobilities, high moral standards, and pleasure of the community, to save the people from poverty and deprivation, and to spread luxury and security among the subjects.

The masses surrounded Imam Ali ('a) and asked him to hold the reins of government, but the Imam ('a) answered,

I am by no means in need for ruling over you. I will accept anyone else you will choose for this position.

On another occasion, Imam Ali ('a) demonstrated the motives that made him dispute with the previous caliphs, saying,

O Allah! You know that what we did was not to seek power nor to acquire anything from the vanities of the world. We rather wanted to restore the signs of Your religion and to usher prosperity into Your cities so that the oppressed among Your creatures might be safe and You forsaken commands might be

established. O Allah! I am the first who leaned (towards You) and who heard and responded (to the call of Islam). No one preceded me in prayer except the Prophet.

You certainly know that he who is in charge of honor, life, booty, (enforcement of) legal commandments and the leadership of the Muslims should not be a miser as his greed would aim at their wealth, nor be ignorant as he would then mislead them with his ignorance, nor be of rude behavior who would estrange them with his rudeness, nor should he deal unjustly with wealth thus preferring one group over another, nor should he accept a bribe while taking decisions, as he would forfeit (others) rights and hold them up without finality, nor should he ignore the Prophetic traditions as he would ruin the people.[1](#)

Nevertheless, the masses insistently said to Imam Ali ('a), 'We do not have any leader except you. We will choose none but you.'

Imam Ali ('a), again, did not pay any attention to their demands; rather, he insisted on refusing their offer, because he had already predicted the coming problems and seditious matters that would be created by the perverted powers.

Conference Of The Military Forces

After Imam Ali ('a) had refused to assume power, the military forces held a meeting in which they discussed the dangers that would befall the Muslim community if they would remain without a leader. They therefore summoned the people of Al-Madinah and the prominent personalities and threatened that they would kill Imam Ali ('a), Talhah, and Al-Zubayr, creating a massacre as a result, if a man would not be appointed as the caliph.[2](#)

Hence, the people of Al-Madinah hurried fearfully to Imam Ali ('a) and shouted, 'Pledge of allegiance! Homage! Can't you see what has befallen Islam and what tribulations we have encountered because of the people of the villages?'

Once again, Imam Ali ('a) insisted on refusing their proposal, saying,

Leave me and find another one!

Expressing the reasons for his refusal, Imam Ali ('a) added,

We are facing a matter which has (several) faces and colors, which neither hearts can stand nor intelligence can accept. Clouds are hovering over the sky, and faces are not discernible. You should know that if I respond to you I would lead you as I know and would not care about whatever one may say or abuse. If you leave me then I am the same as you are. It is possible I would listen to and obey whomever you make in charge of your affairs. I am better for you as a counselor than as chief.[3](#)

Nevertheless, people poured forth on Imam Ali ('a) from all sides, demanding him to accept assuming

caliphate.

Expressing the insistence of the people, Imam Ali ('a) says,

At that moment, nothing took me by surprise but the crowd of people rushing to me. It advanced towards me from every side like the mane of the hyena so much so that Al-Hasan and Al-Husayn were crushed and both the ends of my shoulder garment were torn. They collected around me like the herd of sheep and goats.[4](#)

Finally, Imam Ali ('a) asked for respite to the next day so that he would think about the matter ponderously. Only then did the people leave him.

Imam Ali Accepts Caliphate

Having contemplated the matter thoughtfully, Imam Ali ('a) concluded that the public interest of Muslims necessitated that he would assume caliphate; otherwise, one of the infidels of the Umayyads would jump to hold the position. He thus said,

By Allah, I have not advanced to accept caliphate for any other reason than that I anticipated that a goat from the Umayyads would leap to play in the Book of Allah the Almighty and All-majestic.[5](#)

Swearing Allegiance To Imam Ali

The next morning, the masses hurried to the mosque, waiting impatiently for the Imam's acceptance. Before long, Imam Ali ('a) came while the two grandsons of the Holy Prophet (S) were to his two sides and the other pure Companions, like 'Ammar and Malik, surrounded him. The voices of the masses rose with cries of complete support to the Imam ('a) who, then, ascended the minbar and delivered these words to the masses:

O people! Verily, no one has any word about this affair of you except the one you choose as leader. Yesterday, you and I left after I had been displeased to respond to your request. Nevertheless, you insisted that I should be your chief. Behold! I am not allowed to take for myself a single dirham more than what you take. If you wish, I will sit (on the rule seat) to preside over you; otherwise, I will not accept the pledge of allegiance made by any one of you.

Once again, cries from all sides of the mosque rose to declare their consistent insistence on selecting Imam Ali ('a) for leadership. They thus said, 'We still bear the same idea of yesterday.'

The masses then shoved one another to swear allegiance to the Imam ('a). Talhah also advanced to swear allegiance to Imam Ali ('a) with his evil hand, which is the same hand that breached allegiance afterwards. Imam Ali ('a) saw an evil omen in Talhah's homage; he therefore expressed,

He (i.e. Talhah) is too immoral to keep this allegiance. Thus, he will very soon breach it.'

Allegiance to Imam Ali ('a) was sworn by the military forces from the people of Egypt and Iraq as well as the people of the other regions, the warriors of the Battle of Badr, the Muhajirun, and the Ansar.[6](#)

In fact, no other caliph has ever gained such popular and massive homage. Hence, homage to Imam Ali was not a slip [7](#) nor was it made by nomination of the previous caliph, nor was it restricted to the selection of less-than-ten persons!

Exultant Joy Of Muslims

Muslims were very happy for swearing allegiance to Imam Ali ('a); this exultant joy spread all over the Islamic world, because the right has regained its position, the state of justice has been established, and caliphate has been assumed by the father of orphans and the supporter of the deprived and the oppressed.

Talking about the exultant joy of people on this occasion, Imam Ali ('a) says,

You drew out my hand towards you for allegiance but I held it back and you stretched it but I contracted it. Then you crowded over me as the thirsty camels crowd on the watering cisterns on their being taken there, so much so that shoes were torn, shoulder-cloths fell away and the weak got trampled, and the happiness of people on their allegiance to me was so manifested that small children felt joyful, the old staggered (up to me) for it, the sick too reached for it helter skelter and young girls ran for it without veils.[8](#)

Support Of The Companions

The most prominent companions of the Holy Prophet (S) rushed to declare their full support of Imam Ali ('a).

Thabit ibn Qays stopped before the Imam ('a) and said, 'O Amir Al-Mu'minin! By Allah, if they had preceded you in assuming the position of leadership, they had never preceded you in religiousness. If they had forgone you, you have now caught them. They were what they were, and you are what you are.

Your position is never concealed and your standing is never ignored. They always needed you since they were unaware of many things, but you never need anyone, because of your comprehensive knowledge.'

Khuzaymah ibn Thabit advanced towards Imam Ali ('a) and said, 'O Amir Al-Mu'minin! We have not found any one suitable for assuming this position save you. In fact, we will not resort to anyone but you. Apart from our opinion about you, you are most certainly the foremost in belief, the most knowledgeable

of all people with regard to Almighty Allah, and the closest of all believers to Allah's Messenger. You share people in everything they enjoy, but people never share you in what you have.'

Sa'sa'ah ibn Sawhan, addressing Imam Ali ('a), said, 'O Amir Al-Mu'minin! By Allah, you have beautified the position of caliphate, but it has never beautified you. You have raised it, but it has never raised you. In fact, caliphate needs you more than you need it.'⁹

Malik Al-Ashtar delivered this sermon to the Muslims: 'O people! This (Ali) is the successor of all the prophets' successors, the real inheritor of the knowledge of the prophets, the owner of extreme courage and benefit, and the one who received his sufferings most nicely. The Book of Allah has testified to Ali's faith and the Messenger of Allah has testified to his being awarded Paradise.

All virtues are perfect in Ali, and none of the past or the coming generations can ever doubt his preference in Islam, knowledge, and righteousness.'

Abd Al-Rahman Al-Jamhi composed some poetic verses in which he demonstrated the fact that Muslims had sworn allegiance to the one who would protect their religion; the one who is chaste in his behavior, and far above any defect. He also called Muslims to adhere firmly to their allegiance to Imam Ali ('a), for he is the successor and cousin of the Chosen Prophet (S) and he was the first to pray to and believe in Almighty Allah.

'Uqbah ibn 'Amr then stood up and praised Imam Ali's unparalleled virtues, saying, 'Imam Ali ('a) was unmatched at all situations, such as his situation on that day of Al-'Aqabah and that day when Muslims swore allegiance to the Holy Prophet (S) and he accepted it from them; therefore, it was called the allegiance of utter pleasure (*ridwan*). Imam Ali ('a) is the guide to the truth in an unprecedented way. Bias is never expected from him, and he is never feared to lack knowledge.'

The Congratulating Delegations

Delegations from the other Muslim regions came to Al-Madinah to declare their support of Imam Ali's government and to show loyalty to him. Among these congratulators were a delegation from Yemen, the tribes of Hamdan, the tribes of Juhaynah, and the tribes of Bujaylah.

This is another distinctive feature of Imam Ali's caliphate, since none of the previous caliphs had gained such support and reinforcement.

Congregational Supplications For Imam Ali

Imam Ali ('a) is the first caliph for whom people used to implore Almighty Allah's support and victory from the mosques. The first to pray for Imam Ali ('a) from the minbar of a mosque was Abdullah ibn 'Abbas who said, 'O Allah, please grant Ali aid to establish the truth.'

Gloom Of The People Of Quraysh

The people of Quraysh received the news of Imam Ali's assuming caliphate with very much panic and disorder, because they would never forget that Imam Ali ('a) had killed their chiefs for the sake of Islam. They were full of malice and fury toward him.

In addition, they knew that Imam Ali ('a) would follow a course due to which they would be interrogated and deprived of the great fortunes they had usurped from the funds of people and that he would oppose caste and social group. From this cause, they stood in the face of Imam Ali's government and rebelled against him.

Leading the Umayyads, Al-Walid hurried to swear allegiance to Imam Ali ('a) on the condition that the Imam ('a) would close his eyes against the fortunes that they had illegally got from the public treasury during the reign of 'Uthman. Hence, Al-Walid said to the Imam ('a), 'You killed our family members and our heroes. As for me, you killed my father in the Battle of Badr.

As for Sa'id, you killed his father in the same battle, while his father was the light of Quraysh. As for Marwan, you reviled at his father and condemned 'Uthman for he had embraced him. Now, we will swear allegiance to you on condition that you will forgive us for the fortunes we are possessing, allow us to keep what we are currently having in our hands (i.e. governmental offices), and to kill the slayers of 'Uthman.'

Imam Ali ('a) answered,

As for what you have mentioned regarding my killings amongst you, it was the truth, not I, that killed them.

As for your request that I should forgive you for the fortunes you are now possessing, I do not have the right to free you or any others from violating the right of Allah.

As for allowing you to keep what you are now holding, justice will judge in what is the right of Allah and the Muslims.

As for your request to kill the slayers of 'Uthman, if I am required to kill them today, then I will be required to kill them tomorrow. However, I pledge to you that I will judge amongst you according to the Book of Allah and the practice of His Messenger. Whoever is too narrow to accept the truth, is too narrower to accept the wrong. You may now leave me and see your own affairs. [10](#)

The people of Quraysh formed a difficult test for Imam Ali ('a). Expressing his tribulation because of these people, Imam Ali ('a) is reported to have said,

What (cause of conflict) is there between the people of Quraysh and me? By Allah, I have fought them

when they were unbelievers and I shall fight them when they will have been misled. I shall be the same for them today as I was for them yesterday. By Allah, I shall split the wrong until I extract right from its flanks. So, convey this to the people of Quraysh: Let them make noise as loudly as they can.

Some persons absented themselves from swearing allegiance to Imam Ali ('a). About this group, Imam Ali ('a) says,

These people failed to stand up with the truth and did not rise with the wrong. [11](#)

These persons were namely Sa'd ibn Abi-Waqqas, Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Hassan ibn Thabit, Ka'b ibn Malik, Maslamah ibn Mukhallad, Abu-Sa'id Al-Khidri, Muhammad ibn Maslamah, Al-Nu'man ibn Bashir, Zayd ibn Thabit, Suhayb ibn Sinan, Salamah ibn Salamah, Usamah ibn Zayd, Qudamah ibn Mas'un, and Al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah. [12](#)

As for Sa'd ibn Abi-Waqqas, he excused that the question was not very obvious for him.

As for Abdullah ibn 'Umar whose heart was full of malice towards Imam Ali ('a), he said to the Imam ('a), 'O Ali, fear Allah and do not jump to the leadership of the community without consultation!'

However, Abdullah then regretted this situation very much that he said on his deathbed, 'I will leave this world while I feel regret for nothing except my failure to swear allegiance to Ali.'

Abdullah lived after that incident a long lifetime during which Almighty Allah punished and humiliated him severely. When Abd Al-Malik ibn Marwan came to power, Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf took the people's homage on his behalf. Abdullah ibn 'Umar came and stood at the last of the row of people who were to swear allegiance, so that none would see him. Then, Al-Hajjaj could recognize him.

He despised him and said, 'Why did you fail to swear allegiance to Abu-Turab (i.e. Imam Ali). Now, you have come in the rear of people to swear allegiance to Abd Al-Malik! You are so worthless that I will not extend my hand towards you to take homage from you. Here is my foot! Shake my foot and swear allegiance!' Abdullah ibn 'Umar did.

Confiscation Of The Usurped Fortunes

The first act Imam Ali ('a) undertook immediately after assuming caliphate was that he issued a decision of confiscating all the fiefs that 'Uthman had granted to the Umayyads and reacquiring all the fortunes that he had gifted them, because they were taken wrongly. Thus, all the properties of 'Uthman were confiscated, including his sword and armor.

This decision stimulated the wrath of the Umayyads and the horror of those whom 'Uthman had granted huge sums of money, including Talhah and Al-Zubayr.

For this reason, these opportunist powers showed signs of schism and rebellion and declared armed

insurgence against Imam Ali's government.

Deposition Of Deputy Governors

Another procedure that Imam Ali ('a) took was that he deposed the deputy governors whom 'Uthman had appointed while they spread injustice and corruption among Muslims. The Imam ('a) deposed all the Umayyads from the ruling system of his government, because keeping them in their offices would mean admission of persecution and tyranny. Without delay, Imam Ali ('a) deposed Mu'awiyah ibn Abi-Sufyan from the governorship of Syria, since Mu'awiyah was the strongest among 'Uthman's deputy governors.

However, some companions of the Imam ('a) suggested to him that he would keep Mu'awiyah in his office until all situations would be established compactly. Imam Ali ('a) refused and declared that he would never flatter anyone in the religious affairs.

One day, Ziyad ibn Hanzalah visited the Imam ('a) and asked, 'O Amir Al- Mu'minin! What for should we invade Syria? Lenience and respice seem better for us.'

The Imam ('a) answered,

Whenever you have together a smart heart, a sharp sword, and a disdainful spirit, all wrongdoings will evade you.

Imam Ali ('a) then mobilized his forces to invade Syria and annihilate Mu'awiyah, but he was surprised by the rebellion of Talhah, Al-Zubayr, and 'A'ishah. He thus dedicated all his efforts to this issue and left to Al-Basrah to save it from the evils of these persons.

Imam Ali's Internal Policy

Imam Ali ('a) worked very hard for running the affairs of people through a bright policy founded on pure justice and perfect truth. He endeavored to spread luxury and security in the society and to distribute the fortunes among people equitably, away from preferring some people to others.

Equitability

In all of the stages of his rule, Imam Ali ('a) adopted the policy of equitability and the establishment of justice among the subjects.

In allowances, Imam Ali ('a) equalized all people with one another; he preferred neither an Arab to a non-Arab, a Muslim to a non-Muslim, nor a relative to a non-relative. This perfect equality created the criticism of the capiTalibst powers that, as a result, waged war against the Imam ('a).

The Imam ('a) ordered all his officials and deputy governors to implement the policy of perfect equality

among all people in judgment and other fields. In his epistles to one of his officials, Imam Ali ('a) says,

Behave humbly with the people and keep yourself lenient. Meet them large-heartedly and accord them equal treatment so that the big should not expect injustice from you in their favor and the low should not be despondent of your justice to them. Allah the Sublime will certainly question you, O community of His creatures, about your actions, small or big, open or concealed. If He punishes you, it is because you have been oppressive; and if He forgives, then it is because He is the Most Generous. [13](#)

Equality In Rights And Duties

Among the other aspects of equality that Imam Ali ('a) put into effect was equality in rights and duties. He never exempted the strong from any duty that was made incumbent upon the weak; rather, all citizens were equal before his justice.

Adopting The Life Styles Of The Poor

Another political program that Imam Ali ('a) practiced was his adopting a style of life that was equal to the styles of the poor and the weak among his subjects. He therefore shared them in harsh living and in vicissitudes of time.

Expressing this program, Imam Ali ('a) says,

Shall I be content with being called Amir Al-Mu'minin (The Leader of the Believers), although I do not share with the people the hardships of the world? Or shall I be an example for them in the distresses of life? I have not been created to keep myself busy in eating good foods like the tied animal whose only worry is his fodder or like a loose animal whose activity is to swallow. It fills its belly with its feed and forgets the purpose behind it. Shall I be left uncontrolled to pasture freely, or draw the rope of misguidance or roam aimlessly in the paths of bewilderment? [14](#)

Cancellation Of The Habit Of Taking Pride In The Ancestors

Imam Ali ('a) cancelled out one of the loathsome habits that the Arab people used to do; namely, taking pride in the ancestors, mutual boasting, and vying in the multiplication of wealth and sons. [15](#)

He ('a) thus taught them that vying must be in good action and the favors that one does to his homeland and society so as to contribute to the development of the intellectual and social aspects of life. Any other vying is in fact worthless and it leads to nothing but mirage.

Forbiddance Of Playing Chess

Imam Ali ('a) also disallowed his officials to play chess in the offices of the government. One day, he passed by some people who were engaged in playing chess. He, quoting this holy verse, said to them,

'What are these images to whose worship you cleave. (21:52)'

He then turned over the chessboard. [16](#)

Forbiddance Of Sitting On The Public Ways

Imam Ali ('a) also forbade the people of Al-Kufah from sitting on the public ways aimlessly, because this act is expected to bring about violation of people's chastity. However, the people of Al-Kufah talked to him to cancel this decision; therefore, the Imam ('a) said, *'I will cancel it if you guarantee commitment to this condition.'*

'What is your condition, Amir Al-Mu'minin?' they asked.

The Imam ('a) said, *'You must lower down your sights (against what you are forbidden to look at), respond to the greetings of others, and guide the lost people.'*

The Imam ('a) left them after they had committed to him that they would abide by his condition.

Prohibition Of Intoxicants

As for intoxicants, which are the key to all vices, Imam Ali ('a) adopted all procedures to prevent the circulation of intoxicants among people. He is also reported to have set to fire a whole village in Al-Kufah where intoxicants were sold.

Establishment Of Detention Centers

Imam Ali ('a) is the first to make a detention center, which he called *nafi'* (*i.e. beneficial*). However, the building of this center was not too firm to prevent the detainees from leaving it. The Imam ('a) therefore destroyed the building and built another one he called *nahis*.

Establishment Of House Of Complaints

For those who could not present themselves before the ruling authorities in order to make complaints, Imam Ali ('a) established for them a building that he called *bayt Al-masalim* (*House of Complaints*) that he himself used to supervise in order that no one else would reach there and have a look at the people's complaints. After reading these complaints, Imam Ali ('a) used to summon the wrong party and give back the wronged people their dues.

The Military Police

Imam Ali ('a) establish a police system whose mission was to maintain security and to supervise the civil events. Giving the name of *Shurtat Al-Khamis* to this system, Imam Ali ('a) chose the best men in faith and religiousness to join this power, such as Habib ibn Musahir and 'Ifaq ibn Al-Musayh Al-Fazari. [17](#)

Unseemly Dress

One day, Imam Ali (‘a) saw a man putting unseemly attire that had a long tail. He (‘a) said to him, ‘Shorten this tail. If you do, you will seem to be cleaner, more enduring, and more pious.’[18](#)

A Record For People’s Needs

Imam Ali (‘a) issued an order of opening a record in which people’s needs should be registered without mentioning their names. In this respect, he (‘a) said,

Whoever of you needs something, may provide it before me in a concealed document so that you will be avoided exposing yourselves to beggary. [19](#)

The Police Commissioner–In–Chief

Ma’qil ibn Qays Al–Riyahi, one of the most virtuous personalities of his time, was appointed by Imam Ali (‘a) as the police commissioner–in–chief.

The Clerk

Sa’id ibn Nimran, the chief of the Hamdan tribe,[20](#) was appointed by Imam Ali (‘a) as his clerk.

Imam Ali (‘a) is reported to have directed his scribes to write in small and closely written script without leaving much space between letters and words [to save stationery] and not to eulogize him.[21](#)

Frankness And Honesty

One of the most prominent features of Imam Ali’s policy was that he abode by frankness and honesty in all of the aspects of his life. He never played a trick on anybody, never equivocate, and never flattered anybody at the expense of his religious morals; rather, he followed the same course of his brother and cousin; namely the Holy Prophet (S). Had Imam Ali (‘a) used the political traditions that were circulative in his time, caliphate would not have reached ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan.

When Abd Al–Rahman ibn ‘Awf insisted on the Imam (‘a) to pay homage to him on condition that he would follow the policy of Abu–Bakr and ‘Umar, the Imam (‘a) refused and insisted that he would follow the policy inferred from the Holy Quran and Sunnah.

Imam Ali’s conscience would never cheat or try to deceive in order to come to power; rather, he had forsaken power and refused all its seductive effects. Very often, he used to express the pains he had to encounter because of the rivalry of the people of Quraysh. He used to say,

Alas! They are playing tricks on me although they know for sure that I have full acquaintance with their tricks. I have already anticipated their tricks. However, I know for sure that trickery and deception lead to

Hellfire. Therefore, I stand their trickeries and I never do what they do.[22](#)

Answering those who claimed that the Imam ('a) lacked familiarity with the management of the political affairs, while Mu'awiyah was experienced in this field, Imam Ali ('a) said,

By Allah, Mu'awiyah is not more cunning than I am, but he deceives and commits evil deeds. Had I not been hateful of deceit, I would have been the most cunning of all men. But (the fact is that) every deceit is a sin and every sin is disobedience (of Allah), and every deceitful person will have a banner by which he will be recognized on the Judgment Day. By Allah, I cannot be made forgetful by strategy, nor can I be overpowered by hardships.[23](#)

On another occasion, Imam Ali ('a) condemned those people who do not refrain from using any means, be it legal or not, to come to power and then claim these acts to be a sort of cunning. The Imam ('a) thus says about them,

O people! Surely, fulfillment of pledge is the twin of truth. I do not know a better shield (against the assaults of sin) than it. One who realizes the reality of return (to the next world) never betrays. We are in a period when most of the people regard betrayal as wisdom. In these days, the ignorant people call it excellence of cunning.

What is the matter with them? Allah may destroy them. One who has been through thick and thin of life finds the excuses to be preventing him from orders and prohibitions of Allah but he disregards them despite capability (to succumb to them and follows the commands of Allah), while one who has no restraints of religion seizes the opportunity (and accepts the excuses for not following the commands of Allah).[24](#)

Cancellation Of Popular Festivals

Imam Ali ('a) did not pay any attention to the popular festivals. One day, when he was on his journey back from Al-Basrah immediately after the cessation of the Battle of the Camel, he passed by the city of Al-Mada'in whose people came out congregationally to receive him with the women's shrills and the men's trilling cries of joy.

Surprised by such behaviors, Imam Ali ('a) asked about this festival. They said, 'We usually receive our kings with such festivals.' The Imam ('a) answered, 'I am not a king; rather, I am just like any one of you. My duty is to establish truth and justice among you.' The Imam ('a) did not leave that place before these crowds had separated.

Imam Ali Executes The Religious Punishment On A Loyal Poet

Al-Najashi was a talented poet who used to praise Imam Ali ('a), since poets in these ages were the spokesmen of the community and the one and only mass medium. One day, this poet was seduced by a

licentious man to drink wine in the month of Ramadan, while all Muslims were observing the obligatory fasting.

When these two men became drunk, they vied in boasting with one another and their voices became so loud that a neighbor could hear them and recognize the situation. He therefore ran towards Imam Ali ('a) and informed against them. The Imam ('a) sent his police to arrest them; so, Al-Najashi was arrested while the other man could escape.

When he was presented before Imam Ali ('a), the Imam said to him in a strict language, *'Woe to you! We are observing fasting while you are not!'*

Hence, the Imam ('a), executing the religious punishment on this man, ordered him to be lashed eighty lashes. The Imam ('a) then ordered that twenty more lashes should be added.

Al-Najashi asked about the reason, and the Imam ('a) said, *'These twenty lashes are for your challenge of Almighty Allah in the month of Ramasan.'*

The Imam ('a) then attired Al-Najashi with a short trousers and demonstrated him before people as a sign of humiliation so that he would not do it again, although this man had many times praised Imam Ali ('a) in his poetry.[25](#)

The Imam Is Just Like The Feeble People

According to the philosophy of Imam Ali ('a), a ruler must imitate the most feeble people of his subjects in food, dress, and house. He ('a) is thus reported to have said,

Verily, as Allah the All-exalted has made me the leader of His creatures, He imposed upon me constriction in my personal affairs, my food, my drink, and my dress just like the feeble people, so that the poor will pattern after my poverty and the rich will not be made despotic due to his richness.[26](#)

In the same connection, Imam Ali ('a) is reported to have said,

Certainly, Allah the Sublime has made it obligatory on true leaders that they should maintain themselves at the level of low people so that the poor do not cry over their poverty.[27](#)

In the view of Imam Ali ('a), a ruler is no more than a caretaker whose responsibility is to drive people to decency, supply them with their needs, reform their affairs, and guide them to the straightest path.

Method Of Conversing With The Imam

In one of his speeches to his companions, Imam Ali ('a), teaching them how to speak with him, said,

Do not address me in the manner despots are addressed. Do not evade me as the people of passion are (to be) evaded, do not meet me with flattery and do not think that I shall take it ill if a true thing is

said to me, because the person who feels disgusted when truth is said to him or a just matter is placed before him would find it more difficult to act upon them.

Therefore, do not abstain from saying a truth or pointing out a matter of justice because I do not regard myself above erring. I do not escape erring in my actions but that Allah helps me (in avoiding errors) in matters in which He is more powerful than I.

Certainly, I and you are slaves owned by Allah, other than Whom there is no Lord except Him. He owns our selves, which we do not own. He took us from where we were towards what means prosperity to us. He altered our straying into guidance and gave us intelligence after blindness.[28](#)

These words overflow with the most supreme pictures of justice and virtue. The following are examples of the teachings mentioned in these words of Imam Ali ('a):

1. The Imam ('a) instructed people not to project great titles and stately descriptions on the ruler, since such words are said to the tyrants and the adorers of rule and authority.
2. He ('a) instructed that people should not associate with their rulers by means of flattery and courtesy; rather, they should speak frankly and provide advices to the rulers, because flattery is a sort of social hypocrisy.
3. He ('a) confirmed that people should not believe that their leaders hate listening to the truth and complying with justice.
4. He ('a) directed people to convey to their rulers only the issues that achieve public interest.
5. He ('a) encouraged people to pronounce loudly the truth and to face the ruling authorities in order to force them to carry out their duties and responsibilities completely.

These are a few, yet important, points inferred from the previous speech of Imam Ali ('a), the pioneer of human thought and the founder of the human rights.

Imam Ali's Financial Policy

Unlike all other rulers, Imam Ali ('a) had his own program of distributing the public funds. He believed that these funds belonged to Almighty Allah and to the Muslims equally; therefore, they must be spent in fields that develop their livelihoods and save them from misery and destitution. Not only were Muslims given from these funds but also non-Muslims had shares, according to Imam Ali's financial plan, because he took into more consideration citizenship than religion.

In the view of Imam Ali ('a), penury was a social devastating calamity that must be eliminated through all means possible. He ('a) is thus reported to have said,

Had poverty been a man, I would certainly have killed him.

Distribution Of Funds

In the field of distributing the public funds, Imam Ali ('a) followed the course of immediate distribution. Hence, as soon as funds entered the public treasury after they had been collected as obligatory taxes, the Imam ('a) would hurry to distribute them equally among the beneficiaries and to spend them in the fields of constructing lands and reformation of irrigation.

Historicists state that Ibn Al-Nabbah, the treasurer, once came to Imam Ali ('a) and said, 'O Amir Al-Mu'minin! The public treasury is now full of yellow (i.e. golden) and white (i.e. silver) units.' The Imam ('a) astoundingly said, 'Allah is the Most Great!' Leaning on Ibn Al-Nabbah, the Imam ('a) hurried to the public treasury house. There, he cited this poetic verse as example to express his own feelings:

This is my yield and the best of it is still in it. Every yielder will have his hand able to reach his mouth.[29](#)

The Imam ('a) then ordered the seven divisions of the army from people of Al-Kufah [30](#) to be there in an instant. When they were present, the Imam ('a) starting distributing these units among them while repeating these words:

O yellow (coins)! O white (coins)! Deceive someone else!

Thus, no single unit remained in the public treasury.

He ('a) then ordered the house of the public treasury to be swept and cleaned.

He then offered a two-unit prayer there.[31](#)

On another occasion, after Imam Ali ('a) had distributed the entire quantity of money that came to him, only a loaf of bread remained. He then divided it into seven parts and gave these parts to the people.

On another occasion, some skins of honey came to the public treasury; so, the Imam ('a) distributed them among the beneficiaries. After that, he gathered the orphans and fed them with the leftover of that honey.

Equality In Allowances

Imam Ali ('a) followed a special method of distributing the allowances; namely, the method of equality of all people. He did not give precedence to any class over the other. Because of this method, the Imam ('a) had to encounter many crises and difficulties. His army went up against him, the prominent and chief persons renounced him, and the capital powers of Quraysh who used to appropriate the allowances during the reigns of the previous caliphs opposed him.

In fact, this was the very method followed by the Holy Prophet (S); rather, when 'Umar came, he

followed the policy of creating classes in the Muslim community; he therefore used to give the warriors of Badr and the Ansar more than the others, creating caste and capiTalibsm among Muslims.

When the Imam's troops were stricken by dissolution and effeteness, they turned their faces towards Mu'awiyah to join his army. Abdullah ibn 'Abbas hurried to the Imam ('a) to inform him of this problem and give him some advice. He thus said, 'O Amir Al-Mu'minin! You may prefer in allowances the Arabs to the non-Arabs and the people of Quraysh to the other Arabs.'

Looking down on Abdullah, the Imam ('a) answered,

Do you command me that I should seek support by oppressing those over whom I have been placed? By Allah, I will not do so as long as the world goes on, and as long as one star leads another in the sky. Even if it were my property, I would have distributed it equally among them, then why not when the property is that of Allah. Beware! Certainly, that giving of wealth without any right for it is wastefulness and lavishness.

It raises its doer in this world, but lowers him in the next world. It honors him before people, but disgraces him with Allah. If a man gives his property to those who have no right for it or do not deserve it, Allah deprives him of their gratefulness, and their love too would be for others. Then if he falls on bad days and needs their help, they would prove the worst comrades and ignoble friends.[32](#)

One day, a lady from the tribe of Quraysh came to Al-Kufah, the political capital of the Islamic State in the reign of Imam Ali ('a), to ask the Imam ('a) to increase her allowance. When she was to Al-Kufah, she could not find Imam Ali's house; therefore, she asked a woman to guide her to his house and asked her to accompany her thereto.

On their way to the Imam's house, the lady from Quraysh asked this woman about the amount she usually received from the allowances. When the woman answered, the lady from Quraysh found out that both of them were receiving the same amount. She then asked about her nationality and she came to know that she was non-Arab.

When the lady arrived in the mosque where Imam Ali ('a) lived, she did not let that non-Arab woman leave, and when she was before the Imam ('a), she shouted, 'Is it fair, O son of Abu Talib, that you make me equal to this non-Arab woman?'

With feelings of anxiety, Imam Ali ('a) took a handful of dust, turned it over in his hand, and said,

Some of this dust has never been better than the rest of it.'

The Imam ('a) then recited this holy Quranic verse:

O humankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in

conduct. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware. (49: 13)

Precaution In Matters Related To The Public Properties

Imam Ali (‘a) was at the highest point of precaution in matters appertained to the public properties. He did not spend a single penny from the public treasury on his family members and himself; rather, he made his family members stand harsh poverty. On the other hand, he used to spend all the money of the public treasury on the public interests in order to provide for the poor and the financially weak.

About the public money that ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan embezzled from the public treasury, Imam Ali (‘a) said,

By Allah, even if I had found that by such money women have been married or slave-maids have been purchased I would have resumed it because there is wide scope in dispensation of justice, and he who finds it hard to act justly should find it harder to deal with injustice.[33](#)

Instructing one of his officials to economize and not to lean to extravagance, Imam Ali (‘a) said,

Give up lavishness and be moderate. Every day remember the coming day. Hold back from the funds what you need and send forward the balance for the day of your need.

Do you expect that Allah may give you the reward of the humble while you yourself remain vain in His view? And do you covet that He may give you the reward of those practicing charity while you enjoy comforts and deny them to the weak and the widows? Certainly, a man is awarded according as he acts and meets what he has sent forward; and that is an end to the matter.[34](#)

The most important issue that preoccupied Imam Ali (‘a) was to act cautiously towards the public property and to spend them on the financially weak, the widows, and the orphans in order to meet their needs and save them from misery and deprivation.

An example of Imam Ali’s cautious course in the public property is that when he was informed that Ziyad ibn Abih, the Imam’s deputy governor of Al- Basrah, had taken part of the Muslims’ property for himself, he wrote this letter to him:

I truthfully swear by Allah that if I come to know that you have misappropriated the funds of the Muslims, small or big; I shall inflict upon you such punishment, which will leave you empty, handed, heavy backed and humiliated; and that is an end to the matter.[35](#)

This is the very justice that Almighty Allah has prescribed for His servants in order to meet their needs from sustenance and to cast the shadow of misery and deprivation away from them.

Another wonderful example of Imam Ali’s policy of precaution in the public funds is that Abdullah ibn Ja’far, Imam Ali’s nephew and son-in-law (i.e. the husband of Lady Zaynab), came from Al-Madinah to visit the Imam and seek financial assistance. He thus said to his uncle, ‘O Leader of the Believers! I

expect that you may grant me some subsidy or financial support, for, by Allah, I have no maintenance left except that I should sell my riding animal.'

Answering him, Imam Ali ('a) said,

Nay, by Allah! I cannot understand your request in any other way except that you want your uncle to steal and give you! [36](#)

This is the very infinite justice that Imam Ali ('a) applied to himself before applying it to the others.

Al-Shi'bi narrated the following incident:

When I was boy, I once traveled to Al-Kufah and entered the courtyard of the mosque there. I found Ali standing on two heaps of silver and gold and holding a belt-like stick in the hand. He used to drive people away with that stick and then return to the heaps to distribute them to the last piece. He then left home without carrying with him even one piece of these heaps.

I then returned to my father and said, 'I have just seen the best of all people.' 'Who is he, son?' asked my father.

I answered, 'He is Ali ibn Abi Talib. I have seen him' etc.'

My father wept and said, 'Surely, you have seen the best of all people.'[37](#)

One account of piety and alienation from worldly pleasures with which Almighty Allah has endued him, Imam Ali ('a) is really the best of all people. During his reign, Imam Ali ('a) did not grant his two sons Al-Hasan and Al-Husayn anything from the public funds; rather, he treated them as same as he treated the other Muslims.

Khalid ibn Mu'ammal Al-Awsi says to 'Alya' ibn Al-Haytham, one of Imam Ali's companions, 'Fear Allah, O 'Alya', with regard to your clan and look deeply into the affairs of your relatives and yourself. What do you expect from a man whom I once asked to increase the allowance of his own sons Al-Hasan and Al-Husayn a few units so that they would improve their living, but he was angry and he refused to do?'[38](#)

Agricultural Production

Imam Ali ('a) took very much interest in developing the agricultural projects and attached very much importance to such plans, because, in these ages, they were the spinal column of the national economy. In his famous epistle to Malik Al-Ashtar, Imam Ali ('a) shed thorough light on this point and highlighted the importance of reforming the agricultural lands before collecting their taxes. He thus says,

You should also keep an eye on the cultivation of the land more than on the collection of revenue, because revenue cannot be had without cultivation; and whoever asks for revenue without cultivation

ruins the area and brings death to the people. His rule will not last only a moment.

If they complain of the heaviness (of the revenue) or of diseases, or dearth of water, or excess of water or of a change in the condition of the land either due to flood or to drought, you should remit the revenue to the extent that you hope will improve their position. The remission granted by you for the removal of distress from them should not be grudged by you, because it is an investment, which they will return to you in the shape of the prosperity of your country and the progress of your domain in addition to earning their praise and happiness for meeting out justice to them.

You can depend upon their strength because of the investment made by you in them through catering to their convenience, and can have confidence in them because of the justice extended to them by being kind to them. After that, circumstances may so turn that you may have ask for their assistance, when they will bear it happily, for prosperity is capable of bearing whatever you load on it.

The ruin of the land is caused by the poverty of the cultivators, while the cultivators become poor when the officers concentrate on the collection (of money), having little hope for continuance (in their posts) and deriving no benefit from objects of warning.³⁹

Freedom

One of the principles that Imam Ali ('a) put into practice during his reign was that he granted people full freedom that is contingent upon the point that these freedoms should not be exploited for transgressing the others and injuring their interests and should not be in violation of the regulations of the religion.

Political Freedom

Political freedom is understood as granting all people full freedom to follow any political trend even if it is in violation of the trend followed by the ruling authorities. Imam Ali ('a) granted this freedom even to those who refused paying homage to him openly, such as Sa'd ibn Abi-Waqqas and Abdullah ibn 'Umar, and their likes who supported the government of 'Uthman, because this man used to grant them fiefs and huge sums of money from the public treasury.

Hence, Imam Ali ('a) did not force such persons to pay homage to him and did not take any strict procedure against them, as Abu-Bakr did with those who refused to swear allegiance to him, taking into consideration the difference that all people, except a very few ones, paid homage to Imam Ali ('a) without coercion or compulsion, as Abu-Bakr and his gang did.

Imam Ali ('a) viewed that all people should be free to follow any trend or take side with any political movement; rather, it is the ruling authority's duty to procure full freedom for them as long as they do not declare rebellion against the government or create mischief in the land.

Likewise, Imam Ali ('a) granted freedom to the Khawarij; he neither deprived them of their allowances

nor ordered his police and security forces to arrest them, although they were the most dangerous enemies and rivals. However, when they spread mischief in the land and circulated panic and fear among the masses, Imam Ali ('a) fought them so as to maintain the public interest.

Freedom Of Expression

A branch of political freedom, the freedom of expression is to grant people the right to express their own views, be they with or against the policy of the ruling regime.

Imam Ali ('a) granted his people the freedom to express their own ideas and opinions, even if they would oppose his policies, unless these ideas led to creating mischief. Only then, they would be exposed to punishment.

Historicists report that on his way back after the Battle of Al-Nahrawan, Imam Ali ('a) was received by very much abuse and insult. Nevertheless, he did not take any procedure against these people and did not punish or deprive them of their rights as citizens.[40](#)

One day, Abu-Khalifah Al-ta'i met a group of his cousins among whom was Abu'l-'Ayyar who was Kharijite (i.e. one of those who antagonized Imam Ali ('a) and considered him to have abandoned the faith of Islam). This man asked 'Adi ibn Hatam Al-ta'i, 'Are you safe and successful (i.e. following the faith of the Khawarij) or you are still transgressor and sinful (i.e. following Imam Ali)?' Of course, by these words, he attacked Imam Ali ('a) by making an innuendo.

'Adi answered, 'Of course, I am safe and successful (i.e. by following Imam Ali).

However, Al-Aswad ibn Zayd and Al-Aswad ibn Qays had apprehensions of that man; so, they arrested him and brought him before Imam Ali ('a), who said to them, 'Now, what should I do to this man in your opinion?'

They answered, 'You should permit us to kill him.'

The Imam ('a) asked in surprise, '*Should I kill him although he had not rebelled against me practically?*'

They said, 'Then, you should order us to detain him.'

The Imam ('a) answered, '*He has not committed any crime. Release the man.*'[41](#)

The like of this freedom has never been witnessed by people all over history. Imam Ali ('a) did not settle an account with people just because of what they say; rather, he let them say whatever they wanted. He did not impose upon them supervision to prevent them from expressing their ideas freely.

Freedom Of Criticism

Imam Ali ('a) granted people full freedom to criticize his rule. He did not punish anyone for having

criticized his policy.

Ibn Al-Kawwa¹, one of the bitterest enemies of Imam Ali ('a), once objected to him and quoted this holy verse:

If you ascribe a partner to Allah, your work will fail. (39:65)

Imam Ali ('a) answered him with quoting another holy verse, which is this:

So, have patience! Allah's promise is the very truth. Let not those who have no certainty make you impatient. (30:60)

Thus, the Imam ('a) did not take any penal procedure against the man; rather, he left him alone.

Freedom Of Moving

Unlike 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab who had placed the Companions under house arrest and prohibited them from leaving the capital before obtaining a permission from him personally, Imam Ali ('a) granted all the citizens who were under his rule the freedom to move and change their places. For instance, he allowed Talhah and Al-Zubayr to leave the capital although he had already known that they only intended to breach their homage to him.

Supervision Over Markets

Imam Ali ('a) was the first caliph to place the market under supervision that he himself used to make. He ('a) used to wander among the sellers, instructing them to show piety, warning them against disobeying Almighty Allah, and ordering them to be honest in their dealings. He used to say to them,

Act charitably. Lower the prices as much as you can, because this brings you more blessings (i.e. profits).[42](#)

Holding a stick in his hand, Imam Ali ('a) used to walk around in the marketplaces and say to the merchants,

O group of merchants, take rightfully and give rightfully, and only then will you be safe.[43](#)

Alone, Imam Ali ('a) used to walk in marketplaces, ordering people to show piety and to sell their merchandise in a proper manner. Instructing the butchers, he used to say,

Give full measure and full weight, and do not puff the meat.[44](#)

One day, Ghalib ibn Sa'sa'ah, the father of the famous poet Al-Farazdaq, visited Imam Ali ('a), who asked him, 'What have you done with your numerous camels?'

Ghalib answered, 'The taxes have separated them (i.e. they have been spent as taxes and financial duties).

Praising him, Imam Ali ('a) said, '*This is verily the best way to use.*'[45](#)

In the time of Imam Ali's government, there was an insane man who used to walk behind almost all funerals and call out, 'Leaving (is the fate)! Leaving!'

One day, a funeral passed by Imam Ali ('a) who could not find that man following it. So, the Imam ('a) asked about the reason, and he was informed that this funeral was carrying the dead body of that very insane man! The Imam ('a) thus said, '*There is no god save Allah (i.e. an expression of astonishment)!*' The Imam ('a) then cited this poetic verse as example: '*He kept on calling out the leave, until the cameleer made the camel of death keel down on his door.*'[46](#)

In one of his speeches to the people of Al-Kufah, Imam Ali ('a) said,

If I leave you without supervision, you will return to sitting in groups, citing proverbs and reciting poetry.[47](#)

One day, Imam Ali ('a) left to visit the market of camels. In the middle of the marketplace, he raised his voice with these words:

O group of merchants, beware of false oaths, because they will bring about decrease in your stocks and removal of blessings.[48](#)

Imam Ali ('a) would not purchase anything from sellers who would recognize him, for fear that they would not let him pay the price or they would make improper discount for him. One day, he went to the market of the cloth merchants and asked a seller if he had two dresses with five dirhams. The man said, 'Yes, O Amir Al-Mu'minin! I have such.'

Immediately, the Imam ('a) left him, because he had recognized him.[49](#)

[1.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 130.

[2.](#) Ibn Al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi'l-Tarikh 3:80.

[3.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 92.

[4.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 3.

[5.](#) Ibn Abd-Rabbih, Al-'Iqd Al-Farid 3:93.

[6.](#) According to Al-Buladhari, in Ansab Al-Ashraf 3:933, allegiance to Imam Ali ('a) was sworn on Saturday, the nineteenth of Dhu'l-Hijjah. According to Ibn Al-Dimashqi in Jawahir Al-MaTalibb 1:291, it was sworn on Friday, the thirteenth of Dhu'l-Hijjah, AH 35.

[7.](#) Historicists report that 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab ascended the minbar and said, 'Verily, the swearing of allegiance to Abu-Bakr was a slip. May Allah protect from its bad consequences. Whoever repeats its like, then you must kill him. Whoever swears allegiance to a man before counseling the Muslims, both of them are surely perishing men. Therefore, you must kill them both.'

However, 'Umar's words can be understood as follows: 'The swearing of allegiance to Abu-Bakr was slip, but Allah saved

the Muslims from its evil.' [translator]

[8.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 229.

[9.](#) Quoting this meaning, Ahmad ibn Hanbal is reported to have said, 'Verily, caliphate did not beautify Ali; rather, Ali beautified caliphate.' Manaqib Ahmad, pp. 163.

[10.](#) Tarikh Al-Ya'qubi, 2:155.

[11.](#) Ibn Abd Al-Barr, Al-Istiab 3:55.

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

[13.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 27.

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

[15.](#) Al-Baghdadi, Khuzanat Al-Adab 3:59.

[16.](#) Ibn Al-Jawzi, Al-Furusiyyah, pp. 73.

[17.](#) Al-Baghdadi, Khuzanat Al-Adab 7:130.

[18.](#) Al-Tha'alibi, Al-Tamthil wa'l-Muhasarah, pp. 284.

[19.](#) Ibn Abd-Rabbih Al-Andalusi, Al-'Iqd Al-Farid 1:238.

[20.](#) Al-Tha'alibi, Lata'if Al-Ma'arif, pp. 59.

[21.](#) Al-Zubaydi, Taj Al-'Arus 5:204.

[22.](#) Al-Naraq, Jami' Al-Sa'adat 1:202.

[23.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 199.

People who are ignorant of religion and ethics, free from the shackles of religious law, and unaware of the conception of punishment and reward find no paucity of excuses and means for the achievement of their objects. They can find ways of success at every stage; but when the dictates of humanity, or Islam, or the limitations imposed by ethics and religious law act as impediments, the chances of devising and finding means become narrow, and the possibility of action becomes restricted. Mu'awiyah's influence and control was the result of these devices and ways in following, which he knew neither impediment nor any obstacle of what is lawful or unlawful, nor did fear of the Judgment Day prevent him from acting fearlessly. 'Allamah Al-Raghib Al-Isfahani, taking account of his characters, writes:

'His aim always was to achieve his object whether lawful or unlawful. He did not care for religion nor did he ever think of divine chastisement. Thus, in order to maintain his power, he resorted to misstatements and concoctions, and practiced all sorts of deceits and contrivances. When he saw that success was not possible without entangling Imam Ali Amir Al-Mu'minin ('a) in war, he roused Talhah and Al-Zubayr against him. When success could not be achieved by this means, he instigated the Syrians and brought about the civil war of Siffin. When his rebellious position had become known by the killing of 'Ammar, he at once duped the people by saying that Imam Ali ('a) was responsible for killing him as he had brought him into the battlefield; and on another occasion, he interpreted the words 'Al- fi'ah Al-baghiyah (rebellious party)' occurring in the saying of the Holy Prophet (S) to mean 'avenging party' intending to prove that 'Ammar would be killed by the group that would seek revenge of 'Uthman's blood, although the next portion of this saying namely 'he will call them towards Paradise while they will call him to Hellfire,' does not leave any scope for interpretation.

When there was no hope of victory even by these cunning means, he contrived to raise copies of the Holy Quran on spears, although, in his view, neither the Holy Quran nor did its commandments carry any weight. If he had really aimed at a decision by the Holy Quran, he should have put this demand before the commencement of the battle, and when it became known to him that the decision had been secured by 'Amr ibn Al-'As by deceiving Abu-Musa Al-Ash'ari, and that it did not have even a remote connection with the Holy Quran, he should not have accepted it and should have punished 'Amr for this cunning, or, at least, should have warned and rebuked him. However, on the contrary, 'Amr's performance was much appreciated and in reward he was made the governor of Egypt.

In contrast to this, Imam Ali's conduct was a high specimen of religious law and ethics. He kept in view the requirements of truth and righteousness even in adverse circumstances and did not allow his chaste life to be tarnished by the views of deceit and contrivance. If he wished, he could face cunning by cunning, and Mu'awiyah's shameful activities could have been answered by similar activities. For example, when he put a guard on the River Euphrates and stopped the supply of

its water (to Imam Ali's men), then the supply of water could have been cut from them also on the grounds that since they had occupied River Euphrates, it was lawful to reTalibate, and in this way, they could be overpowered by weakening their fighting power.

However, Imam Ali ('a) could never tarnish his hands with such an inhuman act which was not permitted by any law or code of ethics, although common people regard such acts against the enemy as lawful and call this duplicity of character for achievement of success, a stroke of policy, and administrative ability. Imam Ali ('a) yet could never think of strengthening his power by fraud or duplicity of behavior on any occasion. Thus, when people advised him to retain the officers of the days of 'Uthman in their position and to befriend Talhah and Al-Zubayr by assigning them governorship of Al-Kufah and Al-Basrah, and make use of Mu'awiyah's ability in administration by giving him the government of Syria, Imam Ali ('a) rejected the advice and preferred the commandments of religious law over worldly expediency, and openly declared about Mu'awiyah as follows:

If I allow Mu'awiyah to retain what he already has, I will be one

'who takes those who lead people astray, as helpers (Quran, 18:51).'

Those who look at apparent successes do not care to find out by what means the success has been achieved. They support anyone whom they see succeeding by means of cunning ways and deceitful means and begin to regard him an administrator, intelligent, a politician, intellectually brilliant, and so on, while he who does not deploy cunning and fraudulent methods owing to his adherence to Islamic commandments and divine instructions and prefers failure to success secured through wrong methods is regarded as ignorant of politics and weak in foresight. They do not feel it necessary to think what difficulties and impediments exist in the way of a person who adheres to principles and laws which prevent him from proceeding forward even after approaching near success. [Quoted from Nahj Al-Balaghah; a commentary on Imam Ali's word about Mu'awiyah's cunning.]

[24.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 41.

[25.](#) Al-Baghdadi, Khuzanat Al-Adab 1:420.

[26.](#) Shaykh Al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi 1:410.

[27.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 209.

[28.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 215.

[29.](#) Arab linguists state that Imam Ali ('a) wanted to say that his hands have never been stained with these public funds, since he always put them where they should be placed. [Ibn Mansur, Lisan Al-'Arab 14: 155]

[30.](#) In the reign of Imam Ali ('a), the military forces were divided into seven divisions, as follows:

The first division included the tribe of Kinanah and their allies, including the Abyssinians and the tribe of Judaylah.

The second division included the tribes of Qusa'ah, Ghassan, Bujaylah, Khash'am, Kindah, kasramawt, and Al-Azd.

The third division, whose members were known for their loyalty to Imam Ali ('a) and animosity to the Umayyads, included Midhhaj, kimyar, Hamdan, and their allies.

The fourth division included the tribes of Tamim and their allies.

The fifth division included the tribes of Asad, Ghatafan, Muharib, A'ubay'ah, and Taghlib. The sixth division included the tribes of Iyad, 'Akk, Abd Al-Qays, the people of Hajr, and the Persians.

The seventh division included the tribe of tayy.

[31.](#) Abu-Na'im, Hilyat Al-Awliya' 1:81.

[32.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 125.

[33.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Sermon No. 15.

[34.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 20.

[35.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 21.

[36.](#) 'Allamah Al-Majlisi, Bihar Al-Anwar 31:51.

[37.](#) Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Al-Thaqafi, Al-Gharat 1:54.

[38.](#) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 10:250.

[39.](#) Nahj Al-Balaghah, Epistle No. 53.

[40.](#) Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Al-Thaqafi, Al-Gharat 1:31.

[41.](#) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Sharh Nahj Al-Balaghah 3:73.

[42.](#) Al-Zamakhshari, Rabi' Al-Abrar 4: 154.

[43.](#) Waki', Akhbar Al-Qusah 1: 169.

In Al-Zamakhshari's Rabi' Al-Abrar 4: 144, the following words are added to the Imam's previous words:

'Do not refuse the right even if it is little; lest, you will be deprived of its much quantity. Whenever an amount that is right is refused, many of its folds will be wasted in a wrong manner.'

[44.](#) Ibn Sa'd, Al-tabaqat Al-Kubra 2: 18.

[45.](#) Al-Baghdadi, Khuzanat Al-Adab 1:222.

[46.](#) Muhammad Shakir Al-Katabi, Fawat Al-Wafiyat 2:269.

[47.](#) Haydar Al-Hilli, Al-'Iqd Al-Mufassal 9:220.

[48.](#) Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Al-Thaqafi, Al-Gharat 1:105.

[49.](#) Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Al-Thaqafi, Al-Gharat 1:99.

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