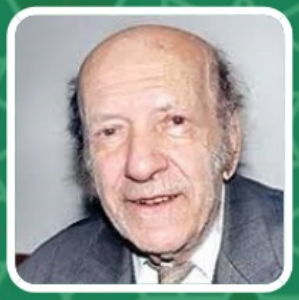
The Voice of Human Justice (Sautu'l 'Adalati'l Insaniyah)

The Voice of Human Justice, a Biography of Imam Ali (as)



George Jordac

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Author(s):

George Jordac [1]

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The present book is an English translation of Sautu'l `Adalati'l Insaniyah, the biography of Imam Ali, written in Arabic by George Jordac, a renowned Christian author of Lebanon. It has gained much popularity in the Arab and the Muslim world. Many Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have paid it glowing tributes.

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Important notice:
DISCLAIMER: The book, "The Voice of Human Justice", authored by the late Lebanese-Christian author, George Jordac, is a seminal work on the live and character of the cousin and son-in-law and first Imam (Divinely appointed leader), Ali ibne Abi Talib, peace be upon him. As such, the reader may come across points which seem to differ from the main-stream Shia opinion of Imam Ali, peace be upon him, in this work and may also find historical accounts which differ compared to similarly recorded events in the works of Muslims authors. Please keep these points in mind when reading this book.

Person Tags:

Imam Ali [7]

Publishers' Note

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali, peace be on him, is the most distinguished personality of Islam after Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be on him. His entire life is the life of struggle for the advancement of Islam. He was a great combatant, a great judge, a great philanthropist and the most pious person of his time. Much has been written and continues to be written about the life, character and

attributes of Imam Ali.

The present book is an English translation of *Sautu'l `Adalati'l Insaniyah,* the biography of the Imam, written in Arabic by George Jordac, a renowned Christian author of Lebanon. It has gained much popularity in the Arab and the Muslim world. Many Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have paid it glowing tributes.

The author is an enlightened man of letters and has written the book with perfect sincerity. However, at times, he has said things which do not accord with the facts of history. In such cases necessary clarification has been made in the foot-notes and at places some paragraphs have been deleted altogether. Keeping in view the usefulness and popularity of the Arabic version of this book, the Islamic Seminary is presenting the English version for the English knowing readers. It is hoped that this book will enlighten the mind of our conscientious young generation and will inspire it to form an Islamic social order.

Preface

The history of great men is a fountain of experience, faith and aspirations for us - a fountain which will never dry up. The great men of the world are like lofty peaks of mountains which we aspire to climb with great eagerness and ardent desire. They are the light-houses which keep darkness away from around us. It is due to the examples set by them that we have gained self-confidence. They have made us hopeful of life, taught us its aim and objects and helped us to avail of its amenities. If these great souls had not been there, we would have fallen prey to despair while combating with the unseen and intelligible forces and would have surrendered ourselves to death.

However, the righteous persons have not so far surrendered themselves before despair nor shall they do so in future, because they are entitled to victory and success. This is proved by the fact that in history many persons have been successful and victorious and Ali is one of them. These people who conquered death are always with us. Although time and space separate them from us, neither time prohibits us from hearing their words nor distance prevents us from seeing their faces.

Preface of the first edition of the Arabic version published in 1956

The best proof of what has been said above is the present book. It is the biography of a great man. Although he was born in Arabia his person is not meant for Arabia only. Although the fountains of his kindness and favours sprang from Islam he is not confined to the Muslims. If he had been for the

Muslims only a Christian would not have been prompted involuntarily to analyse the events of his life and eulogize like a poet his fascinating judgments, his stupendous feats of valour and interesting incidents of his life.

Championship of Ali was not confined to the battlefield. He was also matchless in the matter of faith, piety, purity, eloquence, magnanimity, help for the deprived and the oppressed and support for truth. So much so that even after the passage of more than fourteen hundred years his wonderful achievements are a beacon light for us and extremely useful for making our lives sublime.

The author has explained the various events in detail and also mentioned at length the views and beliefs of the Imam regarding religious, political, social and financial matters. Furthermore, he has explained the events of the life of Ali with great dexterity and in a manner in which they had not been penned before.

No historian or writer, however deft and dexterous he may be, can draw a true picture of the Commander of the Faithful even in a thousand pages, nor can he explain the dreadful events which took place in his time. The things which this wonderful and unmatched person thought of, and acted upon, had not till then been seen or heard by anyone. They are more than a historian can cover even in a very detailed treatise. Hence, whatever picture of Ali is described by a writer will inevitably be incomplete.

However, the object of an author in writing a book like this is to collect the details of the actions and words of the Commander of the Faithful from all possible sources and to ponder over them very carefully and then to present them in such a way that it may be possible to see a glimpse of the Imam as he was. This is what the author has done in this book.

I am sure that George Jordac, a research scholar and an unbiased person as he is, has been successful in describing the life of the Imam to a large extent and those who read it will be obliged to say that it is the biography of a person who was second to the Prophet of Islam.

Michael Na'imah

Arabian Peninsula

The territory of Arabia is very wonderful and miraculous and it will retain this characteristic even in future. It contains very large deserts. If these deserts had not been devoid of rains and had been green and fertile this land would have fed the hungry and clothed the naked of the world. However, unfortunately Arabia has always remained a desert. It contains vast areas comprising mounds of sand, small and dry hills and stony tracts, which are neither cultivable nor habitable. If farming had been possible this region would have been thickly populated, but the position is otherwise. Although this territory is surrounded by

sea on three sides, the rains are very scanty and it is very hot during summer.

It also rains in some areas which makes the atmosphere somewhat cool. However, when the scorching wind blows it is so hot that trees and plants become dry and even the animals die of heat.

The Arab poets liken zephyr, which always blows from the eastern side, with the breeze of Paradise.

There are no perennial rivers in Arabia. However, as and when rains come and the streams begin to flow, the people avail of the opportunity and store water by constructing dams. This water suffices only for some time.

Camel is the typical animal of Arabia which enjoys a distinguished position as compared with the animals found in other regions. The Almighty God has given it long legs so that it may cover long distances easily and may not get weary in the dreary deserts. Its hooves are also such that its feet do not get thrust into the sand. It also possesses sufficient stamina to cross the difficult and strong paths and can tolerate heat as well as thirst. God has given it an extraordinary stomach in which it can store water to suffice for many days and as and when water is not available its owner also takes out water somehow from its stomach for his personal use. The Arabs have given the camel thousands of names.

Vegetation is very rare in this territory. Some thorny bushes grow but they too are withered on account of shortage of water and severe heat. The dwellings of the people are usually tents which cannot protect them either from the scorching winds or from the heat of the sun. In fact there is no difference between living in these tents and living under the sky. For these reasons its population is scanty and scattered. The people of Arabia do not usually live at one place permanently but shift from place to place.

The staple food of the Arabs is dried palm-dates. To this is added the meat of the camels and the hunted animals. On account of their spending their lives permanently in the deserts warfare and bloodshed have become a part of their nature. It is so hot in the desert and valleys of the Arabian Peninsula that the earth accumulates sufficient heat to enable the people to roast the animals on the sand.

Similar deserts replete with sand, scanty and scattered population and uniformity of conditions are very tiresome things and make life unpleasant. Aspiration and hope which are the capital of happy life do not exist anywhere in this desert.

In such difficult circumstances and with such uniform life it was not possible for the nomadic Arabs to become acquainted with the vicissitudes of life and the various ways and manners of the other people of the world. Existence of righteousness and piety which make the heart of man accept faith cannot be imagined in a barren land. Such qualities develop in green and fertile lands and not in stony and dry areas. They develop in persons who are endowed with blessings of all kinds and not in the heart of those who are devoid of them.

A few small towns and settlements of those times were not very significant, firstly because their number was very small and secondly their position was no better than a few tents pitched in a barren desert, which had to suffer the onslaught of unfavourable winds. Of course, in Taif and Madina better means of livelihood were available.

As regards Mecca it was an idol–temple. Its residents were tradesmen in whose eyes one dinar was more valuable than the life of a human being. A life of poverty and indigence in a desert burning like hell with the present full of despair and the future without any hope – this was the condition of what was called the Arabian Peninsula.

What is surprising is this that although there are many lands adjacent to Arabia which are fertile and contain all amenities of life, there were people who ignored all these facilities and preferred to lead a miserable life in this barren land. They, therefore, never thought of stepping out of this desert. And what is more surprising is that the people there considered their homeland to be superior to the entire remaining world. They neither wanted to leave it, nor desired to choose another place as their homeland. This was a miracle of the Arabian Desert even before the Prophet of Islam was appointed to the prophetic mission.

However, if we compare all the cold and sweet springs, the fertile and green lands, the beautiful sceneries, the wealth and all other blessings available to various countries, other than Arabia, with the thing which appeared in that land, all those blessings and facilities appear to be of no value. The Arabian Desert, the land of miracles, produced something which is superior to all other blessings.

That magnanimous being was the great personality who showered his blessings on all human beings, who cleansed the springs of reality, because of whom the value of life became known, righteousness and deliverance became great things, and reality was elevated viz. Muhammad.

The birth of the cousin of Muhammad, Ali, in Arabia, where human life was not worth more than a dinar was the second miracle of this Desert.

The Coming of the Prophet

With eyes as bright as the shining sun, a reality on the lips more brilliant than the light of the sun, a heart more fresh than the flowers of the gardens of Yathrib and Taif, habits and morals more decent than the moon–lit nights of the Hijaz, a mind more brisk than the strong winds, a bewitching tongue, a heart with heavenly light, firm determination like a trenchant sword and heavenly words on the tongue – such was Muhammad son of Abdullah, the Prophet of Arabia, the Prophet who destroyed the idols which had separated brothers from brothers. He did not break only the idols of wood and stone but also broke the

idols of wealth, indecent habits and party-spirit.

The only thing which the cowardly Quraysh desired was money should be transferred from the hands of the nomadic Arabs to their own pockets. The only value which they attached to life was that in order to earn profit they should travel through the desert on the back of the camels undergoing extreme hardships and then return to their hometown Mecca - the same Mecca which was the city of idol-worship, and where money was the only thing which counted.

Suddenly they heard a voice which shook their nerves. Their hopes were shattered. The world turned away its face from them saying: "The value of man is not the same which you have assessed and the object of the creation of the nomadic Arabs is not the same which you think it to be".

..... This was the voice of Muhammad .....

Banu Asad and Banu Tamim were so foolish and ignorant that they buried their daughters alive without any cause. There was no justification for their doing so except that it was a custom which had survived amongst them. They were opposed to the Divine will. They hated the beauty of nature. And then they heard a voice, which was expressive of deep love and sympathy for the people saying: "Don't bury your daughters alive. Daughters are as good a creation of God as the sons. No human being has a right to deprive others of life. It is only God who creates the people and makes them die".

..... This was the voice of Muhammad .....

The Arabs were always fighting. They fought and shed blood for years on account of very trivial things. They killed their own brothers and then rejoiced and glorified themselves on it. To sacrifice their lives for the sake of their own ignorance was something very ordinary for them. The children cried and screamed and grew up in conditions which were not conducive to the creation of love or sympathy for anyone in their minds.

In these circumstances they heard another voice which said: "What are you doing? You kill one another although you are all brothers because all of you have been created by God. Strife is something satanic. Peace and friendship are more beneficial for you. The blessing for which you fight can't be achieved except through peace".

..... This, too, was the voice of Muhammad .....

The Arabs were the most proud and egoistic people. They considered the non-Arabs inferior to themselves. Not only this, but they did not consider the non-Arabs even human beings. Muhammad disliked this attitude of the Arabs very much. Addressing these proud people he said: "No Arab is superior to a non-Arab unless he is more pious. Whether you like it or not all human beings are brothers of one another".

There were oppressed, homeless and helpless persons whose faces had been scorched by the hot

winds. The society had discarded them and made their lives miserable. They were more humble in the eyes of the people than the particles of sand and their life had become extremely unenviable.

And these were the true friends of the Prophet of Islam, just as the indigent and outcasts of the society were the friends of Jesus Christ and other great men of the world. It was these very people for whose benefit the Prophet of Islam endeavoured to prevent the establishment of dictatorship, disallowed slavery, freed man from the bondage of his fellow-men, and established the public treasury so that all might benefit from it without any discrimination.

He directed the efforts of the people towards public welfare. He insisted on Quraysh, who were his kinsmen, at every step that they should improve their conduct, do good deeds, and keep their attention directed whole-heartedly to God, who has united the scattered creation into a single whole. However, Quraysh instigated the ignorant persons as well as their own children to stone and ridicule him.

The helpless, oppressed and homeless slaves among whom one was Bilal, the Mu'azzin of the Prophet, were overjoyed when they heard this: "All human beings are fed by God. He likes him most who is more helpful to his creatures".

..... This was the voice of Muhammad .....

Those who were his enemies and stoned and ridiculed him heard this animating voice:

"If you (Muhammad) had been stern and hard-hearted they would all have deserted you a long time ago. Forgive them and ask God to forgive (their sins) and consult with them in certain matter. But when you reach a decision trust God. God loves those who trust Him". **(*3: 159*)**

..... This was the voice of Muhammad .....

The following pure words were imprinted on the minds of those who were endeavouring in the path of God for a better life, and were ready to support him (Muhammad) in his campaign against idol-worship and evil-doing, and were afraid lest their rights and good conduct might be wasted in the battle-field.

"Remember! Don't be treacherous. Don't commit breach of trust. Don't kill either a child or a woman or an old man or a monk in a monastery. Don't burn a date-palm tree and don't cut any tree nor pull down a building".

..... This voice was the voice of Muhammad .....

The Arabs heard this heavenly voice from Muhammad and spread it in all the four corners of the world. They covered powerful rulers and kings with this voice, established brotherhood amongst human beings and strung them in one faith, and created relationship between man and God.

The shade of Muhammad spread so much that the entire Old World came under it and the land from the east up to the west began producing the fruits of goodness, knowledge, peace and friendship. The Prophet of Islam stretched his hand and sowed the seeds of friendship and brotherhood throughout the world. That hand is still stretched and is busy sowing the seeds. Hence, there is no part of the world wherein the followers of Muhammad are not found. One of them may be in Pakistan and the other may be in Spain, but in spite of this both of them are treated to be under one and the same standard. The Prophet provided honour and respect to the Orientals which is even now a shining crown on their heads.

This voice of the Prophet, was a call for human brotherhood. It stopped the hands of the rulers from reaching the property of the subjects and gave equal rights to all human beings. In his religion there is no discrimination between a common man, a ruler and a subject and an Arab and a non–Arab, because all human beings are the slaves of God and it is He who provides sustenance to all of them.

This voice emancipated women from the oppression of men, freed the labourers from the injustice of the capitalists and delivered the servants from the degradation of submission to their masters. As opposed to Plato and other philosophers, who deprive the workers of their social rights on account of their mean occupation and have divided the society into many grades, the Prophet of Islam made all human beings participate in the affairs of government. He also disallowed usury and exploitation of one man by another.

After the Prophet of Islam it was Ali ibn Abi Talib who called men to good morals.

A glance over history

If you lend ear to the history of the world you will hear the news of a great event the like of which has not happened even after a passage of more than ten centuries. If you reflect carefully about the various happenings in the world you will be fascinated by a grand personality before whose high thinking everything appears to be trivial. The world and its life, and the children, the kinsmen, wealth and rulership do not enjoy any importance in his eyes.

This personality is too great to be placed in the row of ordinary people and his insight is so keen that it resembles the reasoning of common people only in name.

If you hear with the ears of your heart, history will narrate to you that story of the martyrs in the path of truth and justice with whose blood the border of the sky is covered. If you look at the horizon you will observe two kinds of redness; one the natural redness and the other that of the blood of the martyrs in the path of truth and justice.

Have a look at the history of the East and find out that great power of comprehension and understanding which is the centre of every circle of high thinking, and the origin of every true reasoning and logic. Every modern research and new idea about the life of this world and the Hereafter is related to him. The opinions which may have come to your notice with regard to human system and laws, principles of civilization and rules of morality has originated from this spring. These rules and principles are based on the mutual relations, co-operation and partnership of humanity.
Which reflective power[1] has invented a new policy and a new method in philosophy and placed it at the disposal of the people who have passed it on to the posterity? Everyone has benefited from it according to his understanding, but none has so far reached its real philosophy and its depth. It is necessary that other brains and intellects should make new discoveries from what he has said.

Who is that enlightened person who himself is involved in suffering and pains but others are blessed and happy because of him? He who has prepared and continues to prepare the path for his friends as well as enemies! A scholar who is prepared whole-heartedly to explain things for others after discussing the cause and effect of everything!

Who is that subtle scholar who has pondered over everything and there is nothing about which he is not well-informed? So much so that he knows even those things which the people have not done but have only thought about them. He possesses such a powerful intellect that the knowledge which appeared in the East after him is also associated with him; in fact it is he who is the foundation and the fountain-head of all such sciences.

Have you ever observed so perfect an intellect as should have recognized the greatest reality? And that reality is the basis for social relations, the cause for everyone pursuing his own particular path. It tells why one group follows the right path and the other wrong path.

This reality which was understood by Ali thirteen hundred years ago has been made the new subject of discussion by the scholars of the East and the West. By this I mean the need for the necessities of life, to acquire which the people are following different paths. One group has transgressed its limits. It has ignored the rules of justice and is endeavouring to mislead the people. In order to achieve their nefarious ends deception is being practised and illogical things are being spread by the capitalists to accumulate wealth, by government officers to get things done gratis and to keep the masses under control and by the innovators to collect obedient followers.

Do you recognize that great sage who established more than a thousand years ago a reality which superseded thousands of superstitions and extravagant ideas and said: “If a person starves it is due to the fact that his share has been taken by another” and added: “I have not seen any excessive bounty which is not associated with a right which has been violated”.

As regards hoarding he wrote to one of his governors: “Prohibit the people from hoarding, because it is something which entails loss to the public and brings a bad name to the rulers”.

A great and enlightened person realized the real secret of humanity more than a thousand years ago and concluded that those persons who had no value in the eyes of the kings and the rulers were endowed with virtues and good morals, and every kind of oppression practised upon them was considered by them (i.e. by the rulers) to be permissible.

The Italian sculptor Raphael prepared an image of the Virgin Mary in the shape of an Italian farmer woman and made all good human qualities visible in it. Tolstoy, Voltaire and Goethe also recommended and approved with their mental labour and imagination the same thing which had been indicated by Raphael in the image. However, Ali clarified this concept centuries ago. He campaigned against the aristocrats, the ruling class, the profiteers and the selfish persons, opposed their wrong and absurd way of thinking about the oppressed and said: "By God! I shall realize the right of the oppressed person from the oppressor and shall pull the oppressor to the fountain-head of truth by putting a cavessor in his nose, even though he may not like it".

The things which he said about the people of his time go to show that he had understood them very well. They consisted on the one hand of the worthless aristocrats and others who were holding high positions notwithstanding their inefficiency, and on the other hand of persons who were helpless and oppressed and who had no alternative but to obey. He therefore, said briefly: "Your down-trodden are honourable and your powerful ones are base and mean".[2]

By these words he means that the subordinate people cannot display their good morals and talents due to their helplessness and oppression by the powerful class and the persons holding high position keep their defects hidden under their costly dress.

He told the people that truth and virtue are established and eternal things which have always been and will remain forever. In the heart of his hearts every human being believes in this, although different persons may interpret it in different ways. Even the oldest nations have flourished under the protection of this belief although they may not have known it. They have inherited their views and beliefs from their ancestors and adopted them because by doing so they have been saved from the trouble of investigation and research. Imitation has thus become their second nature.

The basis of all the beliefs and thoughts is this that there is an absolute reality which should be the starting point of all discussions and opinions.

The qualities of his head and heart enabled Ali to realize this fact and he believed whole-heartedly that anything which is based on truth does not become shaky. He was a perfect specimen of steadfastness and found himself successful in the event of victory as well as defeat. In the battlefield as well as in the arena of politics it was immaterial for him to win or lose, because he knew that the reality was with him and it was he himself who was the standard for distinguishing between truth and falsehood.

Throughout the history of the world it is not possible to find a man with such a firm determination that he should not waver in any circumstances and the flames of revolt should not make him tremble. No other

thing can shake the faith of a man than this that the enemies should be accusing him of worst offences and even deviation and heresy. And nothing can make a man more unsettled than the threat of death or attack on one's faith which is worse than death. However, Ali did not waver in any circumstances and nothing could make him deviate from his path. He did not give up his efforts for the enforcement of Islam and did not crave for wealth or position as a reward for these efforts. His only reward was the success of the faith.

Have you seen in the history of the world a magnanimous person with a kind and loving heart encircled by greedy, rebellious and revengeful, stone-hearted persons, keen to exploit one another, but he may be inviting them to peace and welfare and they may still be joining hands to fight against him?

There are many sayings which people repeat verbally or in writing and every person selects one of them according to his nature to serve as his motto. However, have you seen any other person who may be the embodiment of purity and modesty in its true sense?

Amongst the great personalities of the world Ali was foremost in the matter of love and sincerity.

Sincerity was his habit and nature, and his heart and soul were imbued with it. He loved the people but did not associate love with his own self. He kept his promises. Sincerity was the essence of his being. By his natural and profound intelligence he found out that freedom is the most sacred thing. The entire world craves for it and does not consider any other blessing to be equal to it.[3]

Only the free persons possess power of correct thinking and good habits, and true love and pure sincerity are also not possible without freedom. He, therefore, said: “The worst brother is he with whom you have to observe formalities”. Hence, the best man is he who is not of this type.

Do you know any ruler who never ate his fill because many persons amongst his subjects did not get sufficient food to fill their bellies, or did not wear fine clothes because many persons wore coarse dress, or did not accumulate wealth because there were many poor and needy persons?

Ali recommended to his children and friends to follow in his footsteps. He declined to give as much as one dinar to his brother, because he was not entitled to it. He took severe action against his companions, subordinates, and officials, if they took even a loaf of bread as bribe. He warned a person against breach of trust in respect of public property in these words: “I swear by God that if you commit breach of trust in respect of public property I shall take such severe action against you that you will become poor, burdened and disgraced”. And he addressed another person in these eloquent words: “I have been given to understand that you have swept the earth clean, have appropriated whatever was under your feet and have spared nothing. You should, therefore, send your account to me”.

He also admonished in these words a person who became rich by taking bribes: “Fear God and return the property of the people to them. If you do not do so and God provides me hold over you I shall perform the duty which I owe to God with regard to you and shall strike you with the sword which has

dispatched to Hell every one whom it has struck".

Have you ever heard about a monarch who used to grind the grains with his own hands and prepared for himself the bread, which could be broken only by pressing it with the knee? He who mended his shoes himself? He who did not accumulate any worldly wealth, because he had no object in view except to help the afflicted and the oppressed, so that he might realize their rights from the oppressors and make them happy?

He who never cared for his food and never thought of sound sleep, because some persons in his country had to starve. He who uttered this eloquent sentence: "Should I content myself with this that people call me 'Commander of the Faithful' and I should not share the hardships of life with them?"

If government and sovereignty do not serve the purpose of establishing truth and eliminating falsehood they are the worst things of the world in the eyes of Ali.

Which person out of those who are famous for their justice is such that even if all the inhabitants of the world combine against him it must be said that he is truthful and all his opponents are false. It was Ali who possessed this qualification, because his truthfulness and justice were not acquired but inherent and from them others learnt lessons.

His laws were not formulated on account of the exigencies of government and polities but government and polities were based on those laws. He purposely did not adopt a path which might lead him to rulership, but adopted that which might enable him to make his place in the pure hearts. Justice was a part of his soul and was ingrained in his heart and it had combined other virtues also with itself. It was not possible for him to deviate from justice and from the demands of his nature.

Justice was an element which was entwined in his entire body and ran in his veins like blood.

Have you seen any brave man in the pages of history who was opposed by a group of self-seekers which also included his kinsmen and then a battle took place, and those persons were victorious and he was defeated, and even then he dominated over them? It so happened in the case of Ali and he dominated over them, because they were devoid of human qualities and had risen in the capacity of oppressors using the weapons of deceit, bribery, covetousness and fraud, whereas he sacrificed all gains and even his life in the path of human excellence, justice and protection of the rights of others. It was for this reason that the victory of his enemies was in fact their defeat and his defeat was a great success for human virtues.

Have you come across a great warrior in the pages of history who should love even his enemies and wish to see them endowed with human qualities?

Ali was such a person. He was so kind to his enemies that he recommended to his companions: "Do not take the initiative in fighting with them. When they are defeated by the will of God do not pursue or kill

those who run away. Do not kill the helpless and the wounded and do not molest the women".

The army of the enemy consisting of eleven thousand persons, who were keen to shed his blood blocked his approach to water so that he might die of thirst. However, when he regained control over water he said to them: “We are quenching our thirst with water. The birds are also availing of it. You too should come and carry away water to meet your needs”.

Imam Ali used to say: “If a person is killed while performing jihad in the path of God his spiritual reward is not more than one who can take revenge, but refrains from doing so, because such a person is one of the angels of God".

When a wicked person struck on his head and as a result of it, he was departing from the world he said to his companions: “In case you forgive him your action will be nearer to piety and virtue".

He was a great warrior, who had combined his valour with kindness. He reproved only verbally the enemies, who had gathered to oppose him, although he could curb their power with his sword. Even when he went to admonish them he was bare-headed and without any armour, whereas they were armed so heavily that their faces could hardly be seen through their helmets and coats of mail. Then he reminded them of old brotherhood and friendship and wept much on account of their having adopted the wrong path.

However, even when he realized that the advice was not having any effect on them and they were bent upon shedding his blood he did not commence fighting himself but delayed it till they themselves started it. At that moment he drew his sword for the sake of the oppressed and launched an attack which scattered them like the particles of sand in the desert. After the spiteful oppressors who openly displayed enmity and rebellion were killed and he himself gained victory he wept on their dead bodies, notwithstanding the fact that they had met this fate on account of their selfishness and worst greed.

Have you heard about any king who was well-equipped with all means of sovereignty and wealth which were not available to others, but he chose sufferings and pains for himself? Of course, Ali made such a choice. He was of noble descent but he said: “No dignity is greater than humility and meekness".

He said to some persons who loved him: “Whoever loves me should prepare a robe of poverty for himself".

A group of persons went to the extreme in the matter of love for him. Thereupon he said: “Persons of two kinds got involved in destruction in connection with me - the friends who went to the extreme, and the spiteful enemies".

Ali severely punished a group which considered him to be their deity. He advised like brothers a group of persons who were inclined favourably towards him. Some persons abused him. His adherents did not tolerate this and abused those people in reply. Thereupon he said: “I do not like that you who are my

friends should become persons who use abusive language".

Some people were inimical to him. They harmed and slandered him and rose in opposition to him. In spite of this he used to say: “Punish your brother with goodness and improve his nature with prizes and honours". Ali also said: “Your brother is not more powerful than you in breaking the bonds of love and friendship, provided that you try to cement them, and is not quicker than you in doing harm if you behave well with him".

Some persons suggested to him to behave towards the oppressors kindly and leniently so that his government might be strengthened. He said in reply: “Your friend is he who prevents you from doing evil, and your enemy is he, who induces you to do evil". He also said: “Adopt truth even though it may be harmful to you and refrain from telling lies even though you may derive benefit from it".

Ali had done good to a person. Once the same person came to fight with him. Ali then said addressing himself: “If a person is not thankful to you for your goodness this should not mean that you should discontinue your goodness".

Once, the blessings of the world were being discussed in his presence. Ali said: “Out of the worldly blessings good morals are sufficient blessings".

When some persons suggested to him to use all possible means like the kings to achieve victory Ali said: “A person whose heart is overcome by sin is not a victor, and he who dominates by means of bad deeds is actually the vanquished person".

Ali overlooked those bad deeds of his enemies of which only he was aware and said repeatedly: “Among the most exalted acts of a noble person is that he ignores what he sees".

If his enemies or the simpletons among his friends said something which he did not like he used to say: “If you hear something from someone and there is a possibility of its being good do not be suspicious about it".

Do you know any religious leader who has given directions to his officials in these words: "The people are either your brethren-in-faith or equal to you in the matter of creation. You should, therefore, overlook their shortcomings in the same manner in which you wish God to overlook yours".

Do you know any king who may have forsaken his kingdom to establish truth? And have you seen any wealthy person who may have contented himself with only a loaf of bread to sustain his life, and life in his eyes should mean doing good to mankind and he should have told the `world' not to deceive him but someone else?

Amongst the monuments of the East have you read Nahj al-Balaghah (The English version of the glorious book has been published by Islamic Seminary) and seen how eloquent and impressive its sentences are? It deals with various matters and also provides information about the other world. It is

like the events of the world which cannot be altered, and if even one word is removed from its place the entire purport will undergo a change.

This book will continue to remain attractive so long as man and his intellect and sentiments exist. Its eloquence surpasses every other eloquence. It contains all the attributes of the Arabic language which existed at that time and were introduced later. Hence, it has been said that it is lower than the word of God and higher than that which has been said by God's creatures.

Great wisdom, knowledge of the highest standard, unparalleled eloquence, perfect valour and unlimited love and kindness were all combined in Ali. If a person possesses even one of these attributes it is sufficient to dazzle others and when they are combined in one person his greatness is evidently beyond comprehension.

At times it so happened that this philosopher, man of letters, scholar, administrator, ruler and commander sequestered himself from the world, and did not have any dealings with others. He then desired only to stimulate human qualities and rouse the sentiments, and made these nice and pure words, which are the proof of love and intense feelings, reach the ear of the hearts gently:

- “To lack friends is tantamount to poverty".
- “Do not express joy on the adversity of others".
- “Bring people nearer to you by means of gentleness and munificence".
- “Forgive one who oppresses you".
- “Do not deprive of your munificence a person who deprives you of his munificence".
- “Establish new relations with the person who cuts off his relations with you".
- “Be friendly towards one, who is inimical towards you".

He was a great man, who surpassed the philosophers of the world in high thinking, the righteous of the world in beneficence, the scholars of the world in the matter of vast knowledge, the researchers of the world in the matter of deep insight, all the philanthropists as regards love and kindness, all the pious persons in the matter of abstemiousness, and all the reformers of the world in the matter of reformatory views. He shared the sorrows of the helpless and helped the oppressed in their distress. He taught the literary persons of the world the art of literature and trained the brave men in the methods of warfare. He was always prepared to sacrifice his life for the establishment of truth. He went higher than the highest stage of human virtue and perfection. He displayed these qualities equally in his words and actions.

He was so great that the domination of his enemies over him was meaningless and their victory carried no importance, because at that time everything had turned upside down. The right hand was on the left

side and the left hand was on the right side. High and low, light and darkness, the earth and the sky, had all assumed a reverse shape.

It makes no difference in the position of Ali whether or not history recognizes him and whether his eminence appears greater or lesser. Notwithstanding this, history has testified that he was the deepest stage of human thought. He sacrificed his life for the sake of truth and reality. He was the father of the martyrs and the proclaimer of justice. He was the unique man of the East, who will live forever!

1. In fact the knowledge of Ali should not be treated to be the outcome of reflection because it was derived from divine inspiration and was communicated to his heart through the prophet. The knowledge which was possessed by him or even a small part thereof cannot be acquired by reflection and reasoning however profound and extraordinary it may be.
2. Here the Commander of the Faithful has referred to the trouble which was created during the period of his caliphate and which did irreparable harm to the Muslim nation. Although these words do not carry the meaning inferred by the writer still it is an established fact and is evident from his other remarks. As a matter of fact the greatest object of the appointment of the prophets to their mission and the means of their success was this that they introduced freedom of the individual and freedom of thought as opposed to the policy of the tyrants like Nimrud and Pharaoh who controlled the lives and property of the people and kept their power of thinking paralysed.
3. Man loves freedom. In case, therefore, a person is put in a prison and all amenities of life are provided to him he will even then prefer freedom to the prison life. The prophets campaigned against the tyrants and succeeded, because they declared that man is entitled to possess control on his own activities and property whereas the despotic rulers deprived the people of this right and subjected them to all sorts of torture and tyranny.

The Prophet and Abu Talib

If we leave aside the details and cast a glance not at the apparent conditions but at the reality, it appears that the conditions and the adventures of life of Ali son of Abu Talib were similar to those of the Prophet Muhammad, and the attitude of his companions towards Mu'awiya and his associates was similar to that of the Prophet and the Muslims towards Abu Sufyan, Abu Jahl and other Quraysh. The difference between them was this that the Prophet acquired necessary strength to establish a state and to subdue the chiefs of Quraysh whereas the circumstances and conditions had changed in the days of Ali and he did not succeed in overpowering his opponents.

Although Ali could not rule over the people like Bani Umayyah he was not deprived of ruling over the pure hearts of the virtuous people. And he was so well-equipped with the qualities of a perfect man that he deserved to rule the hearts.

Before we begin our discourse about Ali it is necessary to throw some light on the relationship which associated him with Muhammad son of Abdullah. This relationship existed in the detailed adventures of their lives as well as in their spiritual qualities which had come together in one family. The Prophet was the most perfect person and the son of Abu Talib followed in his footsteps and was the most perfect

person next to him and excelled all others.

When the Prophet was deprived of the love of his parents, his grandfather Abd al-Muttalib, who was the grandfather of Ali as well, assumed his guardianship. His grandfather was very fond of him. Many times it so happened that he fixed his eyes on his grandson and said to those present: “This child is very honourable".

He accorded Muhammad great respect even though he was a child yet, and in the general assemblies he made him sit at a place in the shade of the Ka'bah where even his brothers could not aspire to sit.

When the Prophet's grandfather breathed his last, his guardianship was assumed by his uncle Abu Talib, the father of Ali. The Prophet led a very comfortable life under the guardianship of his uncle, and benefited from his love and excellent manners and morals, which he had inherited from Abd al-Muttalib. The good morals, which were characteristic of the family of Abd al-Muttalib were inherent in the soul of Muhammad and were manifest in his words and actions. It might be said that when God chose His messenger from the family of Bani Hashim He also chose his magnanimous uncle to train him. It appears that a messenger-angel had informed Abu Talib about the mystery related to his nephew of which others were not aware.

Once during a period of famine and drought this child was requested by his uncle to pray to God for rains with his back resting on the wall of the holy Ka'bah. The child complied with his uncle's wish and pointed to the sky with his finger. There was no cloud in the sky at that moment. However, the clouds gathered suddenly from all sides, and it rained heavily so that the fields were filled with water and the earth gained a new life.

The people asked Abu Talib, “Who is this boy?" He replied: “He is my nephew Muhammad about whom I have said: He is the white-faced one. By means of his bright face water is sought from the clouds. He is the refuge for the orphans and the protector of the widows".

This narrative indicates the fervent mutual love and affection of the uncle and the nephew. Abu Talib always attended to the needs of the child very meticulously and was extremely kind to him.

Once when Abu Talib went to Syria he also took with him his nephew (Muhammad) who was then about fourteen years of age. After having crossed Madyan, the valley of Qura and the land of Samud they came near the gardens of Syria. They enjoyed different scenes and observed therein the secrets of nature.

The views of Abu Talib about Muhammad were confirmed by the monk Bahira when he told him that his nephew would become a towering personality in the future. From then onwards he took greater care of his nephew because he became aware that a mystery was linked with his person.

When Abu Talib heard the people of Mecca calling Muhammad with the title of ***'Amin'*** (the honest) he

was very much pleased, and the tears of joy began to flow down from his eyes.

Khadijah, the chief of the woman of Quraysh, herself proposed marriage to Muhammad although she had already rejected the suit of rich Qurayshite noblemen. The only confidant and true adviser of Muhammad was Abu Talib. He therefore, consulted him in the matter. Abu Talib was well aware of the nature and morals of Muhammad and knew that he was not inclined towards anything except goodness. He supported this alliance because what his nephew had enquired about was exactly the same thing which he (Abu Talib) himself had wished from the core of his heart.

After the Quranic verses were revealed to Muhammad in the Cave of Hira the first persons to express faith in him and to offer prayers with him were his wife Khadijah and his cousin Ali. When Abu Talib came to know about the embracement of Islam by Ali he said to him: “My son! What act do you perform?” Ali replied: “Dear father! I have adopted the religion of the Prophet of God, confirm what he has brought and follow him in offering prayers”. Abu Talib said: “Dear son! Be obedient to him always, because he will never invite you to anything except goodness and virtue”.

When the Prophet of Islam ordered the Muslims to migrate to Ethiopia he made Ja'far son of Abu Talib the chief of the migrants, and of all those persons he loved his cousin most.

Abu Talib was the first person in Islam who composed verses eulogizing Muhammad and exhorted the people to support him. Once a group of Quraysh came to Abu Talib and asked him to surrender Muhammad to them. He replied to them: “So long as all of us are not finished we shall neither surrender him to you nor withhold assistance from him”.

Throughout his life Abu Talib did not forget even for one moment that Muhammad was a great person and his (i.e. Abu Talib's) brother Abdullah and his father Abd al-Muttalib were also great personalities.

When the time of Abu Talib's death drew near he called a large number of persons belonging to his family by his bedside, and said to them: “I exhort you to behave well with Muhammad because he is known as 'honest' among Quraysh and is famous among the Arabs for his truthfulness, and all these qualities are combined in his person. I can imagine very well that the indigent and the nomads have gathered round him and have accepted his invitation and confirmed his words. Their movement has become strong. The chiefs and elders of Quraysh have been humiliated. The weak persons have become honourable. Those who were opposed to him most are most obedient to him and those who were more apart from him are profiting more by remaining in his service.

O Quraysh! Support and reverence him. I swear by God that whoever follows his path will be saved and whoever acts on his advice will become prosperous. If I had lived and death had granted me respite I would have defended him from the calamities of time because he is truthful and honest. Accept his invitation, co-operate with one another in supporting him and fight against his enemies, because so long as the world lasts he is the capital of dignity and honour for you”.

Abu Talib rendered support to the Prophet for forty two years. He opposed Quraysh for his sake and supported his declaration of prophethood till he breathed his last.

After Abu Talib's death the Prophet felt that he had been deprived of his great supporter who used to defend him against harm by Quraysh. Abu Talib was the chief of the family in which the Prophet had been brought up, and was his supporter against his enemies. He loved him ardently and warded off the mischief of the obstinate Quraysh against him. The Prophet himself said: “So long as my uncle Abu Talib lived the people could do me no harm”.

As we all know Muhammad was very patient and self-possessed, and notwithstanding the fact that his enemies were numerous and his friends were fewer, he believed firmly that he would succeed in his mission. The question therefore, arises as to the reason for his being so much grieved at the death of his uncle. In fact the reason was their great mutual love, because a person loves one who is kind to him and supports him. His flowing tears showed that the Prophet was feeling that he had lost something which was as dear to him as his own life.

The Prophet and Ali

A very good and pure spirit existed in the family of Abu Talib. It looked at the world in a peculiar manner and saw all things connected and united with one another.

This spirit was very strong in the Prophet and Ali and a very firm relationship existed between them, because Ali had been brought up by the Prophet from his childhood till he grew up to be a youth. When we admit that it is possible that good morals should become firm naturally in a heart and a soul we have also to say that Ali was born with perfect faith in the prophethood of Muhammad and support for him, because the qualities and virtues of the Family of Abu Talib in which the Prophet was brought up were transferred to his cousin from his birth [1].

The personality of Ali developed with the virtues of his family. It was this place where he heard Muhammad speak and the call to Islam also started from here. Ali was quite young when the Prophet attached him with himself and called him his brother.

In his sermon entitled “Qase'a,” Ali mentions the attention paid to him by the Prophet and says: “Do you know, that due to my relationship and on account of my worth and merit, what were my relations with the Prophet?

From the very beginning of my life he loved me and I loved him. He took me in his lap when I was a baby and thence I was always with him, he often kept me embraced to his heart, he used to make me

sleep next to him; we used to be so close to each other that I felt the warmth of his body and smelled the fragrance of his breath. When I was a baby, he fed me with his hands often chewing hard bits for me. He never found me lying nor weak and wavering. From the time of his babyhood God had appointed the Holy Ghost to be always with him and this archangel was leading him towards exemplary qualities and high moral values and I followed the Prophet step by step as a baby camel follows its mother. Daily he used to place before me a fresh standard of efficiency and used to order me to follow it. Every year he used to stay in a grotto of the Hira Mountains for sometime, and nobody used to be with him but I. None could then see or hear him or be near him but I.

During those days Islam was the religion of only the Prophet and his wife Khadijah, I was the third of the trio (the Prophet, Khadijah and Ali himself). Nobody else in this world had accepted Islam I even then used to see the divine light of revelation and prophethood and smell the heavenly fragrance of prophethood. When the Prophet received the first revelation Satan lamented loudly. I asked the Prophet "Who is lamenting and why"? He replied, "It is Satan who had given up hopes of acquiring complete sway over human mind. In this disappointment he is lamenting over the chance lost. Verily, Ali, you also hear whatever is revealed to me and you also see whatever is being shown to me. With this difference that you are not entrusted with prophethood, but you will be my successor, helper and vizier, and you will always uphold truth and justice".

Childhood is the age when one is fully capable of acquiring good qualities. Ali spent a good deal of his life with the Prophet alone. He imitated the Prophet's conduct and remained separated from his community which was leading a miserable life and was firmly bound with the chains of hereditary customs.

For years Ali lived in a pure atmosphere by the side of his cousin and was loved very much by him. None of the companions and followers of the Prophet could develop such a close relationship with him. Ali opened his eyes on the path which had been opened for him by his cousin.

He learnt how to worship God from Muhammad's prayers. He enjoyed the Prophet's love, kindness and brotherhood. His relationship with Muhammad was similar to the one between Muhammad and Abu Talib. When Ali first felt the sentiment of love in his mind he loved Muhammad. When he spoke for the first time he spoke with Muhammad. On the very first occasion when he was required to display manliness and valour he showed readiness to support Muhammad. Muhammad's friends were friendly with him and his enemies also respected his personality. Ali was such a protege and disciple of the Prophet that he became his soul and a part of his limbs.

In the early days of the prophetic mission of the Prophet, some elders amongst Quraysh who hated worship joined him. The slaves and helpless persons came round him in expectation of justice and freedom. And after he was successful and victorious a third group also joined him, because those people had no alternative left. They wanted to benefit from the new situation and most of Bani Umayyah belonged to this group. These different groups embraced Islam on different occasions and although they

resembled one another in the matter of obedience to the Prophet the degrees of their faith differed.

However, as Ali was born and brought up in the lap of prophethood, his faith was natural and innate, and he emerged from the body of his mother with this faith in his heart. His faith had nothing to do with age or the vicissitudes of time. He offered prayers and testified the prophethood of Muhammad at an age when a child cannot even express his thoughts. And he did all this without obtaining any order or advice from anyone.

Most of the persons who embraced Islam in the early days of Muhammad's prophethood had worshipped the idols in previous days. However, when Ali prostrated for the first time it was before the Allah of Muhammad. This was the quality of the faith of the person who was destined to grow up as a supporter and well-wisher of the Prophet, to lead the faithful after the Prophet, and to save the people from the calamities of time.

1. The correct position is this that Abu Talib and the members of his family or the ways and manners of the time or the environments had no influences on the prophethood of Muhammad or the Imamate of Ali. These things were related with divine inspiration and neither Abu Talib nor the members of this family shared the secrets of prophethood and Imamate.

Ali is my brother

In order to indicate at which level spiritual brotherhood existed between the Prophet and Ali, to what extent Ali inherited the virtues of the Prophet, how Ali's soul acquired the colour of prophethood, how much he was loved by the Prophet and to what extent he respected and honoured the Prophet with his heart and tongue, it is necessary that a few traditions may be quoted. Only then we can conclude that in accordance with the sublime rules which became the source of strengthening the religion of Islam, the Prophet was paving the way for the caliphate of Ali. And he was doing so, because he could see his own face in the mirror of the person of Ali and the good qualities possessed by him were also possessed by Ali as will be explained later.

Tabarani has quoted Ibn Mas'ud as saying that the Prophet said: “Looking at Ali's face amounts to worship”. And Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqas quotes the Prophet as saying: “Whoever hurts Ali hurts me”.

Ya'qubi has quoted in parts of his history that when the Prophet was returning to Madina from the “Farewell pilgrimage” he stopped on the 18th day of Zil-Hajj at Ghadir al-Khum near Johfah, delivered a sermon and then held the hands of Ali and said: “Of whomsoever I am the master, Ali too is his master. O God! Love him who loves Ali and be inimical towards him who is inimical towards Ali”.

Fakhruddin al-Razi has quoted in Tafsir al-Kabir that thereafter Umar son of Khattab greeted Ali and said to him: “O Ali! You have become my master as well as master of every Muslim man and woman”.

This hadith has been quoted from sixteen companions of the Prophet by the ulema and historians like Tirmizy, Nasa'i and Ahmad bin Hanbal, and has also been verified by many poets, the foremost among them being Hassan bin Thabit Ansari. He says: “On the day of Ghadir the Prophet called the people at Khum and made his voice reach the ears of all and said: Who is your chief and master? The people did not feign ignorance and said: Your God is our master and you are our Prophet and we are not disobedient to you”. Then the Prophet said to Ali: “Rise; for certainly I have chosen you to be the Imam and the guide after myself. Hence, of whomsoever I am the master this Ali, too, is his master. You should, therefore, be his true friends and supporters”.

Abu Tamam Tai is one of the poets who have mentioned the event of that day. Another poet Kumait Asadi has given a detailed account of it in his *al-Qasidah al-Ainiyya.* He says inter alia: “In the ground of Ghadir al-Khum the Prophet made an announcement about his caliphate. I wished that the Prophet's decision had been accepted. I never saw a day as important as the day of Ghadir and I never saw such a right being violated”.

Abu Sa'id Khudri has been quoted in Kitab Aal of Ibn Khalawayh as having said that the Prophet said to Ali “Love for you is faith and enmity towards you is hypocrisy” “Your friend will be the first person who will enter Paradise and your enemy will be the first person who will be thrown into Hell”.

The narrators believe that the Prophet looked at the face of Ali time and again, and said: “This is my brother”.

Abu Huraira has been quoted to have said that the Prophet addressed his companions saying: “If you want to see the knowledge of Adam, the determination of Noah, the habits of Abraham, the supplications of Moses, the piety of Jesus and the guidance of Muhammad combined in one person look at the man who is coming towards you”. When the people raised their heads they saw that it was Ali”.

Once a man complained against Ali before the Prophet. The Prophet said in reply: “What do you want from Ali? What do you want from Ali? What do you want from Ali? Ali is from me and I am from Ali and after me he is the master of all believers”.[1]

The Prophet sent Ali to Yemen. Some of his companions requested him to give them the camels received as alms to mount so that their own camels might take rest. Ali did not accede to their request. When all of them returned to Madina the persons whose request had been rejected by Ali complained against him to the Prophet. Sa'd son of Malik Shaheed acted as their spokesman. He said that Ali had been harsh towards them and also made a mention of the relevant incident. While he was speaking the Prophet struck his thigh with his hand and said loudly. “O Sa'd! Stop complaining against Ali. You should know that he is dedicated to the path of God”.

It appears from the above mentioned traditions as well as from many others which have not been quoted here that the Prophet considered Ali to be his brother, and Ali, too, was very much pleased with his brotherhood.

Moreover, the Prophet used to invite the attention of the people to the attributes and virtues which had concentrated in the personality of Ali so that they might know that he was the best person to carry on the Islamic mission after him. Some instances have been quoted in authentic traditions, which go to show that the natural conditions also helped in creating harmony between Muhammad and Ali, and shaped the events and the environments in such a way that Ali displayed the attributes which were not shared with him by any one.

One of those attributes was that he was born in the Ka'bah, which is the "Qibla" of the Muslims and his birth took place at a time when the Islamic call was about to be given by Muhammad and he had not made it public. In those days he resided in the house of Ali's father Abu Talib. When Ali opened his eyes he saw Muhammad and Khadijah offering prayers. He was the first man who expressed faith in Muhammad although he was not yet fully grown up. When the people reproved him for embracing Islam without the permission of his father he replied at once: "God created me without seeking Abu Talib's agreement. Then why should I obtain my father's permission to worship God".

For quite a long time the religion of Islam remained confined in the house of Muhammad and there were then only four Muslims in the world: namely, Muhammad, his wife Khadijah, his cousin Ali and his slave Zaid bin Harith.

On the day when Muhammad invited his kinsmen to a feast and wished to address them and communicate the message of Islam to them, his uncle Abu Lahab interrupted him and incited those present against him. Consequently all of them stood up and left Muhammad's house. The Prophet invited them once again and said after meals were over: "I do not know any person in Arabia who may have brought a present which is better than the one which I have brought for you. Who from amongst you will help me?" The persons present declined to commit themselves and wanted to leave the house as before, but in the meantime Ali, who was still a boy and had not attained the age of manhood stood up and said: "O Prophet of God! I shall assist you and shall fight against anyone who opposes you". Members of Bani Hashim family laughed out and then went away ridiculing Abu Talib and Ali.

In every battle Ali was the standard-bearer of the Prophet. He dedicated his valour, blood, heart, tongue and his very life for his cousin, the Prophet, and for the success and victory of Islam. He crushed the enemies of Muhammad and showed his mettle as and when the occasion demanded. At the time of the Battle of the Ditch when the companions of the Prophet were worried and perplexed on account of the fear of the enemy, Ali stood like a rock before the chiefs of Quraysh and displayed such feats of valour that the Muslims became hopeful of their victory, and the Quraysh and their allies had to suffer defeat.

In the Battle of Khaybar Ali performed a jihad which was astonishing. The forts of Khaybar, although very strong, were conquered at his hands. This was notwithstanding the fact that very brave and experienced soldiers were assembled there and the companions of the Prophet were afraid of them. In short the siege of the fort by the Muslims was prolonged. The soldiers within were defending themselves courageously, because they knew that if they were defeated by Muhammad their power in the Arabian

Peninsula would come to an end and their business and authority would go.

The Prophet sent Abu Bakr to conquer the fort. He displayed his efficiency in his own way and came back without achieving the success. On the following day he sent Umar son of Khattab, but he also returned like Abu Bakr without achieving any success and could not overcome the lofty fort and the armed soldiers. The Prophet then called Ali and ordered him to conquer the fort. Ali gladly proceeded to perform this duty for the sake of Islam.

When he approached the fort, and its inmates came to know that this time Ali son of Abu Talib, who had not sustained defeat in any campaign, had come to join the battle, many squads of theirs came out from the fort all at once, and one of their soldiers attacked so forcefully that the shield fell down from the hand of Ali. He immediately pulled out the gate of the fort and continued to fight, using it as a shield, till the fort was conquered. And the fort was not conquered till a number of soldiers were killed, the first among whom was Harith son of Abi Zainab.

At this stage we come across a strange phenomenon. In the history of our ancestors we come across many champions who fought battles for the sake of their beliefs, but in the heart of their hearts they desired peace and wished that the problem had been solved without resorting to warfare. Besides them we also know many brave men who met martyrdom to achieve their objective. However, such battles and martyrdoms are mostly without any forethought. There are sudden occurrences which usually take place owing to eruption of enthusiasm and ardour in the presence of the onlookers. However, the case of Ali son of Abu Talib is most surprising, because in order to defend the faith of Muhammad and his own, and for the sake of brotherhood, and in the path of God he exposed himself to the gravest danger. It is an event which is unparalleled in history and abundantly proves the unity and harmony of these two great personalities.

When persecution by Quraysh reached its maximum limit and they were planning to kill Muhammad and destroy Islam, the Prophet went to the house of Abu Bakr and told him that as Quraysh were conspiring to kill him he had decided to migrate. Abu Bakr expressed his desire to accompany the Prophet and the latter acceded to his request. When both of them decided to migrate, they were certain that the Quraysh would pursue them. Muhammad therefore proposed to follow a deviated path and should leave their houses at a time at which they could not normally be expected to do so.

On the very night during which Muhammad decided to migrate the Quraysh had decided to kill him and had posted a group of experienced warriors round his house so that he might not escape under the cover of darkness. However, Muhammad asked his cousin Ali confidentially to sleep in his bed and to cover himself with his green sheet. He also asked him to stay on in Mecca till he had restored to the people the things which they had deposited with him. (i.e. with Muhammad).

As usual Ali obeyed the orders of the Prophet very gladly. As mentioned above Quraysh had besieged the house of the Prophet. They peeped through the holes and saw a man sleeping in the bed of the

Prophet. Thev were therefore, satisfied that the Prophet had not escaped. In the latter part of the night when the enemies imagined that the Prophet was sleeping in his bed he was actually in the house of Abu Bakr, wherefrom both of them proceeded to the Cave of Thour. On finding a clue the Quraysh reached this place also, but God kept them hidden from the eyes of the enemies.

The examples of self-sacrifice set by Ali are very rare. One wavers between life and death and reflects whether one should sacrifice high morals, which are the capital of one's life, for the sake of the base and transitory comforts of worldly life. If, on such an occasion a person chooses martyrdom, it is a proof of the fact that in his eyes real life is eternal life and not temporary mudane life.

Of course, such devotion and self-sacrifice is very rare in the world. If Socrates and others like him welcomed death gladly, Ali son of Abu Talib also placed his life at the disposal of the Prophet of his own free will. However, to go into the battlefield and court death or to drink a cup of poison is easier as compared with the heroic act performed by Ali.

Just imagine how difficult it is for a person to sleep in the bed of one whom his enemies are bent upon to kill and it is not possible to escape from their hands, especially when they may be watching him from a distance of a few steps and making signs for a murderous attack and he may be observing their movements and hearing their words and seeing their blood thirsty swords flashing on his head and may spend the entire night in this condition.

At this dangerous stage Ali imitated the Prophet and displayed the power of resistance which he had acquired by his association with his illustrious cousin. His sleeping in the bed of the Prophet was a specimen of his jihad and effort for the promotion of the faith propagated by him. This dangerous fact unveils the nature of the Imam that his actions were not tainted with artificiality and resembled the coming out of a pearl from a shell. It also shows his strong intellect and matchless insight, because it is not possible for any other person to understand fully the reality of the Islamic call at such a young age.

This fact also shows many other traits of Ali. It shows that he did not attach any importance to worldly life. He was very faithful and sincere. He did not prefer himself to others. He was prepared even to lay down his life for the sake of the oppressed, so that they might be relieved of the oppression, and the prophetic mission of the Prophet might succeed. Fidelity, manliness, righteousness, valour and all other good qualities were concentrated in this person. The self-sacrifice displayed by him at this stage was an introduction of the heroic acts performed by him in future.

There existed a firm relationship of love and brotherhood between Muhammad and Ali and they assisted each other in connection with the Islamic call. This co-operation commenced from the time when Muhammad recognized Abu Talib and Ali recognized Muhammad i.e. from the time when these three illustrious personalities were living together in a house which was founded on piety and virtue.

It was one of the characteristics of the house of Abu Talib that it was there that Ali and Abu Talib were able to realize the greatness of Muhammad. As a result of this Abu Talib bestowed his love and

kindness on Muhammad and Ali displayed obedience and devotion to him. This very recognition prepared Ali for supreme sacrifices. The Prophet also realized this reality fully well. He loved Ali beyond measure. He did not only love Ali himself but endeavoured to make others also love him, so that he might assume the responsibilities of the caliphate after him.

He wished that people might become fully aware of the qualities of Ali so that after his own death they should see in Ali the person of Muhammad himself as if Muhammad were still alive. Hence, they should select him with love and kindness of their own free will, and not because he belonged to the Family of Bani Hashim and was the cousin of the Prophet. This was so because the Prophet himself opposed such discriminations and had strictly prohibited them. It was for this reason that just as he had himself avoided material benefits, he also kept Bani Hashim away from governmental offices which might bring worldly benefits.2

1. The Prophet sent two detachments of the soldiers to Yemen – one under the command of the Imam and the other under the command of Khalid son of Walid and said that if both the contingents reached there together, the command would rest with Ali. Khalid who was perfectly imbued with the habits and sentiments of the age of ignorance was very much annoyed at this. After the completion of the assignment, therefore, he sent some persons to the Prophet to complain against Ali. The companion Buraidah, the bearer of the letter says: "I placed before the Prophet the letter which I had brought and it was read out for him. The Prophet was so much annoyed that I observed the signs of anger on his face. Then I said: "O Prophet of God! I seek refuge in you. The letter has been sent by Khalid and he ordered me to bring it to you. As he has been my commander, I obeyed his orders. The Prophet said: "Do not talk ill of Ali. He is from me and I am from him and he is your master and man of authority after me". (Al-Musnad-Ahmad bin Hanbal, vol.5, p.356, Al-Khasais-Nasa'i, p. 24).
In one of the texts of Hadith, an addition to the above- mentioned Hadith is available and it is that when Buraidah saw the behaviour and the extreme anger of the Prophet he entertained doubt in his mind about his own faith and, therefore, said to the Prophet: "I administer you an oath of the rights of companionship which exist between us that you may stretch out your hand so that I may take an oath of allegiance de novo and my sin may be forgiven". (Majma al-Zawaid by vol.9, page 128).
On the basis of this narration the Imam is the supervisor, man of authority and guardian of the Muslims, after the prophet. Viz. he enjoys exactly the same guardianship, over the life and property of the people, in the capacity of the successor of the Prophet as the Prophet himself and, of course, exercises this authority for their material and spiritual benefit as the exigencies of the circumstances demand.
2. The Prophet had declared zakat, which formed a large part of the assets of the public treasury, to be unlawful for Bani Hashim, so much so that he did not even send them to collect zakat so that the people might become aware that it was not utilized by the Prophet's Family, and was collected only to assist the indigent persons and to meet common needs of the Muslims

The attributes of Ali

Out of the persons who have narrated the attributes of Imam Ali son of Abu Talib the author of Zakha'ir_al-Uqba writes thus: "His stature was moderate and slightly short. His skin was of wheaten colour and his beard was white and long. His eyes were large and black. He had a cheerful face and was good-natured. His neck was long like a goblet made of silver. His shoulders were broad. The joints

of his hands were like those of a roaring lion, because his hands and wrists were completely joined with each other and distinction could hardly be made between them. His hands and fingers were strong, moderately fat and fleshy. His calves were fleshy and their lower part was thin. His arms were also fleshy in a similar manner.

He walked calmly like the Prophet. However, as and when he proceeded to give a fight he walked briskly and did not turn his head to see anything else. His bodily strength was unimaginable. He usually picked up the fighters whom he laid his hands on and threw them on the ground without any difficulty or effort, as if they were small children. And if he held the arm of any warrior in his hand the latter could not even breathe. It is well-known that he did not fight with anyone whom he did not vanquish, even though he might have been very strong and a renowned champion.

At times he picked up a big gate which a number of strong persons could not even close or open, and used it as a shield to defend himself. On some occasions he threw away with one hand, a stone, which could not even be shaken by a number of men. At times he roared in the battlefield so loudly that the bravest men got frightened although their number might be quite large. He possessed such a great power to bear hardships that he did not fear any harm from heat or coldness. He used to wear summer clothes in winter and winter clothes in summer".

Once a man lodged a complaint against Ali with Umar who was then the caliph. Umar summoned both of them and said: “O Abu’l Hasan! Stand side by side with the other party. Signs of displeasure appeared on the face of Ali. Thereupon Umar asked him whether he did not wish to stand by the side of the other person. Ali replied: “No. That is not so. However, I have observed that you have not maintained equality between me and my opponent. You have addressed me with my Kuniyah and thus shown me respect whereas you have not meted out the same treatment to him". [1]

It is very difficult to explain fully the nature and habits of human beings and especially of great personalities because personal qualities of men are related with one another and everyone of them influences others. Every quality is related with another quality and every habit is the cause of another habit and the result of a third one, or two of them are effect of another and so on and so forth.

Hence, I propose to study a few of the personal qualities of Ali from different angles and to compare them within one and the same personality so as to arrive at some conclusions by means of this intellectual analysis. In the first instance I shall briefly present the various qualities of Ali by deducing them from his simple dealings and well-known actions so that his nature, habits and disposition are known and our detailed discussion in the following chapters may be limited to those qualities and characteristics.

We now commence the discussion with reference to his acts of worship.

Ali was well-known for his piety and continence. He did many things for his own self as well as for his own people and others, as he was extremely pious. I believe that Ali's piety was not the outcome of

circumstances like that of other pious persons, who engage themselves in worship on account of the weakness of their souls, or to escape the vicissitudes of life and to keep aloof from the people, or in imitation of their ancestors, and the effects of the events of life confirm it, because as a rule people accord respect to ancestral customs and traditions.[2]

The fact is that the piety of the Imam Ali was based on a firm footing and was linked with the mutual tie which exists in all parts of the creation and has bound the sky and the earth with each other. His worship was in fact a continuous effort and a campaign against mischief for the sake of human life and prosperity. He fought against all aspects of evil and wickedness. On the one hand he fought against hypocrisy and selfishness and on the other hand against dastardliness, abjectness meanness, helplessness and other bad qualities which had been acquired by the people during those evil days. According to Ali the essence of piety is to sacrifice one's life for the sake of truth and justice. He has said: “Your faith should be at such a level that you should prefer truth to falsehood even though it may cause you loss and falsehood may bring you gain".

His piety was of the same type as defined by him. He was martyred on account of this very truthfulness, and if it be possible to give the title of “Martyr" to living persons it may be said that even while alive he was a martyr in the path of truth and righteousness.

If a person studies the piety of the Imam carefully it will become known to him that even in politics and government, he had a special method in the matter of worship which he pursued firmly. When he stood before the Almighty God he made his supplications with full attention, just as a poet is lost in the beauties of nature. The following remark of Ali is very instructive for those who worship God and observe piety: “One group worships God to be favoured with His blessings. This is the worship of the tradesmen. Another group worships Him on account of His fear. This is the worship of the slaves. A third group worships Him by way of thanksgiving. This is the worship of the free man".

Unlike many persons the Imam's worship was not on account of fear, and it was also not a tradesman–like worship with the hope of acquiring Paradise. On the other hand when great men stand before the Almighty God they find themselves meek and obliged to consider themselves His worst slaves. The basis of this worship is reason, conscience, and spiritual perfection.

One who accords the same position to worship as was accorded by Ali will certainly view life in the same manner in which it was viewed by Ali. Such a person does not seek life for worldly gains and transient pleasures. On the other hand he seeks it to attain high morals and to achieve the ends which are compatible with his nature. It was for this reason that Ali chose piety in the world and did not seek fame and ostentation. He was true in the matter of piety in the same way in which he was true in the matter of his actions, words and intentions. He was disinclined towards the pleasures of life in the same way in which he was disinterested in rulership, and other things, which were so much coveted by others. He lived with the members of his family in a hut which was also his seat of government. His rulership was not in the form of kingship but in the form of caliphate.

He ate barley bread prepared from the flour ground by his wife. Of course his governors and officials availed of the luxuries which became available from Syria, Egypt and Iraq. Often he did not make his wife take the trouble of grinding the mill and did this job himself. Although he was the Commander of the Faithful he ate bread which was so dry and hard that it could be broken by pressing it with the knee. When it was very cold during winter he did not have any clothes for that season and contented himself with thin summer clothes.

Haroon son of Antara relates thus from his father: I went in the presence of Ali in Khurnaq Palace in winter season and saw that he was wearing an old cloak and was trembling with cold. I said to him: “O Commander of the Faithful! God has fixed a share for you also in the public treasury and in spite of that you are living in this condition". He replied: “I swear by God that I do not take anything out of your (i.e. public) property and this cloak is the same which I brought from Madina".

He spent his days in the small house with perfect contentment till he was martyred at the hands of Ibn Muljim. Although he was the caliph there was none amongst the Muslims who lived as simple and contented a life as he did.

In fact this lack of interest on his part in worldly comforts was related with his valour. Some persons think that these two qualities are apart from each other, but this view is not correct. Really speaking his valour consisted of the greatness of his soul and his efforts to achieve great objects and to help the poor and the needy without caring for his own benefit. The fact is that he was not prepared to enjoy the pleasure of life while living in a city in which many helpless and indigent persons were also residing.

Umar son of Abdul Aziz was a caliph of the family of Bani Umayyah. This family was inimical towards Ali, slandered him and abused him from the pulpit. In spite of this he was obliged to remark thus keeping in view the sublime conduct of Ali: “The most chaste and pious person in the world was Ali son of Abu Talib".

It is said that Ali did not place either a stone on a stone or a brick on a brick and did not also join a reed with a reed. In other words he did not construct for himself even a house made of reeds. Although the White Palace had been constructed for him he did not occupy it because he did not wish to live in a house which was better than the huts made of wood occupied by the poor people. The manner in which Ali led his life is reflected in his well-known remark: “Should I content myself with this that the people call me the Commander of the Faithful and I should not share the vicissitudes of life with them?"

Ibn Athir has narrated that when Ali married the Prophet's daughter Fatima their bed consisted only of the hide of a sheep. They used it as a mattress during night and placed fodder on it during the daytime to feed their camel. They did not have more than one servant. During the caliphate of Ali some property was received from Isfahan. It was divided by him into seven parts. It also included a loaf of bread and he broke that also into seven pieces.

Manliness was incarnated in Ali in all respects and included every quality necessary for it. Broad

mindedness and forgiveness are the necessary concomitants of manliness and they were ingrained in the Imam's nature. It was on this account that he did not even think of harming any person although he might have harmed him, and did not oppress a person about whom he knew that he wanted to kill him.

Bani Umayyah abused and slandered him but he did not retaliate in the same manner because magnanimous persons do not abuse a person who abuses them. Imam Ali prohibited his own companions from abusing Bani Umayyah. At the time of the Battle of Siffin he was informed that some of his companions were abusing Bani Umayyah. Upon this he said: “I do not like that you should be one of those who use abusive language. However, if you mention their misdeeds and their behaviour you will be justified in doing so and will be pronouncing an ultimatum.

In reply to their abuses you should say: “O Lord! Protect our blood as well as theirs. Relieve our and their hearts of deviation, and guide us so that he who has not recognized the truth should recognize it, and he who is involved in injustice and deviation should forsake it".

He has no peer in history in the matter of forgiveness and chivalry, and there are innumerable incidents which throw light on these qualities of his. It is said in this connection that on the occasion of a battle he gave inter alia the following instructions to his soldiers: “Don't kill an enemy who runs away. Don't withhold assistance from one who is helpless and wounded. Don't strip any one. Don't take the property of anyone by force”.

At the conclusion of the Battle of the Camel he offered funeral prayers for the enemies who had been killed and prayed to God for their forgiveness. When he gained control over his fallen enemies like Abdullah son of Zubayr, Marwan son of Hakam, and Sa'id son of Aas, he forgave them, behaved with them kindly and prohibited his companions from punishing them although he was in a position to give them a harsh treatment, and they too did not hope that they would be set free.

Another example of his chivalry is this that when he gained the upper hand on Amr Aas he turned his face aside and let him go, although he was by no means a lesser danger for Ali than Mu'awiya and remained inimical towards him even after this kindness. When he saw Zulfiqar (Ali's sword) on his head he committed a particular act and hoped that if he did so Ali would shut his eyes and leave him.[3] If Ali had killed Amr bin Aas at that time, cunning and deception would have been eliminated and Mu'awiya's army, too, would have been destroyed.

In the Battle of Siffin Mu'awiya and his supporters decided to overcome Ali by subjecting him and his companions to thirst. For some days, therefore, they blocked his way to the Euphrates and threatened that they would not allow his army to utilize the water and would make them die of thirst. However, Ali's army launched an attack and gained control of the bank of the river. But Ali behaved with Mu'awiya in a different manner. Notwithstanding the fact that he could stop supply of water to the Syrian army as a measure of retaliation he allowed them to utilize water in the same way in which his own men were utilizing it.

Once he was given to understand that two persons were accusing Ayesha of having started the Battle of the Camel and of plotting to kill him. He ordered that each of them might be administered one hundred lashes by way of punishment.

After achieving victory in the Battle of the Camel he sent Ayesha back to Madina with due honour and respect. He accompanied her upto a few miles distance and also sent some persons with her so that they might serve her on the way, and she might reach Madina comfortably.

In spite of his being so brave Ali avoided being oppressive. The narrators and historians are agreed that he hated warfare and did not resort to it except when no other alternative was left. He always tried that matters might be settled with the enemies without bloodshed and fighting. He used to advise his son Hasan not to invite anyone to fighting. He was always sincere in what he said and followed the policy which he recommended to his son till he was obliged to act otherwise.

For example when Kharijites were equipping themselves for warfare the companions of Ali suggested to him that he should attack them (i.e. Kharijites) before they became ready to wage a war. Ali, however, replied: “I shall not start fighting till they begin the battle themselves”. His faith and human attributes compelled him to keep the people from deviation by means of advice. One day he was delivering a sermon to a gathering and many Kharijites who considered him to be an infidel were also present and were hearing him. One of them who was wondering at his sweet language and eloquence said: “May God kill this infidel! How wise and intelligent he is!” The followers of Ali wished to kill that man. He, however, said to them: “He has done something wrong with his tongue. You should, therefore, either take revenge from him with the tongue or forgive him”:

We have already mentioned above that Mu'awiya's army blocked the path of Ali's army to the Euphrates so that they might surrender on account of thirst but when Ali gained control of the bank of the river he did not stop Mu'awiya's army from utilizing the water. Many other similar incidents took place so far as Mu'awiya was concerned, but it is not possible to give their details here.

All these events show that as demanded by his angelic soul he was kind even to his enemies and was just and magnanimous to all. A historian narrates thus with reference to the Battle of Siffin: “A man named Kareez son of Sabah Humeri came out of Mu'awiya's army into the battlefield and said standing between the armies: Is there anyone who may come and fight with me? One of the soldiers of Ali's army went to combat with him and was killed. He again asked for an adversary. Another man went but he too was killed and still another person also met death at the hands of Kareez.

When he demanded an adversary for the fourth time none went to oppose him. The men in the first row stepped back. Ali felt that there was a danger of his army becoming demoralized. He, therefore, went himself to give a fight to Kareez and killed him. Then he killed another man and thereafter a third man also met the same fate. After having killed three warriors Ali said loudly these words which were heard by all: ‘If you had not started the battle we would not have fought with you’. Having said this he returned

to his place".

It is also related in connection with the Battle of the Camel that when the enemies gathered for an attack, Ali also arrayed his troops but said to them: "Don't throw an arrow nor make an attack with a spear or a sword until we have first invited them to peace". He did not wish that a battle should take place resulting in bloodshed and loss of life. After a moment someone belonging to the opposite army shot an arrow which struck a companion of Ali and killed him. Ali said: "O Lord! Bear witness". Then another arrow came and killed another man. He said again: "O Lord! Bear witness". Then an arrow struck Abdullah son of Badil and his brother brought him before Ali. Ali again said "O Lord! Bear witness". And then the battle started.

To shun cruelty and oppression was a moral principle of Ali and formed part of his nature and disposition. He never broke covenants and was not inimical towards his former friends unless they themselves broke the covenants and showed enmity in reply to kindness.

The best form of friendship and the meaning of fidelity is that a warrior, while standing in the battlefield should look at the former friends who may have come to fight in the capacity of enemies, with the same brotherly eye, should invite them to peace and remind them of former love and friendship, so that they may possibly refrain from breach of covenant and treachery, or should take away the arms from their hands and solve the difficult problems by negotiations and peace talks. Fighting with a former friend should not be started all at once, because it is possible that he may be reminded of former relations and may refrain from fighting and opposition. If keeping promises and regard for former friendship had not dominated the spirit of Ali he would not have depended on them for warding off the enemies.

The Imam's firmness in keeping the promises is evident from the treatment which he meted out to Zubayr son of Awam and Talha son of Ubaidullah. These two persons separated the Imam's friends and helpers from him and took them to his enemies. They also misguided Ayesha and made her come up as opponent of Ali.

Those who were present on the spot whether they were friends or enemies, have reported that when Talha and Zubayr decided to fight against Ali, broke the oath of allegiance and displayed their evil intentions in the Battle of the Camel, Ali went to them bare-headed and without wearing any armour or coat of mail, meaning thereby that he had come with peaceful intentions. He then called Zubayr saying: "O Zubayr! Come to me". Zubayr came fully armed. When Ayesha heard about it she cried: "What a pity it is that there should be a combat"!

She said this because she knew that whoever went to fight against Ali would be killed, however brave and strong he might be. And it may be said with certainty that Zubayr could not have saved himself if he had fought with Ali. However Ali embraced Zubayr. Ayesha and her supporters were very much upset to see this. Ali said in a tone of love: "O Zubayr! Why have you come to fight against me?" Zubayr replied: "To avenge the murder of Uthman". Ali said: "May God kill that person who has been responsible for the

murder of Uthman".

Then Ali reminded Zubayr of past companionship and brotherhood and wept a number of times while talking. However, Zubayr was bent upon fighting and opposed the Imam till he (i.e. Zubayr) was killed. Ali, who attached great importance to the tie of friendship, was very much grieved when Zubayr met his death. Ali did not withhold his suggestions from the former caliphs and assisted them in their words and actions. 4

Although this magnanimous person was steadfast in his friendship, his friends did not accord due respect to his friendship, because they did not expect that he would act contrary to his nature and let their hands loose to usurp the rights of others.

Imam Ali has been reported to have said: "Even if all the seven regions of the world and whatever is under the sky is offered to me so that I may disobey God and take away unjustly the husk of barley from an ant I shall not do so. In my eyes this entire world is inferior to a leaf which may be pressed in the mouth of a locust". In this matter Ali's words and actions conformed with each other. He was not like others who indulge in tall talk which their actions belie. He was prompted to say these words by his nature which formed the basis of his character.

Ali was more kind to the people than anyone else and refrained from harming any person. He became oblivious of his own self in order to assist others and considered this self-abnegation to be a part and parcel of his life. His entire life was dedicated to the support of the oppressed and the helpless so that he might realize their rights from the tyrants who considered themselves entitled to usurp the rights of others on account of noble descent and racial discrimination.

Ali opposed the Quraysh and fought with them, because they coveted the caliphate for the sake of personal gain and in order to acquire position, wealth and rulership. He renounced the caliphate and even the worldly life and forsook everything because he could not act like worldly persons and could not agree to allow them to exploit the weak and the helpless.

Ali was so kind to the common man that when his brother Aqeel requested him to give him something more from the public treasury than his due share, he turned down his request and as a consequence thereof Aqeel went away to Mu'awiya. Ali tolerated separation from his brother but did not agree to give him anything from the public treasury of the Muslims without entitlement.

Ali was like a kind father for all human beings. He gave directions to the officers and governors to behave with the people gently. He behaved harshly with those who oppressed the people and warned them of severe consequences. The following directions given by him reached the ears of the governors continuously: "Redress the grievances of the people and meet their needs because you derive your capital from them. Do not deprive anyone of what he needs, and do not obstruct him from attaining his object. Do not sell the summer or winter dress of anyone to realize revenue. Do not take away from any person a quadruped which is required by him for his business and do not whip a person for even a

penny".

Ali was the person who wrote an excellent testament for Malik Ashtar Nakha`i at the time of appointing him the governor of Egypt and the adjoining areas. He wrote: "Do not live with people like ferocious animals, and do not treat their sustenance to be war booty, because the Egyptians fall under one of the two categories: either they are your brethren-in-faith from the point of view of religion or your equals because of their being human beings. Ignore their shortcomings and forgive their mistakes, just as you hope that God will forgive your crimes and sins. Do not regret your forgiving a person and do not insist upon awarding punishment".

He added: "Prohibit hoarding". Ali strictly forbade hoarding, which was the main reason for Mu'awiya and his party opposing him, because they wanted the country, the wealth and the war booty for themselves whereas Ali wanted them for all human beings.

Ali was so kind to human beings that, as we shall mention in detail later, he ordered that his murderer, the wicked Ibn Muljim might be treated kindly.

In the recommendations made by him to his sons Hasan and Husayn he said: "Be enemies of the oppressors and supporters of the oppressed". He also said: "Be enemies of the oppressor even though he may be your near relative and support the oppressed person even though he may not be related to you and may be a stranger". He always endeavoured to punish the oppressors and relieve the people of their wickedness. To achieve this purpose he used his heart, tongue, sword and blood. He always remained a helper of the oppressed and an enemy of the oppressors. Following this path he never relaxed till the end of his life.

One should not be surprised that Ali was just. It would have been a matter of surprise if he had not been just. The instances of his justice which have been narrated are the most valuable assets in human history and man should be proud of them.

His brother Aqeel asked him to grant him a special pension out of the public treasury, but he refused to accede to his request saying: "It is not my personal property that I may give it to anyone I like. There are also other helpless and needy persons, who are more deserving than you are, and I must be mindful of them". Aqeel said: "If you do not allow me a pension out of this property I shall go to Mu'awiya". However, Ali did not care for what he said, and did not revise his decision.

His brother went away and joined Mu'awiya and used to say: "Mu'awiya is better for my world", Mu'awiya's treatment satisfied him, because the public treasury was a tool in his hands with which he strengthened his kingdom, achieved his objects and wanted to revive the past politics and importance of Bani Umayyah.

The Imam did not claim any privileges vis-a-vis his subjects and appeared in the courts as their equal. This was so because the spirit of justice had penetrated into the depth of his heart.

Once Ali saw his coat of mail in the possession of a Christian. He took him in the court of a judge named Shurayh so that he might give a decision regarding its ownership. When both of them appeared before the judge, Ali said: “This coat of mail is mine. I have neither sold nor gifted it to anyone”. The judge asked the other person: “What have you to say about the claim made by the Commander of the Faithful?” The Christian said: “This coat of mail is mine. In spite of this, however, I do not consider the Commander of the Faithful to be a liar”. Then the judge Shurayh turned to Ali and said: “Can you produce any witness who should depose that this coat of mail is yours?” Ali smiled and said: “Shurayh is right. I cannot produce any such witness”.

The judge gave a judgment in favour of the Christian who took the coat of mail and departed. The Commander of the Faithful kept looking at him from behind. After having gone a few steps, however, he returned and said: “I testify that such an order resembles the order of the Prophets, because one who is the Commander of the Faithful has appeared along with a person like myself in the court of the judge who is also his subordinate and the judge has given a judgment against him”. 5 Then he added: “O Commander of the Faithful! I swear by God that this coat of mail is yours and my claim was false”.

Later the people saw that Christian serving in the army of Ali as a faithful soldier and he fought most enthusiastically against Kharijites in the Battle of Nahrawan.

Ibn Abi Rafe' has narrated thus: “I was the administrator of the public treasury during the period of the caliphate of Ali and was also his scribe. The property received from Basra for the public treasury included a pearl necklace. The daughter of Ali sent word to me saying: “I understand that there is a pearl necklace in the public treasury which is controlled by you. Send that necklace to me on loan so that I may wear it on Eid al-Azha day. Thereafter I shall return it”.

I sent the necklace to her on the conditions that she would be responsible if It was lost or damaged, and that she would return it within three days. She accepted these conditions.

By chance the eyes of the Commander of the Faithful fell on the necklace and he recognized it. He asked his daughter as to where she had obtained it from. She replied: “I have taken it on loan from Ibn Abi Rafe' the in-charge of the public treasury to wear it on Eid al-Azha day and have promised to return it to him within three days”.

The Commander of the Faithful summoned me and said; “Do you consider it lawful to commit breach of trust with the Muslims?” I replied: “May God forbid that I may commit treachery with the Muslims”. Thereupon he said: “Then why did you lend such and such necklace to my daughter without obtaining my permission and without the concurrence of the Muslims?”

I replied: “O Commander of the Faithful! She is your daughter. She borrowed it to adorn herself and guaranteed its safe return so that I might restore it to its proper place”. Ali said: “Take it back today and do not do so in future otherwise I shall punish you”.

When Ali's daughter came to know about it she said to him: “O father! I am your dear daughter. Who else is more entitled to wear this necklace?”
Ali replied: “O daughter of Abu Talib! Don't deviate from the right path. Can you tell me how many Muhajir and Ansar women adorn themselves with such necklaces?” Eventually I took back the necklace from the daughter of the Commander of the Faithful and restored it to its proper place.

Ali observed justice even in small and insignificant matters. If it became necessary for him to divide something with others he gave the right of selection to the other party so that people might not think that discrimination was being made in the matter of division between the persons in authority and the subordinates.
One day he went to the shop of a draper named Abu al-Nawar accompanied by his slave and purchased two dresses. Then he asked his slave to choose one out of the two dresses. The slave picked up one of them and Ali retained the other. 6

All the orders and letters which he sent to the governors and other officials rotate on the pivot of justice. Ali's near ones as well as others joined hands in opposing him. It was on account of the fact that he did not give them preference from the point of view of equity and justice, and did not grant any concession to his relatives. He was not influenced by anyone and accepted only the right things from others.

When Uthman son of Affan became caliph, he gave full freedom to his relatives, friends and associates to accumulate wealth, and he followed those who gave him wrong advice. Marwan had the greatest influence on him. He did not benefit from the wise recommendation which Abu Bakr had made to Umar. Abu Bakr had said: “Don't be in proximity to those persons who are eager to fill their bellies and acquire position and wealth. Don't be enamoured of the fact that they have associated with the Prophet and served him. Assess the nature of every person and find out what sort of man he is”.

Ali hated such greedy persons. Hence when he became the caliph he decided to deal with them justly. He, therefore dismissed some of them and checked the greed of others for position and wealth.

There was a group of persons who wanted to give the principles of Islam a new form and make them a means of acquisition of position and wealth and to treat the Islamic territories as hereditary property of their family. Ali fought against them and said to them in loud words: “I know what can keep you from rebellion and mischief, but the thing which is a source of happiness for you is the means of evil for me”. The stage at which Ali's dealing with such people reached is well-known. When the oppressors were defeated they resorted to deceit and the spirit of justice succeeded in the hearts of Ali and his followers, although apparently they were the sufferers.

When Ali met martyrdom at the hands of Ibn Muljim, a Nakha'i woman named Ummul Haitham wrote an elegy for him. A verse of that elegy goes to show the opinion of the people about his character and justice: “He established truth and entertained no doubt about it. He behaved justly with his kinsmen as well as strangers”. Sincerity and intrepidity are the qualities of great men and they were possessed by

Ali par excellence.

Sincerity, truthfulness, intrepidity and manliness and all other similar qualities are inter-connected. Hence he did not express anything which was opposed to his real intention and determination. He did not practise deceit, although he knew very well that by doing so he could get rid of the mischief of the enemies.
What has been said above about the truthfulness and character of the Imam fully proves his sincerity and intrepidity.

One of his principles and morals consisted of simplicity in everything. He hated formality very much and used to say: “The worst brother is he for whom one has to involve onself in trouble”. He also used to say: “If a believer observes formality with his brother it means that he has separated himself from him. If he expressed an opinion or tendered an advice or gave some present, then this act of his was not tainted with ostentation. This habit was so much ingrained in his nature that the selfish people could not make him act according to their wishes, and the flatterers should not hope to attract his attention. These people used to say that the Imam was hard-hearted, ill-natured and proud. However, the Imam was neither hard-hearted nor ill-natured nor proud. On the contrary, as demanded by his nature, he said whatever he had to say without any formality or deceit.

A large number of persons who gathered around him coveted personal gains. Ali became suspicious about them and did not conceal his misgiving. Expression of his views about them cannot be called pride or rudeness.

Ali hated pride and was absolutely free from egotism. He also forbade his children, companions and officials to show pride and practise egotism. While giving them advice he used to say: “Shun egotism. You should know that egotism is a bad quality and a calamity for reason". He hated formality. He also restrained the people from going to the extreme while praising him and told them: “I am lesser than what you say”.

At times it so happened that he considered the person concerned to be his enemy. On such occasions he did not refrain from mentioning the mental condition of that person of which he was aware and told him: “I am better than what you believe about me in your heart”.

Ali disliked some of his friends exalting him too much in the same manner in which he disliked his being belittled by his enemies. He has said: “Persons of two types have been destroyed on account of their attitude towards me - the friends who have exaggerated my qualities and the spiteful enemies”. He neither showed pride nor humiliated himself unnecessarily. He presented himself as he was. He was free from affectation and hypocrisy. It is difficult to find a straightforward man like him. He purchased a bagful of palm-dates and was carrying them home. Some persons observed this and volunteered to carry the bag for him. He, however, told them frankly that the head of the family was more responsible to carry it.

It is said erroneously that artificial humility and meekness constitute good qualities. In fact it is falsehood and mere affectation that one should pose to be inferior to what one actually is. Ali was not humble in that sense and he was also not proud. He displayed himself as he actually was without any meekness or pride, because these two things are not the qualities of manly persons. The writer of “Abqariyatu'l Imam” says: “Ali entered the battlefield bare-headed to fight against the enemies whereas they were completely covered with steel and iron. How can it be said that this action of his was based on hypocrisy?

Another attribute of Ali was his noble disposition. He did not entertain grudge in his heart against anybody, even though he might be his fell enemy. As we have already mentioned he directed his sons and friends not to kill his murderer (Ibn Muljim). Although Talha had come as an enemy to kill him, he wept on his dead body and recited a heart-felt elegy for him. Although the Kharijites were his deadly enemies and had fought against him, and his murderer was also one of them, and in fact they had not given him lesser trouble as compared with Mu'awiya and Amr bin Aas, but he advised his friends and followers not to fight against them. He gave this direction because he knew that those people had fallen prey to misunderstanding and had been misguided. They were seekers of truth but had been mistaken in the matter of its assessment as opposed to Mu'awiya and his companions who were seekers of falsehood and succeeded in acquiring it.

Nothing can be seen in the biography of Ali which may go to show that he was revengeful. In all circumstances he showed truthfulness, honesty, straightforwardness and swordsmanship.

Magnanimous persons are not revengeful and do not also tolerate injustice and oppression. They get annoyed with one who oppresses others. Although Ali did not entertain any grudge in his heart against anyone, he had to face a spiteful group. His meaningful words show how grieved he was. His grief was such as arose from sympathy and kindness. He was grieved to see that people harmed themselves.

Another quality which distinguished him from others and was complementary to his other attributes was his perfect faith in his actions and beliefs, and whenever he did anything he believed in its correctness and in his being on the right path. When he decided to fight against Amr son of Abd Wudd, the famous champion of Arabia he was warned by the Prophet and his companions about the consequences. He however, decided to fight because besides being brave he possessed enthusiasm to support Islam.

We repeat that when the enemies had encircled Ali from all sides he busied himself in offering prayers without there being any guard to protect him from the mischief of those enemies, and consequently Ibn Muljim succeeded in wounding him with his poisoned sword. This very thing is a great proof of the fact that he was certain of the correctness of what he did, because a righteous person does not fear anything.

All the words and acts of Ali go to prove that he had perfect and firm faith in his actions. This was so because all his actions emanated from wisdom and capability. [7]

When the people were divided into two groups in their attitude towards him (i.e. friends and enemies) he did not become afraid of the enemies and did not lay down arms before them, because he had perfect faith in his own truthfulness and justice and correctness of his actions. It was in this context that he said: “Even if I strike on the nose of a believer so that he may become my enemy he will not become my enemy and even if I shower all the bounties of the earth on him so that he may become friendly towards me he will not become my friend”. He has also said in this behalf. “I am not afraid of fighting against these people alone even though the entire world may join their army”.

When he came to know that a group of the people of Madina had joined Mu'awiya he wrote to Sahl son of Hanif the governor of Madina: “I understand that a group of the inhabitants of your city has secretly joined Mu'awiya. However, you should not be worried on this account that some persons will leave you and will not assist you. I swear by God that these persons have not forsaken injustice and oppression and have not stuck to equity and justice”.

1. The Arabs did not consider it proper to address the respectable persons with their real names. In case, therefore, they wished to accord respect to someone they addressed him with his Kuniyah.
2. According to the Christians `worship' consists of sequestered and monastic life. However, monasticism is not permissible in Islam. It was for this reason that the pious Muslims neither avoided effort in life nor kept aloof from other human beings. On the other hand at times they heroically staked their very lives even when it was expedient to remain silent (and they do so even in these times).
3. It is said that when Amr b. Aas came to fight against Ali in the Battle of Siffin he was very much afraid. He could think of no other alternative except that he should lie on the ground and uncover his private parts so that Ali might shut his eyes, and he himself might escape. He, therefore, did so and thus saved his life.
4. Ali assisted the caliphs because every action of his was for the sake of the benefit of Islam and he did not let the interests of the religion suffer in order to acquire his own right
5. In the free countries of the modern world the court and judges have been made permanent and none can remove them from their office. This has been done so that they may take decision without any fear or favour, and may give judgment against influential persons and even against the members of government.
6. Such incidents show that the leaders of the faith were very mindful of the rights of their subordinates. Those who make a show of supporting the helpless persons, and accuse religion of being an impediment in the matter of weak persons getting their due rights have not done as much for their subordinates as Imam Ali did.
7. Its reason was that Imam Ali was infallible and he said and did everything in accordance with the inspiration and traditions of the Prophet of Islam. Hence, he did not entertain any doubt about his views and actions..

Knowledge and sagacity of Ali

Ali was matchless so far as power of perception is concerned. The Islamic learning rotates on the pivot of his intellect. He was the fountain head of knowledge. There is no branch of science in Arabia which was not founded by him or in the foundation of which he was not the chief figure. We shall write in detail later about his great skill in social sciences, because this topic deserves to be discussed separately. In this chapter I propose to deal only briefly with his knowledge of jurisprudence, scholasticism and Arabic

literature, as well as his judicial acumen. I shall be brief because many others have written on this subject and some of them have conducted deep research. I shall, therefore, narrate briefly those facts which they have dealt with in detail, and shall narrate those things in detail which they have dealt with only briefly.

I begin with the Qur'an and the Hadith (tradition) and shall write about other sciences later so that it may become known as to how far the following words of the Prophet proved to be true about Ali:

"I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate"

Ali was brought up by his cousin. He became his disciple and adopted his habits and conduct. The Prophet's heritage became implanted in his heart and brain. He reflected over the Qur'an with the intellect and eye of a sage and learnt its latent realities. The circumstances provided him ample time to reflect over the Qur'an. So long as Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman remained busy with the caliphate, he kept his attention directed towards the Qur'an. He mastered its words and meanings. His tongue could recite it eloquently and his heart was immersed in it.

His knowledge of the traditions of the Prophet was such that none else could compete with him in the matter. And there is nothing surprising about it, because he was always associated with the Prophet and benefited from him more than any other companion or Mujahid did. Whatever heard by others was heard by him and whatever was heard by him was not necessarily heard by others.

It is a well-known fact that Ali did not narrate any Hadith from anyone except from the Prophet. This was so because he was certain that not even a word of the traditions of the Prophet was hidden from his ears and heart. He was asked: "How is it that you are superior to all other companions in the matter of the knowledge of Hadith?" He replied: "It is so because the Prophet told me whatever I enquired from him, and if I did not enquire about anything he himself made it known to me"

Ali was superior to all others in the matter of jurisprudence and Islamic learning just as he acted upon them in a better way than others. Those who were his contemporaries did not find a greater jurist and a greater judge than him. Abu Bakr and Umar always approached him for the solution of difficult problems. These two caliphs benefited much from his knowledge and wisdom. Other companions of the Prophet also consulted him for the solution of their problems. None could put forth better arguments than him with regard to legal problems.

As regards jurisprudence Ali's knowledge was not limited to text and orders. He was more adept than his contemporaries in other branches of learning also, as their knowledge is necessary for a jurist (for example mathematics).

Abu Hanifa is called 'the grand Imam' in the capacity of a jurist. He was a pupil of Ali, because he learnt jurisprudence from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq and the chain of his teachers when taken upwards, ended with Ali. In the same way Malik son of Anas was a pupil of Ali through a few intermediaries. Malik learnt

jurisprudence from Rabiya. He learnt it from Akrama. He learnt it from Abdullah and Abdullah learnt it from Ali.

Abdullah son of Abbas, who was the preceptor of all others, was asked: “What is the ratio of your knowledge to that of your cousin i.e. Ali. He replied: “The ratio is the same as exists between a drop and the ocean”.

The companions have unanimously quoted the Prophet as saying: “The best judge amongst you is Ali”. Ali excelled all other persons of his time in matters of law, because he knew the Qur'an and religious rules and regulations better than all others, and in Islam correct judgments depend on these two things.

He possessed such intelligence, wisdom and power of thinking that in the event of dispute he could give the most rational judgment. His conscience was so strong that he was capable of giving a conscientious and just decision after examining and understanding various aspects of a matter.

Umar ibn Khattab has been reported to have said: “O Abul Hasan! May that problem be not auspicious for the solution of which you are not available”.

While giving his judgment Ali had regard for the claimants as well as for the nation and the general public. This double consideration and regard on his part was inter-dependent. He was the first judge who proved the rights of the people from philosophical point of view and said that it is the duty of the rulers to pay due consideration to these rights. Besides in the case of claimants it is also necessary to observe justice in the case of all persons in the matter of general administration. People are under obligation to perform certain acts for the reformation of the society in which they live.

There is mutual relationship between the human beings, and the public laws have joined them with one another. It is necessary to respect these laws for the reformation of the nation and not only for achieving personal ends.

Ali established public laws and national unity, and treated all the individuals as one person in the matter of rights and responsibilities. In his orders and judgments he fully observed this principle which is being followed strictly by the civilized people of the present times.

One night Ali heard some afflicted person crying for help. He ran towards him at once and said: “The rescuer has come”. He saw that one man was holding another man by his collar. When he saw Ali he left his opponent. Then he said addressing Ali: “I sold a piece of cloth to this man for nine dirhams and did not also violate any condition of the bargain. He gave me base coins and when I asked him to give me good ones instead he abused and slapped me”.

Ali asked the buyer to take back the base coins and give the seller the good coins. Then he enquired from the other person whether he had any witness to confirm that the buyer had slapped him. He produced the requisite evidence. Thereupon Ali asked the buyer to sit down and told the other man to

take revenge. He, however, forgave him.

When Ali saw that the claimant had forsaken his right and forgiven the other person he did not press him to take revenge. He, however, kept this point in view in connection with this incident that it was necessary to take care of the rights of the common people and it was his duty to punish the oppressors so that the link of justice might remain firm amongst the people, and the rights of the nation might not be violated.

He also kept in view the fact that in every community there are many powerful and cruel persons who usurp the property and rights of the weak, and the latter cannot take back or demand their rights on account of weakness or fear, although it is only appropriate that their rights should not be encroached upon. He, therefore, thought within himself: “Who is there besides myself who should support them and claim their rights so that they may lead a peaceful social life and should rest assured that there is no distinction between the individuals in respect of social rights, and their rights are safe?”

In the case mentioned above, therefore, Ali let go the person who had been beaten but caught the aggressor by the hand and slapped him nine times in the presence of the other person saying: “This is the right of the ruler”.

Ali was not contented with the outward appearance of anything and was keen to go deep into all matters. He pondered over the Qur'an and the religion sagaciously in the same way in which other thinkers ponder over worldly matters.

No doubt a person possessing celestial power like Ali does not content himself with the apparent orders of the religion, the carrying out of prescribed duties and the formalities of worship. Mostly the people look at the religion and the orders relating to transactions and judgments in a superficial manner. However, Ali looked at their interior and realities also. He made these things the subject of his reflection and research, and proved that religion is based on the principles which are linked and related with one another. This led to the establishment of the science of scholasticism and Islamic philosophy. Ali was the first scholastic ('Arif) and founder of scholas– ticism. (For details see “On Ilmul Kalam wal Irfan, ISP 82)

The ancient scholastics drank deep from this fountainhead, because they acquired the elements and principles of scholasticism from him. The later scholastics also admit him to be their leader, because they also acquired guidance from him.

Wasil son of 'Ata was the chief and the central figure of Mu'tazila sect. This was the first sect in Islam which introduced reason into religion and advocated that the religious precepts should conform with the principles of logic, and the correctness of religion should be proved by means of reason.
Wasil son of 'Ata was the pupil of Abu Hashim son of Muhammad son of Hanafiya and his father Muhammad was the pupil of Ali.

The same thing can be said about the Asha'ira, because they were the pupils of the Mu'tazila, who

acquired knowledge from Wasil son of 'Ata, and he acquired it through some intermediaries from Ali.

The source and basis of Sufism lies in Nahj-al-Balaghah.

Before becoming aware of the Greek philosophy the Muslim Sufis had acknowledged the sayings of Ali to be the source of their ideas, because till that time Greek philosophy and Persian philosophy had not yet been transferred to the. Arabic language.

The Almighty God willed that as in the case of religious knowledge Ali should be the pillar and centre of Arabian learning. Not even one person in his time could compete with him in the matter of Arabic literature.

With his perfect knowledge of syntax, eloquent tongue and great power of thinking he formulated the rules and principles of correct Arabic language. He confirmed it with logical reasoning and arguments. His skill in logical reasoning can be realized from the fact that he laid the foundation of Arabian sciences and paved the way for others to promote them.

History shows that Ali was the founder of the science of syntax. One day Abu'l Aswad, who was one of his companions came and saw that Ali's head was bent down and he was reflecting about something. He said: "O Commander of the Faithful! What are you thinking about?" Ali replied: "In your city (i.e. Kufa) I have heard something which was expressed by the speaker in a wrong manner. I have, therefore, decided to write an elementary book on the principles of the Arabic language".

He then handed over a paper ro Abu'l Aswad on which it was written that the words are of three kinds: noun, verb and preposition.

This incident has also been narrated in another way and it has been said that Abu'l Aswad complained before Ali that the people usually spoke incorrect language, because since the time the Arabs had mingled, after their conquests, with the non-Arabs, incorrect phrases had penetrated into their conversation.

The Imam reflected a little and then asked Abu'l Aswad to write down what he was going to dictate. Abu'l Aswad procured a pen and a sheet of paper and then Ali said: "The Arabic language is composed of noun, verb and preposition. Noun tells about the things which bear that name, verb tells about the motion and action of that thing and preposition conveys a meaning which is neither noun nor verb". "Things are of three kinds viz. a patent thing, a latent thing and a thing which is neither patent nor latent". (Some scholars of syntax say that by the third kind of things Ali meant 'demonstrative pronoun').

Then he asked Abu'l Aswad to expand and complete the subject according to the same 'nahw' (i.e. method or manner). From that day onwards this branch of learning began to be called 'Nahw' (syntax).

One of the other attributes of Ali was his sharp intelligence and quick understanding. Often it so happened that whether it was an assembly of friends or a gathering of enemies he uttered extempore

wise words, which became proverbs and passed from one tongue to another. Difficult mathematical problems which were enigmas for others were solved by him in no time. It is said that a woman came in the presence of Ali and complained that her brother had died leaving behind six hundred dinars, but out of that money she had been given only one dinar. Ali replied: “Perhaps the heirs of your brother consist of one widow, two daughters, mother, twelve brothers and yourself”. And the position turned out to be the same as was mentioned by the Imam.

One day while Ali was delivering a sermon from the pulpit, one of those present said: “A man has died and he has left behind his widow, father, mother and two daughters”. Ali replied at once: “The one-eighth share of the widow will be changed into one-ninth. As the Imam gave this judgment while he was occupying the pulpit, the problem began to be called”. “Obligation of the Pulpit”.

Ali was the philosopher of Islam. Philosophy comes into existence by means of wisdom and intelligence and strong power of perception and inference. A philosopher is he who mentions a number of important matters in a brief narrative and endeavours to live according to his words.

Ali occupies the highest position not only among the philosophers of Islam, but also among the unique personalities of the human race.

It is very difficult to find a person like Ali who may infer theoretical and rational matters with the power of his intellect, and state them in beautiful and brief sentences in such a way that time may preserve them, and they may become proverbs. Islamic sciences and learning absorbed the colour of humanity in their paintings by means of celestial philosophy and their fountainhead were the two personalities viz. Muhammad and Ali.

The Imam looked philosophically at the secrets of creation, human life and society and numerous sayings with regard to the Oneness of God, divine matters, and metaphysics, are available. We have already remarked above that he was the founder of scholasticism and theology. He was a preceptor, whose skill and leadership has been admitted by every person, who came after him with his own view or remark. In Nahj al-Balaghah he has strung so many pearls of wisdom that, time has made him stand in the first row of the philosophers of the world. Muhammad in fact referred to Ali when he said: “The scholars among my followers are like the Prophets of descendants of Israel”.

Human rights and Ali

A Difficult Test

By God! I admit the truth myself before any evidence is given against me.

Our matter is very difficult. Our words can be understood only by the honest hearts and the far-sighted intellects. (Imam Ali).

Ali formulated such firm rules and presented such solid views for the rights of the human beings and the welfare of the human society, that their roots penetrate into the depths of the earth and their branches extend upto the heavens. All the social sciences which are prevalent at present mostly confirm these views and principles. Although these modern social sciences may be given many names, and may be presented in various forms, their object is one and one only that the human being should be protected from oppression and there should be formed a society which should protect human rights in a better way - a society in which human dignity should be respected and the freedom of word and action should be safe to such an extent that none should be hurt.

The conditions and circumstances of time have a great effect on the creation of social sciences. It is these very conditions and circumstances which present social sciences in one shape at one time and in another shape at another time.

When we study history and come across various events we come to know that there has been a conflict between two different groups of human beings and two different views and ideas. One group has been keen to be despotic and to usurp the rights of the common man and to eliminate his freedom, whereas the other group has been desirous of justice, democracy, preservation of the rights of the people and their freedom.

During the past all useful movements were started by the oppressed and the reformers always rose from amongst them so that they might put an end to oppression and injustice and establish governments on the foundation of equity and justice which should accord with reason as well as the conditions and circumstances of the society.

Ali enjoys a very high position in the history of human rights. His views were linked with the thinking of Islam. The central point of his views was that despotism should come to an end, and class discrimination should be eliminated from amongst the people. Whoever has recognized Ali and heard his remarks and understood his beliefs and views about human brotherhood knows that he was a sword drawn on the necks of the tyrants. His entire attention was directed towards the enforcement of the rules of equity and justice.

His thoughts and manners and his government and polities were all dedicated to the achievement of this purpose. Whenever any oppressor encroached upon the rights of the people or treated the weak in a humiliating manner or ignored their welfare and threw his own burden on their weak shoulders, Ali gave

him a tough fight.

The mental upbringing of the Imam took place with this thinking that equity and justice should be enforced in such a way that equality should be established and one class should not enjoy any supremacy over another class and every person should receive that to which he is entitled. His voice remained loud continuously for the enforcement of justice, and his mace always remained active to achieve this end. He elevated man and always remained ready to protect him. His government was the best specimen of administration during that period. It was a government which was just and the protector of human rights, and one, which achieved its end by all possible means.

The Imam realized it clearly that the society of that time was based on fraud, deceit and harmful activities, and its reformation was necessary. He also knew well how that society could be reformed and how much time it would take to do so. Although he thought of the welfare of the people in all respects, the things to which he paid his attention most was their reformation. Nothing could stop him from making efforts in this behalf. What he desired most was to establish truth and destroy falsehood and none else could be more capable of making distinction between truth and falsehood.

Ali assessed things correctly and engaged himself in his task fearlessly according to his calculations. He never entertained any doubt with regard to anything related to public welfare. As and when any officer or governor oppressed the subjects Ali neither sat quiet nor connived at their actions. He never displayed slackness when he found that some persons had formed a group against the true government. At times his plans to achieve his ends were opposed not only to the wishes of his enemies but to those of his friends as well, but he did not mind this.

All this was done by him so that the right of every person to lead a peaceful life might be ensured, and the people should not be divided into two groups, one of whom should be very happy and the other should be very much grieved.

Ali had clearly understood that it will be very dangerous to divide the people into two classes and to prefer one of them to the other. This will retard the intellects, create malice in the spirits, and introduce oppression and injustice in the judgments and transactions, and all sorts of mischiefs and corruptions will appear. The result will be that ambition for life will die and the people will become pessimistic and will entertain ill-will towards one another. Consequently the society will be ruined. So long as these two classes exist in a society a conflict between them is inevitable and it will involve the loss of many lives.

During the last days of the caliphate of Uthman the dignitaries of the state and especially the members of the Umayyad family, who were the kinsmen and relatives of the caliph had made it a practice that they openly opposed the Islamic rules and regulations. They humiliated the people, treated them like slaves and made them so much afraid of the ruler that they could not pick up courage to stand before him and mention their grievances. They played with their lives in the same manner in which they played with their property. They did not refrain from shedding the blood of the people for their personal benefit and none

could dare take revenge. They were not afraid of taking bribes or looting the property of others.

Their continuous activities, conditions and circumstances showed what their intentions were. It was clear that they were going to besmear their hands with the blood of the people, to trample upon their rights and to change the caliphate into kingship and the Islamic democracy into despotism and dictatorship of an individual. The position of the members of this party, between the very just conduct of Ali and their personal avarice, was that of gamblers.

On the one hand Ali was determined to enforce equity and justice with all his might, and on the other hand these persons were keen to have the reins of government in their own hands and to possess as much wealth and property as possible. Between these two conditions they acted like gamblers, hoping to seize an opportunity to bring about a revolution and consequently to appropriate all benefits themselves, entertaining the worst passions and desires in their minds.

There is no doubt about the fact that the responsibility assumed by Ali was very difficult and onerous. Various reasons and intricate circumstances had made Ali face many difficulties which could not be overcome easily. The world of that time was topsy turvy, the conditions were revolutionary and the events were frightening and the responsibilities of Ali were so great and burdensome that the caliphate and the religion of Islam depended on them. By solving these problems and overcoming these difficulties Ali performed a task which made his qualities known to the world. The world came to know how mindful he was of public rights, how determined he was to promote individual and collective virtues, and with what patience and perseverance he achieved his objects.

Ali's difficulties were just like the difficulties experienced by the Prophet when he made known to Quraysh that he had been appointed to the Prophetic mission and they had turned against him. On the one side there was truth and justice and equity and equality, and on the other side there was treachery, profiteering and egotism. The Prophet wanted to introduce truth, justice, equity and equality whereas the Quraysh were bent upon practising treachery, profiteering and egotism.

Ali had also to face a similar difficulty. However, it was viewed to be a difficulty by others. So far as Ali was concerned even the greatest difficulty could not make him deviate from his object. If another person possesses the strength and perseverance which Almighty God had given to Ali every difficulty will become easy for him as well. What was intolerable for Ali was that he should sit in seclusion and not enforce equity and justice – that he should crush the spirit of freedom and not sow the seeds of virtue.

The Prophet blew a voice in the ears of Abu Sufyan, Abu Lahab, Umm Jamil, Hind – the liver–eater, and the Quraysh tradesmen, on account of which the foundations of their plans were demolished, their structure was broken and their roofs came down on the ground. However, this very voice was a good tidings and a message of happiness for the Muslims and the helpless people. He said to Abu Talib: “Dear Uncle! Even if these people place the sun on my right hand and the moon on my left hand so that I may abandon the invitation to Islam I shall not do so till Almighty God makes this religion victorious or I

lay down my life".

One day the elders of Quraysh said to Muhammad: "If you have introduced this new religion in order to accumulate wealth we shall place so much wealth at your disposal that you will become the richest person amongst us. If your object is to acquire high position, we are prepared to acknowledge you to be our chief. And if you want to become a king we are ready to accept you as our king".

He said in reply: "My object in inviting people to Islam is not to acquire wealth or position, nor am I desirous of becoming your king. I extend this invitation because God has sent me to you in the capacity of a Prophet and has revealed the Book to me. He has ordered me to warn you of His torture and to give you good tidings of Paradise. I have conveyed God's message to you. If you accept it you will be prosperous in this world as well as in the Hereafter, and if you reject it I shall remain patient till God gives His judgment about you and myself".

What did Ali do? What was his attitude towards the son of Abu Sufyan and Hind, the liver-eater, and towards the traders, who bought and sold positions and offices, and towards the soldiery, who blindly sacrificed their lives for the benefit of others, and towards those, who had sold their religion and beliefs at the hands of falsehood? Ali also blew a voice in their ears which demolished the foundations of their designs, and made their structures and roofs collapse. And this very voice became the good news of happiness and message of comfort for the righteous and pious persons. He said: "Your powerful are weak and your weak are powerful. So long as the stars revolve in the sky I shall not at all give a judgment opposed to justice. By God I shall do justice so far as the oppressor and the oppressed persons are concerned. I shall put a cavessor in the nose of the oppressor and pull him towards truth even if he may dislike it most. I swear by God that I admit the truth before any evidence is given against me. I do not care whether I myself am walking -towards death or death is coming towards me".

One day some persons said to Ali "We are respectable members of the community". He said to them: "An abject person is respectable in my eyes till I recover his right and the respectable person is weak in my eyes till I recover the right (of the weak person) from him".

We shall now examine how far Ali put these words of his into practice and how he dealt with the people.

Poverty and its consequences

Ali looked at the world intently. He looked at every aspect of it without any exception. He kept the individual as well as the collective rights of the people in mind and did not ignore anything. He invited the people to look at the beauty of the world and the wonders of creation and simultaneously informed the individuals as well as the society of their rights so that they might acquire the greatest bliss and

prosperity. He explained the rights of the individuals and the society so that the individuals should help one another by mutual co-operation and endeavour for the permanence and prosperity of the society and may benefit from it in their individual capacity.

Man is composed of three things viz. spirit, body and sentiments. Body is the material part of man. It also enjoys a right which must be respected.
Ali whose efforts were centred on the refinement of the self and good morals also endeavoured to lay the foundation of the society on equity and justice and to enact just laws for the material and worldly life of man.

It was also the object of Ali to guide the people to the purity of heart and the acquisition of good conduct, and to nurture and train their conscience in such a way that they might shun bad habits of their own accord and adorn themselves with good qualities. However, it is not possible to develop good habits until one has food to eat and dress to wear and the people cannot acquire means of livelihood until justice prevails. Hence the program of reformation and refinement should commence with the provision of necessities of life like food, dress etc. The people can become interested in the refinement of self and good morals only after these necessities have been provided. This was the object of desire of Ali before as well as after he attained to caliphate.

How can a labourer, who works hard throughout the day, enjoy the sceneries of the world and ponder over the signs of the Might of God when he does not get his full wages and is exploited by the profiteers and the money-lenders? How can he become inclined to virtues and good morals when he is fed up with his very life?

How can those helpless persons understand the meaning of refinement of self who weep when whipped by their rulers and consider their lives useless - whose very lives are owned by the rulers, who are expected to serve and assist them but who actually exploit them?

There are many indigent persons who do not possess even a penny. However, the collector of revenue confiscates whatever property they possess so as to fill the treasures of the pleasure loving rulers. They do not have even a loaf of bread to eat and their lives and property are also not safe. However, if they utter even a word against the rulers their very lives become subjected to trouble. How can such poor people reflect over the secrets and mysteries of the universe and make efforts to refine their conduct? When indigence has estranged a person from every goodness and has destroyed his peace of mind, and he has lost interest in everything, and tyrants have tied his hands and feet, and it is not at all possible for him to regain freedom, how is it possible for him to be truthful, pure-hearted and virtuous, and to be free from envy and grudge, and not to deviate from the path of goodness and piety?

When hunger has inflamed a fire in the heart of a person which consumes every drop of his blood and eliminates his faith, how can he enjoy life, and believe in the justice of the people, sympathize with his brothers, and live kindly with his kinsmen and relatives?

How can a person love others when his hands and feet are tied with inferiority complex and servitude, and when he has no interest left in life and considers it to be useless?

A person who does not have anything to eat cannot possess the qualities of goodness and piety, because food is the first support for every class and the means of peace of mind. It is food which enables a person to reflect, and makes him adopt good morals, and show good behaviour towards others.

Freedom from indigence is the thing which extricates man from abjectness and affliction and elevates him to the top of prosperity. Indigence slackens human sentiments. Poor and helpless persons consider themselves to be strangers in their own city. They feel that their city is not their city and their relatives are not their relatives and they themselves are good–for–nothing.

As the indigent and needy persons do not consider themselves to be fit for good deeds and excellent qualities, they can get rid of this inferiority complex only when they become safe from poverty. Only at that time can they believe that they too can become good citizens and can free their hearts from the feelings of envy and grudge.

There were some hypocrites who used to say that the only means of maintaining law and order was that the people should remain divided into two groups – those who were satiated, and those who were hungry. According to them it was not necessary for the satiated to submit before the exigencies of life – the life which is loved by all – nor was it necessary for them to desire any change in their own condition or that of others. They wanted that status might be maintained in the world. According to these hypocrites the hungry were also not entitled to claim their usurped right nor could they cry for the loaf which had been snatched away from them and placed on the dinner table of the capitalists.

If a hungry person claimed his rights and protested against bread being pulled out of the mouth of his children, he was styled to be an infidel and a mischief–monger, who disturbed the people leading a peaceful life.

These hypocrites resorted to new devices every now and then to protect the means of their lives of enjoyment and pleasure and to keep the indigent persons enslaved. They used various weapons in the remote as well as the near past, to achieve these ends. Their main weapon was the wrong interpretation of the religious orders. This policy has not been peculiar to the Muslims. It has been adopted by all hypocrites claiming to profess Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity or Islam.

The most simple weapon, of which the hypocrites took advantage, was their claim that the Prophets have invited the people to abstemiousness, insisted upon forsaking worldly pleasures and affluence, preferred indigence and poverty, and encouraged the life of contentment and inaction instead of making any effort. [1]

The hypocrites give much publicity to their abovementioned views and desire that the common man

should accept them as correct, so that others may remain deprived, and they themselves may continue to be rich and may enjoy the pleasures of life. It is necessary that to counteract their false propaganda we should clarify the true position. It is only by doing so that we can find out the foundation on which the policies of Ali and the orders given by him were based.

It is true that the world was removed from under the feet of Muhammad and spread under the feet of others. All the worldly pleasures and adornments were prohibited for him. He was an extremely abstemious person. He never ate his fill and whatever food he ate was not very rich. He left the world in the manner as mentioned by Abu Dharr: “The Prophet never ate two kinds of food during one day. When he ate dates he did not eat bread. Often it so happened that food was not cooked in his house for many months consecutively”.

It is also true that Ali considered only two sheets of cloth to be sufficient for himself and also contented himself with only two loaves of bread per day. His house also resembled the house of the poor people. The instances of his abstemiousness and contentment are numerous and so well known that it is not necessary to recount them here.

It is also true that his companions like Abu Dharr contented himself with dry barley bread. He as well as the members of his family ate such bread and were quite happy and contented with it.

All these things are true and correct. However, there is something else also which is also correct. All of them were responsible for the education and guidance of the people and held the high office of `guide' and `leader'. Realizing the responsibility attached to their office they considered a very small quantity of food and other necessities to be sufficient for themselves and remained contented. However, every person cannot be like them and cannot endure the hardships which were endured by them, nor can that light, which illuminated their hearts and made them active, kindle in every heart. Furthermore, they were so much concerned about the welfare of their followers that they did not pay much heed to their own food, dress and comfort. 2

Those who have studied the lives of these leaders of the world, must have realized in the very first instance that they were the standard-bearers of revolution, and their objects were associated with the revolution. Whatever they did was for the welfare of the people and they did it with the help of the people. In order to make the revolution successful they adopted the methods which were suited to their country. Some of the leaders of the revolution were those who were killed, for example Ali son of Abu Talib and some were those, whom the enemies could do no harm, for example the Prophet Muhammad.

It was not possible for the leaders of the revolution to live a life of luxury and pleasure, because the nature of the revolution did not permit them to do so. Peace of mind is a pre-requisite for a life of pleasure and such peace of mind was not enjoyed by these leaders.

The second thing is this that the first target of the enemies of revolution is the leader of the revolution. Until and unless the revolution succeeds, his life remains constantly in danger, and he remains

subjected to oppression and persecution. Now how can it be possible for a man, whose life is constantly in danger, to enjoy the worldly bounties and pleasures? This can be possible for him only if his revolution succeeds or he abandons the revolution.

However, it is also a fact that the leaders of the revolution were free to lead the type of life they liked and to be contented with such necessities of life as they considered to be sufficient. None could object to their selecting or not selecting a particular thing for themselves. They had themselves adopted the life of abstemiousness and contentment, but had not compelled others to adopt it.

Besides all other things, was Jesus Christ not accused by the Romans of instigating the people to rise against Kaiser, and stopping them from paying him the taxes, as a consequence of which he (Christ) was tried and sentenced to death?

Why did Christ stop the people from paying the taxes to the Kaiser? Was it not on account of the bread which Kaiser and his officials snatched away from the indigent, the hungry and the orphans? Did not the Jewish priests of Jerusalem tell the representative of Kaiser in order to support the Kaiser's system of government according to which the poor were exploited and the capitalists became rich that if he did not crucify Jesus Christ he was not a friend of the Kaiser?

It was Muhammad, the brother of Christ, who rose against the oppressive society of that time, wherein there was a great friction between the oppressors and the oppressed. The Qur'an addresses the people through him in these words:
"..Walk on the earth and eat and drink what has been provided to you by God." (***67:15***)

Here the people have been directed to eat and drink because life depends on these acts. This direction has been given to all the people and not to a particular class. Every person is entitled to work and earn his livelihood.

On another occasion it has been said:
"Man should have a look on his food, We sent rains from the heavens, split the earth, sowed the seeds in it and made the vine and sugar-cane and olive and date trees grow from it. We created green gardens and fresh fruits". (***80:24-31***)

There is a hadith of the Prophet wherein he has been reported to have said: "There are three things in which the people have equal shares – water, vegetation and fire".

Every person has an equal share in the water which God sends down from above, or lets flow on the earth. However, if a person digs a canal to procure water or stocks water, others are not entitled to take that water from him, because he has a prior right over it. Similarly the vegetation, which grows naturally and none is entitled to appropriate it to himself to the exclusion of others. Similarly if a person kindles fire he cannot deprive another person of it, because if someone lights his lamp with that fire it will not diminish.

During the age of ignorance it was the custom that the chief or the ruler appropriated to himself any piece of land he liked for grazing his camels and other animals. The animals belonging to other persons were not permitted to enter or graze in that area. His own animals could, however, graze in the common land utilized by all other people. This was one of the oppressive methods which were adopted during that age. The Prophet abolished this tyrannical custom along with many others.

The Prophet paid full wages to the labourers and also directed others to follow his example so that there might not remain any needy and poor person in the society. As and when revenue money was received by him from some place he distributed the share of his companions amongst them in the first instance and gave his daughter Fatima her share afterwards. His intention in doing so was that the needs of the common people should be met first.

We do not wish to dilate upon here on the subject of the attitude of Muhammad in the matter of wealth and indigence. We have already mentioned in detail in a previous chapter how Islam has encouraged the people to do useful work so that no needy person may remain in the society so much so that in Islam a useful work is more commendable than recommended prayers and fasting. Prophet Muhammad who did not like poverty and dependence on others has been reported to have said: “It is likely that indigence may change into blasphemy”.

In a subsequent chapter we shall explain how the far-sighted Prophet of Islam understood innumerable secrets and mysteries related to the society and how he encouraged the people to make their lives happy.

Abu Dharr Ghaffari was an abstemious and contented person who did not care much for worldly comforts. Although he chose to lead an insipid life, he put up a severe and serious fight against indigence, and laid down his life while campaigning in support of the rights of the people. The following sentence uttered by him is very attractive: “When indigence proceeds to a city blasphemy requests for its company”.

The Umayyads and the latter rulers made their best endeavours for the continuance of their power and authority. To achieve this purpose they instigated their associates and employees to narrate forged traditions attributing them to the Prophet so that they might be helpful for exploiting the people and keeping them enslaved.[3] Their proteges therefore coined and narrated

many new traditions wherein the people were advised to remain patient, bear the oppression by the rulers and carry out their orders indisputably.

The second question is that if these remarks of the Prophet are genuine from the historical point of view why did the companions acted against them at the time of his death when there was a dispute about the caliphate, succession and inheritance?

Furthermore, why were these traditions not put forth and the people advised to remain patient when

there was a dispute about those who declined to pay zakat, being declared apostates or not, and also when the caliph Uthman was attacked and the people wanted to kill him?

Ayesha was the favourite wife of the Prophet and remembered many traditions by heart. Talha and Zubayr were also the close companions of the Prophet and had been given the good tidings that they would go to Paradise. Why did these persons not recollect these traditions and why did they revolt against Ali?

Furthermore the traditions are directly opposed to many Quranic verses and authentic traditions and they have no relationship with the nature of the Prophet and Islamic philosophy. For example: It has been said in Surah al-Baqarah:

"Fight in the path of God and remember that He is the Hearer, the Knower". (***2:244***)

In Surah al-Ma'ida the Qur'an says:

"The punishment for those who fight against the Prophet of God and create mischief in the world is that they should be killed or hanged or their hands and feet should be cut off". (***5:33***)

In Surah al-Mujadilah it is said:

"You will not see those who believe in God and the Day of Judgment befriending the enemies of God and His Prophet even though they may be their fathers, sons, brothers or kinsmen". (***58:22***)

In Surah al-Mumtahinah it has been said:

"O you who believe! Do not befriend those who have become subjected to the wrath of God…" (***60:13***)

These are some Qur'anic verses which are clearly opposed to the aforesaid forged traditions. Now we quote below some traditions which are opposed to them.

Imam Muslim quotes from Abdullah son of Mas'ud on different authorities that the Prophet said: "Amongst the followers of the Prophets, who were appointed to the prophetic missions, they were their apostles and companions, who followed the traditions and orders of the Prophet concerned. These apostles and companions were succeeded by persons who said one thing and did another thing, and performed acts which were not allowed. Whoever fights against such persons with his hands, tongue or heart is a believer". (Sahih Muslim, Vol. 1)

Ahu Sa'id Khudri has been quoted to have said that he heard the Prophet saying: "Whoever sees such persons committing indecent acts should stop them with his hands. If he cannot stop them with his hands he should stop them with his tongue. And if he cannot do even that he should condemn them in his heart. And this is the lowest stage of faith". (Futuhat al-Zahabiya)

In short whoever has studied the lives of the Prophets carefully knows that they disliked indigence and warned of Hell-fire those hypocrites, who invited the people towards poverty. If it had not been so the capitalists would not have been enemies of these prophets and the weak and helpless persons would not have gathered around them.

The sayings of the ancient sages of Arabia go to show that they knew well that the actions of a person in his individual capacity have a close relationship with the system of the society. They were well aware that the availability of the means of livelihood has a great effect on the purity of the disposition, morality and habits of man. The contentment which is commendable does not mean that man should do nothing and should be concerned only with self-indulgence, which brings about indigence, destroys good habits and eliminates faith.

It is also not right to say that man's entire attention should be directed towards the training of his soul and the body should be neglected, because obedience to law is not possible when one's belly is empty. It is only great men who remain patient like Abu Dharr, even if they are indigent, and every person does not possess the patience and perseverance which was peculiar to Abu Dharr.

According to Sa'adi of Shiraz the Prophet's remark: “Indigence is a matter of pride for man” refers to those people who were champions of the field of obedience to God and Divine pleasure and not to the poverty of those who wear the dress of righteous men and take food regularly at the expense of others. And the sentence: `Contentment is an unlimited treasure' has not been uttered for the idle persons who do nothing. It has in fact been uttered with reference to those covetous wealthy persons and unjust rulers who are not contented with anything and are not satisfied even if all the bounties of the world are placed at their disposal.

The entire life of Ali was spent in improving the condition of the people and relieving them of need and indigence. As we shall explain later this was the very basis of his government. Ali himself was the greatest abstemious person, who was free from all worldly taints. However, he did not at all like that others too should remain contented with poverty. If it had not been so he would not have started a campaign against the rich and powerful persons, and against those who usurped the property acquired by them unlawfully, and distributed it amongst the poor and the needy.

Tha`labi narrates an incident in these words: “One day during my childhood I went to the ground of Rahba in Kufa. There I saw Ali standing on two heaps of gold and silver. Later he began distributing that wealth and distributed all of it. Then he returned home in such a condition that he did not take anything with himself. The same Ali who did not take anything out of the said wealth says addressing the people: “Remain busy for your worldly profit in the same way as if you had to stay in this world permanently”.

Nothing was more important in the eyes of Ali than eliminating the indigence of the people. In this connection he has made an explicit statement which cannot be explained away in any other manner. He says: “If you continue to walk on the highway of truth the paths will welcome you and none of you will

get involved in indigence".

Besides attacking the ways and manners followed by the Arabs during the age of ignorance he also criticized their dervish-like contentment. He says: "O Arabs! You lived in hard stones, drank turbid water and ate rotten food like the indigent persons".

Ali's words show that it was not that he disliked delicious food, fine clothes and a magnificent house, what he did not like was that he himself should lead a comfortable life whereas others might not be possessing those facilities. His explicit remarks show that it was his earnest desires that every person should have sufficient means of livelihood at his disposal. Ali was the leader of the people and it is the duty of a leader to lead as hard a life as his followers do, till indigence in the society is eliminated. When there is no indigent person left in the society the indigence of the leader too will necessarily come to an end.

His way of living will be similar to that of the other people, because failing that leadership and chiefdom will become meaningless, Ali says: "Should I content myself with this that people call me the Commander of the Faithful and that I should not participate with them in the matter of the abominable things of the time?" By the `abominable things' he meant the hardship of poverty.

Ali did not allow his daughter to adorn herself with pearls as the daughters of many others were not in a position to adorn themselves in this manner. As has been mentioned in the foregoing pages he ordered her emphatically to return the pearl necklace to the treasury saying: "O daughter of the son of Abu Talib! Do not deviate from the right path. Do all the women of the Muhajirs and the Ansar adorn themselves on Eid day in this manner?" He said "all the women" and not "the women of the nobility".

When Ali attained to the caliphate the first thing which he did was this that he endeavoured to do away with the poverty of the people. And this was what Ali ought to have done, because he knew fully well that though man has to suffer many hardships, indigence is the greatest calamity for him. It was he who uttered these words: "God has not involved man in any hardship which may be greater than indigence". This sentence shows firstly that he considered the removal of the indigence of the people to be absolutely necessary and secondly that he had made a perfectly correct assessment of the condition and circumstances of the people and the outcome thereof.

Some persons have praised indigence much and have invited the people towards it. However, their thinking is not correct. Ali campaigned against indigence in the same manner in which the Prophet and Abu Dharr Ghiffari, the great revolutionary and foremost among Ali's supporters, and the victim of the tyrant Ummayyads, campaigned against it.

The Prophet as well as Ali and Abu Dharr knew that indigence destroys every quality so much so that it becomes the cause of blasphemy on the part of the pious believers. It was for this reason that Ali fought against it on every occasion and humiliated those who invited the people towards it. According to the belief of Ali indigence makes a wise person deaf and dumb. It is on account of indigence that the

inhabitants of the same city become strangers and even enemies of one another. There is no doubt about the fact that death is a great calamity but indigence is worse than death. Ali says: “Indigence is the greatest death”.

This is the sentence which Ali uttered against indigence and against those who preached indigence which pulls down the edifice of their falsehood and deceit: “If indigence comes before me in the form of a human being I shall kill it”.

In the eyes of Ali the human society is like a body which is not composed of antithetical elements nor its system based on discrimination in the matter of rights and liabilities, so that some persons may do whatever they like without there being anyone to restrain them, and others should be helpless without there being anyone to assist them.

In the society which was liked by Ali it was not permissible that one group should grow fat and the other should be reduced to a skeleton or that one group should work and the other group should reap the benefits.

Although Ali was a great spiritual person whose attention was always directed towards God there did not pass even a day when he might have been unmindful of the affairs of the people, or might have ignored even their most trivial matters, because he considered man to be the best specimen of the most excellent creation. He looked at the world and its inhabitants exactly in the same manner in which the Prophet looked at them.

The Qur'an says:
“We have made the night to serve as a dress and the day for earning livelihood”. (***78: 10-11***)

He made this divine revelation the basis for centralizing his attention on the human society. He revived the social laws and remained busy in correcting and improving them so that a lucky and prosperous society might come into being. He utilized his sermons and recommendations on their proper occasions and informed the people of their duties and responsibilities.

Ali was most anxious to enforce equity and justice. His main object was that justice should be established. After he attained to the caliphate some persons came to congratulate him and found him busy in mending his shoes. He said to them: “If I cannot establish truth and annihilate falsehood these shoes of mine would be dearer to me than the rulership”.

He always desired those pious persons, who were anxious for the Hereafter, to serve the public to gain the bounties of the next world. He said: “Only that person, who works for the welfare of the people, will be prosperous in the Hereafter. And the best things which can be done in connection with public welfare are these: to feed the hungry; to provide water to the thirsty; to provide dress to those who do not have it; to inform the people of their rights and duties; and to protect the rights of others”.

One day the Commander of the Faithful paid a visit to one of his companions named 'Ala son of Ziad Harasi. When he saw how spacious his house was he said to him: “Of what use to you is the spaciousness of this house in this world, when you stand more in need of a spacious house in the Hereafter where you have to live eternally. Of course, if you also desire a spacious house in the Hereafter you should entertain guests in this house, behave well with your kinsmen and pay the rights of others on appropriate occasions. If you do so you will be successful in the next world”.

While explaining the importance of fasting and prayers he said to Kumail son of Ziad: “O Kumail! It is not important that you should offer prayers, observe fast and pay Zakat. What is important is that you should offer prayers with a pure heart and in accordance with the desire of God”.

Even before the Hereafter he was so anxious about the life of the people in this world that inspite of his being the caliph he went to the Bazars of Kufa as a matter of daily routine, stopped at every shop and said: “O merchants! Fear God. Seek proximity to the customers. Adorn yourselves with the forbearance. Don't swear. Don't tell lies. Avoid injustice. Be just to the oppressed and weigh and measure properly. Don't give the people lesser than their due. Don't spread corruption in the world”.

Nauf Bukali has been reported to have said: “I went and saw the Commander of the Faithful in the Masjid of Kufa. I saluted him and he replied to the salutation. I said: “O Commander of the Faithful! Give me a piece of advice”. He said: “Be good to the people and God will do good to you”. I requested him to say something more. He said: “Nauf! If you wish to be with me on the Day of Judgment you must not help the oppressors”.

In short the central point of the policy of Ali was service of mankind, meeting their needs and elimination of injustice. Once the Prophet looked at him and said: “O Ali! God has adorned you with an adornment which is the best adornment in His eyes. He has endowed you with love for the weak. May it be pleasing to you that they should be your followers and happy and satisfied on account of your being their Imam”.

1. As much has been said about the excellence of the renouncement of the world and piety it is possible that some persons may think that the acquisition of worldly things is totally prohibited in Islam. It is, therefore, necessary to clarify that there are different stages of piety and the duties and responsibilities of the Prophets, saints and the other chosen servants of God are also different from the common people. So far as the common people are concerned the definition and the limits of piety recommended to them have also been specified clearly. Imam Ali said: “The essence of piety has been mentioned in the Qur'an in two sentences. Almighty God has said: “You may not grieve for what you have missed, nor rejoice in what God has given you” (57:23). By following this verse one attains perfect piety”. God says: “O you who believe! Do not make unlawful for yourselves the things which God has made lawful for you, and do not transgress the limits. God does not like those who transgress” (5:87). God also says: “(O Prophet!) Ask them as to who has made unlawful the ornamental things and the pure edibles which God has created for his slaves ?” (7:32) The verses quoted above go to show that just as it is not permissible to treat lawful the things which God has declared unlawful, it is not permissible to treat unlawful – the pure things and means of adornment declared lawful by God, and it is also not allowed to make a vow not to use lawful things. Such a vow is not enforceable in religious law. Imam Ali says: “Piety in the world means diminishing one's desire, thanking God for His blessings and abstaining from things made unlawful by God”. (Jame` al-Sa`adat) Ali says: “Piety in the world does not mean that property should be destroyed or lawful things should be treated to be unlawful. On the contrary it means that you should not depend more on the worldly things which you possess as compared with that which is with

God". (Jame' al-Sa'adat)
Ali also says: "If one acquires possession of everything on earth and his object by doing so is to acquire the pleasure of God he is a pious person, and if he forsakes the entire world but his object in doing so is not divine pleasure, he is not pious".
Someone asked Imam Ali: "What is piety?" He replied: "To avoid unlawful things of the world". In short the goodness or badness of worldly things depends on one's intention. If the intention is good and the worldly things are acquired to serve as means of happiness in the Hereafter, one's action is praiseworthy, otherwise it deserves to be condemned.
2. In order to keep the morals and mentality of the indigent persons high the representatives of the Islamic government have been directed to lead simple lives. They should keep themselves at the level of the indigent and associate freely with them as was the method of the Prophet.
It has been reported in connection with the ways and manners of the Prophet that he said: "I shall not abandon five things till my death viz. taking meals along with the slaves, sitting on earth, milking the sheep with my own hands, wearing woolen clothes, and saluting the children, so that it should become a general tradition after me".
Imam Ali has said: "God has made me the Imam of the people and has made it obligatory for me to reduce my personal comfort and food to such an extent that my standard of living should become equal to that of the indigent, so that the indigent may follow the example of my way of life, and the rich may not become rebellious on account of their wealth".
3. Sometimes Bani Umayyah themselves coined such traditions and at other times this task was performed for them by their associate or paid ulema. We give below some examples of such forged traditions and baseless anecdotes: Imam Bukhari has quoted from Abdullah ibn Umar as below from different authorities:
The Prophet said: "After me you will soon be faced with distinction without a difference and undesirable acts". The companions enquired: "O Prophet of God! What are your orders for us (in such circumstances)". The Prophet replied: "Pay those rulers their rights and seek your own rights from God" (Sahih Bukhari vol.8).
He has also quoted Ibn Abbas as having said: The Prophet said: "If a person observes something from his king which he abhors, he should observe patience, because whoever separates from the nation even to the extent of a span will die the death of ignorance". (Sahih Bukhari vol.8)
Bukhari has reported on different authorities from Alqama bin Wail Hazrami as having said: "Muslim bin Zaid Jo'fi asked the Prophet: "O Prophet of God! What are your orders in the event of some persons becoming our rulers, who demand their rights from us but do not pay our rights? The Prophet turned away his face from him. Muslim repeated his question. The Prophet turned away his face from him once again. Muslim asked the same question for the third time. Thereupon Ash'ath bin Qais pulled him and the Prophet replied: "You must bear what they say. Their responsibilities rest with them and your responsibilities rest with you". (Sahih Bukhari vol.2, page 119)
Bukhari has quoted Ajrafa as having said that he heard the Prophet saying: "Very soon untoward things will happen. If any person wants to create a split in the nation strike him with a sword, whatever the case maybe". (Sahih Bukhari Vol.2, p.211)
Bukhari has also reported Abu Sa'id Khudari as saying that the Prophet said: "When oath of allegiance for two caliphs has taken place kill the one for whom the oath has been taken later". (Sahih Bukhari, vol.2, p.122)
There are numerous traditions on the subject and the purport of all of them is this that the Muslims must remain obedient to the government of the time and should not complain against the king however tyrannical he may be, because by doing so that will create split and differences among the Muslims.
The gist of all these traditions is given in the following Hadith: "Disturbances will appear soon. During these disturbances one who is sitting will be in a better position than the one who is standing, and the one who is standing will be in a better position than the one who is walking, and one who is walking will be in a better position than the one who is running. And if at that time a person finds a place of refuge he should go into it". (Musnad Imam Ahmad, vol.2, page 282)
The above quoted traditions show that fearing split amongst his followers the Prophet insisted upon their remaining faithful to their rulers even though they might be guilty of unlawful acts. This would mean that the Prophet was anxious that the unity of the Muslims should be maintained at all cost even though the religion brought by him was destroyed. In that case the first question which arises is this that if the Prophet was so anxious for the unity of the Muslims that he preferred it even to the religion of Islam why did he create a split among the polytheist Arabs by inviting them to Islam? The Arabs were united on the point of polytheism and idol-worship, but he created a rift among them by introducing a new religion. He

broke their idols and trampled upon their beliefs although these were the things which they loved most.

Conditions prior to Ali

Before we explain what ideas and beliefs Ali held about human brotherhood and how he respected human rights it appears necessary to mention what the Prophet did for the welfare of humanity, what rules and regulations he enacted, and how far he respected human rights. It is necessary to do so, because Ali's only responsibility was to enforce the rules promulgated by the Prophet and to accomplish what he had wished. What Ali did was a complement of the acts of the Prophet and every step taken by him was linked with the steps taken by the Prophet.

The Prophet of Islam paid full attention to the material and social conditions of the society. Islam enacted rules and regulations for the human society in the same manner in which it enacted them for the individuals.

Islam attaches so much importance to the human brotherhood and society that it treats every national service to be an act of worship – rather, national service enjoys precedence over the performance of religious rites. The Prophet of Islam has said: “Resolving differences and disputes is better than recommended prayers and fasting”.

The following incident shows clearly how much the Prophet was concerned about the welfare of the nation and the society:
Ibn Abdullah says: We (i.e. the companions) were accompanying the Prophet in a journey. Some of us were fasting whereas others were not. It was summer season. We halted at a place. No shade was available to us except the sheets of cloth which we were carrying. There were many amongst us who were protecting their faces from sunshine with their hands. Those of us who were not fasting stood up and pitched the tents and provided water to the animals. Thereupon the Prophet of Islam said: “Today those persons who are not fasting have appropriated the entire spiritual reward to themselves”.

This incident shows that fasting which is an important mandatory article of worship ceases to be valid during journey so that one may not show laxity in economic matters for that reason and may not become incapable of serving the creatures of God.

The Prophet has also said: “When anyone of you sees an indecent thing being done he should stop it with his hands and if he cannot do so he should stop it with his tongue. And if he cannot stop it with his tongue he should condemn it in his heart. And this (i.e. the third alternative) is the weakest stage of faith”.

'Ordering to do good and restraining from evil' is such an explicit order in Islam that by its means every

sort of good can be done to others, and all types of evil can be eliminated. There are many traditions quoted from the Prophet which go to show that whoever renders any service to the nation is superior to a devout person. This is about common persons who render service to the nation. In case, however, one, who renders such service, is also a scholar, he will no doubt be superior to millions of devout persons in the eyes of the Prophet just as the moon is superior to millions of stars.

The Prophet of Islam has said: “A scholar is decidedly superior to a devout person in the same manner in which the moon is superior to the stars”.

The Prophet has praised wisdom because it is wisdom which endeavours to find out ways and means for the welfare of the people. One can do good to the people only by means of wisdom. The Prophet says: “An hour's reflection is better than a year's worship”. (In some traditions it has been said that it is better than seventy years' worship).

Islam has paid full attention to the welfare of human society and its unity and order, as well as to its means of livelihood, and has drawn the attention of the people to the bounties of the earth and the blessings of work. ***“Almighty God has created all the gifts of the earth for you. The earth has been created for the creatures. It is God who has subjected the earth to you. Walk on its paths and eat the provisions made available to you by God”.*** (***67:15***)

Islam has made it obligatory for man to thank others. One can be thankful to God only when one thanks others, because one who does not recognise the creatures cannot recognise God.

`One who has not thanked the people has not thanked God'.

The Prophet has praised useful activities very much. He has not contented himself with praising such activities but has also treated worth kissing those hands which are swollen due to excessive work. He says: “This is the hand which is liked by God and His Prophet”.

The following narration goes to show how great the Prophet considered the useful tasks and the measures of public welfare:

The companions of the Prophet saw a well-built man and wished that he might have spent his strength by way of jihad in the path of God. Thereupon the Prophet said: “If this person has come out to serve his weak and aged parents it is a task in the path of God. If he has come out to earn for his children this is also a task in the path of God. If he has come out to earn for his wife so as to protect her from illegal things this too is a task in the path of God. And if he has come out to earn something for himself so that he may not have to beg is also a task in the path of God”.

The books of Hadith contain many traditions of the Prophet which show that he appreciated work very much and had great regards for those who worked hard. He says: “God likes a believer who works and earns. No food is better than that earned with one's own efforts”.

Hence, when work is such a valuable thing and is even regarded to be holy it is necessary for us to work with perseverance. When a person works hard he will benefit himself as well as others. His presence in the society will be considered to be auspicious and God will also like him.

The Prophet says: “God likes that when someone of you does a work he should do it properly”.

We have said above that Islam has subjected the earth to man. He walks on it and utilises its bounties. The question however, arises as to what attitude Islam adopted in the matter of distribution of these bounties?

Are all the bounties mean for a particular class to the exclusion of others? Is only one group of people entitled to benefit from them, and are others to remain deprived? Or should they be distributed on the basis of efforts and need? Are these bounties to be collected and stored by the kings, the aristocrats, the rich and the usurpers, or should they be divided justly among all persons?

Islam has looked at humanity with the eye of justice and logic and has enacted rational laws for it. It has neither deprived anyone of his share nor given him more than his due. Every effort carries a reward and it is necessary for the society to honour this reward. A good society does not allow that a hard worker should starve, and an idle person should benefit from the proceeds of the former's work. Nor does a good society mean that a worker should not get the reward for his work and an idle and good-for-nothing person should usurp all the bounties, as happened in the societies of the earlier time and as Bani Umayyah endeavoured to do after the advent of Islam viz. that they should enslave all others and utilize their property and play with their lives as they liked.

We find that Islam has prohibited extravagance and improper adornment, especially in a society in which the majority of the people are indigent. Its reason is that if there is extravagance and improper adornment on one side there will be poverty and hunger on the other side and also because none is entitled to usurp the proceeds of the efforts of others; and life of pleasure in a poor society is possible only when some persons feed themselves on the proceeds of the efforts of others. The Prophet has treated the houses of the spendthrift persons to be the abodes of Satan. He says: “The houses of the devils are cages which have been covered by the people with silk and brocade”.

The Qur'an says:

“There were many cities whose residents were drowned in pleasure. We annihilated them and their houses were ruined. None was left to reside there except a few..”. (***28:58***)

At another place the Qur'an warns the people in a very eloquent manner and says:

“When We wish to destroy a city We order its pleasure-loving citizens to become libertines (***i.e. We provide them the means of the life of luxury and pleasure***) ***so that they may become deserving of annihilation and then We destroy that city”.*** (***17:16***)

Islam has prohibited living a life of pleasure and extravagance while one lives amongst the indigent, as it disheartens them, and has obstructed all paths leading towards it. Tyranny and oppression by the governors and the officials was one such path. The Prophet prohibited and declared unlawful hoarding, taking work from the labourers without paying wages, becoming owner of land without doing anything to develop it, usurping the property of others, and other similar acts of oppression. He said about hoarding: "One who hoards is a sinner".

The Prophet of Islam warned of terrible torture to those who usurp land and said: "Almighty God will put a chain of the seven layers of land round the neck of a person who usurps the lands of others".

He also said: "One who usurps the property of others will meet God on the Day of Judgment in such circumstances that He will be annoyed with him".

Islam has prohibited all kinds of usury. The Qur'an says about usury:

"O believers! Do not go on consuming compound interest". (***3:130***)

At another place it says:
"..Allah has allowed business and disallowed usury..". (***2:275***)

Usurers have been warned of severe torture, because it is a sort of forced labour and amounts to enslaving others". 1

Justice means that one should get wages equal to one's work. If the people do not usurp the property of others and do not hoard the commodities to earn large profit wealth cannot become centred in a few hands.

If man and his hard work had been given their due importance in the society, servitude and slavery would not have become current. As opposed to corrupt societies in which man's worth was assessed keeping in view his wealth Islam has a much higher criterion for assessing the worth of man.

The worst sin which can be committed in a society is this that the government and the profiteers should unite to exploit the weak and helpless people. The Qur'an says:

"Do not eat one another's property unlawfully nor give bribes to the rulers so that you may misappropriate whatever you can out of the property of others, although you know". (***2:188***)

The Prophet has said: "No food is better than that earned with one's own hands".

In Surah al-Zilzal of the Qur'an it has been said:

"Whoever does something evil equal to an atom will see its result". (***99:8***)

It has been said: "Every person is pledged to his actions".

Although Islam has acknowledged wealth as personal property, the Islamic laws have been formulated in such a way that wealth may not be concentrated in a few hands and they may not enjoy all its benefits and humiliate others and subject them to forced labour. The Holy Qur'an says:

"..So that wealth may not become a plaything in the hands of your rich..". (***59:7***)

Thus according to the Qur'an and Hadith the wealth belongs, in the first instance, to the community, and the members of the community can utilize it according to their needs and efforts. It is for this reason that usurpation of other people's property has been disallowed in Islam and hoarding of surplus property has also been prohibited.

This was the basis of the Prophet's fiscal policy and he set examples in this behalf by his words and actions, which must be followed. 2

Rafa'a bin Zaid was one of the dear companions of the Prophet. In one of the battles he was killed with an arrow. People came to the Prophet to condole Rafa'a's death and said: "O Prophet of God! Rafa'a was lucky. He died a martyr's death. By these words they wanted to console the Prophet, but he was not consoled and said: "Certainly not. The turban which he took out of the booty of Khaybar is still a flame like fire".

Notwithstanding the fact that Rafa'a had been killed while performing jihad the Prophet treated him to be a sinner because he had taken something very insignificant out of public property, of his own accord, although he ought to have waited till the property was divided.

The attitude adopted by Islam towards the usurpers and the profiteers can be judged from the fact that it has attached great importance to human life. Only a living person is the spirit of this universe and God has created all things for him. In the circumstances how can he be deprived of life and means of livelihood and how can it be possible to permit some persons to deprive others of the means of livelihood because of their being stronger than them?

In the eyes of the Prophet of Islam wealth is meant to ensure comfortable life for all human beings. Just as human beings have equal rights to utilize sunlight and air in the same way they have equal rights over the means of life which are the products of sunlight and air and none is entitled to deprive others of these benefits.

The Prophet has said: "All persons have equal rights over three things viz. water, vegetation and fire". To whichever community a person may belong matters little; for he is entitled to enjoy the fruits of his labour. Every member of human brotherhood is under obligation to help others, and all of them must make collective efforts for the reformation and improvement of their affairs.

It is the duty of human brotherhood to recognize the rights of the individuals and give them full freedom to earn their livelihood so that they may work according to their capabilities and enjoy the proceeds of

their labour. It is also necessary for the members of the society to help others and not to make their own freedom an obstacle in their path. It is neither permissible for the human brotherhood to oppress the individuals nor is it permissible for the individuals to harm the brotherhood.

It is necessary for the individuals to keep in mind the welfare of others in the same manner in which they take care of their own welfare. The Prophet has said: “Every one of you is a guardian and every one of you will be answerable for his wards. None is entitled to harm others”. The Prophet has explained this point with a very fine example as narrated below:

Some persons boarded a boat and every one of them occupied his seat. In the meantime one of them rose from his seat, picked up an axe and began making a hole at the place which was occupied by him. On others having asked him what he was going to do he replied that it was his seat and he was at liberty to do there whatever he liked. Thereupon others held him by the hands and thus saved him as well as themselves from drowning. If that man had been left to himself he as well as others would have been drowned.

It is obligatory for every person to prevent evil in whichever form it may be committed, and to make efforts to ensure the welfare of the society. The Prophet has said: “Whoever sees something evil being done must stop it”.

The Prophet of Islam explained to his followers every now and then that good morals take birth from practical training and not only from verbal recommendations and advice. People should be shown kindness practically and not only verbally. The Prophet did not remain aloof from the people; he mixed with them freely, heard patiently what they said, and served them as all great persons do.

Abu Hurayra says: “Once I accompanied the Prophet to the bazaar. He purchased some things from a shop-keeper and advised him to take only reasonable profit on the sale of his merchandise, not to hoard things, not to earn anything by unlawful means, and not to think that he was entitled to comfortable life whereas others were not”.

Abu Hurayra wanted to carry the things purchased by the Prophet, but he stopped him from doing so, and said with a smile: “Leave the things. Their owner has a prior right to carry them”.

The Prophet always mistrusted the kings and did not give them any position in the society because they are corrupt and also corrupt others. The Almighty God says:

“When the kings enter a city they destroy it and humiliate its respectable persons”. (***27:34***)

One of the events which show that the Prophet did not like glorification is this that on the day on which his son Ibrahim died a solar eclipse took place. Thereupon the people said that sky was also mourning the death of the Prophet's son. When the Prophet heard this sentence he addressed the people with these words: “The sun and the moon are the signs of God. They are not eclipsed because of the death

of any person”.

The Prophet's teachings consisted of this that one should spend one's life in as simple a manner as possible, and there should be no intricacy or formality in it. This way of leading life is the basis of Islam. If Islamic problems are studied carefully it appears that all the problems have emerged from one source which is very deep and covers all problems. That source is simplicity untainted with fraud, or deceit or in other words `sincerity with life'.

Once the Prophet hit a bedouin unintentionally with a stick. He then insisted that the bedouin should also hit him in the same manner. He mounted the pulpit and said: “Whomsoever I may have hit on his back should take revenge from me and if I have taken the property of anyone he should compensate himself out of my property”.

The Prophet had never hurt anyone. However, what he said was sincerity towards life which he manifested in the best manner.

Just as his life was free from hypocrisy and weakness it was also untainted with pride. He mended his own shoes, and clothes, milked his goats, helped the members of his family in household matters, carried bricks along with his companions and tied stones on his belly on account of hunger.

This was sincerity towards life which is confirmed by all the narrations quoted above with regard to the Prophet. As regards the rulers they have to shoulder so many responsibilities that they have to become the servants of the society and not oppressive and rebellious chiefs or thieves or dacoits.

The biography of the Prophet shows that once the residents of some place complained that the governor posted there had taken presents and gifts from the people. He investigated the matter, and it transpired that the complaint was true. He was very much annoyed upon this, summoned the governor and asked him: “Why did you take things to which you were not entitled?” The governor replied: “O Prophet of God! Those were presents”.

The Prophet said: “Supposing that you had stayed on at home would the people have come to give you presents?”
He then ordered the governor to deposit the property in question into the public treasury and also removed him from the office.

Thus the Prophet directed the people not to give bribes and also told the officer not to indulge in such nefarious activities. As he had been appointed the ruler of the people he should have been like a father to them and not like a robber.

When the Prophet was so much annoyed at the governor accepting presents it can very well be imagined how much he must have been annoyed when wealth was looted and the rights of the people were encroached upon.

In Islam a ruler is appointed by the selection, and under the authority of the people [3] and he rules the people according to their wishes. He is always anxious about the welfare of the people. Islam has made it necessary for the rulers to consult their subjects in important matters, the proper solution whereof is difficult. As the Qur'an says:

"They perform their tasks with mutual consultation". (***42:38***)

The caliph is not entitled to appropriate the property of the people without their consent, nor is he competent to make any law, because all the requisite laws are those which have already been enacted by Islam, and he is entitled only to safeguard the lives, property and honour of the citizens. It is not permissible for a ruler to neglect oppressed persons, and not to protect their rights from the transgression of the tyrants.

It is also not proper for a ruler to wait for the oppressed person to come up to him with a complaint. On the contrary it is his duty to go and help the oppressed person himself, because it is possible that the oppressed person may not pick up courage to make a complaint or may not be able to find his way to the ruler. Islam has severely reproached an oppressed person who silently bears oppression and humiliation and has said that such a person is cruel to himself. Islam has commended one's efforts to defend one's life, property and honour.

The Prophet has said: "One who gives up his life opposing oppression and tyranny is a martyr".

The Prophet has also said: "If people see a tyrant committing oppression and do not hold his hand it is likely that all of them may become subjected to Divine torture".

Islam has considered all human beings to be the brothers of one another. It has also campaigned against religious fanaticism. The Qur'an says:

"There is no compulsion in the matter of faith". (***2:256***)

It has put up the toughest fight against family or tribal bias. The Prophet has said: "Man is the brother of man, whether he likes it or not".

The Qur'an says:
"We have bestowed dignity upon human beings, provided them with means of transport on land and water, given them pure things to eat and given them superiority over many creatures".
(***17:70***)

Whenever the Prophet addressed the people his address was meant for all human beings whether Arabs or non-Arabs and whether white, yellow or black. He addressed them as kind and sympathetic, brothers of one another joined together with the relationship of humanity and irrespective of their nationality etc. If there was any difference between them it was on the basis of good deeds and not on account of colour or race.

The Prophet has said: “O people! Your Lord is One. You have also a common ancestor Adam. No Arab is superior to a non-Arab and no non-Arab is superior to an Arab and similarly no red-coloured person is superior to a white-coloured person and no white-coloured person is superior to a red-coloured person. And if a person enjoys superiority over others it is on account of his piety. Those of you who are present should convey this message to those who are absent”.

1. There is great difference between usury and trade. The traders procure the provisions from appropriate place at cheaper rates. Every person cannot do this. The traders take these commodities to suitable markets for sale. At times they earn some profit and at other times they sustain loss. That is not the case with the usury. The money-lender does not make any efforts, is not contented with a small profit and does not sustain any loss. Hence the difference between the two kinds of transactions is evident.
2. Those who have studied the Qur'an are aware that Islam neither supports the condemned capitalism nor the unnatural communist system. It acknowledges the institution of individual ownership so that every person may make the best use of his capabilities. As only legal restrictions are not sufficient for economic reform Islam has also endeavoured to attain this object by moral training. This is the main difference between the material systems and Islam. Communism binds our entire existence with law and a as a result thereof we are reduced to a machine. Consequently we cannot use our will and determination and they wear away gradually.
3. This form of government is accepted by all Muslim sects, with the difference that the Shi'a regard it as justified only during the occultation of the Imam of the Age. Otherwise the Shi`a give preference to those who were appointed or designated by the Prophet and the Imams. But according to the Sunnis immediately on the death of the Prophet, this form became the only right form of the government.
From the Shi'a point of view, since the major occultation of Mahdi, the Imam of the Age in 329 A.H. no particular person has been appointed to be the head and leader of the Muslim ummah.
That is why in the traditions related to leadership during this period only the general qualities and characteristics required to be possessed by a leader have been mentioned. This shows that it is upto the people themselves to choose a person as their leader, having following qualities and characteristics:
* Faith in God, His revelations and the teachings of His Prophet.
* Integrity, adherence to the laws of Islam, and earnestness about their enforcement.
* Adequate knowledge of Islam, appropriate to his prominent position.
* Enough competence for holding such a position and freedom from every defect not in keeping with Islamic leadership.
His standard of living being equal to that of the low-income people.
In this connection there is enough material in the sermons of Ali and in the epistles he sent to his officials. In a number of epistles it has been emphasized that an administrative officer should be free from love of money, ignorance, inefficiency, outrage, timidness, bribery, and violation of Islamic injunctions and traditions and should not be guilty of shedding blood. (For further details see: “Philosophy of Islam” ISP, 1982).

Ruler is one of the people

Before Ali attained to the caliphate it was likely that the Umayyad governments might be converted into kingship - rather it had already been so converted. The rulers and other persons at the helm of affairs were of the view that the caliphate was their special right and only they were entitled to it on account of their belonging to a noble family. In order to strengthen their hold and establish a firm government they

considered all unlawful acts like tribal bias, formation of groups, bribes etc. to be lawful.

According to them a ruler was the master of the lives, property and honour of the ruled and could exploit them in any manner he liked, without the oppressed persons having any right of protest. They viewed the common people as quadrupeds whom they could load with the heaviest burden and beat as much as they wished.

During the time of Uthman the Umayyad governors got an opportunity of despotic rule and they availed of it to their heart's content. They endeavoured to strengthen the Umayyad rule in all parts of the Islamic territories. They bribed the Shaykhs and dignitaries of the Arabian tribes heavily to win their support. They also gave full freedom to the persons in position to oppress the common man in any manner they liked.

They also bought the armed forces by giving them excessive wealth and promising them high offices. And in fact the people could not oppose them because whoever sided with them was honoured, and whoever opposed them was condemned and disgraced.

In short the government was established on new principles. This was done by Bani Umayyah whose hearts had not sincerely acknowledged Islam. They embraced Islam owing to fear and continued to remain within its fold on account of their avarice for riches. History shows that these people remained after embracing Islam as they were during the age of ignorance. The distinguished companions of the Prophet who managed the affairs previously were discarded and disgraced. [1] They were held to be of no consequence now.

Of course, those companions who co-operated with Bani Umayyah to destroy the rights of the Muslims and to strengthen the Umayyad government were exalted. These persons handed over the keys of the public treasury and the sword of government to Bani Umayyah to make the people obedient to them. The public was also divided into two groups. One group consisted of pious persons who were the well-wishers of the society. They wanted a just ruler, although he might not endow riches on them and might not let them plunder the wealth of the public treasury. The second group had deviated from the right path. They wanted to sell their faith to Bani Umayyah at the price fixed by them. If Bani Umayyah paid that price well and good, otherwise they intended to dilly-dally till the price demanded by them was paid.

* * * * *

When Ali, the Commander of the Faithful attained to the caliphate the conditions were very precarious. The people were divided into two groups. The persons belonging to one of those groups were prepared to lay down their lives in support of the pious and just Imam. The other group supported Bani Umayyah and endeavoured to strengthen their government and kingdom. Bani Umayyah had also been endeavouring for years to establish their rule on a permanent footing. They knew that their program was beset with difficulties, but they were determined to succeed and had decided to do away with anyone who obstructed them, although he might be a very great and respectable religious personality.

Ali was not very keen to become a caliph. He assisted Abu Bakr and Umar as and when they were faced with a difficulty. 2 Whenever the Islamic caliphate was confronted with a problem Ali solved it.

He showed kindness even to Uthman and never complained against Uthman's attaining to the caliphate instead of himself. The only thing for which he was anxious was the establishment of truth and justice. People beseeched him to accept the caliphate but he did not evince any interest in it. History shows and his own remarks are also available to the effect that when, after the assassination of Uthman, the people came to him collectively and requested him to assume the caliphate he said: “Leave me and find out someone else for the job. If you leave me alone I shall be a member of the society like you and shall be more attentive and obedient than you to the person whom you select as the caliph. I shall be more useful for you in the capacity of an adviser than in that of a caliph”.

On that day Ali was not agreeable to accept the caliphate as with his far-sightedness he could see up to the last end of the future. If he was a claimant of the caliphate earlier, it was not because he desired to become a ruler. On the contrary what he desired was that Muslims should develop within themselves those morals and virtues which the Prophet wanted to inculcate in them. And if he declined to accept that office at that stage (i.e. after the assassination of Uthman) it was because owing to the policies of the former rulers the habits of the Muslims had been spoilt and their way of thinking had changed.

The kingdom which was established with the name of Islamic state had been moulded into worldly authority and carried the signs of the despotism of Kaiser and Kisra. Ali's object differed from the desires of the people. Neither Ali could condescend to the wishes of the people, nor could people agree to Ali's achieving the ends he had in view. He himself draws the picture of that period in these words:

“The time is extremely incompatible and disagreeable. In these days a righteous person is considered to be wicked and the refractoriness of the tyrant is on the increase. This is so because the sky is covered with dark clouds and the signs of the paths have been obliterated. The people are involved in doubts and sensuality. They have ears but they are deaf. They have eyes but they are blind. They are neither steadfast in the battlefield nor reliable in difficult circumstances”.

Ali knew very well that if he accepted the request of the people and assumed the responsibilities of the office of caliphate they would not tolerate the manner in which he would run the administration and would not obey his orders unless he was harsh to them.

These were the conditions which Ali had to face after the assassination of Uthman. The dignitaries as well as the common people gathered outside the door of his house again and again and insisted upon his accepting the oath of allegiance from them. However, notwithstanding the fact that he entertained very good wishes for the people in his heart he was reluctant to accept the oath of allegiance from them. There was, however, one thing which obliged him to think of accepting their request. The Muslims were too much insisting upon his accepting that office, which meant that a responsibility was being placed on them to guide those, who were in need of reformation and guidance from him. Furthermore, at that time

social equity and justice were in danger. Persons in authority were encroaching upon the rights of the weak, and the life, property, and honour of the common man did not carry any value.

Ali could not tolerate that he should sit quietly in his house when the poor citizens were being subjected to oppression. A brave and steadfast person like Ali could not let the Muslims fall a prey to the atrocities of the wolves of Bani Umayyah and remain silent. If he had not come to the rescue of the Muslim at that difficult moment he would have been treated to be a coward and not the brave and valiant person as he is known in history.

He himself says: “I was worried and alarmed lest the foolish and wicked persons should become the rulers of this nation and make the property of God their plaything and the creatures of God their slaves and fight with the righteous and make the tyrants their helpers”.

For these reasons he considered it obligatory for himself to accept the oath of allegiance although many other righteous persons found themselves incapable of bearing the burden of caliphate

Ali hated sequestered life. Except when it was possible to serve the people by remaining in seclusion it was impossible for him to spend his time in retirement. A person who neglects serving the creatures of God inspite of his being in a position to do so spoils his faith as well as his world. Ali accepted the caliphate with firm determination and considered it in the interests of the Muslims that he should assume that office.

In order to understand the nature of Ali's administration and his economic and financial policies it is necessary to learn how Ali himself has explained the caliphate and mastership, what position caliphate enjoyed in his eyes from the religious point of view, and what benefits it carried in its lap.

While addressing the people at the time of taking the oath of allegiance from them, Ali said to them: “O People! I am one of you. I enjoy the same rights which you enjoy. My responsibilities are also the same as yours. Nothing can invalidate truth. (i.e. a ruler or caliph cannot change the commands of God”.

In another sermon he said: “I swear by God that in the first instance I myself obey those commands of God which I invite you to obey and I myself refrain first from those things, from which I ask you to refrain”.

On this basis the ruler and caliph is not to be obeyed in his personal capacity. It is necessary to obey him because he enforces equity and justice and the laws of the ***Sbari'ah***. The caliphate does not entitle the ruler and the caliph to appropriate to himself as much of the property of the public treasury as he likes, and to spend it himself or give it to his friends, associates and kinsmen. On the contrary the object of the institution of caliphate is that justice should be administered. The ruler should mete out equal treatment to everyone, should regard the efforts of a person who propagates the Divine religion and serves the public, should prohibit hoarding, and prevent oppression, and should not deviate from truth in any circumstances. He should not abandon his program even though the wicked and cruel persons

dislike his just conduct and may be after his life. It is also his duty to acquaint the people with the rules of justice and to prevent their deviation from it.

Ali wrote to one of his governors as under: “Your holding this office does not entitle you to accumulate wealth or to take revenge from any person. Your only duty is that you should destroy falsehood and revive truth”.

In the eyes of Ali son of Abu Talib rulership and caliphate did not mean that the ruler should sit on the throne of dignity, strengthen his power and make his position the means of enslaving the people. He says: “Generosity and munificence is a greater source of love and affection than consanguinity and kinship. There is no greatness like meekness and no virtue like knowledge”.

Caliphate does not mean that people should be subjugated at the point of the sword, and by means of bloodshed and force, or that they should obey the caliph on account of fear or covetousness. Ali was a man who did not worship God because he desired forgiveness or because he feared punishment. On the contrary he worshipped God because He deserved to be worshipped. He wished that the people should obey the caliph on account of his being worthy of obedience and not because of fear or greed of gain.

Now as regards consulting others the Commander of the Faithful has said: “One who faces different opinions recognizes the spots of mistakes and errors”.

The person who realizes mistakes arrives at truth and right action. The opinions of the people are essential things which benefit the state as well as the people, and the affairs are conducted in such a way that they do not entail shame and regret. Ali acknowledges this fact in very clear words and says: “Correctness cannot be achieved by abandoning consultation”.

It does not behove a ruler to keep his doors shut before the people and try to achieve some object by keeping the people in the dark. The Commander of the Faithful draws attention to this point by saying: “Acquire light from a kindled lamp”'

According to the Commander of the Faithful it is not proper for a caliph to seek distance from them, to be proud and haughty, or to ignore the needs of the people. Caliphate is a means of the ruler associating with the people, showing kindness to them and behaving with them meekly. If the ruler remains aloof from the people none of his excuses and arguments can be accepted.

If the people are annoyed with the ruler on account of any such thing they will become a burden on him in the same manner in which his rule will be burden on them, because the people will behave with him as he behaves with them. The Commander of the Faithful says in this behalf: “The hearts of the subjects are the treasury of the ruler. He will get from there what he places there, whether it be equity and justice or cruelty and oppression”.

In the eyes of Ali the caliphate was not based on party-spirit or family bias which are very bad qualities. He considered caliphate to consist of good qualities, pious deeds, meting out justice to the people and refraining from tyranny and mischief.

In any case according to Ali rulership was not meant for those people about whom he said: “If these people become your rulers they will behave like Kaiser and Kisra”. Nor did those persons deserved to be the rulers who were deceitful and oppressive.

Keeping all these things in view Ali accepted the caliphate with a firm determination to establish truth and destroy falsehood and failing that to sacrifice his very life. It was on this account that he insisted that the people should watch the activities of their rulers and should not accept a ruler who did not prove to be a public servant. He also advised them to express displeasure on the bad activities of a ruler or to approve them on merit. He said: “Do you not feel annoyed and displeased if foolish persons become your rulers and consequently you are humiliated, afflicted and ruined?”

In his eyes being annoyed at cruelty and oppression was as important a thing as welcoming equity and justice.

He respected the personal freedom of the individuals and also kept in view the rights of the nation. As regards those who did not take oath of allegiance to him he said: “It does not matter if they do not take the oath of allegiance. However, they should stay indoors and should not interfere in the affairs of the nation”.

Sa'd son of Abi Waqas who was a member of the Consultative Council declined to take oath of allegiance to Ali. Ali did not compel him to take the oath and left him free. Sa'd had said: “You need not feel worried about me. I shall never rise against you”.

Similarly Abdullah son of Umar did not take the oath of allegiance. Ali asked him to produce a guarantor, who should guarantee that he would not create any disturbance, but he declined to do so. Thereupon Ali said to him: “You have been ill-mannered since your childhood and I know you from the very first day”. Then he turned to the people and said: “Leave him as well. I guarantee that he will not create any disturbance”.

There were some other persons also who remained hidden in their houses and were inclined to take the oath of allegiance. Ali said about them: “I, too, am not desirous of those persons who do not need me”. He left them free on the condition that they would not create any disturbance and would not harm the people. Many revolutionaries wanted to free such persons to take the oath of allegiance but the Commander of the Faithful did not agree to this. In the matter of the oath of allegiance his usual attitude was what he says: “I shall accept the oath of allegiance from one who takes it voluntarily and shall ignore one, who declines to take it”.

Hence, the freedom of the individuals was fully secured in the government of Ali and could not be

violated except when they were guilty of harming the people, because in that case it was not possible for Ali to leave them free. It was for this reason that he did not leave Talha, Zubayr and Mu'awiya alone as he had done in the case of Sa'd son of Waqas and Abdullah son of Umar. These three persons were dreaming of attaining to caliphate and were keen to usurp wealth and authority. They wanted to create trouble so that they might remove Ali from his office and appropriate to themselves the public property which belonged to all Muslims. They had accumulated immense wealth, and had also equipped an army to fight against Ali's government. It was on account of this state of affairs that Ali did not leave them alone, and all these facts go to prove that the opinion formed by him about these three persons as absolutely correct. Later we shall mention in detail what disturbances took birth from the conspiracy of these three persons against Ali.

In short, rulership and caliphate is the right of the people and it is not permissible to compel a person to take the oath of allegiance. Such a compulsion can possibly be exercised in the public interest but not in the personal interest of the ruler. Good relations can subsist between the ruler and the subjects only when the people elect a ruler themselves and take oath of allegiances to him voluntarily.

As Ali freely associated and mixed with the people, it was, therefore, natural that he should desire that every one of the governors and other officers should also associate with the people as one of them. He recommended to the officials emphatically to respect the rights of the people. Ali introduced the best tradition of the association of the rulers with the people. This tradition is also compatible with the tradition of the civilized nations of modern times. He made the subjects the supervisors of the actions of the rulers so that they might act according to the wishes of the people.

As and when the Commander of the Faithful entrusted the rulership of a province, a territory or a city, to a person he wrote a testament and gave it to him so that he might read it out before the people. If the people of that place accepted the testament it constituted a treaty between them and the ruler which neither of them could violate. If the treaty was violated by either party it was necessary for the Imam to punish the party concerned and to remove the ruler from his office in case he happened to be the violator.

1. It was the earnest endeavour and the heartfelt desire of caliph Uthman that the despotic government of the Umayyads should be established firmly in all Islamic cities and he spared no effort in this behalf. Two or three days after Uthman's becoming caliph Abu Sufyan came to congratulate him. As Uthman's partiality towards his kinsmen was well known Abu Sufyan told him what he had in his heart saying: “Play with the caliphate like a ball and make Bani Umayyah its pillars”. Although Uthman rebuked him at that time, but from that very day he made the words of Abu Sufyan his own motto and entrusted the governorship of all big cities to the young and inexperienced lads of Bani Umayyah. These persons were neither educated nor good natured. By making such appointments Uthman opened the gates of mischief and disturbance, and provided means of the destruction of the Muslim society as well as his own death.
Allama Abu Amr, the author of Isti`ab says that once Shabil son of Khalid arrived when Uthman was sitting with others consist– ing of Bani Umayyah only. Shabil said: “O Quraysh! What has happened to you? Has no child, whom you might exalt been left with you? Is there among you no indigent person whom you might like to make rich? Is there among you no unknown person whom you might like to become known? Why have you made Abu Musa Ash'ari the governor of Iraq and given him that province as his freehold wherefrom he is earning a lot?” Thereupon Uthman enquired as to who should be

appointed as governor to replace Abu Musa. Those present suggested the name of Abdullah son of `Asmir, a cousin of Uthman. He therefore, dismissed Abu Musa and appointed Abdullah in his place, although he was only sixteen years of age. These youngster of Bani Umayyah did not care as to what they did nor said. Uthman did not pay heed to any complaint against these boys nor did he attach any importance to reproaches on this account. One of these young men was sa`id son of Aas, the governor of Kufa. He was a hot-headed and pleasure-loving person who said to a gathering from the pulpit: "These lands of Iraq are gardens for the young men of Quraysh".

These were the boys about whom the Prophet had already said: "My followers will be ruined at the hands of foolish lads of Quraysh". (Sahih Bokhari Kitab al-Fitan part 10, p.146 and Mustadrak, vol.4, p.470)

2. It is true that the Commander of the Faithful was not keen for wordly government. If he desired the caliphate it was because the Prophet's Islam could not be propagated and spread except by him. This was so because he had been brought up in the lap of the Prophet and was the treasure of his wisdom and knowledge. The Prophet had fed him with knowledge in the same manner in which a bird feeds its offspring. From the very day of his birth till the Prophet's death he was not separated from the Prophet. Every moment of his was spent in the company of the Prophet. None knew the Sunnah of the Prophet better than he did. He was the exact picture of the ways and manners of the Prophet and successor to all his attainments. This is a fact which was acknowledged not only by his friends but also by his enemies and even by those who had assumed the office of caliph. God willed and the Prophet also desired that after him Ali should be at the helm of affairs, because only he possessed the capability to enforce and expand the religion of Islam in the manner desired by God and His Prophet.

As regards the question whether or not he objected to others usurping the caliphate the pages of Nahj-al-Balaghah as well as history go to show that he protested against this on all occasions and put forth his arguments. He said: "I deserve the oath of allegiance more than you do. I shall not take the oath of allegiance to you rather you should take the oath in my favour. You have assumed this office in preference to the Ansar on the basis of your kinship with the Prophet and now you are bent upon usurping it from the members of his household. Did you not put forth this argument before the Ansar that you were more entitled to the caliphate because Muhammad was one of you. And accepting this argument they surrendered this office to you and let you assume the govern- ment. Now I put forth the same argument before you which you advanced against the Ansar. We are successors of Muhammad during his life as well as after his death. In case, therefore, you believe in Muhammad and Islam, you must do justice to us, failing which you will be guilty of wilful oppression".

Ali's rendering assistance to the three caliphs at difficult times is a clear proof. of his magnanimity and high morality. The greatest quality of man is that when there is a conflict between personal interests and collective interests he should prefer public welfare to his own interests. Another great quality of man is that he should be honest and sincere even in his dealings with his enemies.

To keep personal interests in view in all matters, and to be influenced by personal likes and dislikes on all occasion, are the qualities of mean persons whose actions are governed by animal instincts rather than human values. It is true that the majority of human beings has always endeavoured to serve individual interests, but if the action of the majority is accepted to be the criterion every meanness will become civilization and culture and every good quality will become a vice and defect.

It is however, a matter of regret that the people have been looking at the method of action of the great men according to their own mentality and have been drawing wrong conclusions.

Ali son of Abu Talib was a perfect specimen of Islamic teachings in the world of Islam and the best image of human qualities and perfection. His conduct was replete with all the qualities which are considered to be the essence of human perfection and the most prominent aspect of his disposition was this that he never allowed his personal differences, egotism or enmity to interfere with Islamic and collective matters, nor did he permit his personal interests and feelings to disregard honesty and integrity.

The inhabitants of the world who have become accustomed, on account of their own conduct as well as that of their so-called leaders, to keep in view the aspect of personal interest in everything conclude from the conduct of Ali that he had no personal differences with anyone and entertained great love and friendship for all in his mind. However, if one reflects a little with broadmindedness it becomes known that to provide correct guidance to others for the sake of public welfare, inspite of personal differences, is the supreme human quality which can be observed clearly in the conduct of Ali. This

characteristic of the Commander of the Faithful is reflected in different forms in the events of his life with which the pages of history are replete. The rulers who acquired the caliphate ignoring the qualities of Ali and his entitlement to that office, and claimed to be the only persons who could look after the welfare of the society, consulted him as and when they were faced with any difficulty and on every such occasion he gave them the best advice suited to the circumstances of the time.

Freedom and its sources

The method adopted by Imam Ali in the matter of politics, rulership and administration of the State was based on the principle of the freedom of the people. [1] He had an ardent belief in this freedom which can be observed in all his actions. Whether he said something, or gave some orders, or prohibited some actions, whether it was at the time of peace or war, or made an appointment of a governor, and in whatever manner he treated the people or his children or worshipped God – his conduct was based on all such occasions on this freedom.

The question, however, arises as to why the people should be free, why they should work according to their will and determination. From where did they get the freedom and what are its limits? According to Ali the real cause of this freedom is the human society which must proceed on the path of blessedness and prosperity.

Freedom is the result of the mutual relations, sentiments and inclinations of the people. It has a close relationship with a few things which exercise great influence on it.

Reason and experience prove this thing and it has also been confirmed by Ali that the members of a society are inter–related with one another. This inter–relationship of theirs is on account of personal interests as well as national interests. [2]

It was the policy of Ali to reform these connections and ties, so that every person might lead his life in a better way. He provided opportunities to the people to utilize their freedom in the best possible manners and to discharge by means of this freedom the responsibilities which it is not possible to discharge without it.

In the first instance Ali made the people realize that to establish truth and to destroy falsehood is their own responsibility. They should get hold of their freedom, should not be subservient to the orders of the upper classes, and should neither betray the society nor be cruel to themselves. Throughout his life and before attaining to the caliphate, as well as thereafter, he explained to the people that they must discharge their duty to establish right and destroy falsehood.

Ali was endeavouring his best to provide means for the welfare of the people, and at the same time he was so severe in awarding punishment to the criminals that friends and foes were equal in his eyes in

this matter and he did not observe leniency with anyone.

Ali was confident that his piety was known to all, and they were aware that he had no equal in the matter of piety, and he took from the world only as much as was sufficient for his living. The people also knew that the only purpose of his life was to establish truth and to help the needy and the oppressed, and that he did these things as a matter of duty and not to show kindness to others. He did not like to eat honey because he was afraid that there might be some persons among his subjects to whom even barley bread might not be available. He never wore fine dress, because there might be a member of the public who might not be having even coarse dress to wear. He did not like that the people should call him the Commander of the Faithful and he should not partake in their difficulties.

Ali kept himself free from all the pollution in which the rulers of those days were involved. He did not take advantage of his noble descent. He never coveted territory, high office or wealth. On no occasion did he display pride. He remained aloof from all irrational and worthless things. He never preferred his kinsmen and friends to others. He never nursed a grudge against his opponents, nor did he take revenge on anyone. He never did anything about whose goodness and correctness he was not sure. He did not say or think of anything which he did not like.

He was indifferent to the things which he ate or drank, the dress which he wore, and the house in which he lived. He utilized these things only as much as they were absolutely necessary for him. He did not take anything from the public treasury to meet his personal expenses, although he could take at least as much as the governors of the provinces did. Authentic narrations show that often he had to sell his sword, coat of mail and household articles to feed himself and the members of his family. However, he gave sufficient salaries to his governors so that they might not be obliged to take bribes or acquire money by unlawful means.

Ali kept himself free from all such bonds as might interfere with his administering justice between friend and foe. He has mentioned his own condition in this brief sentence. “Whoever forsakes desires remains free”.

His piety was the piety of magnanimous persons. It was not tainted with any avarice. He had perfect faith in God and he acted according to his belief. There was no simulation of hypocrisy in his actions. His good deeds were not prompted by fear of Hell or desire for Paradise.

As regards the freedom of the common man its first stage is freedom of action. Imam Ali has given the body of the workers the same rank on earth as is enjoyed by the hearts of the righteous persons in Paradise i.e. this world welcomes the workers in the same manner in which Paradise remains ready to welcome the righteous persons. About the righteous persons he says: – “Their hearts are in Paradise and their bodies are busy doing work”. (i.e. they do not attach their hearts with the worldly things).

He elevated the position of freedom and considered the work of a free person to be great. He had made it his principle not to compel any person to do any particular work, because any work which is not done

voluntarily is dishonesty in freedom as well as in work.

He says: – “It is not my intention to compel any person to do a particular work”. He prescribed award for making people do useful work and preserving freedom and deprived of reward a person who compelled others to work. He says: “The canal belongs to one who dug it on his own accord and not to one who compelled others to dig it” (or one who does not work on it).

It appears necessary to mention an important point here. The word freedom as it was used in those days did not carry as vast a meaning as was attached to it by Ali. Others did not mean by it what Ali meant. In those days freedom was the opposite of slavery and freeman was the opposite of slave. Caliph Umar has said: “How did you make the people your slave when their mothers gave birth to them as freemen?”

When we ponder over these words and take into account the time and the conditions in which they were uttered by caliph Umar we clearly learn that by freeman he meant the opposite of slave i.e. one who cannot be bought or sold. However, during the modern times the words free and freedom do not carry the same sense in which they were used by caliph Umar.

We hereby put forth another proof of our view. In the sentence quoted above caliph Umar has expressed annoyance for the people who had reduced their subordinates to slavery. He rebuked the powerful persons and told them not to consider the weak people to be slaves, because their mothers had given birth to them as free men. Caliph Umar did not tell the slaves that they were free and should not obey those who claimed to be the masters of their slaves. In short, caliph Umar in his sentence has admonished the masters to give freedom to those subservient and weak persons.

According to Imam Ali the meaning of freedom is different from what is meant by caliph Umar and carries a much wider sense. In the first instance we reproduce below a clear remark of his on the subject and shall later reproduce his other remarks, recommendations and orders in support of our view.
As opposed to the remark of Umar he says: “Do not be the slave of anyone when God has created you free”.

Caliph Umar had addressed the masters and told them to give freedom to their subordinates. He had not told the subordinates to decline to obey their masters. Ali, however, addresses the subordinates themselves and tells them to have self-reliance and a sense of freedom. He advises them to realize their right of freedom which is the essence of their being. He reminds them that God has created them as free beings and whatever they do or do not do should depend on this natural right of theirs.

By uttering this sentence Ali sowed the seeds of revolution in the hearts of those subordinates, and prepared them to fight against anything which might stand in the way of their freedom or involve them in perplexity.

The readers might think that there is not much difference between the remarks of caliph Umar and those of Ali, because Umar has addressed some particular person viz. the masters not to enslave the people

whereas Ali has addressed all the people and told them that they are free. He has made their freedom dependent on their own intentions and not on the intentions of their masters so that they may keep them enslaved as long as they like and make them free as and when they (i.e. the masters) wish.

However, there is basically a great difference between these two remarks. Ali's sentence shows the deep insight which he had on the meaning of freedom. His sentence shows the reality that the fountain-head of freedom is the being of man himself. He has been born free and he himself should select his path of action and not that someone else should take pity on him and set him free.

This sentence of Ali shows that he considered the freedom of man to be inherent and natural and all the actions of man are the outcome of this inherent and natural freedom. This freedom is free from all external influences. This freedom is enjoyed by him internally and not externally. It is like the light of the sun which cannot be separated from it. It is not like the light of the moon which declines.

Hence there is a real and basic difference between the sentences uttered by Caliph Umar and Imam Ali. To one category belong the persons whose freedom depends on the will of others. This freedom is external and does not emerge from its own foutain-head. To the other category belong those free persons whose freedom depends on their nature. This is the real and true freedom. Such free persons act according to their reason and interests and do not do what they do not like. However, those whose independence depends on others are not subordinate to their own views and thinking.

The type of freedom which Imam Ali desired was the one on which human relations are based. It is this freedom by means of which the human beings can walk side by side with one another on the path of prosperity. It is this freedom which can bring a great civilization into existence.

As the freedom of the kind mentioned above was considered by Imam Ali to be the real freedom, all his orders were issued keeping this very freedom in view, and he also determined the human rights on that basis. We clearly find the observance of this principle in all his orders and regulations. He treated all the human beings to be equal in the matter of rights and responsibilities and did not fix any limit in this behalf. And if he did fix any such limits it was fixed keeping in view the interests of the public in general.

When we study the character of Imam Ali we clearly see that he did not violate this freedom in any of his laws, orders, rules and regulations and kept the public welfare in view in all his actions. He meted out equal treatment to his friends and foes. We have already mentioned that he did not compel any person to do any work against his will, nor did he allow forced labour.

We have also said that he did not compel anyone to take the oath of allegiance to him. Those who declined to take oath of allegiance to him were no doubt wrong-doers, but he left them to themselves because he knew that their not taking the oath of allegiance would make no difference nor would the public interests suffer on that account. They refrained from taking the oath for quite a long time, but by doing so they did harm only to themselves.

He did not take any action against them so long as they did not prove harmful to the public interest. Addressing Mughira bin Sho'ba he said: “I permit you to do whatever you like about yourself”.

It may also be mentioned that once Habib ibn Muslim Fehri approached him and said: “You should abdicate so that the people may select a caliph through a consultative council”. Thereupon Ali replied: `What have you to do with this matter? You should keep quiet. Why do you speak about something with which you are not concerned at all”.
Habib then stood up and said: “By God you will find us at a place which will not be to your liking”.

The threat latent in Habib's words is quite clear. But what did Ali do? Did he also threaten him in a similar manner? Did he imprison him so that he might not be free to oppose him and might not instigate his tribe to rise against him?

Ali did none of these things. On the contrary he cast a glance at him and said like a man who fully believes in his own justice and who respects the freedom of others: “Go and mobilize as many infantry-men and horsemen as you like. May not God keep me alive till the day when you should take pity on me”.

Another proof of the full freedom allowed by Ali to the people is that many persons belonging to the Hijaz and Iraq went away and joined Mu'awiya, but he did not stop them, nor did he consider it necessary to keep them under observation. They were free men in his eyes and were free to adopt any course they liked. If a person chose the right path it was well and good, but if he decided otherwise the path to Damascus was open for him and Mu'awiya was awaiting such a person with his treasures.

Hence, when Sahl bin Hanif Ansari, the Governor of Madina informed him that some persons had gone over to Mu`awiya he wrote to him in reply: “I understand that some of the persons belonging to your area are secretly joining Mu'awiya. You need not worry at all about the number of people who have left, and the support, which has been lost. It is sufficient for their going astray and your being relieved of worry and sorrow that they are running away from truth and guidance towards ignorance and perversion. They are worldly people who are inclining towards the world and running to it. They recognized, saw, heard and learnt justice. They have understood very well that here all are treated to be equal in the matter of rights and are, therefore, running away towards the place where discrimination is practised. By God they have not run away from injustice and have not joined justice and we hope that God will make easy every difficulty which is involved in this matter, and will make the stony land level for us”.

Another proof of the fact that Ali believed in the complete freedom of the people is provided by his treatment of the Kharijites. One group of the Kharijites was that which had rebelled openly and it was these people most of whom were put to sword in the Battle of Nahrawan. However, there were others who held beliefs common with the Kharijites but they considered it expedient not to rebel, and were mixed up with the people of Kufa. Imam Ali behaved kindly towards the Kharijites of the second category and did not permit his companions to contend with them. He also gave these Kharijites pensions as

much as to the Muslims and had allowed them to go freely wherever they liked.

His way of action was based on perfect freedom i.e. all human beings are free and may do whatever they like and love or hate whomsoever they wish. However, none was permitted to harm the people or to create mischief on the face of earth. If anyone indulged in mischievous activities he was not spared and was punished for the crime committed by him.

Once a Kharijite named Khareet bin Rashid came to Ali and said to him: “By God I shall not obey you and shall not offer prayers with you”. Imam Ali did not interfere with him and left him free to do whatever he liked.

After some time Khareet collected a number of men and revolted against him. Even then Ali did not prevent the persons who deserted him and joined Khareet, from doing so, although he could stop them from joining Khareet. However, when those persons took undue advantage of this freedom and began committing robberies and murders he sent his army and suppressed them.

The thing which is most surprising is that even at the most delicate moments of his period Ali paid due respect to human freedom and never violated it. This he did because he considered freedom to be the most important thing for humanity.

He did not detract from this freedom even when campaigning against the ***Nakitheen, Qasiteen*** and ***Mariqeen*** who had appropriated large tracts of land to themselves and were the sworn enemies of Ali.

It was permissible according to every law and religion to fight against such persons and every person with sound judgment would have treated such a fight to be a just one.

In the circumstances it was necessary for Ali to mobilize his supports and march to join battle with the enemy. However, Ali did not compel any supporter of his to partake in a battle, whether he was his kinsman or someone else. Although he was the caliph and possessed authority, but he did not compel his companions to render material or spiritual assistance, because in whatever manner he might have resorted to compulsion it would have been opposed to the freedom in which he believed. [3]

Imam Ali performed his duty by showing themclearly the true path and appealing to their intellect and reason. He put forth arguments regarding his being correct so that whoever liked it might recognize his right, and support him, and whoever did not like it might oppose him in spite of knowing the truth.

He prayed for the welfare of those who responded to his call and praised them. As regards those who did not respond to it he warned them about their mistake by tendering them advice. Whoever a person was and wherever he was, was free. Ali did not compel anyone and did not consider compulsion to be proper.

He never liked that anyone should join him without proper reflection and faith and knowledge. He did not compel anyone to enlist himself in his army to fight in the Battles of the Camel, Siffin and Nahrawan for if

he had so desired he would have filled the plains and mountains with soldiers.

Ali knew very well what freedom is and what its ins and outs are. He explained it by his words and actions and observed it in his behaviour towards the people. He kept the principle of freedom in view in eradicating the evils from the society, in enforcing the religious law, in mobilizing the forces, in ruling over the people, in making recommendations and tendering advice, and, in short, in everything. Every day of his life provided a fresh proof of the fact that man's right of freedom deserves to be respected provided that it does not mar the freedom of the public at large and this is the real meaning of freedom.

1. The author of the book has proved in this chapter that the political freedom which exists in the advanced nations of today is the same freedom which prevailed during the period of the caliphate of Imam Ali. There is no sign of such freedom in the governments which existed earlier than the caliphate of Ali.
2. In the terminology of the western philosophers, freedom means the same thing which is meant by the following belief of the Muslims: – "None is permitted to compel another to do a particular work or to appropriate his property without his permission". These philosophers believe that the cause of every oppression is deprivation of the human beings of their freedom and the murders, robberies and other crimes are its consequences. They say that freedom and self-determination are the inherent properties of man in the same manner in which heat is the inherent property of fire.
3. Even today the westerners are unaware of the freedom which was allowed by Imam Ali, as has been explained by the author, although some social experts like Rousseau have mentioned it in their books and endeavoured to make people believe in it. Some persons may possibly think that the penal laws of Islam contradict the claim of the author and also that the Muslims do not consider it permissible that someone should apostatize from Islam or use indecent words about God or the Prophets. Drinking of wine was punished during the caliphate of Ali as well as other caliphs, purchase and sale of intoxicants was treated to be a crime and the apostates were executed. Such persons may, therefore,ask as to where the freedom exists.
The reply to what the author wishes to prove is that all these things (viz. punishment for apostasy and other crimes) are correct. However, the freedom which is praiseworthy and which was supported by Ali is not the freedom enjoyed by a person to appropriate his property and use it as he likes and to adopt the occupation which he desires. In short Ali believed in political and social freedom.
All Muslims agree that drinking wine and apostasy are crimes. Now when these acts are crimes from the social point of view how can freedom to commit them be commendable? Hence if Imam Ali had given freedom to the people to commit these crimes his act would have been opposed to the divine commands as well as to the freedom of the people. If caliph Abu Bakr and Umar had not fought against the apostates they would have opposed the majority. of the Muslims. Even now some parties in various countries are declared to be unlawful, because many people consider the views and beliefs of these parties to be crimes. Similarly apostasy is a crime according to the Muslims, because it certainly creates trouble in the society.

Individual freedom

The Imam's treatment of others and his behaviour towards them was based on their freedom.

Man's conscience should take decisions according to its own determination and with freedom. The means are themselves effective without external effects. The external impediments prevent them to

some extent from becoming effective.

Collective activities are correct only when they conform with the principles of a free conscience and with the 1 natural laws which are themselves free. Man is free fundamentally. A free being possesses feelings. He thinks with his own power, speaks with authority and acts with his determination. To place him under compulsion would, in fact, amounts to finishing his very being. Hence it will be permissible to curb a person's freedom only when it is permissible to kill him. 2

If you wish to restrict the light of the sun and draw a curtain before it as a consequence whereof it cannot make the opposite things hot and bright, you in fact extinguish its light. If you are able to restrain the air from blowing you in fact annihilate the air. Similarly if you deprive the waves of the rivers, the flowers of the deserts, the birds in the air and all other things available in this world from performing their natural functions it is as good as your having destroyed them. Same is the case with man and to deprive him of freedom amounts to killing all human beings. 3

This was the conception of freedom in the eyes of the Imam and this was how he reached its depths. He mentioned freedom with his tongue as he understood it and also acted according to it. Every deed of his was correct according to his own views and beliefs as well as according to those of others. The laws of nature as well as the interests of the society support them.

Ali's words and actions which we have studied thoroughly go to show how he guided the people to do everything with their determination and free will. In fact there was a point which he always kept in view and it was the freedom of the individuals in such a manner that the freedom of others was not hurt.

A group of the old Greek philosophers and some European philosophers of the Middle Ages kept only the individual’s freedom in view and did not attach any importance to public interests and national freedom. There was also another group which took only the collective interests into account and did not favour individual freedom and rights. They considered pressure upon the people and subjecting them to forced labour to be lawful.

However, Ali took the individual’s freedom and collective interests into account in such a way that neither of them might be hurt and made them compatible with each other so that an individual might take care of collective interests with his own free will and free efforts of the individuals might be in the national interests. He declared that the individuals were for the nation and the nation was for the individuals. We shall continue this discussion so that the matter may become perfectly clear.

We shall now see how he coordinated the freedom of the individuals with the public interests.

Ali knew that as the individuals are the members of the nation they should apply their freedom to matters which might not hurt the interests of the nation. Here freedom does not mean general licence. On the contrary it should be coupled with the faith and sense of responsibility, and man should consider it his duty to take the public interests into account along with his own freedom.

Ali did not say like other philosophers that human freedom was limited, but said something deeper and did not fix any limit for freedom. His remark is much more valuable and sublime than those of others, and shows that he was much superior to others in understanding the spiritual mysteries of man and the social rules and regulations.

He inculcated in the hearts of the people the belief in freedom, and added to it the belief that every person has some responsibilities which he must fulfil. The proof of this policy of his is that a canal in a village was filled with dust and became useless and some persons who wanted to restart it approached the governor of the area to compel the people to work on it, but the Commander of the Faithful strictly prohibited it and said: “they may work of their own free will and take wages for that. As regards the canal it belongs to the person who works on it of his own accord and considers himself responsible for the result”.

Ali accorded respect to the freedom of the working class more than one thousand years ago, and Rousseau, the famous French writer was inclined to remark thus about two centuries ago: “Respect for mankind and philanthropy oblige us to say that we should consider our subordinates to be human beings like the intelligent people even though they may be untrained and ignorant”.

The principles set forth by the Imam make it necessary that determination and authority should be limited within their own bounds and authority should be coupled with belief in responsibility. Hence duty and responsibility do not hurt authority and will but support them.

Responsibility alone is not sufficient for the performance of good deeds until determination and authority are also responsible. Responsibility is proportionate with authority. The greater the authority and determination the heavier will be the duty and responsibility.

Responsibility is related with authority in the same way in which it is related with intellect and conscience. A person whose power of thinking is paralyzed and who cannot distinguish between good and evil and whose intellectual capabilities are out of order cannot be held responsible for any action.

Similarly a person who has been deprived of his freedom and authority cannot be subjected to any responsibility. Freedom, authority and mental awakening make a person distinguish between good and evil and carry out his responsibilities as a matter of necessity.

It was on this account that Ali ordered his governors and other officers to release the people from captivity and remove the heavy chains from their hands and feet so that they might do useful deeds for the nation of their own free will, because so long as they were not independent they would be helpless, and helpless persons are under no responsibility. They do not consider themselves to be responsible and do not, therefore, do good deeds, because good deeds can be done only with freedom of thought. The actions of those who do not possess free will are not their own. They are the actions of the government which are performed through them. Their determination is weak and their strength is wasted on inappropriate occasions.

After the Imam the people arrived at that very stage which has been mentioned by us. Although they were free during the period of his caliphate and were safe from harm and torture by the rulers he had prescribed a rule according to which they were required to admit their responsibilities of their own free will and were to realize that they owed some responsibilities to the nation and the nation had some rights on them. As we have already seen on many occasions and shall also see later his orders and directions were based on this principles and he commanded and prohibited and rewarded and punished the people keeping this principle in view.

1. The author proves in this chapter that the individual should, while enjoying freedom, have regard for national interests and should perform all those acts with their determination, free will and choice which are useful for the people and should avoid harmful acts, so that freedom should be confined to one's own freedom and should not result in placing others under compulsion and captivity.
2. By this statement the author wants to prove that the point of view of the socialists that government should monopolize all activities and should not leave anyone free on the ground that in various matters the people look after their personal interests and do not care for national interests is not correct. The opponents of this school of thought say that no interest is higher than freedom and after curbing their freedom the people cannot be provided with any bounty which might equal it. They also say that every kind of blessing and advancement of industry and trade can be achieved in a better way by means of freedom. As we can very well observe abundant facilities are available in free countries and the number of scholars and skilled persons available there is also larger. The workers in such countries live in comfort and the rate of crime there is very low so much so that in many of those countries no criminal case is registered for years.
3. The mischievous and sensual persons also say that freedom is something respectable and the nation should set them free to indulge in their sensual activities and to bring up the children and young men in an irreligious atmosphere. They should be told that the freedom demanded by them is a crime and if they are given this licence, others whose number is thousands of times larger than theirs, will be deprived of their freedom.

Accountability

As we have already said, freedom in its wide sense was the real basis of the government of Ali. In his eyes this freedom was as much related with the mutual relations of the people as with intellect and conscience. Man who wishes to cover different stages of advancement by means of mutual co-operation and brotherly relations cannot achieve success in this behalf unless he is free in his individual and collective capacities. And it is not possible for him to be free unless his conscience is free from those defects which destroy the value of man. Similarly that person cannot also be free whose rights for freedom are admitted by the society but ignored in practice.

In this matter Ali meted out equal treatment to the individuals and the society as well as to friends and the foes. He followed this line of action very firmly. He could not be made to deviate from his object by any allurement or threat. He knew very well that truth is unpalatable to many persons. It is for this reason that he says: “Our matter is very difficult”.

He was also aware that truth is especially hard for the rulers. He therefore, says: “Truth weighs heavily

upon the rulers and every truth is heavy".

However, whether truth is heavy on the rulers and the dignitaries or light, it was immaterial for Ali, because his intellect as well as conscience obliged him not to deviate from truth in the least, and he did not attach any importance to things other than intellect and conscience. Intellect and conscience compelled Ali not to turn away his face from the people who sought justice and not to leave the ruled at the mercy of the rulers so that they (the people) might bear the hardships of need and suffer from hunger which might dry up their palates and kindle a fire in their bellies. This intellect and conscience directed Ali not to leave the bounties and blessings at the disposal of those whose bellies were full, and who ate without hunger and drank without thirst, and led luxurious lives at the expense of the common people.

All's fear that the influential persons and the dignitaries would not tolerate his just ways and methods of government, as expressed by him before the oath of allegiance was taken to him proved to be true. Hence, after taking the oath of allegiance, those nobles and dignitaries demanded from him that they might be given larger shares from the public treasury as compared with others, but Ali replied: "I am not going to give anyone anything to which he is not entitled".

Talha and Zubayr came to him to make a deal and said: "We are prepared to take the oath of allegiance to you on the condition that we shall be your partners in running the government". However, Ali replied to them in the negative without any hesitation.

On hearing this reply they left him and began mobilizing an army to fight against him, as will be mentioned in detail later.

Ali knew very well that Talha and Zubayr were very influential and they had a large number of supporters in Kufa and Basra. However, it was justice which Ali loved most. He said: "Do you want me to achieve success by means of oppression? By Allah this will never be. Unjustified award is extravagance".

Food is not brought before a person who is satiated. Wealth, small or large, was not lawful in the eyes of Ali until it was acquired by lawful, means. It should not have been acquired by hoarding, or by exploiting the people or by taking undue advantage of one's position as a ruler.

Ali forgave many crimes of the criminals and overlooked many evil deeds of the oppressors, but he did not tolerate that the hoarders, should exploit and oppress the people. According to him oppression was a curse in whatever shape it might be, but the worst oppression was that exercised by the powerful on the weak, by the hoarder on the public, and by the ruler on the ruled. He could not ignore an oppression, which might give birth to wickedness and crime in the society.

Study `Nahj al-Balaghah' and you will see how fiery his words are when he speaks about the exploitation of the people. He mentioned this topic in every speech of his. His remarks show that he was fully convinced that exploitation of the wealth of others is a social crime. Whoever acquires wealth by

unlawful means is an oppressor and must be punished for his offence. In one of his sermons Ali says about the hoarders: “And he should remember the wealth which he accumulated and did not care as to where he acquired it from (i.e. did not make any difference between lawful and unlawful sources) and collected wealth by lawful and unlawful means. He should rest assured that he will be punished for accumulating the wealth by illegal means”.

However, as regards accumulation of wealth which is untainted by usurpation, oppression and hoarding he says: “Whoever dies while earning by lawful means will die in such a condition that God will be pleased with him”.

It was for this reason that Ali had decided that he would demolish the structures which had been erected on the foundation of usurpation and oppression, abolish the custom of spending the wealth of the public treasury on one's relatives, and would not permit the influential class to exploit the common man.

In one of his speeches he declared thus in clear words: “Look here! Whoever was assigned land by Uthman out of Allah's property should return it to the public treasury because nothing can annul an old right. If I come to know that women have been married by spending the money of the public treasury or that money has been distributed in different cities, my utmost effort will be to restore that money to its original position. Justice covers a wide range, and if justice is hard upon a person injustice will be harder upon him”.

It is possible that there may have been some kings and rulers who may not have given anything to an undeserving person from the public treasury and may not have spent public money lavishly on their friends and relatives. However, we do not come across anyone like Ali, who compelled those who had become rich by unlawful means during the period of the former governments to render account of their earning and to return to the public treasury the wealth which they had earned unlawfully. This brave action of Ali proves that he had immense knowledge of the state of affairs and had such a perfect faith in social justice as was not possessed by anyone else.

If the rule that only that person who works hard and renders service to the society should be rewarded, is correct, then the question arises as to what public service Harith son of Hakam had rendered that he should have been given three hundred thousand dirhams by Uthman from the public treasury on the day his (Harith's) marriage took place? Was marrying Uthman's daughter a public service? 1

What service had Talha and Zubayr rendered to the Muslims as a recompense whereof they got such large amounts of dirhams and dinars and big land grants from Uthman that if they had been distributed among the hundreds of thousands of the Muslims all of them would have become rich and would have got more than they might have hoped and desired? 2

What preferential rights did Talha and Zubayr possess that they should have had thousands of slaves and slave-girls? Even if it is admitted that they embraced Islam at its earliest stage and were the distinguished companions of the Prophet and had rendered great services to Islam they had done all this

for the sake of God and should have expected its reward from God in the Hereafter. God never allows the efforts of the righteous to go in vain. Whatever services they rendered to Islam were rendered by them to seek the pleasure of God and it is He who gives the best reward. But what special right had they on the public treasury on which all the Muslims enjoyed equal rights? What deeds of public welfare were performed by the relatives of Uthman as a reward for which he opened the doors of the public treasury for them, entrusted the administration of the state to them, made them the masters of the lives, property and honour of the Muslims and allowed them to utilize everything in whatever manner they liked?

One of these relatives of his was Mu`awiya, who was notorious for taking bribes. And there were many other relatives and friends of his including Hakam son of `Aas and Abdullah son of Sa'd.

What services had Mu`awiya rendered to Islam as a reward for which he was made the governor of Palestine and Hamas, besides Syria, and was also entrusted the command of four armies? From where did the relatives of Uthman acquire such immense wealth and how did they erect lofty palaces in all cities and villages? When these persons did not render any public service from where did they get capital to finance these projects? If a person possesses usurped wealth for a long time he does not become its owner nor does that wealth become his personal property. Falsehood does not become truth if it persists for a long time.

It was for this reason that Ali had decided to get restored to the public treasury all those lands and wealth which had been given by Uthman to undeserving persons by depriving those who deserved them even though that wealth might have been scattered in different cities or given to women as their dowry. Justice is a means of prosperity and comfort for the people and it cannot be limited or confined.

Another point which deserves attention is this that Ali considered the lands, which had been made personal property by the people on account of their being Uthman's relatives or favourites, as well as the benefits drawn from them, to be usurped property. Ali knew very well what sort of people Uthman's kinsmen were. He was aware that after usurping the lands they would take forced labour from the common people and accumulate the produce and would acquire more property with this income. Thus their capital would increase day after day and whereas others would continue to become poorer they themselves would grow richer and richer.

Then these big landowners would purchase the holdings of small owners and consequently only two classes would be left. viz. the capitalists and the indigent who would have to depend on the former and serve them. In his testament for Malik Ashtar Ali says: “Beware! Do not give a land to any of your associates and relatives. He should not expect from you that you will allow him to occupy a land which is harmful for the neighbouring people in the matter of irrigation or any other common matter, so that he may throw the burden thereof on others”.

The fears of the Commander of the Faithful about the land grants proved to be too true. Those persons took abundant forced labour from the common people and subjected them to every kind of injustice and

oppression.

Dr. Taha Husayn writes in the first volume of his book entitled `Al-fitnatu'l Kubra': "On the one side there were big landowners and nobles and on the other side there were indigent persons who were the slaves of these land-owners and nobles. Out of them there emerged a new class in Islam i.e. those who were the chiefs of the nation according to the tribal custom prevalent in the Arabian Peninsula and had now become more distinguished and dignified on account of abundant wealth and a large number of associates".

According to Ali all are entitled to share the profit which accrues from gold and land and only that person, who works harder and is also more needy, is entitled to a larger share. Whoever denies this reality commits treachery with his people. In the eyes of Ali the greatest treachery is the treachery committed with the public. Ali considers that man who commits treachery with the public to be mean and despicable. He never relied upon such persons and never associated with them.

Ali endeavoured to safeguard the rights of the people to the utmost extent. Whenever he took a decision none could make him deviate from it. He did not care if the people deserted him and joined the enemy. He was the embodiment of truth and whatever he said was absolute justice.

Ali did not show preferential treatment even to the devoted companions of the Prophet, who had participated in the battles along with him. He says: "Beware! There are some persons among you whom the world has made prosperous. They have acquired lands and dug canals. They ride on strong horses and possess larger number of slaves and slave-girls. If I prohibit them tomorrow from doing things in which they are immersed and restrict them to the rights of which they are well aware they should not complain that Ali has deprived them of their rights. Remember! Whether they be the Muhajirs or the Ansar, whoever from amongst them thinks that he is superior to others is mistaken.

Superiority will be decided upon before God on the Day of Judgment. It is only God who can reward the people. Remember! Whoever has acknowledged God and His Prophet, certified our community, joined our religion and turned to our qiblah is entitled to the rights and responsibilities of Islam. All of you are the slaves of God and the wealth, which belongs to God will be divided amongst you equally. None enjoys preference over another. The righteous and the pious will get better reward from God".

This very equal treatment meted out by Ali to common people made the nobles and distinguished persons among Quraysh leave Ali and join Mu`awiya as will be mentioned in detail later.

It was impossible for Ali to prefer those who enjoyed a higher position to those who were at a comparatively lower level, because according to him the criterion of virtue and excellence was not that which was prevalent in his days. He did not prefer a Qurayshite to a non- Qurayshite or an Arab to a non-Arab, because he considered all men to be brothers of one another. He could not flatter those chiefs and nobles as Mu`awiya did, nor could he attract people towards himself by means of the wealth of the Muslims.

Malik Ashtar said to the Commander of the Faithful: “O Commander of the Faithful! We joined the people of Basra and Kufa and performed jihad against the people of Basra. At that time all were of one view. Thereafter differences arose. Their intentions became weak and their number decreased. You are just to all and act according to what is right. Consequently they got scared on account of your justice. On the other hand they saw the policies and methods which Mu`awiya adopts with regard to the rich and the noble, because there are very few people in the world who do not aspire for worldly gains. There are many who buy falsehood at the price of truth and adopt the world. In case, therefore, you distribute wealth lavishly among the people and give more to the influential persons you will see how their necks become inclined towards you and how they sing songs in your praise and become your well-wishers. May God settle your affairs and disperse and weaken the association and the deceit of your enemies. God is certainly aware of their deeds”.

Ali said in reply: “You have said that I act according to justice. The reason for this is that God says: ***“Whoever does good deeds does them for his own benefit and whoever does bad deeds suffers on their account. Your Lord does not do injustice to His slaves”.*** (***41:46***)

If I violate this rule I am afraid that I will have to suffer on this account.

As regards your saying that some persons have deserted us because truth is intolerable for them, God knows better that they have not left us because we have been unjust to them. And it is also not so that after leaving us they have sought refuge with a just person. There is no reason for their deserting us except that they have sought the material world and this world is not lasting. On the Day of Judgment they will be questioned as to whether they sought the world or acted for the sake of God.

Now as regards our spending money to attract the people, it is not lawful for us to give anyone from the public property more than what he is entitled to. (And I do not bother if the number of my adherents decreases owing to my being just) God says thus and what He says is correct:

“How many a smaller party has overpowered those who are stronger numerically, with the will of God. And God is with those who are patient”. (***2:249***)

God appointed the Prophet to the prophetic mission when he was all alone. He had few supporters and then their number increased. He bestowed honour on his group after they had been humiliated. If God wishes to give a better turn to our affairs He will solve these difficulties and make the matters easy for us”.

The gist of his policies and the method of his government is embodied in the testament which he wrote and gave to Malik Ashtar while appointing him the governor of Egypt. He said therein: “Beware! Do not appropriate to yourself the things in which all the people have equal share”.

The public rights are those which vest in all the citizens equally and those are the rights to which Ali has alluded in his above remarks.

1. Uthman gave three hundred thousand dirhams to Harith son of Hakam (brother of Marwan) who was his second son-in-law and husband of his daughter Ayesha (Kitab al-Ansab, Balazari, Vol.5, p.58).
Balazari says at another place: Camels received as zakat were brought before Uthman and he gave all of them to Harith son of Hakam (Kitab al-Ansab, Vol.5, p.28).
Allama Ibn Qutaiba, Ibn Abd Rabih and Ibn Abi al-Hadid have narrated that the Prophet had endowed `Mehzool', a bazaar of Madina, upon the Muslims but Uthman gave it away to Harith as a land grant (Ma`arif, p.84, Aqd al-Farid, p.261, Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, vol. 1,p.27).
Uthman did favour to Harith in three ways:
(1) He gave three hundred thousand dirhams to Harith although this amount was not Uthman's personal property but belonged to the public treasury of the Muslims.
(2) He gave Harith all the camels which had been received by way of zakat.
(3) He gave to Harith by way of Jagir all the property which had been endowed by the Prophet upon the Muslims.
2. On account of the favours done by Uthman to his relatives, friends and associates they became very rich. As a consequence of the method adopted by him in the matter of division of wealth, which was opposed to the Book and the Sunnah as well as to that adopted by his predecessor, these people acquired big estates, cons tructed magnificent palaces and accumulated large amounts of wealth.
Zubayr son of Awam left behind eleven houses in Madina, two in Basra, one in Kufa and one in Egypt. He had four wives. They inherited one-eighth of his property and every one of them got one million and two hundred thousands. Thus the entire property left by him amounted to 59 millions and 800 thousands. (Sahih Bokhari, vol.5 p.21). In Sahih Bokhari only the number has been stated; it has not been specified whether they were dirhams or dinars, but it has been stated in Tarikh Ibn Kaseer that they were dirhams.
Allama Ibn Sa'd writes that Zubayr had estates in Egypt and houses in Alexandria, Kufa and Madina. He also received income from the suburbs of Madina. (Tabaqaat Ibn Sa'd, vol.2 p.77, Printed at Leiden)
Mas'udi says: "Zubayr left behind, on his death, one thousand horses, one thousand slaves and slave-girls and many palaces and lands. (Murooj al-Zahab,vol. 1,p. 34).
Talha son of Obaidullah left behind himself one hundred `buhars' (ox-skins) full of gold. Allama Ibn Abd Rabih has quoted Khashni as having said that Talha left three hundred `buhars' of gold and silver. Sibt Ibn Jauzi says that he left behind himself gold which could be loaded on three hundred camels. (Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd vol.3. p.158. Murooj al-Zahab,v. 1. p.444. Aqd al-Farid, v.2. p.275 etc).
Allama Balazari has narrated that during the age of ignorance Hakam son of Aas was a neighbour of the Prophet and after the advent of Islam he was one of the deadly enemies and persecutors of the Prophet. When Mecca was conquered in the eighth year of Migration he came over to Madina. It is doubtful whether he embraced Islam. He used to follow the Prophet and made ridiculous signs towards him, mimicked him and made a wry face, and when the Prophet offered prayers he also stood behind him and made signs with his fingers. The result was that the shape which he gave to his face while mimicking the Prophet became permanent and did not change till he died. He also became insane.
One day while the Prophet was staying in the house of one of his wives, Hakam began peeping. The Prophet recognized him. He came out of the house and said: "Who will save me from this accursed trembling person?" Then he added: "This Hakam and his descendants cannot live where I live." He, therefore, exiled Hakam and his family to the side of Taif. When the Prophet breathed his last Uthman approached Abu Bakr with the request that Hakam might be permitted to return to Madina. Abu Bakr however, declined to accede to his request saying that he could not grant asylum to a man who had been exiled by the Prophet. When Umar became the caliph after Abu Bakr, Uthman approached him with the same request, but he also gave him the same reply which had been given by Abu Bakr.
However, when Uthman himself became the Caliph he called back Hakam and the members of his family to Madina. He told the Muslims that he had recommended to the Prophet to permit Hakam and the members of his family to return to Madina and the Prophet had promised that he would grant such a permission but he breathed his last before this could be done. The Muslims did not believe what Uthman said and disliked very much his having allowed Hakam and his descendants to return to Madina. (Kitab al-Ansab vol.5, p.27)
Uthman not only called back Hakam to Madina and made him his chief adviser, but he also gave away to him the entire

property which had been collected as zakat and alms from the tribe of Bani Qaza`a.
When Hakam entered Madina he was clad in rags and the people could see in what miserable condition he was. He had with him a goat which he was driving. He entered Uthman's court in this condition. However, when he left that place he was wearing a very valuable fur cloak and had covered himself with a costly silken sheet. (Tarikh Yaqoobi, Vol.2, p.41)
Allama Balazari says: “Amongst the many acts of Uthman which annoyed the people one was this that he deputed Hakam son of Aas to collect zakat from Bani Qaza`a, which amounted to three hundred thousand dirhams and when Hakam collected this money and brought it to Uthman the latter gave away the entire amount to him”. (Tarikh al-Ansab, Balazari Vol.5, p.28).
Allama Yaqoobi says that Uthman married his daughter to Abdullah son of Khalid son of Aseed and ordered that six hundred thousand dirhams might be given to him. He wrote to Abdullah son of `Aamir that this amount might be paid out of the public treasury of Basra. (Tarikh Yaqoobi, Vol.2, p.145).
Allama Ibn Abd Rabih Qartabi, Allama Ibn Qutaiba and Allama Ibn Abi al-Hadid have written that Uthman gave four hundred thousand dirhams to Abdullah (Aqd al-Farid Vol.2, p. 261.
Ma`araf, p.84 and Sharh Ibn Abi al-Hadid Vol.1, p.66).
One fifth (khums) of the war booty which was received as a result of the African war amounted to five hundred gold coins. Uthman gave this amount to Marwan son of Hakam, who was his cousin and son-in-law, being the husband of his daughter Umm Ayan.
Allama Ibn Athir writes: Khums (one-fifth) was brought from Africa to Madina and Marwan purchased it for five hundred thousand dinars. Uthman excused him from making payment of this amount. This was one of those acts of Uthman which were criticized by the people later. (Tarikh Yaqoobi, Vol.3, p.38).
Allama Balazari and Ibn Sa'd have narrated that Uthman endowed upon Marwan the “Khums” which was received from the war in Egypt, and also bestowed large sums of money upon his relatives. He explained away these acts by saying that he had shown kindness to his kinsmen. The people disliked these actions of Uthman very much and criticized him. (Tabqat Ibn Sa`d, V.3, p.24. (Printed at Leiden) and Kitab al-Ansab Balazari, Vol.5, p.25).
Uthman gave one hundred thousand dirhams to Sa`id son of `Aas. Ali, Talha, Zubayr, Sa`d son of Abi Waqas and Abdur Rahman son of Auf had a talk with him in this regard. He, however, told them that Sa`id was a relative and a kinsman of his and by giving the said amount to him he had shown kindness to a kinsman. (Kitab al-Ansab, Vol.5, p. 28).
He gave large sum of money out of the public treasury to Walid son of Aqba son of Abi Mu`eet who was his brother from his mother's side.
Allama Balazari says: “When Walid was appointed as governor of Kufa Abdullah son of Mas`ud was in charge of the public treasury. Walid borrowed a large sum of money from the treasury.
The rulers used to borrow in this manner and returned it when they received their salaries. After a few days Ibn Mas`ud demanded the money back. Walid complained to Uthman against this demand by Ibn Mas`ud. Thereupon Uthman wrote to Ibn Mas`ud: “You are only a treasurer. Do not press Walid to return the money borrowed by him. It is not proper to expostulate with him”. (Kitab al-Ansab, Vol. 5,p. 1)
The day on which Uthman got one hundred thousand dirhams paid to Marwan from the public treasury he also got two hundred thousand dirhams paid to Abu Sufyan. (Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, Allama Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Vol.8, p.27).
Allama Ibn Abi al-Hadid says that Uthman gave the entire war booty received from different places in Africa, where battles were fought, to his foster-brother Abdullah bin Abi Sarha to the exclusion of all other Muslims (Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, V.1, p.27).

Helping the needy

There are those common rights which were respected by Ali himself and he also impressed upon others

to respect them. According to him the real duty of the governors of the provinces and other officials was that they should protect these rights and should not allow them to be encroached upon.

If Ali appointed anyone as a ruler or removed him from his office, it was for this very reason. According to him these rights carried very wide meanings and were of many kinds. The purport of all of them was, however, that the needs of every person should be met and no one should remain hungry, because remaining hungry is the greatest insult to humanity.

There is no harm in violating the laws which cannot eliminate the indigence of the people. Just as in the creed of Ali worship must not estrange man from the society and religion means good behaviour towards the people, and true religious beliefs are those which promote righteousness, in the same manner the laws should be such as meet the needs of the people and ensure elimination of poverty and indigence, so that man may not be humiliated in his own eyes and become dejected.

It is not a favour but the duty of a ruler and a law-giver to enact laws which relieve the people of need and indigence, and they are entitled to demand such laws from him.

Ali safeguarded the rights of the people so meticulously that it is almost impossible to find any sermon, speech or testament of his in which he may not have mentioned these rights and may not have drawn the attention of the governors and the officials to them. Meeting the needs of the people was undoubtedly the greatest duty of the ruler and the law-giver and the greatest right of the people in the eyes of Ali.

It was Ali who considered the greatest sin of Kaiser and Kisra to be this (although the list of their sins is quite long) that they humiliated their subjects, did not look after their rights, deprived them of the bounties of the earth and the comforts of life and tried to make them indigent and despicable. He says: "Think over the agitation and distress of the people when Kaiser and Kisra were their rulers. They had expelled them from fertile lands and the water and verdure of Iraq and transferred them to a place where there was no vegetation and where there was nothing except violent winds, and had made them extremely poor and indigent.

Whenever a governor or an official committed breach of trust of public property (whether the amount involved was small or large) Ali threatened him with severe punishment. He was deeply grieved as and when he came to know that a governor or an official had usurped a property or had been guilty of hoarding, and he reprimanded him in very severe terms. He once wrote thus to a governor: "I understand that you have usurped the land belonging to the public treasury and have appropriated what was under your feet and eaten what was in your hands. You should, therefore, send me your account".

The sentence "Send me your account" in the letter of the Commander of the Faithful deserves attention. This sentence carries very vast meanings. He was so keen to enforce justice that he could not tolerate any excuse or slackness in this behalf.

Besides possessing a firm faith Ali was a subtle observer and was fully aware of the mysteries of human society, and the mutual relations of the public. He knew which rights had been encroached upon, and which of them were going to be encroached upon. He fully realized that injustice and oppression was harmful for the society internally as well as externally and the oppressors as well as the oppressed were threatened with grave dangers. He considered pleading for justice and administration of justice to be necessary even though it might be disliked by the governors and the officials. He wrote with much annoyance: “Send me your account”.

He was informed about another governor having misappropriated public property. He wrote to him immediately as under:

“Fear God and return the property of the people to them. If you do not do so and then God grants me control over you I shall acquit myself of my responsibilities in the matter and shall strike you with my sword, and whoever has been the victim of it has always gone direct to Hell. By God, even if Hasan and Husayn had done what you have done I would not have been lenient to them and they would not have been able to make me accede to any wish of theirs till I had taken back the right (of others) from them and had effaced the results arising out of injustice”.

The Commander of the Faithful sent a man named Sa`d to Ziad bin Abih to bring some money which was lying with him. The Commander of the Faithful had received information that Ziad was leading a luxurious life and that he was accumulating wealth himself and did not give anything to the widows, the orphans and the indigent. When Sa`d approached Ziad and demanded the money the latter behaved proudly and rebuked him. Sa`d came back and informed Ali about what had happened.

Thereupon Ali wrote a letter to Ziad on these lines: “Sa`d has informed me that you have rebuked him without any justification and behaved with him haughtily and proudly, notwithstanding the fact that the Prophet has said that greatness belongs to God only and whoever is proud incurs His wrath. Sa`d has also informed me that you eat food of various kinds and perfume yourself every day. What harm will accrue to you if you also fast for a few days for the sake of God and give away a part of your wealth as charity in the path of God, and eat many times the food which you eat once, or let an indigent person eat it.

You, who are rolling in bounties, do not look after your poor neighbours, the weak and needy widows and the orphans. Do you desire, inspite of all this, that you should get the reward of the righteous persons who give alms? Sa`d has also told me that you speak like the righteous but act like the evil-doer? If you really do so you have been cruel to yourself and have wasted your actions. You should repent before God and reform your ways and should be moderate in your acts. You should send forward whatever surplus property you possess for the day on which you will need it, in case you are a true believer. And use perfume on alternate days and that should not be too much. The Prophet has said: “Use perfume on alternate days and do not use it excessively. Peace be on you”.

The Commander of the Faithful sent successive orders to the governors and warned them severely against misappropriating public property and taking bribes. He considered such activities to be the worst relationship between the rulers and the ruled and a great barrier between title and the entitled person. He was well aware of the harm which these bad habits were likely to do to the people.

Once he received information that a military officer had taken bribe. He held his hand and gave it such a violent jerk that it was about to be dismembered from his body. Then he said to him: “The people earlier than you were annihilated because they deprived the people of their rights and they were, therefore, obliged to acquire their rights by offering bribes. They compelled the people to do invalid things as a result of which falsehood became prevalent”.

Once a governor was invited to a feast. The governor accepted the invitation and participated in the party. When the Commander of the Faithful came to know about this he reprimanded the governor severely saying: “Entertaining a governor is bribe. Why was this bribe given? If it was given to establish a right it is the duty of a governor to give the entitled persons their right without taking bribe, or this bribe was given to validate something invalid. If that be the case it is not lawful for a governor to do any such thing even though the entire world may be offered to him as bribe.

The second thing is: why did the governor participate in a feast to which the rich were invited but the indigent were ignored and thus discrimination was made between the slaves of Allah? This discrimination pained many persons and also grieved Ali. Of course if the society is prosperous and the people are well-to-do there is no harm in inviting only some persons to a party to the exclusion of others. However, when the conditions are such that there are poor as well as rich persons in the society, does the extension of an invitation to a governor to participate in a feast not amount to giving him bribe?

Some persons may think that such severity on the part of Ali with regard to the governors and the officials was not appropriate and they did not deserve to be censured and reprimanded in this manner. However, if such persons become aware of the facilities provided by Ali to the officers which made it absolutely unnecessary for them to take bribes or to resort to misappropriation of funds they will acknowledge that the severity expressed by Ali towards the officials was not unjustified.

Another point also deserves attention here and it is that Ali did not consider it permissible that the officials should take advantage of their position vis-a-vis the public even to the extent of a feast, because such an advantage also amounts to theft or bribe. And when Ali did not permit an officer to accept an invitation to a feast by way of bribe, how could he tolerate that he should appropriate a whole city to himself or should take the property of the people from them by way of bribe?

A far-sighted person who has an eye on the realities is obliged to be severe and to nip the evil in the bud. Restraint on the officials commenced in the days of Ali and not during the period of Uthman. Ali gave such handsome salaries to the governors as were sufficient for their needs. There could, therefore, be no justification for their taking bribes.

If Ali was severe with the corrupt officers he was also affable with the righteous ones. He acknowledged their rights and encouraged them for their devotion towards their Imam and for their services to the Muslims.

The letter which he wrote to Umar son of Abi Salma, the governor of Bahrain whereby relieving him of his assignment and asking him to come over to him to accompany him in the Syrian campaign, deserves to be studied. He wrote to him: “I have entrusted the governorship of Bahrain to No`man son of Ajlan Zarqi and have relieved you of it. However, I have not done this because you have been considered to be incompetent or because you have been accused of anything improper.

The fact is that you have run the administration very competently and faithfully. You should, therefore, come over here and join me. There is nothing against you. The actual position is this that I have decided to proceed against the Syrian rebels and wish that you should be with me because you are one of those persons who can assist me in fighting against the enemy and erecting the pillar of the faith”.

He always adopted this firm policy with regard to the officers. He encouraged those who were righteous and was severe to those who did evil deeds. He neither wavered, nor minced words nor resorted to connivance or deceit. His real object was the welfare of the Muslims and the establishment of justice among all, whether they were the rulers or the ruled.

Those officers who did not misappropriate public funds and did not take bribe received salaries from the public treasury according to their needs, and the Commander of the Faithful praised and encouraged them. As regards the dishonest officers, however, Ali reprimanded and censured them in the first instance and then dismissed them. In case their crimes were more serious he also sentenced them to imprisonment.

Besides the governors there were some persons who had usurped the property of others and had accumulated large amount of wealth by unlawful means. The Commander of the Faithful subjected them to severe accountability and did not show them any leniency. He severely opposed their greed to accumulate wealth and their sensual and luxurious life, and endeavoured to become a wall between them and their wealth which they were keen to increase.

He opposed verbally as well as practically the usurpation of the property of others and severely prohibited hoarding. In the testament addressed to Malik Ashtar he wrote inter alia: “Keep this also in mind that many of these persons are habituated to parsimony and stinginess. They hoard to make profit and weigh lesser and charge more. This thing is harmful for the public and a defect of the rulers. You should, therefore, prevent them from hoarding”.
Then he says: “If someone is guilty of hoarding after your having prohibited it you should punish him, but you must ensure that no excess or oppression is done in your action”.

As regards occupation of estates and land by the people the view held by Ali was compatible with reason as well as a source of virtue. We have already discussed this matter in the foregoing pages.

Subjecting others to forced labour and exploiting their earnings is also a kind of hoarding. Ali did not tolerate this also, and has mentioned it at various places in Nahj al-Balaghah. While describing the condition of the people of his time he says: “There are many persons whose endeavours have been wasted and whose efforts have gone in vain. You people are living in a time when goodness is receding and wickedness coming nearer and nearer. Satanic avarice is killing the people. Wherever you cast your eye you will see indigent persons, who are suffering on account of poverty, or the rich who are guilty of ingratitude to God, or the stingy persons who do not pay God's dues and are keen to increase their wealth. What has happened to your righteous and pious people? Where are those noble and magnanimous persons, who were pious in earning wealth and pure in their actions and conduct?”

In fact the Commander of the Faithful had clearly understood this reality by means of his correct thinking, pure disposition and high morality that a system which cannot eliminate the indigence of the people is worthless and a law which cannot do away with class discrimination is useless and undesirable. All those social laws, which give birth to a society, in which people are divided into classes, are a plaything in the hands of those, who call themselves the nobles and the dignitaries and exploit the rights and property of the common man in a most shameless manner.

Ali took positive steps to eliminate the poverty of the people. His actions were based on two principles: Firstly that the entire wealth of the public treasury and the lands and property and all means of earning wealth belong to the nation and it is necessary that they should be distributed among all the citizens according to their needs and entitlement. Every person should work and benefit from these resources according to his efforts. None is entitled to appropriate whatever he likes and to convert the public property into his special property. It is also in the interest of the individuals that they should co-operate with the society. They should prove themselves useful for others and should also benefit from them. The benefits which they will derive from the society will be thousands of times more than those which they render to the society.

Ali says: “Whoever withholds his hand from doing harm to his people apparently withholds only one hand but actually keeps thousands of hands away from himself”.

The government should adopt this just policy in right earnest because the people are like a body and it is necessary for the government to treat every limb of that body according to its needs. It should neither ignore anyone, nor neglect the right of anyone, nor permit any discrimination between them. It is in such circumstances that it can become possible for the government to realize revenue and obtain other rights of the public treasury from the nation and spend it on the projects of public welfare.

The second thing on which Ali based his actions was the development of land, because the life of human beings and their welfare depend on land. He was of the view that the governors and officers should take much greater interest in the development of land as compared with the effort which they make to realize government revenue, because if land is not developed from where will the revenue come?

A ruler who does not develop land, but wants to realize revenue from the public, is ignorant and unjust. He desires that the cities should be destroyed, the people should be ruined and he himself should lose his dignity and honour. The land is neither developed automatically nor by means of the ignorance or power of the rulers. Development of land does not also mean that magnificent palaces should be erected on it to accommodate rich people. Land is developed with the efforts of the labourers and the residents of villages. The Commander of the Faithful had given strict instructions that if the people were distressed and were not happy with their rulers, revenue should not be realized from them.

The principles of kindness to the subjects and philanthropy and the moral values demand that the subjects should pay the revenue voluntarily and not under duress. It is the duty of governors to make the subjects prosperous in the first instance and then to think of collecting the revenue. The Commander of the Faithful has addressed the collectors of revenue in these words: "..... Don't sell the winter or summer clothings of the people or the animals used by them, in order to collect revenue. Don't flog any person or make him stand on his feet for the sake of money, and don't sell any of their things for this purpose, because God has ordered us to take that which is surplus".

He also says: "In the matter of revenue keep in view the interests of those who pay the revenue, because the affairs of others can be set right only by means of taxes and the tax-payers".

These views of the Commander of the Faithful about land and its development and the conclusion drawn by him that the welfare of government depends on the welfare of the people are so true and correct that nothing wrong about them has been found even after the lapse of so many centuries. All the economic and social theories of the modern times also confirm these views.

Ali prescribed a general rule for the development of land and the extraction of wealth from its heart which is admitted by the social sciences of our time, to be absolutely correct.

During the age of ignorance there was a custom that the powerful persons forced the slaves, prisoners and subordinates to develop their lands. They gave these workers paltry wages at their own sweet will but appropriated the produce of the land themselves without having done any work.

According to their law man did not carry any value and his labour did not deserve any reward. The rulers considered the people to be their slaves and subjected them to forced labour. Their very religion was based on making people their slaves or in other words on killing and destroying those helpless and afflicted persons. The people were ignorant and the rulers, taking undue advantage of their ignorance, made them their slaves.

The idolatrous priests, who were the religious leaders of those times had also declared slavery to be lawful and had thus strengthened the hands of the rulers. These priests had befooled the people in such a way that they were prepared to make supreme sacrifices for the sake of their rulers to enable them to increase their wealth and add new lands to their territories. All this was done either in the name of the homeland or in the name of the deity, whom they worshipped.

The famous British historian H.G. Wells says: “The idolatrous priests told the people that the lands which they tilled did not belong to them. They belonged to the gods whose image they had hung in the temples, and those gods had given those lands to the rulers. Now it depended upon the sweet will of the rulers to give the lands to those servants of theirs whom they liked”.

The peasants also began to entertain the belief that the land which they ploughed did not belong to them, but were owned by the god (idol) and it was their duty to surrender a part of the produce of the land to the representative of the god. Or that the god had given the land to the ruler and he was entitled to impose thereon any taxes he liked. Or that the ruler had given the land to the landlord who was their master. If at times the idol, the ruler or the landlord needed the services of the peasant it was his duty to leave other work and carry out the orders of his master. The peasant did not even think that he had any right on the land which he ploughed. In short the peasant neither possessed any freedom of will nor enjoyed any right.

The history of Arabia tells us that the persons who assumed the reins of government after Ali monopolized the lands, their produce, and the public treasury for their personal benefit. They used to say: “The entire wealth belongs to God and we are his representatives and vicegerents on earth. It is our prerogative to give this wealth to whomsoever we like. Nobody is entitled to criticize us in this regard”. 1

However, Ali knew the position very well. He was very far-sighted and was well aware that God does not need land or wealth and the land belongs to those who work on it. Ali also knew that if the peasants are indigent the land will become waste and it will be difficult to realize any revenue. Land can be developed only by those people who are its owners and derive profit from its produce. If the peasants know it for certain that they will not be able to enjoy the fruits of their labour and it will reach the treasuries of the extravagant rulers, they will work half-heartedly and will not make any effort to develop the land.2 Consequently they themselves will be in distress and others will also be deprived of the fruits of their labour.

In case, however, they know that the more they produce with their hard work the more they themselves and their children will benefit from it, and the rulers too will not distribute the revenue among their friends and relatives, but will spend it on projects of public welfare, they will work whole-heartedly. As a result of this they will become prosperous and additional revenue will also accrue to the government treasury.

In the eyes of the Commander of the Faithful the happiness and goodwill of the subjects was the only source of the welfare of the people as well as the good condition of the rulers. He did not believe in coercion and said: “The best source of satisfaction and heartfelt happiness for a ruler is that justice should be established and the love of the subjects for the rulers should become patent. They do not display love so long as there is ill feeling in their hearts and their devotion cannot be relied upon so long as they are not prepared to defend their ruler and do not cease to think that his rule has been burdensome and it will come to an end after a long time”.

Ali considered farming and all other professions to be respectable. He prohibited people from remaining idle and considered it essential that a worker should be paid wages commensurate with his work. He exercised much strictness in these matters so that the people might realize that he was not going to pay anything which had not been earned by the person concerned by means of his work. The incident of his real brother Aqil son of Abu Talib is well known. He approached Ali to make him some payment without any work or service, but Ali declined to accede to his request.

In the eyes of Ali there was no injustice greater than that a worker should not be paid his wages or that he should be deprived of his right even to the smallest extent. According to him it was also highly improper that the work done by persons belonging to the higher class should be applauded whereas that done by the ordinary persons should be looked down upon. According to him what mattered was the work and its real value whether it was done by a big man or an ordinary person.

There were many workers in his time who worked hard but were not rewarded for their labour. The Commander of the Faithful disliked it very much. These words of his are a beacon light in the path of social and moral principles: “Keep eye on the achievement of every person and do not attribute the achievement of one person to another, and do not deprive the real person of the reward to which he is entitled on account of the work done by him. Never treat an ordinary work to be great on account of high position of the doer, and never treat a great work to be ordinary on account of the low position of the person who has done it”.

Development of land and payment of full wages, commensurate with the work done, were the two strong pillars on which Ali intended to erect the structure of a good and pious society. Some persons belonging to a particular place came to him and said: “There is a canal in our area which is now filled with dust. If it is dug again it will be very beneficial for us”. They then requested him to write to the governor of the area to make it compulsory for everyone to dig the canal. The Commander of the Faithful approved the digging of the canal but did not accede to their request that the people should be compelled to dig it.

He wrote thus to Qarza son of Kaa`b the governor of the area: “Some persons belonging to your area came to me and told me that there was a canal in that region which is now filled with dust. If these people dig the canal once again it will lead to the development of the area and they will be able to pay the revenue. This will also lead to the increase in the income of the Muslims residing in the area. These persons asked me to write a letter to you desiring you to collect the people of that place to dig the canal and to make it obligatory upon them to bear the expenses of the work.

I do not consider it appropriate to compel any person to do a work which he does not like to do. You should, therefore, call the people and employ those of them who are willing to do the work. When the canal is ready only those persons who do digging work will be entitled to use it, and those who do not participate in the work will have no right on its water. If those people develop their area and their financial position improves, it is much better than their remaining weak”.

Ali did not consider it lawful to subject anyone to forced labour, although a group of persons wished to resort to this practice. The thing which matters is that one should work. Ali, therefore, said to those people: “You have been ordered to work (and not to remain idle). As regards the canal only those persons, who participate in its digging, will be entitled to benefit from it. Those who do not want to do this work cannot be compelled to do it. Work should be done willingly and not under coercion”. This is the principle which Ali followed very strictly.

By formulating this rule about work and the workers centuries ago Ali surpassed the western thinkers. The western thinkers are putting forth so vehemently the same thing today which was said by Ali thirteen hundred years ago. He provided a basis for justice and a better basis cannot be imagined. 3 And that basis is that none should be subjected to forced labour, however beneficial the work may be, because taking work by force is an insult to humanity. It reduces the value of man and infringes his inherent freedom. Furthermore, work taken under compulsion loses its value, because one who is forced to perform a job will not perform it whole-heartedly.

Ali, however, encouraged the people in another way to do the work by saying that only those persons who participate in digging the canal would be entitled to benefit from it. He said: “The owners of the canal are those persons who participate in digging it and not those who refrain from doing so”.4 This principle enunciated by Ali is the pillar on which the greatest beliefs and ideas of the western thinkers are based.

Hence it is necessary for every person to work. None is great or small except through his work. Whoever works shall be rewarded for it. The aristocrats and dignitaries are not entitled to usurp the earnings of others and encroach upon their rights. As said by Ali if God likes any one He likes an honest worker. If a person earns some wealth by hard work it naturally belongs to him because he has worked for it.

However, he must also take the interest of the nation into account. The said property will be treated to be his personal property so long as public interests are not jeopardized. If public interests demand that a part of the personal property of the individuals should be taken and spent for public welfare, this will be done. This wealth is meant for the benefit of the individuals as well as for the welfare of the society (it was on this account that revenue was realized from the owners of the canal for the public treasury) when ownership is circumscribed in this manner there will neither be excessive wealth with anyone nor will there be any indigent person in the society.

In every nation there are certain persons (for example young orphans) who are not able to do any work. Did Ali ignore such persons, as is done by the western countries, or did he take care of them according to the rules of justice and morality?

There is no doubt about the fact that the nation has rights on the individuals and the individuals have rights on the nation. The nation is like a body which is composed of different limbs. It is necessary for every limb to help other limbs. Every person is entitled to enjoy the fruits of his labour. God has given a

share of the necessities of life to everyone. None is, therefore, entitled to appropriate the necessities of life to the exclusion of others.

However, it is the responsibility of the nation to support those who are unable to earn, for example small children and old persons. 5 It should do justice to the helpless persons in the same manner in which it does justice to others. It is an exclusive right of theirs, and not an act of kindness and the governments and its representatives are responsible to pay this right. Ali Says: “Out of all members of the society these persons are more deserving of justice. Hence you should pay the right of every one of them and equip yourself with an excuse to be presented before God. Take care of the orphans and the old persons who can neither earn their livelihood nor stand before others to beg”.

Ali has gone ahead of thousands of western thinkers and philosophers in this matter. He realized the necessity of paying the rights of the helpless persons and made it a responsibility of the government. He did not let it depend on the kindness and generosity of the rich so that the deceitful hypocrites might not get any chance to spread mischief. 6

Ali's conscience as well as his intellect were well aware of the reality that all human beings are entitled to live. This right is one of the necessities of social life.

Freedom is of no use if sustenance is not available and a good society cannot come into being without it. He promulgated the law that all human beings enjoy equal rights. Then in the light of the same law he decided that the needy persons had preferential rights over the public treasury as compared with the rich persons even though those rich persons might have embraced Islam earlier.

It is work which entitles one to wages and it is also work by means of which one can become the owner of land and property.

In the orders which the Commander of the Faithful sent to the governors and other officers every now and then he strictly warned them not to harass the people. He directed them not to press the indigent peasants for payment of revenue but to render them assistance so that they might work hard and produce more from the land. Taxes should be realized from the rich so that the income of the public treasury might increase and might be used to help the needy.

How great and dignified Ali appears in our eyes when we learn that fourteen hundred years ago he gave emphatic orders to his governors on these lines: “Don't sell the winter or summer dresses of the people, or their cereals, or the animals used by them, to realize revenue. Don't flog any person or make him stand on his feet for the sake of money. Don't sell the household effects of any person to get revenue – and pay more heed to the development of land than to the collection of revenue”.

The Commander of the Faithful has mentioned the reason for the distressful condition of the indigent persons of his time in a few brief sentences and has explained their contents in numerous testaments and precepts. He says: “If an indigent person remains hungry it is because the rich man has withheld his

share".

This is the greatest reality which is the basis of modern equitable system. Ali had understood this reality fourteen hundred years ago and formulated clear rules and regulations, as were suited to his time.

A Lebanese writer who happens to be my friend says that at one time he was residing in a big city of Europe and the movement to put an end to poverty was being carried on there. One day he met the Education Minister of that country and said to him during the course of conversation: "We Arabs realized centuries ago the class discrimination and its disadvantages which you are endeavouring to eliminate now".

The Minister said: "How?" He replied: Fourteen hundred years ago Ali son of Abu Talib said: "I have not seen excessive wealth with anyone except that I have seen simultaneously the right of someone being infringed".

The Minister said: "We are much better than you". He said: "How?" The Education Minister said: "Because although an Arab had understood this reality fourteen hundred years ago you have not so far endeavoured to eliminate indigence and are still involved in it whereas we are already endeavouring to get rid of poverty. Hence you are fourteen hundred years behind us .i.e. if we had heard this sentence of Ali at that time we would have taken necessary steps in this behalf immediately".

Before we end this chapter, it will be better to recapitulate what has been stated above and to invite the readers to compare the views of Ali on social matters with those of the modern thinkers and to reflect on them judiciously.

We can mention the social principles and views of Ali in nine sentences. These principles and views consist of the causes of affluence and indigence and the class differences of the people or in other words the best rules and regulations for eliminating poverty and need, and establishing equality of rights between them.

(1) Prevent hoarding.

(2) No indigent person remained hungry except because a rich man usurped his share.

(3) I have not seen excessive wealth with anyone except that I have seen the right of someone being infringed.

(4) You should be more anxious to develop land then to collect revenue.

(5) I do not consider it proper that a person should be compelled to do a work which he does not like.

(6) The hearts of the pious people are in Paradise and their bodies are busy doing work in the world.

(7) The canal belongs to him who participated in its digging and not to him who did not provide physical

or financial assistance to dig it.

(8) Keep in view the achievement of a person, and do not attribute the achievements of one person to another.

(9) Beware! Don't appropriate to yourselves the things in which all have equal rights.

If these sentences of Ali are studied carefully it becomes known that the rights of man in the human society can be protected and his freedom can be ensured only by acting on those principles.

1. The fact is that this policy began to be acted upon during the time of Uthman himself. During the time of the Prophet and the period of the caliphate of Abu Bakr and Umar everything belonged to the Muslims and they were treated to have equal rights. However, Uthman's attitude changed considerably. He considered everything to be the property of God and considered himself to be the master of the Muslims. He spent public property as he wished and gave it to whomever he liked. The Commander of the Faithful has drawn a picture of this period in these words: "Consequently the third proudly took charge of the caliphate as if it was a private grazing ground and with bloated stomachs he and members of his clan (Bani Umayya) started plundering the wealth of the Muslim world in the same reckless gluttonous manner which characterises a camel when it devours harvest grass.
Uthman deprived the lawful claimants of that property which belonged to all the Muslims and gave it to his kith and kin and near and dear ones. On many occasions he uttered words which reflected the beliefs of the age of ignorance according to which the lands and its produce and the public treasury belonged to the ruler and he was entitled to give it to whomsoever he liked. This sentence of his is found in all history books: "This is God's property. I shall give it to whomsoever I like and shall not give it to any one whom I do not like to give. If any person gets annoyed I don't care".
Mu'awiya and other Umayyad caliphs were the relatives and kinsmen of Uthman. Whatever they did during their own times was done by them in imitation of Uthman.
2. This goes to show that if the peasants are allowed to share the produce with the land-owners they will work hard to earn more profit from the land. However, if their position is that of wage- earners (as in socialism) they will not strive to increase the produce, knowing that they will get the same wages whatever the quantity of the produce may be.
Further, the socialist governments are a heavy burden on their subjects. They interfere with all the affairs of the subjects and the subjects, too are not faithful to such government, because they do not have any faith in them.
3. The western philosophers are divided into two groups on this question. One group considers forced labour to be unjust and unlawful whereas the other group considers it to be necessary. Socialism holds the latter view.
4. In the beginning of his letter addressed to the governor the Commander of the Faithful had told him that he should encourage the people to dig the canal and bear the expenses of the work. He who could not personally work, should hire someone to work on his behalf. Being `owners of the canal' means that those who participate in its digging physically or financially own its water and so long as their needs are not fulfilled others cannot utilize it. They have a right to prevent others from taking the water or to allow them to take it on payment. This is the purport of the tradition quoted above viz. "The owners of the canal are those persons who participate in digging it and not those who refrain from doing so".
5. In the Islamic law zakat has been made mandatory for this very reason. Abdullah bin Sanan has been quoted in Kafi as saying that Imam Ja`far Sadiq said: "God has fixed that share of the indigent persons in the wealth of rich which may suffice them. If He had considered it to be insufficient He would have ordered that more might be paid".
6. Meeting the needs of the indigent and helpless person is not the responsibility of the government only as stated by the author. In Islamic law the government as well as the individuals have been made responsible to support the needy. If the collection of zakat and its distribution among the poor had been the responsibility of the government only, there would have been greater chances of maladministration, because the persons nearer to government have benefited to the exclusion of those who had been at a distance from the government, and had no chances of approaching the authorities concerned. It is for this reason that Almighty God has ordered the individuals that they should pay zakat to their kinsmen, neighbours, and the indigent persons of their own town of whose indigence they are aware, and should hand it over to government only

when none of their relatives, neighbours, acquaintances, and residents of their town is entitled to it.

Neither fanaticism nor infallibility

Ali marched steadfastly on the path of action fixed by him for himself. He always looked upwards. He prescribed the economic rights of man as well as other rights without which the economic rights cannot materialize. He did not do favour to any particular creed, colour or race. All human beings are alike and all of them are entitled to live and to share the amenities of life even though they may be different in their creed, colour or race. Ali was considerate to the entire mankind. According to him there was no difference between the white-coloured and the black coloured, the Arabs and the non-Arabs, Muslims and non-Muslims in the matter of economic rights and the amenities of life.

Although Ali was the successor to the Prophet, the fortress of Islam, and the Commander of the Faithful, he did not at all wish that the non-Muslims should be compelled to embrace Islam. According to him the people were free to worship God as they liked and to hold the beliefs of their choice subject to the condition that they did not harm others. 1 He allowed freedom of faith because all human beings are the slaves of God and religion is a means of connection between Him and His creatures.

According to Ali one's being a human being was sufficient for his being honoured, befriended and dealt with kindly as well as for his rights being immune from infringement by others. In the testament written by him for Malik Ashtar, the Governor of Egypt, he said: “Do not become a ferocious animal for them so that you may devour them. 2 There are two kinds of persons amongst the subjects, out of whom some are your brethren-in-faith and others are creatures of God like you, and you should be forgiving towards them just as you wish God to be forgiving towards you. You should not feel elated when you accord punishment.

In the circumstances everyone possesses the same rights as you do, even though some or all of his beliefs may be opposed to yours. The object of religion is certainly that it should enable you to establish brotherly relations with others. Others are as much human beings as you are. This similarity of creation is a stronger connection between you and others. You should, therefore, behave kindly with all human beings. If your brother commits a mistake or sin you should overlook his lapse and forgive him, and should not at all feel ashamed in doing so. Purify the hearts of others of enmity and grudge by purifying your own hearts of these bad qualities in the first instance.

It is obligatory for every descendant of Adam, to whatever religion or creed he may belong, that he should sympathise with his fellow beings. He should like that for others which he likes for himself and should not like that for them which he does not like for himself. He should expect from others to the same extent to which he meets the expectations of others. A real believer is he who endeavours to do

good deeds. The best act is perfect justice which means that you should be absolutely impartial and should not discriminate between different persons.

He who follows the ways of Muhammad in leading his life is not different from one who follows the ways of Jesus or other accomplished personalities. The object of the creation of man is this that he should acquire virtues and excellence and should acquire good attributes. He is free to achieve this end by any means he likes.

Ali says: “It is necessary for you to follow the Prophet's actions when the world was contracted from under his feet and he was kept away from its enjoyments and embellishments. And if you so desire you may see Jesus Christ who used to recline on a stone, wore coarse dress and ate tasteless and insipid food. Hunger was his bread, the moon was his lamp, east and west were his shade, and the grass constituted his fruits and perfume. He had no wife who could allure him and no children for whom he might be worried. He had no wealth which might attract his attention nor any avarice which might humiliate him. His feet were his means of transport and his hands were his servants”.

At another place Imam Ali says: “These were the people who made the earth their carpet and its dust their bed. They contented themselves with water instead of perfume and passed away from the world as Jesus did”.

The same reality which Muhammad had in view when he said: “The Prophets are brothers of one another. Their mothers are different but their religion is one and the same”. The same reality was before Ali when he said about Muhammad: “The Prophet spent his life in the same way in which the earlier Prophets spent their lives”.

In these two statements it has been clearly admitted that virtue is the thing which unites the people at one point just as humanity is basically the point of unification.

What has been stated above makes it abundantly clear that just as man possesses many other rights he has, according to the laws enunciated by Ali, this right also that he should be free in the matter of his beliefs and there should be no restriction on his holding any belief he likes. Freedom cannot be divided. It is not possible that man should be free in some respect and a captive in some other respects.

A Muslim is the brother of a Christian whether he likes it or not, because a man is the brother of a man whether he admits it or not. If in the eyes of Ali the main object of creating man as a free being had not been this that he should make efforts to acquire virtues and if, according to him, freedom had not been a sacred right, he would not have praised the followers of Jesus in the same manner in which he praised the followers of Muhammad.

In the foregoing pages we have mentioned that a Christian stole the coat-of-mail of Ali and claimed that he had purchased it. We have also mentioned how Ali behaved with the Christian as a person equal to himself, rather in the manner in which a father behaves with his son. We have also stated how Ali lodged

a complaint in the court of the judge Shurayh and what its outcome was and how the Christian became one of his sincere disciples and vehemently helped him.

The history of Arabia is proud of the following sentence of Ali which adorns its pages: “If a carpet is spread for me and I sit on it, I shall decide the cases of the Jews according to their book `the Torah', of the Christians according to their book `the Evangel' and of the Muslims according to their Qur'an, in such a way that everyone of these books will cry out: “Ali has spoken the truth”.

Ali instructed Ma`qal son of Qais as under:–

“O Ma`qal! Fear God. Don't be unjust to the Muslims and don't oppress the **Zimmis**. Don't be proud, because God doesn't like the proud”.

It shows that according to Ali `fear of God' means this that a person should not oppress his fellow–beings and should not in any way be unjust to them. Furthermore, he places the Muslims and the non–Muslims at the same level and does not accord preference to anyone of them.

This equality of the Muslims and the non–Muslims can be observed in each and every order of Ali. It would appear that he considered the protection of the people from injustice to be more important and necessary than acquiring other Islamic virtues. He says: “If you follow the path of truth, and the tenets of Islam become clear to you, neither a Muslim nor a **zimmi** will be oppressed”. He severely reprimanded the Muslims when Sufyan son of Auf Asadi, a commander of Mu`awiya's army invaded the city of Anbar and committed atrocities on its residents but they (the Muslims) did not side with the truth, and did nothing to prevent oppression.

In the course of his speech he said:– “I have received information that, a member of this group used to enter the houses of Muslims and **Zimmi** women and removed the anklets from their feet and the bangles from their hands as well as the necklace and earrings which they were wearing and they had no means of protection except that they should say: `We are from God and we have to return to Him' and remain patient.... Now if a Muslim dies of sorrow on account of these tragedies he cannot be blamed for it. In my opinion it ought to be so”.

Ali censured and rebuked those people because they failed to defend their brothers and sisters living in the city– whether they were Muslims or Zimmis – against oppression.

When he appointed Muhammad son of Abu Bakr as Governor of Egypt he instructed him thus: “I recommend to you to be equitable to the Zimmis, to do justice to an oppressed person, to be severe upon the oppressor and to be indulgent towards the people as far as possible and to be kind to them. It is also necessary that in the matter of truth the far and the near should be equal in your eyes”.

The following sentence also appeared in the pact which he concluded with the Christians of Najran: “They will not be subjected to injustice and oppression nor will any of their rights be reduced”.

He also fixed the same blood-money for a Christian, which is the blood-money for a Muslim.

According to Ali every human being was entitled to respect. It was for this reason that although the ignorant and brainless followers of all past religions were extremely fanatical and hated other religions, Ali was loved very much for his justice by the knowledgeable Christians during his own time as well as afterward. All of them lauded and praised him. Allama Ibn Abi'l Hadid writes thus in Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah: "What should I say about that man (Ali) whom the **Zimmis** loved ardently although they did not acknowledge the prophethood (of Muhammad)".

Ali had laid the very foundation of his treatment of the non-Muslims on this principle "Their property is like our property and their lives are like our lives".

The facts narrated above show clearly that religious fanaticism was considered by Ali to be something very indecent and despicable. The freedom, which he believed in, in a wide sense, and measured with an extended measure was totally opposed to fanaticism.

When we visualize the treatment meted out by Ali to the non-Muslims, and compare it with the treatment of the clergies of the Church in Europe of the Middle Ages, especially those clergies who were responsible for the **`Inquisition',** and when we contrast the kindness and forgiveness shown by Ali with the severity and harshness of the European religious leaders, we come to know how exalted Ali was and how low those people were.

In short there should be no doubt about it because Ali's faith had sprung from the roots of humanity, freedom and authority and it was according to the view and belief which Ali held about life. Ali's faith was based on freedom and he considered freedom to be respectable whereas the faith of the religious leaders of Europe was based on habit and imitation of their ancestors and freedom had nothing to do with it.

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Fanaticism

Nowadays we are at war against religious fanaticism and consider it to be indecent and despicable, although religious fanaticism is not as dangerous as some other kinds of fanaticism. You will come across many persons who do not at all possess religious fanaticism but they are involved in fanaticism of colour, race, nationality, political beliefs etc. Indulgence and forgiveness is possible in the matter of religious fanaticism but it is not possible in the case of other kinds of fanaticism. Such fanaticism is based on egotism, ignorance and profiteering and those who possess this sort of fanaticism say that their view is correct and only what they have concluded is right and their view about man and life is indisputable. They do not consider the view of anyone else as valid as theirs.

Ever since man has arrived on this earth fanaticism of every kind has been inherent in him, and there

has not been any time during which he has not displayed fanaticism. The great leader of the world Ali fought not only against religious fanaticism but against all kinds of fanaticism. He considered racial fanaticism to be equivalent to rebellion and mischief, and burning up the attractive face of life.

According to Ali priding oneself on one's ancestry was also a sort of fanaticism. He addresses the fanatics of his time in these words: “Look here! You have opposed God openly, have been extremely oppressive and have created disturbance on the face of the earth. Fear God in the matter of priding yourselves on account of the self– conceit of the age of ignorance, because it is the source of enmity and grudge and the centre of Satan's enchantment with which he allured the past nations. Look here! Fear following your chiefs and elders who give themselves airs because of their position and pomp, and pride themselves on account of their ancestry (i.e. those who consider others humble and despicable, oppose Divine decrees and deny God's kindness in order to seize His blessings). These are the very persons who are the deep foundation of fanaticism and the pillars of the house of mischief.

In the first instance Ali likened family and racial fanaticism to rebellion and disfiguring life. Then he made his view more general and declared every fanaticism whether racial, political or religious, to be identical with rebellion and mischief and established a general rule, whose correctness will be established more and more as time passes. He says: “I have looked on all sides and have not found even one man in the world who supports something but that he has a reason in view for it, which becomes the cause of the mistake of the ignorant, or that he has an argument which gets glued to the intellect of the foolish”.

You may go through all that has been said regarding fanaticism and the explanations given about it, but you will not find anything said by anyone which may be more than what Ali has said. Fanatics indulge in fanaticism either on account of ignorance or folly and both of them carry rebellion and mischief in their lap. Ali has drawn the picture of this fact in his two remarks reproduced above.

In short Ali considered fanaticism of every kind to be indecent and despicable. Of course if partiality is to be observed it should be observed in the matter of virtue, justice and public rights. One should side with the oppressed persons who are deprived of their earnings and rights by the oppressors. One should side with truth and conscience. One should be partial for the sake of human freedom and honour and for protecting the helpless from the fanatics. The Commander of the Faithful says: “If you wish to be fanatic and partial you should side with high morals, good manners and praiseworthy qualities, for example to protect the rights of your neighbour, to honour your covenants, to obey the righteous, to oppose the rebellious, to behave well, to avoid injustice, to remain aloof from bloodshed, to administer justice and not to create mischief on the earth”.

How much he hated fanaticism can be realized from the recommendation which he made about the Kharijites, although they were his enemies. They fought a fierce battle against him, but he says: “Do not fight with the Kharijites after me, because one who seeks truth but goes astray is not like one who seeks falsehood and acquires it”.

The Commander of the Faithful made the people realize that as there was a possibility of their views and beliefs being mistaken it was necessary that they should not insist upon the correctness of their views and beliefs nor should they thrust them on others. He told them not to refrain from making consultations and not to hesitate in accepting the truth.

1. Islam allows freedom of faith to the Jews, the Christians and the Magi. They are called `Zimmis' which means non-Muslims living under the protection of the Islamic government.
2. The Egyptians about whom the Commander of the Faithful gave these instruction to Malik Ashtar were Christians.

War and peace

There are many mutual rights enjoyed by the people. One of them is that they should strengthen the ties of love and friendship. The ties should exist between the individuals as well as between the tribes and the nations, because the citizens of all the countries are brother of one another. They are the descendants of one father and their origin is one. They have a common path and their aims and objects are also not different from one another.

Freedom and affluence, prescribed laws and new efforts are all meant for mankind. These are however, useless in the presence of warfare and bloodshed which may destroy human race. All these things are for man. What is the use of all these (amenities and comforts) when human life is not safe?

Every statement which invites people to serve the human beings but does not invite them to peace is false and detestable.

All ideals regarding man and his life are useless unless they promote human brotherhood. How ridiculous those words, acts and ideals appear when the canals are converted into streams of blood, the gardens are destroyed and the palaces fall into ruins! How hopeless these words, acts and ideals seem to be when a man is hurled into the mouth of war and the beauty of his life, his hopes and desires, and his very being are reduced to nothing.

War is the cause of death and destruction, whereas peace is the only means of escaping destruction. This is the object which leads to many other aims and objects. It is only during the time of peace that human beings can utilize all their talents and achieve their common desires by joint efforts.

The principles and methods of Ali apply to all fields in the same manner in which the branches which shoot from a common root spread on all sides He had realized that peace is a high wall surrounding man and life which protects both of them from every calamity. Addressing the people he says: “God has not created you in vain”.

As regards Ali's view regarding the purpose for which God has created man he says: “God has created you respectable on His earth, and safe among His creation. His bounties have spread the wings of their kindnesses on your heads and made the streams of comforts flow for your sake”.

According to Ali love and friendship is the greatest blessing for mankind. He says: “Almighty God has strengthened the tie of love between the human beings. It is the love under whose shadow the people walk about and in whose lap they seek refuge. This love is an invaluable blessing because it is dearer than whatever price is fixed for it, and is greater than every great thing”.

Ali says that every person should establish friendship and love with others so that peace may prevail, because during peace time the atmosphere of a city remains tranquil and the people do not feel any fear. One should avoid warfare, because war is oppression and it is highly indecent and improper to oppress God's creatures. Whether the result of war is victory or retreat it is harmful in both cases. War is ruination and destruction for the victor as well as for the vanquished. War destroys human honour. The victor is considered to be an opponent of intellect and conscience, an enemy of love, who treats human life to be valueless, and one who is defeated is humiliated and his life and property are also destroyed. Ali says: “One who gains victory by evil means is in fact defeated”. “Nothing is worse than fighting and bloodshed”.

Ali has considered looting and plundering which were the preliminaries of war between the tribes during the age of ignorance to be one of the most horrible acts. According to Ali looting and plundering, idol–worshipping, and burying the girls alive, were sins of the same kind and their origin is also one and the same. That origin is that man is not aware of his own value or that of life and there can be no greater ignorance than this. He says: “They had reached the abyss of ignorance. They buried their girls alive, worshipped the idols and robbed and plundered one another”.

He detested fighting so much that he forbade it even during the most difficult circumstances and did not permit that one should challenge another to combat. He says: “Never challenge another person to combat”.

When we study the life and conduct of Ali it becomes abundantly clear that he condemned many characteristics of the people and considered many things in the world to be abominable. As regards the characteristics of the people he first of all condemned inclination towards mischief and bloodshed. As regards the abominable things there was nothing more hateful in his eyes than warfare. This sentence of his deserves to be kept in mind: “This world is the abode of war, plundering and bloodshed”.

Fighting is as much injurious for truth as it is the source of refuge for falsehood. It is by means of truth that man is exalted, the society is strengthened and the world becomes prosperous. Falsehood is the collection of humiliation and disgrace. It is, therefore, evident that there can be nothing worse than war. It is the cradle of all absurdities, because doubt prevails, war and falsehood flourishes, and the voice of truth is subdued; whereas peace is truth itself, and whoever violates truth goes astray.

This was the basis of the view and belief held by Ali about war, and this is not also surprising, because this belief was compatible with his idea of freedom and the reliance which he had on the common man and the respect which he had for life as well as for those who were alive. It was for this reason that at times, in order to put to end to trouble and to invite his friends to peace he said: “For your enemies this loss is sufficient that they have gone astray”.

Imam Ali used to ask a sinner and a transgressor to express regret for his lapse so that fighting might not take place. As regards the oppressed persons he used to ask him to accept the apology of the transgressor however big his offence might be. He says: “Accept the apology of a person who apologizes to you”.

He also says: “Fight against your worldly desires by means of reason. If you do so the people will continue to love you”. He, therefore, considered it the best quality for his followers that they should desire peace, hate war and seek safety for themselves as well as for others. As to what qualities his followers should possess he says: “When my followers are angry they do not commit injustice. They are a blessing for their neighbours and a source of security for their companions”.

However, hatred for war and unusual inclination towards peace did not mean that Ali should have surrendered before his opponent. Hatred for war and inclination towards peace does not mean that one should shirk one's responsibilities and leave the mischief-mongers free to do what they like, because war is not a detestable thing in itself, but becomes bad on account of the horrors and destruction which it entails, and peace is not a good thing in itself, but becomes good, because it provides security to the people, provides chances for improving the society, and opens the paths of life before those who are living.

In short, whether it be war or peace, neither of them is intrinsically good or bad. Their goodness or badness is determined with reference to other people. If war or peace had any intrinsic value, the revolutionary efforts made by the oppressed people of the world against the oppressive kings and rulers and the colonialists would have been evil and sin, and obedience to those tyrants would have been a blessing, but in fact it is not so.

The real thing which counts is the welfare of the masses. If they are living in comfort and their property and honour are safe, peace is better for them. In case, however, they are leading a miserable life and their rights are being violated, war is a blessing for them until an atmosphere of real peace is created, a peace, which is based on human values and is free from humiliation and helplessness, and subservience to tyranny and injustice. This was what Ali had in view.

What he disliked was the war of Abu Lahab and Abu Sufyan against Muhammad and not the war of Muhammad against Abu Lahab and Abu Sufyan. He disliked the war which was fought by the tyrants against the righteous, and not the war which was fought by the pious and Godly persons against the tyrants and the hypocrites.

Ali wished the people not to become Changez Khan, Halaku, Hitler or Mussolini, but he did not also like them to become like those who were enslaved by Changez, Halaku, Hitler and Mussolini.

There is nothing wrong with a war which is fought to get back the right of an oppressed person from the oppressor, or to protect the honour of the people. In fact it is a social need and something which humanity demands. The condition precedent to such a war is that before it is resorted to, all necessary efforts for peace and reconciliation should be made.

When the followers of Ali became impatient because of his having delayed permission at Siffin to perform jihad he said to them: “As regards your asking whether this delay is due to the fact that I abhor death and wish to escape it, I swear by God that I do not care whether I proceed towards death or death proceeds towards me. And similarly as regards your asking whether I am doubtful regarding the lawfulness of jihad against the people of Syria, I swear by God that I have not delayed the battle even for a day except with the idea that some persons from amongst them may possibly come and meet me and be guided through me and may also see my light with their dazzled eyes. I like this more than to kill them while they are in a state of ignorance, although they themselves will in any case be responsible for their sins”.

The second condition for war is that its object should not be only to gain victory. Furthermore, the victor should not become vindictive. He should not torture the enemy and should not maltreat the captive and those who have suffered on account of war. He should not pursue those who fly away, and should not hurt the old men, the women and the children. If he who joins battle thinks that he is on the right, and claims that he is fighting for the sake of justice, and his opponent is an oppressor, and it is necessary to take revenge from him, he should content himself with restoring truth to its place. If this object is achieved after a brief fighting he should withhold his hand from continued warfare.

In all the battles fought by Ali the basic principle followed by him was that bloodshed should not be resorted to unless it was absolutely necessary and there was no alternative other than warfare. He always endeavoured to advise the enemy and make him submit to reason. He used to say: “By God I shall certainly do justice to the oppressed and render advice to the oppressor”.

When advice and efforts for peace and reconciliation failed he resorted to threats, because his real object was that if possible not even one drop of blood might be shed. Threatening the people of Nahrawan he says: “I warn you that you will be killed and will fall on the ground on the windings of the canal and its even slopes in such a condition that you will have no sound argument or clear proof to put forth before God as an excuse.

The position is this that you have become homeless and then the Divine decree has a firm grip on you. I had already prohibited you from agreeing to this arbitration but you declined to obey my orders like opposing violators, so much so that I was obliged to agree to what you wished. You are a group whose heads are empty of understanding and intellect. Woe betide you! I have neither involved you in any

trouble nor wished ill of you".

Now please read this wonderful supplication of Ali and visualize his sublime morality and the sympathy which he had in his heart for fell enemies. When the enemy forces in Siffin finally decided to fight and all efforts for peace and reconciliation failed he prayed to God in these words:
"O God! Lord of the earth, which you have made the abode of man, and the place of roaming about of the reptiles, the quardrupeds and other innumerable creatures which can or cannot be seen. O Lord of the strong mountains which you have made to serve as nails for the earth and means of livelihood for your creatures! If you grant us victory over the enemies keep us immune from committing injustice and keep us on the straight path of truth, and if You make our enemies victorious grant us martyrdom and save us from the allurement of life".

The keenness of the Commander of the Faithful for peace and his efforts for it even a short time before the commencement of the battle is an undeniable fact which is acknowledged by his friends as well as enemies. During his entire life he displayed love for peace and hatred for war. He always tried his best that fighting might be avoided and reconciliation might take place.

When, at the time of the Battle of the Camel, Ayesha, Talha and Zubayr got ready to fight against him he arrayed his companions and said to them: `Do not shoot an arrow and do not strike a spear or a sword so that it may be proved that you have discharged your responsibility".

However, Ali did not start fighting until the enemies had pierced arrows into the bodies of three of his companions and he had prayed to God thrice to bear witness to their act. He reached before his enemies scores of times empty handed and without any arms or coat of mail although they were fully equipped with arms.

In reply to their harsh words stubbornness, and rough tone he spoke with extreme kindness and tendered them advice in a friendly manner. Standing before him were his enemies who looked like a dark night as they were covered with in coats of mail and shields, but his armour was respect for mankind; his shield was his faith in his being right and in his mode of action being correct, and his sword was his compliance with the commandments of reason and conscience. In fact his kindness to the weak, his support for truth and his peaceableness were as good as thousands of shields for him. It was he who said: "If you feel secure from vexation by someone try to make him your brother".

Imam Ali was one who disliked enmity and grudge because these two things give birth to discord and destroy individual morals and national attributes. He said: "Refrain from enmity and dispute, because these two things make the heart sick and discord is generated from them".

Many times he reached before his enemies empty– handed and without any coat of mail or shield. He did this to make them realize that he hated warfare and was keen to solve problems in a friendly and brotherly manner. He said: "Do good to your enemy because this victory is more agreeable and sweet".

Another object of his approaching his opponents in this manner was that he wanted to make it clear that war is something bad and the benefit which the victor acquires from it is a benefit which is acquired from evil and has no value. He says: “The goodness of a goodness which is acquired through evil is futile and the affluence which is the result of indigence and adversity has no value”.

Ali eliminated this evil (warfare) by all possible means and tried to improve the conditions of the people without bloodshed and strife. So much so that when the enemies were bent upon waging war and had no aim other than shedding his blood as well as his righteous companions, he advised them and endeavoured his best to obviate fighting. And when these efforts failed and no alternative was left except to join battle, he did not initiate fighting. Fighting was started by the enemies and he only replied to their attacks. And when he took the sword in his hand he stepped forward and now he was Ali son of Abu Talib. If death did not proceed towards him he himself proceeded towards death. He crushed the champions and made brave warriors flee.

Ali desired equity and justice, whereas his enemies craved for injustice and oppression. He wished that mankind might prosper, whereas they wanted to create mischief. He wanted the people to enjoy freedom and comfort, whereas they were keen to keep them in bondage like slaves. He wished that the slaves of God should be strong and respectable whereas his enemies wanted to enslave and humiliate them.

The things which must exist in the society and which are also considered by law of reason to be necessary were in danger. Now in these conditions remaining a silent spectator amounted to laziness, recklessness, and infidelity, and to protect them meant courage and bravery.

About fighting against Mu`awiya he says:–”I have weighed and assessed this matter very carefully and have concluded that only two paths are open before me either I should wage war against Mu`awiya or I become an apostate”.

Just see how he has drawn a picture of the Battle of the Camel in a concise and precise manner and has also explained his own position:” Talha and Zubayr were the first to take oath of allegiance to me. Later they broke that oath without just cause and took the Mother of the Faithful Ayesha to Basra. I was also obliged to take the Muhajirs and the Ansar with me and pursue them. I tried my best that they might take once again the oath which they had broken but they declined to do so. I counselled them much and treated them well”.

While Ali was still on his way and had not yet confronted them he sent his son Hasan and his cousin Abdullah bin Abbas as well as Ammar bin Yasir and Qais bin Sa'd bin Ubada to have talk with them (i.e. Talha and Zubayr) hoping that they might respond to the call of reason and bloodshed might be avoided. They, however, remained intransigent. The Commander of the Faithful says thus in this regard: “I proceeded along with the Muhajirs and the Ansar and stopped near Basra. I invited them to peace and reconciliation, overlooked their lapses and reminded them of the oath of allegiance which they had taken. They however, remained adamant and insisted upon fighting.

I sought help from God and was obliged to get ready for defence against their attacks. The result was that those who were to be killed were killed and others ran away. Now they requested me for the same peace which I had desired before the fighting took place, I accepted the peace proposal and spared them. I appointed Abdullah bin Abbas their governor and sent Zafar bin Qais to them as the messenger Now you may approach these two persons to tell you whatever you want to know about us and them".

Ali was victorious on account of his unusual bravery and perfect and deep faith. He was, however, as much grieved over his victory as his enemies were over their defeat. Tears trickled down from his eyes and he was extremely sad.

Every father loves his children very much. If a child does not conduct himself properly his father has to take corrective measures and punish him although such action also grieves him. Same was the case with Ali. He treated the Muslims like his children. The Prophet of Islam has said: "I and Ali are the fathers of this nation". Ali loved these children very much. He was obliged to take corrective measures against them on account of their injustice and error but was very much grieved to observe their sufferings.

Ali did not dislike anything more than bloodshed. He was always afraid lest his governors and offices might indulge in unjustified bloodshed. He, therefore, warned them again and again not to indulge in bloodshed. He took care from the moral as well as the political and administrative point of view that blood should not be shed unnecessarily. He forbade it in both the capacities, because he considered that as a consequence of such bloodshed the government might topple down and it was also opposed to the philosophy of government. He did not forgive any officer for a lapse in this regard.

In a letter addressed to a governor he says: "Do not try to strengthen your government by shedding blood without just cause because this will make your government still weaker, rather it will be taken away from you and will reach the hand of someone else. If you are guilty of intentional bloodshed God will not consider this crime of yours pardonable and I, too, will not consider it so".

Has there been any other ruler in the world, who may have issued emphatic instructions to his governors to appoint as military commander a person who is meek and forbearing, hates bloodshed and murder, can settle matters by mutual discussions, is not guilty of unjustified bloodshed, is kind and magnanimous, is not harsh in getting work done by others and is not accustomed to severity and violence?

In the testament written by him for Malik Ashtar while appointing him as Governor of Egypt Ali says: "Appoint that person as commander of your army whom you consider to be most sincere and superior to others in the matter of meekness and forbearance. He should not be short-tempered and should accept an excuse. He should be kind to the weak and hard upon the powerful. He should not become hot-tempered due to cruelty and should not become helpless due to weakness".

Thus it is evident that Ali was a peace-loving person. He always recommended peace. He extremely

hated war and always prohibited it. He never stepped towards War unless war itself stepped towards him and even if he stepped towards it, it was when he had exhausted all efforts to stop it by means of friendship, love, goodness and kindness. If he was compelled to fight a battle he tried that the least number of persons should be killed. And when he secured victory over his enemy he forgave him.

He was equally grieved in the event of victory and defeat. Whenever his enemy requested for peace he acceded to his request cheerfully and wholeheartedly. He used to say: “During peace time the soldiers are in comfort, the worries of the people are lesser and an atmosphere of security prevails in the cities.

He sent many orders to the governors and the officers in which he emphatically recommended to them inter alia that they should follow his example and should not draw their swords on account of ordinary matters as was done by the people during the age of ignorance.

Imam Ali says: “Do not put your hands and swords in motion like the tongue on account of trivial matters”.

“I do not punish anyone merely on account of suspicion”.

“I shall not fight anyone until I invite him to peace and thus discharge my responsibility in this behalf. If he repents I shall accept his repentance, but if he declines to do so and is bent upon fighting I shall seek help from God and shall fight against him”.

We shall mention in detail later how Ali behaved with his cruel enemies.

It is the duty of every person to abide by the promises made by him. By this means peace is maintained between the individuals and in the society and the chances of warfare are eliminated. A covenant should be honoured whether it is concluded between the followers of the same religion or of different religions, between persons belonging to the same race or to different races and between friends or enemies. This was the principle which was followed constantly by Ali.

As stated above fulfilment of promises is a means of peace and peace ensures maintenance of an atmosphere of security and prosperity and is a great service to the nation. It is so because covenants and laws are the means of national unity and solidarity. Fulfilment of promises is a quality of magnanimous persons and a means of the peace of mind and achievement of high morals for which the Commander of the Faithful endeavoured throughout his life.

Being faithful to one's covenants ensures comradeship and love in all circumstances and is a manifestation of respect for mankind. Both the parties remain satisfied as a result of this faithfulness, and when both of them are satisfied each of them can decide with peace of mind as to how he should conduct his affairs. On the contrary if they are not satisfied, it will not be possible for them to undertake their work freely.

During the period of the caliphate of Ali fulfilment of promises was a rule which it was absolutely

necessary for the people to follow. Everyone was expected either to fulfil his promise or to lay down his very life. Ali hated violation of promises as much as he detested falsehood.

In one of his sermons he says: “Fulfilment of promise and truth have always gone hand in hand and so far as I am aware there is no shield better than these to protect a man. Whoever understands the reality of his **“Return”** does not commit treachery. However, our time is such that many persons have supposed treachery and deceit to mean intelligence and wisdom, and the ignorant people have treated their ways and methods to be prudence. May God destroy them! What has happened to them? When a person, who has seen the ups and downs of life and is aware of the vicissitudes of time, makes a plan for himself but finds the divine commandments in his way, he abandons that plan, although he may be able to execute it. On the other hand one whose path is not obstructed by religious feelings avails of the opportunity”.

In the testament which he wrote for Malik Ashtar while appointing him as the Governor of Egypt he says: “If you settle some conditions with your enemy or conclude a pact with him you should relieve yourself of its burden by honouring it. You should discharge faithfully the responsibility undertaken by you and should make yourself a shield for the protection of your promise. You should not, therefore, abandon what you undertake to do or dishonour the covenants you make and should not deceive your enemy”.

Furthermore, he did not content himself only with emphasizing that deception should not be practised on the enemy but also strictly prohibited making ambiguous agreements with the enemy which might be interpreted in different ways, and it may provide a justification for the violation of the agreement. He also directed that after a covenant was concluded and authenticated, advantage of some verbal error should not be taken to violate it.

Whenever Ali formed an opinion or promulgated an order, he, in the first instance, examined and assessed all its aspects very carefully. As he firmly believed in the fulfilment of promise even the greatest impediments and hardships could not make him deviate from this principle. one of the occasions on which he honoured his promise inspite of very difficult circumstances was that of Siffin. At the time of the Battle of Siffin it was decided to refer the dispute to arbitration.

A pact was concluded between the Commander of the Faithful and Mu`awiya to the effect that until the two arbitrators gave their award the hostilities would remain suspended. After fighting was stopped and the pact was concluded the adherents of the Commander of the Faithful realized that they had been duped. A man named Muhammad bin Harith then approached Ali and said: “O Commander of the Faithful! Can we not ignore the pact and start the war again? I am afraid that this pact will be a source of great humiliation and disgrace for us” The Commander of the Faithful replied: “Should we violate the pact after executing it? No. This is not permissible”. And it was also Ali who said: “Stick firmly to the responsibilities which you have undertaken. I am responsible for my words and guarantee their correctness”.

The facts narrated above explain that Ali's efforts for the maintenance of peace fully accorded with the wishes of the people on account of their far-reaching consequences. All human beings crave for justice, equality and freedom and Ali's effort for peace was an expression of their desire. In fact it was the heartfelt desire of Ali himself which he also expressed in his orders and commands.

In the matter of his efforts to ensure that man should love man Ali is on equal footing with the past prophets and benefactors of mankind. What a great resemblance Ali's efforts for peace have with the kind voice of Muhammad who has said: “O slaves of God! Become brothers of one another”.

How much his efforts also resembled the words of the Prophet who, when asked as to which act is the noblest, replied: “The noblest act is that one should endeavour for the welfare of the world”.

Combat oppression

In all general matters Ali led a very consistent and harmonious life. His high morals, unusual sagacity, his actions relating to the administration of the state, command of the army and other personal characteristics and qualities were all similar and inter-connected. He hated usury, hoarding and oppression very much. He was a fell enemy of the wealthy and powerful persons who oppressed others, the ignorant considered themselves to be superior to others, and persisted in their stubborn views founded on ignorance.

He was extremely keen to help the weak and the indigent, because they too were human beings and it is highly unjustifiable to treat them to be mean and humble. He desired the freedom of the creatures of God from the core of his heart, because God has created them free and it is not at all proper that they should be subjected to humiliation and abjectness. Their humiliation and abjectness is the humiliation and abjectness of humanity, and whoever humiliates humanity deserves to be treated an enemy.

It can be realized by everyone from what has been stated above how great a supporter and sympathizer of the helpless and oppressed persons Ali was, how he fought against the enemies of virtue and goodness, and how much annoyance he expressed against those who acted against the dictates of reason and conscience.

However, what has been written by us on the subject does not appear to be sufficient. It appears necessary to allocate a separate and detailed chapter to the subject showing how Ali behaved with the tyrants, and what his views were about injustice and oppression.

There are many kinds of injustice. For example to usurp the property of a person is injustice of one kind and to hurt his honour and reputation is injustice of another kind. Sometimes injustice is patent whereas

at other times it is latent. We shall discuss all these kinds of injustice one by one.

It is not possible to find any sermon or testament of the Commander of the Faithful, in which he may not have mentioned and condemned injustice severely. His entire life was spent in waging war against injustice and oppression and against the oppressors and tyrants. He fought this war with his hands, tongue and orders and commands as well as with his sword.

War against injustice and oppression is being fought ever since man arrived on earth. However, this war has been fought in different ways and in different conditions. Those who undertook to campaign against the tyrants and oppressors of their time were hundreds of thousands in number. These great heroes were a source of pride for humanity whereas the tyrants stained the pages of history with their misdeeds. Those heroes came in succession and every one of them inherited this holy war from another.

They have also been some great souls amongst the human beings whose entire lives were spent in waging war against injustice and oppression. The biographies of Abraham, Moses and Jesus consist of war against oppression, usury and injustice. Muhammad's campaign against the polytheists was also in continuation of and complementary to the war waged by Jesus. He started a great revolutionary movement to uproot injustice and oppression and did not rest till the oppressed were emancipated and their lives took a turn for the better.

Cruelty becomes the second nature of some persons. They commit atrocities with perfect ease in the same way in which they perform other natural acts like eating, drinking, walking and breathing. To this category belong persons like Nero, Changez Khan, European officers of the `Inquisition' during the Middle Ages, and many other kinds and rulers like Hajjaj bin Yusuf, Ziad bin Abih, Obaidullah bin Ziad, Muslim bin Aqba etc. And similarly history tells us about innumerable other persons in whom opposition to injustice was inherent and had become their second nature.

The reason for the tyrants of the past not being ashamed of the atrocities committed by them was that they were not pained by their cruel acts. They did not tyrannize or oppress others with any aim or object. They did so because it had become their habit.

Once Hajjaj bin Yusuf was having his meals along with some friends of his. Before him was standing an innocent old man who was trembling with fear. Hajjaj raised his head and looked at the old man. Then he ordered one of his servants to behead him. The order was complied with immediately and the old man was beheaded. Hajjaj continued to eat as if nothing had happened. He said to his slave loudly: “Bring cold water”.

Nero set the city of Rome on fire. While Rome was burning Nero was busy in his merry-makings.

The firmness and steadfastness of those who consistently campaigned against injustice and oppression can also be explained in the same way. just as the persons mentioned above committed injustice because it was inherent in their nature, in the same way these benefactors of humanity fought against

injustice and supported the oppressed, because they were compelled by their nature to do so.

Socrates drank the cup of poison as if it was a medicine because his drinking it was a display of firmness and steadfastness against falsehood. Voltaire [1] waged war against the aristocrats and nobles of Europe. He was compelled to wage this war by his nature just as a hungry person is obliged to eat food or a thirsty person is compelled by his inner urge to get hold of water to quench his thirst. The companions of Imam Husayn also sacrificed their lives in support of his mission, although they could see a huge army of Bani Umayyah arrayed against them.

These people were the benefactors of mankind and the great and magnanimous souls among human beings, whose head and leader was Ali ibn Abi Talib. He had come into the world to establish truth and to destroy falsehood. He rose with this purpose and also accepted the caliphate with this very object in view. However, the world, with all its expanse could hardly accept the laws and principles of Ali. The unjust and cruel persons were large in numbers and possessed much strength. The task which Ali wished to accomplish was difficult as well as dangerous.

Ali told the people that they should neither be the oppressors nor the oppressed ones. He wished that none should oppress others and none should tolerate oppression. However, the people of the time were not prepared to accept Ali's view and could not lend support to his intentions. So much so that even the oppressed persons did not side with him, because they were over awed by the oppressors and were afraid of their enmity and grudge.

They were so foolish that they took bribes from Ali's enemies and withdrew their support from him. Eventually only a few God-fearing and brave persons were left with him, and they did not desert him at any cost.

However, was it proper that Ali should have shown frailty and weakness at this juncture when the forces of evil had formed a front against him? Is it possible for a brave man to lose heart and give up effort because he is faced with calamities and hardships with men like carnivores around him, particularly when everybody is afraid of death also?

Should Ali have been disheartened and become sluggish when the enemies were becoming more and more rebellious, when the men in authority had lost all sense of wisdom, were selling religion for the sake of the world, were stupidly running after wealth and rank, had created chaos in the cities, were persisting in oppression, were full of pride and conceit, creating innovations and void things before the right things, praising the wrong and evil doing, and still hoping for a good reward, had annihilated justice and fair play, and had created rebellion, and chaos, and their tyranny and violence had no bounds.

Could he become weak and languid when the condition of his companions was this: “Whoever called them for help never succeeded. Whoever met them did not acquire peace of mind. Whoever came in the battlefield accompanied by them sustained loss. They were deaf inspite of having ears and were dumb although they possessed power of speech. They neither showed steadfastness in the battlefield like

noble and zealous men nor could one depend upon their sympathy and support at the time of adversity".

Of course in such conditions and circumstances one should become weak and feeble and must sit down languidly – but it is subject to the condition that he should not be Ali ibn Abi Talib.

The deep love which Ali had in his heart for every human being obliged him not to show the least leniency to one who did harm to the people even though he (i.e. Ali) had to lay down his life in the campaign.

One who considers it love and kindness and a sign of gentleness to remain silent in the face of the oppressors is either a liar or is not acquainted with human nature, because the position is otherwise. True love and kindness for mankind means that the oppressors should be dealt with severely so that they may free the people from bondage. In certain circumstances kindness and gentleness compel man to resort to extreme severity.

Man likes beauty as much as he detests ugliness. He hates injustice and oppression as much as he desires justice. He is as much afraid of the coldness of non– existence as he is fond of the warmth of existence. A person cannot strike a sword on the necks of the rebels and the oppressors unless he considers life to be a blessing. In short one who does not hate cannot also love.

The best proof of the fact that Ali was as much as harsh upon the oppressors as he was kind towards others and was prepared to be extremely severe to eliminate injustice is provided by the event of Saudah daughter of Ammarah Hamdaniyah.

Saudah says: "I saw the Commander of the Faithful to complain against an agent who had been appointed by him to collect zakat. When I stood before him he said with much kindness: "Do you want anything to be done?" I complained to him against the agent. On hearing what I narrated he began to weep and said praying to God: "O Lord! I have neither ordered these agents to oppress the people nor asked them to abandon your right". Then he took out a piece of paper from his pocket and wrote on it as follows: –

"Weigh and measure properly and do not give lesser to the people nor spread mischief on the earth. When you receive this letter keep the things in your charge in reserve so that another person may come and take over the same from you".

It can well be observed from this incident how kind Ali was to the oppressed woman, because he began to weep on hearing her tale. And it is also evident how this kindness was converted into harshness for the agents. This accords with the principles of extreme kindness for the oppressed and extreme wrath towards the oppressor.

Ali never refrained from campaigning against refractoriness and injustice. Whenever he saw a person being oppressed by another he showed no weakness in relieving him of the oppression. And how could

he show any weakness or hesitation when gentleness and kindness had equipped him with unusual manliness and steadfastness and had made him very fond of fighting against falsehood and establishing truth. It was his firm belief that: “The presence of an Imam through whom the right of a weak person may be realized from a strong person and that of an oppressed person from an oppressor is necessary so that the righteous may live in comfort and feel secure from the mischief of the evil–doers”.

“God has provided protection to the people from being oppressed”. And when God has provided protection there should be no occasion for oppression but “God tests the rulers by means of oppression”. Hence if the rulers are oppressive their rule will come to an end because: “Even if the oppressor gets respite he cannot escape being captured by God. God Himself lies in ambush for him and his ambushing will be very severe. The Day of Judgment will be much severer for the oppressor than that on which he oppressed another. The oppressed person must not have suffered so much as the oppressor will suffer on the Day of Judgment".

The following form part of those orders of Ali which must always be complied with: “I order you to behave harshly with the oppressor. Hold the foolish oppressor by the hand, and stop him from committing injustice”.

No doubt the kindness and affection which Ali had in his mind guaranteed his steadfastness in the battle between truth and falsehood. Whenever he reflected about truth and falsehood he said: “O Lord! Our sole endeavour is that peace and tranquility may prevail in Your cities so that Your slaves may remain safe”. And when he initiated the campaign he used to say: “I swear bv God that I shall realize the right of the oppressed person from the oppressor. I shall put a cavessor in the nose of the oppressor and pull him to the spring of the truth however much he may dislike it". Or said: “It is necessary that the oppressor refrains from committing injustice, behaves with the people equitably and does not spread mischief on the earth”.

If the fighting became furious and Ali noticed the disparity between the numbers of his supporters and the enemy and compared his own condition with that of his opponents he said: “I have not shown weakness or sluggishness. I shall continue to fight against falsehood until I extract truth from its side".

Ali saw death staring in his eyes but neither his hands were tired of fighting nor did he entertain the least fear in his heart. He would not have felt afraid even if the entire population of Arabia had joined hands and encircled him.

He relied fully on his own justice and equity and firmly believed that whatever he was doing was in accordance with the canons of equity and justice. He used to say: “A weak person is strong in my eyes until I get his right paid to him, and a strong person is weak in my eyes until I receive the right from him". He also said: ``I swear by God that I am not worried whether death falls upon me or I fall upon death".

When he fought against a group of unjust persons and defeated them but they still offered some resistance he said: “some life is still left in the oppressors. If God wills we shall uproot them. In case,

however, some of them run away to various cities the matter would be different”.

According to Ali the learned persons are the leaders of the nation and for this very reason a number of responsibilities devolve upon them. Their greatest responsibility is that they should oppose the oppressor and assist the oppressed person. He says: “God has made it mandatory for the ulema that they should not remain silent spectators of injustice of the oppressor and the grief and helplessness of the oppressed person.

In order that the oppressors should be eliminated from the society, and that there should also be none who may assist in the perpetration of oppression or may tolerate it willingly, Ali has divided the sins of the people into different categories. There are certain sins which may be forgiven but injustice and oppression cannot be forgiven in any circumstances. He says: ``And the sin which will not be forgiven is that one person may oppress another”. He held the view that: “Oppressing a weak person is the worst type of oppression".

Thus he endeavoured by all means to eliminate injustice and this remained his basic policy in the matter of treatment with the people. He fought against the oppressors with his tongue as well as with his sword and remained steadfast in his struggle. He continued to fight against injustice and the unjust till he met martyrdom. If the vicissitudes of time had not hampered his program and the conditions had not been unfavourable, he would have brought about a change in a number of things.

1. Voltaire, a famous French writer and a renowned figure of his time was born in Paris in 1694 A.D. and died in 1778 A.D. He spent a large part of life in England, Russia and Switzerland. He severely, criticized the rulers and religious leaders of his time. It was he who paved the path for the great French Revolution of 1789 A.D. He is the author of many valuable books

Administration of Ali

After having come to know that the behaviour of the Commander of the Faithful with the human society was absolutely just and he adopted a very correct policy to establish mutual relations of the human beings on the basis of equity and justice, it appears necessary to repro- duce here the testament which he wrote for Malik Ashtar while appointing him as Governor of Egypt. This testament of his is more detailed than all others and is very important from the point of view of its grandeur and elaborateness.

While writing about the character of the Commander of the Faithful we have made use of many of his letters, orders and testaments, because in almost all of them he has mentioned the rights of the individuals as well as of the society. However, the testament written by him for Malik Ashtar is very comprehensive and embraces all his views and beliefs on the subject of public administration. It reads as follows:

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful,
Be it known to you, O Malik, that I am sending you as Governor to a country which in the past has experienced both just and unjust rule. Men will scrutinize your actions with a searching eye, even as you used to scrutinize the actions of those before you, and speak of you even as you did speak of them. The fact is that the public speak well of only those who do good. It is they who furnish the proof of your actions. Hence the richest treasure that you may covet should be the treasure of good deeds. Keep your desires under control and deny yourself that which you have been warned against. By such abstinence alone, you will be able to distinguish between good and bad.

Develop in your heart the feeling of love for your people and let it be the source of kindliness and blessing to them. Do not behave with them like a barbarian, and do not appropriate to yourself that which belongs to them. Remember that the citizens of the state are of two categories. They are either your brothers in religion or your brothers as human beings. They are subject to infirmities and liable to commit mistakes. Some indeed do commit mistakes, but forgive them as you would like God to forgive you. Bear in mind that you are placed over them, as I am placed over you. And then there is God even above him who has given you the position of a Governor in order that you may look after those under you and to be sufficient for them. Remember! You will be judged by what you do for them.

Do not set yourself against God, for neither do you possess the strength to shield yourself against His displeasure, nor can you place yourself outside the pale of His mercy and forgiveness. Do not feel sorry over any act of forgiveness, nor rejoice over any punishment that you may mete out to anyone. Do not rouse yourself to anger, for no good will come out of it.

Do not say, “I am your overlord and dictator, and that you should therefore, bow to my commands,” as that will corrupt your heart, weaken your faith in religion and create disorder in the state. Should you be elated by power, or let in your mind creep the slightest feeling of pride and arrogance, then look at the power and majesty of the divine governance of the universe over which you have absolutely no control. It will restore the sense of balance to your wayward intelligence and give you the sense of balance to your wayward intelligence and give you the sense of calmness and affability. Beware! Never put yourself against the majesty and grandeur of God and never imitate His Omnipotence, for God has brought low every rebel of His and every tyrant of man.

Let your mind respect through your actions the rights of God and the rights of man, and likewise, persuade your companions and relations to do the same. For, otherwise, you will be doing injustice to yourself and to humanity. Thus, both man and God will become your enemies. There is no hearing anywhere for one who makes himself an enemy of God. He will be regarded as one at war with God until he repents and seeks forgiveness. Nothing deprives man of divine blessings nor excites divine wrath against him more easily than oppression. Hence it is that God listens to the voice of the oppressed and overpowers the oppressor.

The Common Man

Maintain justice in administration and impose it on your own self and seek the consent of the people, for, the discontent of the masses sterilises the contentment of the privileged few and the discontent of the few, loses itself in the contentment of the many. Remember! the privileged few will not rally round you in moments of difficulty. They will try to side-track justice. They will ask for more than what they deserve and will show no gratitude for favours done to them. They will feel restive in the face of trials and will offer no regret for their shortcomings. It is the common man who fights the enemy. So live in close contact with the masses and be mindful of their welfare.

Keep at a distance one who exposes the weakness of others. After all, the masses are not free from weaknesses. It is the duty of the ruler to shield them. Do not bring to light that which is hidden, but try to remove those weak- nesses which have been brought to light. God is watchful of everything that is hidden from you, and He alone will deal with it. Cover up the faults of the public to the best of your ability so that God may cover up your faults which you want to keep hidden from the public eye. Untie every knot of hatred for the people and cut asunder every string of enmity between them. Protect yourself from every such act as may not be quite correct for you. Do not make haste in seeking confirmation of tale-telling, for the tale-teller is a deceitful person, appearing in the garb of a friend.

The Counsellors

Never take counsel of a miser, for, he will vitiate your magnanimity and frighten you of poverty. Do not seek advice from a coward too, for, he will weaken your resolutions. Do not take counsel of a greedy person, for, he will instil greed in you and turn you into a tyrant. Miserliness, cowardice and greed deprive man of his trust in God.

The worst counsellor is he who has served as a counsellor to unjust rulers and shared their crimes. So, never let men who have been companions of the tyrants or have shared their crimes, be your counsellors. You can get better men than these, men gifted with intelligence and foresight, but unpolluted by sin, men who have never aided a tyrant in his tyranny or a criminal in his crime. Such men will never be a burden to you. On the other hand, they will be a source of help and strength to you at all times. They will be friends to you and strangers to your enemies. Choose such men alone for companionship both in private and in public. Even among these, show preference to those who have a habitual regard for truth, however trying to you at times their truth may prove to be, and who offer you no encouragement in the display of tendencies which God does not like His friends to develop.

Keep close to you the upright and the god-fearing and make clear to them that they are never to flatter you and never to give you credit for any good that you may not have done, for the tolerance of flattery and unhealthy praise stimulates pride in man and makes him arrogant.

Do not treat the good and the bad alike. That will deter the good, and encourage the bad in their bad

pursuits. Recompense everyone according to his deserts. Remember that mutual trust and goodwill between the ruler and the ruled are bred only through benevolence, justice and service. So, cultivate goodwill among the people, for their goodwill alone will save you from troubles. Your benevolence to them will be repaid by their trust in you, and your ill–treatment by their ill–will.

Do not disregard the noble traditions set by our forbearers which have promoted harmony and progress among the people, and do not initiate anything which might minimise their usefulness. The men who had established those noble traditions have had their reward; but responsibility will be yours if they are discarded. Try always to learn something from the experience of the learned and wise, and frequently consult them in state matters so that you might maintain the peace and goodwill which your predecessors had established in the land.

The Different Classes of People

Remember that the people are composed of different classes. The progress of one is dependent on the progress of every other, and none can afford to be independent of the other. We have the army formed of the soldiers of God. We have our civil officers and their establishments, our judiciary, our revenue collectors and our public relation officers. The general public itself consists of Muslims and **Zimmi** and among them are merchants and craftsmen, the unemployed and the indigent. God has prescribed for them their several rights, duties and obligations. They are all defined and preserved in the Qur'an and in the Hadith of the Prophet.

The army, by the grace of God, is like a fortress to the people and lends dignity to the state. It upholds the prestige of the faith and maintains the peace of the country. Without it, the state cannot stand. In its turn, it cannot stand without the support of the state. Our soldiers have proved strong before the enemy because of the privilege God has given them to fight for Him, but they have their material needs to fulfil and have therefore to depend upon the income provided for them from the state revenue.

The military and the civil population which pays the revenue, needs the co–operation of others – the judiciary, civil officers and their establishment. The judge administers civil and criminal law; the civil officers collect revenue and attend to civil administration with the assistance of their establishment. And then there are the tradesmen and the merchants who add to the revenue of the state. It is they who run the markets and are in a better position than others to discharge social obligations. Then there is the class of the poor and the needy whose maintenance is an obligation on the other classes.

God has given appropriate opportunity of service to one and all; then there are the rights of all these classes over the administration which the administrator has to meet with an eye for the good of the entire population – a duty which he cannot fulfil properly unless he takes personal interest in its execution and seeks help from God. Indeed, it is obligatory on him to impose this duty on himself and to bear with patience the inconveniences and difficulties incidental to his task.

The Army

Be particularly mindful of the welfare of those in the army, who in your opinion, are staunchly faithful to their God and the Prophet and loyal to their chief, and who in the hour of passion can restrain themselves and listen coolly to sensible remonstrance, and who can succour the weak and smite the strong, whom violent provocation will not throw into violent temper and who will not falter at any stage.

Keep yourself in close contact with the families of established reputation and integrity and with a glorious past, and draw to yourself men brave and upright in character, generous and benevolent in disposition, for such are the elite of the society.

Care for them with the tenderness with which you care for your children and do not talk before them of any good that you might have done to them nor disregard any expression of affection which they show in return for, such conduct inspires loyalty, devotion and goodwill.

Attend to every little want of theirs, not resting content with what general help that you might have given to them, for sometimes, timely attention to a little want of theirs brings them immense relief. Surely these people will not forget you in your own hour of need.

It behoves you to select for your Commander-in-Chief one who imposes on himself, as a duty, the task of rendering help to his men and who can excel in kindness every other officer who has to attend to the needs of the men under him and look after their families when they are away from their homes; so much so, that the entire army should feel united in their joys and in their sorrows. This unity of purpose will give them added strength against the enemy. Continue to maintain a kindly attitude towards them so that they might feel ever attached to you.

The fact is that the real happiness of the administrators and their most pleasant comfort lies in establishing justice in the state and maintaining affectionate relations with the people. Their sincerity of feeling is expressed in the love and regard they show to you, on which alone depends the safety of the administrators.

Your advice to the army will be of no avail, unless and until you show affection for both men and officers, in order that they might not regard the Government as an oppressive burden or contribute to its downfall. Continue to satisfy their needs and praise them over and over again for what services they have rendered. Such an attitude, God willing, will inspire the brave to braver actions and induce the timid to deeds of bravery.

Try to enter into the feelings of others and do not foist the mistake of one on another and do not grudge dispensing appropriate regards. See to it, you do not show favours to one who has achieved nothing but merely counts on his family position, and do not withhold proper reward from one who has done great deeds simply because he holds a low position in life.

The Real Guidance

Turn to God and to His Prophet for guidance whenever you feel uncertain regarding your actions. There is the commandment of God delivered to those people whom He wishes to guide aright: ***"O people of the Faith! Obey God and obey His Prophet and obey those from among you who hold authority over you. And refer to God and His Prophet whenever there is a difference of opinion among you".*** To turn to God is in reality to consult the Book of God; and to turn to the Prophet is to follow his universally accepted traditions.

Chief Justice

Select as your Chief Justice from the people, one who is by far the best among them – one who is not obsessed with domestic worries, one who cannot be intimidated, one who does not err too often, one who does not turn back from the right path once he finds it, one who is not self-centered or avaricious, one who will not decide before knowing the full facts, one who will weigh with care every attendant doubt and pronounce a clear verdict after taking everything into full consideration, one who will not grow restive over the arguments of advocates and who will examine with patience every new disclosure of fact and who will be strictly impartial in his decision, one whom flattery cannot mislead, one who does not exult over his position. But such people are scarce.

Once you have selected the right man for the office, pay him handsomely enough to let him live in comfort and in keeping with his position, enough to keep him above temptations. Give him a position in your court so high that none can even dream of coveting it and so high that neither back-biting nor intrigue can touch him.

Subordinate Judiciary

Beware! The utmost carefulness is to be exercised in its selection, for it is this high office which adventurous self-seekers aspire to secure and exploit in their selfish interests. After the selection of your Chief justice, give careful consideration to the selection of other officers. Confirm them in their appointments after approved probation. Never select men for responsible posts either out of any regard for personal connections or under any influence, for that might lead to injustice and corruption.

Of these, select for higher posts, men of experience, men firm in faith and belonging to good families. Such men will not fall an easy prey to temptations and will discharge their duties with an eye on the abiding good of others. Increase their salaries to give them a contented life. A contented living is a help to self-purification. They will not feel the urge to tax the earnings of their subordinates for their own upkeep. They will then have no excuse to go against your instructions or misappropriate state funds. Keep a watch over them without their knowledge. Perchance they may develop true honesty and true concern for the public welfare. But whenever any of them is accused of dishonesty, and the guilt is

confirmed by the report of your secret service, then regard this as sufficient to convict him. Let the punishment be corporal and let that be dealt with in public at an appointed place of degradation.

Revenue Administration

Great care is to be exercised in revenue administration, to ensure the prosperity of those who pay the revenue to the state for, on their prosperity depends the prosperity of others, particularly of the masses. Indeed, the state exists on its revenue. You should regard the proper upkeep of the land in cultivation as of greater importance than the collection of revenue, for revenue cannot be derived except by making the land productive. He who demands revenue without helping the cultivator ruins the state. The rule of such a person does not last long.

If the cultivators ask for reduction of their land cess for having suffered from epidemics or drought or excess of rains or the barrenness of the soil or floods damaging their crops, then reduce the cess accordingly, so that their condition might improve. Do not mind the loss of revenue on that account for that will return to you one day manifold in the hour of greater prosperity of the land and enable you to improve the condition of your towns and raise the prestige of your state. You will be the object of universal praise. The people will believe in your sense of justice. The confidence which they will place in you in consequence will prove your strength, as they will be found ready to share your burdens.

You may settle down on the land any number of people, but discontent will overtake them if the land is not improved. The cause of the cultivators' ruin is the rulers who are bent feverishly on accumulating wealth at all costs, out of the fear that their rule might not last long. Such are the people who do not learn from examples or precedents.

Clerical Establishment

Keep an eye on your establishment and your scribes and select the best among them for your confidential correspondence; such among these, as possess high character and deserve your full confidence – men, who may not exploit their privileged position to go against you, and who may not grow neglectful of their duties, and who in drafting of treaties may not succumb to temptation and harm your interests or fail to render you proper assistance and save you from trouble, and who, in carrying out their duties, can realise their serious responsibilities, for he who does not realise his own responsibilities can hardly appraise the responsibilities of others.

Do not select men for such work merely on the strength of your first impressions of affection or good faith for as a matter of fact, the pretensions of a good many who are really devoid of honesty and good breeding, may cheat even the intelligence of the rulers. Selection should be made after due probation – probation which should be the test of righteousness. In making direct appointments from people and who enjoy the reputation of being honest for such selection is agreeable both to God and the ruler. For every department of administration, let there be a head whom no trying task might cause worry and no

pressure of work annoy.

And remember that each and every lapse of scribes, which you may overlook, will be written down against you in your scroll of deeds.

Trade and Industry

You are advised to treat well businessmen and artisans and direct others to do likewise. Some of them live in towns and some move from place to place with their ware and tools and earn their living by manual labour. They are the real source of profit to the state and provider of consumer goods.

While the general public are not inclined to bear the strain, those engaged in these professions take the trouble to collect commodities from far and near, from land and from across the sea, and from mountains and forests and naturally derive benefits.

It is this class of peace-loving people from whom no disturbance need be feared. They love peace and order. Indeed they are incapable of creating discord; protect them whether they are transacting business at your place or in other towns. But bear in mind that a good many of them are intensely greedy and are immured to bad dealings. They hoard grain and try to sell it at a high price and this is most harmful to the public. It is a blot on the name of the ruler not to fight this evil. Prevent them from hoarding; for the Prophet of God had prohibited it. See to it that trade is carried on with the utmost ease, that the scales are evenly held and that prices are so fixed that neither the seller nor the buyer is put to a loss. And if, in spite of your warning, should anyone go against your commands and commit the crime of hoarding, then inflict upon him a severe punishment.

The Poor

Beware! Fear God when dealing with the problem of the poor who have none to patronise them, who are forlorn, indigent, helpless and are greatly torn in mind - victims of the vicissitudes of time. Among them there are some who do not question their lot in life and who, notwithstanding their misery, do not go about seeking alms. For God's sake, safeguard their rights for on you rests the responsibility of protecting their interests. Assign for their uplift a portion of the state exchequer (***Bayt al Mal***), wherever they may be, whether close at hand or far from you. The rights of the two should be equal in your eye.

Do not let any preoccupations slip them from your mind for no excuse whatsoever for the disregard of their rights will be acceptable to God. Do not treat their interests as of less importance than your own and never keep them outside the purview of your important cosiderations and mark the persons who look down upon them and of whose condition they keep you in ignorance.

Select from among your officers such men as are upright and god-fearing and who can keep you properly informed of the condition of the poor.

Make such provision for these poor people as shall not oblige you to offer an excuse before God on the Day of Judgment for, it is this section of the people which, more than any other, deserves benevolent treatment. Seek your reward from God by giving to each of them what is due to him and enjoin on yourself as a sacred duty the task of meeting the needs of such aged among them as have no independent means of livelihood and are averse to seeking alms. It is the discharge of this duty that usually proves very trying to rulers, but is very welcome to societies which are gifted with foresight. It is only such societies or nations that truly carry out with equanimity their covenant with God to discharge their duty to the poor.

Open Conferences

Meet the oppressed and the lowly periodically in an open conference and conscious of the Divine presence there. Have a heart-to-heart talk with them and let none from your armed guard or civil officers or members of the Police Department or the Intelligence Department be by your side, so that the representatives of the poor might state their grievances fearlessly and without reserve. For I have heard the Prophet of God say that no nation or society, in which the strong do not discharge their duty to the weak, will occupy a high position.

Bear with composure any strong language which they may use, and do not get annoyed if they cannot state their case lucidly. Even so, God will open for you His door of blessings and rewards. Whatever you can give to them, give it ungrudgingly and whatever you cannot afford to give, make clear to them with the utmost condescension.

There are certain things which call for prompt action. One of them is correspondence regarding the redress of grievances which your heedless staff has been unable to tackle. See to it that petitions or applications submitted for your consideration are brought to your notice without any delay, however much your officers might try to intercept them. Dispose of the day's work that very day for the coming day will entail its own task.

Communion with God

Do not forget to set apart the best of your time for communion with God, although every moment of yours is for Him only, provided it is spent sincerely in the service of your people. The obligation which you directly owe to God, should be included in your over-all duties. Therefore, devote some of your time each day and night to prayer so as to be in communion with God. Let your prayer be as perfect as free from blemish as possible, notwithstanding the physical discomfort it may involve.

And when you lead a congregational prayer, do not bore people by a needlessly long prayer, nor spoil it by unwarranted shortness. When, on receiving an order to proceed to Yemen, I asked the Prophet of God, how I should lead the congregation there, he said, “Perform your prayers even as the weakest among you would offer and set an example of considerateness to the faithful”.

Aloofness not Desirable

With regard to the observance of all that I have said, bear one thing in mind. Never, for any length of time, keep yourself aloof from the people, for to do so is to keep oneself ignorant of their affairs. It develops in the ruler a wrong perspective and renders him unable to distinguish between what is important and what is unimportant, between right and wrong, and between truth and falsehood. The ruler is after all a human being; and he cannot form a correct view of anything which is out of sight.

There is no distinctive sign attached to truth which may enable one to distinguish between the different varieties of truth and falsehood. The fact is that you must be one of the two things. Either you are just or unjust. If you are just, then you will not keep aloof from the people, but will listen to them and meet their requirements.

But if you are unjust, the people themselves will keep away from you. What virtue is there in your keeping aloof? At all events aloofness is not desirable, especially when it is your duty to attend to the needs of the people. Complaints of oppression by your officers or petitions for justice should not prove irksome to you.

Nepotism

Make this clear to yourself that those immediately about and around you, will like to exploit their position to covet what belongs to others and commit acts of injustice. Suppress such a tendency in them. Make a rule of your conduct never to give even a small piece of land to any of your relations. That will prevent them from causing harm to the interests of others and save you from courting the disapprobation of both God and man.

Deal justice squarely regardless of the fact whether one is a relation or not. If any of your relations or companions violates the law, mete out the punishment prescribed by law, however painful it might be to you personally, for it will be all to the good of the state. If at any time people suspect that you have been unjust to them in any respect, disclose to them and remove their suspicions. In this way, your mind will become attuned to the sense of justice and people will begin to love you. It will also fulfil your wish that you should enjoy their confidence.

Peace and Treaties

Bear in mind that you do not throw away the offer of peace which your enemy may himself make. Accept it, for that will please God. Peace is a source of comfort to the army. It reduces your worries and promotes order in the state. But beware! Be on your guard when the peace is signed for, certain types of enemies propose terms of peace just to lull you into a sense of security only to attack you again when you are off your guard. So you should exercise the utmost vigilance on your part and place no undue

faith in their protestations.

But, if under the peace treaty you have accepted any obligations, discharge those obligations scrupulously. It is a trust and must be faithfully upheld and whenever you have promised anything, keep it with all the strength that you command, for whatever difference of opinion might exist on other matters, there is nothing so noble as the fulfilment of a promise. This is recognized even among the non-Muslims, for they know the dire consequences which follow from the breaking of covenants. So never make excuses in discharging your responsibilities and never break a promise, nor cheat your enemy, for breach of promise is an act against God and none except the positively wicked acts against God.

Indeed Divine promises are a blessing spread over all mankind. The promise of God is a refuge sought after, even by the most powerful on earth for there is no risk of being cheated. So, do not make any such promise which you cannot fulfil, nor attack your enemy without ultimatum because none, except a wretched ignorant being, would dare defy God who, in His infinite mercy, has made pacts and treaties as tools of utmost sanctity for His creatures; in fact, peace provides shelter under the lively shade of which all seek asylum and in the vicinity of which all listen for a sojourn. A treaty should, therefore, be free from fraud, duplicity and deception.

Never execute a pact open to interpretations, but once it is executed, don't exploit equivocation, if any; nor repudiate any treaty concluded in the light of Divine injunctions, even in the face of grievous difficulties. As there is reward in life Hereafter, it is better to face difficulties rather than violate the treaty with a traumatic sense of accountability on the Day of Judgment.

Beware! Abstain from shedding blood without a valid cause, as it invites the wrath of Almighty, exposes one to, His severest punishment, deprives one of His blessings and shortens one's span of life. On the Day of Judgment it is this crime for which one will have to answer first. So, beware! Do not wish to build the strength of your state on blood for, it is this blood which ultimately weakens the power and undermines the authority and shakes its very foundations; power then slips to other hands.

A murder is a crime which is punishable by death. If, on any account the corporal punishment dealt by the state for any lesser crime results in the death of the guilty, let not the prestige of the state stand in the way of the deceased's relations claiming blood-money.

Last Instructions

Shun self-adoration; do not indulge in self-praise nor encourage others to extol you, because of all the ruses to undo good deeds of pious men, Satan relies most upon praise and flattery.

Neither over-rate nor indulge in tall talks about the favours you have showered on people. Breach of promise annoys God and man alike. God, the Most Exalted, says in the Qur'an: ***"God is much displeased if you do not act upon what you say".***

Do not make haste to do a thing before its time, nor put it off when the right moment arrives. Do not insist on doing a wrong thing, nor show slackness in rectifying a wrong thing. Perform everything at its proper time and let everything occupy its proper place. When the people as a whole agree upon a thing, do not impose your own view on them and do not neglect to discharge the responsibility that rests on you in consequence, for the eyes of the people will be on you and you are answerable for whatever you do to them.

The slightest dereliction of duty will bring its own retribution. Keep your anger under control and keep your hands and tongue in check. The best way to restrain your rage is to defer punishment till you are calmed and restored to yourself. You cannot achieve it unless you remember that you have ultimately to return to your Sustainer.

It is imperative that you carefully study the precepts which have inspired just and good rulers who have preceded you. Give close thought to the example of our Prophet, his traditions, and the commandments of the Qur'an and whatever you might have assimilated from my own way of dealing with things. Endeavour to the best of your ability to carry out the instructions which I have given here and you have solemnly undertaken to follow. By means of this order, I enjoin on you not to succumb to the promptings of your own heart, nor to turn away from the discharge of duties entrusted to you.

I seek refuge in the Almighty and His unlimited sphere of blessings, and invite you to pray with me that He may give us together the grace to surrender willingly our will to His will, and to enable us to acquit ourselves well before Him and His creation, so that mankind cherishes our memory and our work survives. I beseech God for His blessings and pray that He may grant you and me His grace and the honour of martyrdom in His cause. Verily, we have to return to Him. I invoke His blessings on the Prophet of God and his blessed progeny.

U.N. Charter of Human Rights

The rules laid down by Ali regarding human rights appear to be better and more useful as compared with the declaration made by the U.N. on the subject.

The readers have now fully grasped the human rights as enunciated by Ali. It, however, appears necessary to recapitulate them in this chapter and to study their different aspects keeping their gist in view.

We have endeavoured to understand properly Ali's views and ideas regarding special and common rights in the light of his various testaments, letters and orders sent by him to his governors and other officers and have dealt with them in separate chapters and have tried our best to explain them as clearly

as possible. Hence it should be quite easy for a reader to get fully acquainted with rules and regulations set forth by Ali regarding human rights by referring to the relevant chapters.

In order to present the views and beliefs of Ali in a more prominent manner and to find out in a better and clearer way with what celestial power these instructions were issued by him, we propose to mention here some important contents of the charter of the U.N. and the declaration of human rights which have been endorsed by the representatives of all nations. If there is any difference between the rules laid down by Ali and the U.N. charter it will be possible for the readers to realize it and also to find out the reason why it is so.

We may say briefly that from the point of view of their purport there is no difference between the rules laid down by Ali regarding human rights and the charter of the United Nations. If any minor difference is observed, apparently it is due to changes which have taken place in the terminology during the course of time, and is not basic or in principle.

There is no chapter in the charter of the U.N. which is not running parallel to the rules laid down by Ali. In fact better and more useful things are found in the instructions given by him.

In my opinion the difference between the two sets of rules is due to the following four reasons:

Firstly the charter of the United Nations was drafted by thousands of intellectuals belonging to almost all the countries of the world whereas the Alavi rules were enunciated by only one person viz. Ali son of Abu Talib.

Secondly Ali arrived in this world fourteen hundred years ago.

Thirdly those who drafted the U.N. charter or in fact collected the requisite material for it indulged in too much extravagant talk and self-praise and boasted that world was indebted to them on this account. On the contrary Ali showed humility before God and was modest before the people. He did not seek greatness or superiority. He always prayed to God and also wished the people that his acts of commissions and omissions might be overlooked.

The fourth reason for the difference which is more important than the three enumerated above is that many nations, out of those which participated in the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights and endorsed it, violated this declaration and started armed conflicts to nullify and destroy it, but wherever Ali placed his foot, and whenever he said anything, or unsheathed his sword, he did so to destroy tyranny and oppression and leveled the ground to march forward on the path of truth and justice. So much so that he met his martyrdom in defence of human rights, although during his lifetime he had already been martyred thousands of times.

We now give below the contents of the largest chapter of the U.N. charter which deals with human rights. It has been compiled by a French writer Barbabech, and translated by Muhammad Mandoor in

Arabic and published by the U.A.R (United Arab Republic).

1. Human beings are equal to one another in the matter of honour and rights. They have been created with the power of reflection and competence to distinguish between good and evil. Hence all of them should behave with one another like brothers.

2. Every human being should enjoy all his rights and the liberties provided for in this charter. No discrimination should be made between them on account of difference in race, colour, tongue, faith, political views, country, social principles, affluence, indigence, pedigree and family.

3. The rights mentioned in this charter are also available to the citizens of those countries as well as to the citizens of the countries whose governments are subordinate to other governments. Hence the citizens of these regions are equal to the residents of independent countries.

4. Every person is entitled to possess means of living and to lead his life in security and peace.

5. Slavery is not permissible for mankind. Slavery and dealing in slaves is prohibited in all circumstances.

6. It is not permissible to hurt or oppress human beings. It is unlawful to coerce them unnecessarily. Anything which amounts to aspersion on another's character or reputation is prohibited.

7. Every person has a right that his legal position should be acknowledged in whichever country he may be.

8. All human beings are equal before law. Every person is entitled to seek assistance of law. There is no difference between human beings. Everyone has a right to oppose the discrimination which infringes the contents of this charter.

9. Every person has right to lodge a complaint before a regular court which is established to take decisions about rights and violations of the law in force.

10. None can be arrested, imprisoned and exiled from his town.

11. It is not permissible that any one should interfere with the personal or family life or correspondence of another person without being entitled to do so. None is permitted to attack the honour or reputation of another, and every person has a right to approach the law-enforcing authorities in the event of oppression and interference. [1]

12. Every person has a right to travel freely in his country and to settle down wherever he likes. Moreover, every person is entitled to migrate from any town and also to return to it when he likes.

13. Every person has a right to seek refuge in another country when he is subjected to tyranny and oppression.

14. Every person has possessive rights in his personal capacity or as a partner and none can be deprived of the ownership of his property under coercion.

15. Every person is entitled to reflect freely and the governments are not entitled to interfere with the religious beliefs and actions of the people.

16. Every person is entitled to hold an independent opinion and to express it, and by implication none can hurt him on account of his opinions. 2

17. Every person is entitled to intervene in the activities of the Department of Public Affairs of the country either directly or through a freely elected representative. Every person has a right to take part in public activities on equal conditions, and self–determination of the people is the origin and basis of the authority of government.

18. Every person is entitled to benefit from the natural responsibilities of the members of the society which they owe to one another. The economic, social and educational rights, which are necessary for a person according to his status, are guaranteed for him and the entire nation with the co–operation of the governments is responsible to pay these rights.

19. Every person is entitled to select the profession he likes and to demand sufficient conditions for it which are compatible with justice. He is also entitled to be helped to get rid of unemployment. All persons are entitled, without any exception, to demand appropriate wages for the work done by them. Every worker has a right to demand wages, which are sufficient for his and his family's sustenance and with which he may build his life in accordance with human dignity. If at any time the usual wages are insufficient to support him he should be compensated by some collective means. 3

20. It is every person's right that he and his family should lead their lives with means of welfare and security, especially in the matter of food, dress, lodging, health and social affairs. Furthermore, he/she should be assisted in the event of unemployment, weakness, old age, and widowhood, and in all such circumstances as make it impossible for him/her to earn.

21. Every person has a right to acquire knowledge.

Education should be free and primary education should be compulsory. The object of education should be the nurture of human personality and respect for rights and political freedom. It is also necessary that education should be means of strengthening mutual reconciliation, forgiveness and friendship between the nations and should assist the United Nations in its mission of peace.

22. The individuals owe some duties to the society which must be fulfilled by them, because the personality of the individuals is built under the auspices of the society.

23. The individuals cannot be prevented from demanding their rights and enjoying freedom except in matter for which laws have been enacted to protect and respect the rights and freedom of others, or

rules have been prescribed by society for the protection of good morals, administration of government and public welfare.
These rights and freedom should not in any circum stances interfere with the aims and objects of the United Nations.

24. The sentences and language of this charter should not be interpreted in such a way that any government, party or individual may become entitled to react and nullify practically the freedoms provided for in this charter.

These are the most important points which are recorded in the charter of the U.N. regarding the rights and freedom of man. These are the very rights which are often violated by the signatory governments.

I think that the readers must have realized the sufficiency of these instructions with the help of the rules enunciated by Imam Ali and must also have recognized their similarity, with the exception of the terminology which has changed with the passage of time and the ideas which have appeared on account of the developments, which have taken place during the present age. However, the affection and kindness, which is seen in the rules framed by the Imam, is missing from the charter of the United Nations.

In the following chapter we shall mention the high morals and virtues of Ali and how he kept in view the relationship of life which exists between the living beings and how he respected it in his words and deeds.

In another chapter we shall review in detail the conditions of the Arab world during the periods of Bani Umayyah, Bani Abbas and other rulers, and shall explain how they violated these rules, so that, by a comparative study of Ali's conduct and theirs, the value of the rules enunciated by him may become known in a better way.

While giving in detail the rules prescribed by Imam Ali in previous chapters we have already shown their worth and value, and in these two chapters we conclude our discussion regarding Ali and human rights, so that we may turn our attention to other matters.

1. A large part of the contents of this charter is not compatible with the objects of socialism, because in the socialist countries complete freedom of the individuals is considered to be opposed to the interests of the State.
2. The opinions which interfere with law and order, or create disturbance or are injurious to the independence and integrity of the State are offences according to law, and the laws of every country take such offences into account. the co-operation of the governments is responsible to pay these rights.
3. Freedom of action, strikes, complaints by the workers and other similar things are not permissible in accordance with the socialistic ideology, because whatever is connected with action and economy is controlled by the despotic government and opposition to government is treated to be a revolt against it.

Value of life and Ali

We have learnt that Ali was grieved on account of the privations of the oppressed. He helped them to acquire their rights and made them recognize what was due to them. He also shared hardships with the indigent and the deprived, so that the value of justice might be known and its standard might be elevated.

We have studied his method of eliminating oppression, and the principles which he followed in the capacity of a ruler and it has become known that his principles and laws enjoy a very high position amongst the principles enunciated by the great sages of the East and the West. We have already mentioned his contributions to the language, philosophy, and science and have explained that he was the base and origin of these branches of knowledge. We have hinted at the extraordinary power which he possessed to activate the natural inclinations and morality for the people and the wonderful eloquence with which he described their qualities and desires. His inherent powers and personal virtues were intermingled and with their help he planted, on every occasion, a new tree and provided it with leaves and flowers to perfect the knowledge of mankind.

He laid a new foundation through his literary and other works on which Arabic language, jurisprudence, and social sciences, are based, and the fact is that the theories expounded by others are the offshoots of the same know− ledge which he has handed down to us.

This voluminous book about the cognition of man cannot be compiled unless the author describes the nature of human beings, finds out the effects of the vicissitudes of time on their nature, directs his intellect and natural inclinations towards their welfare and then takes a decision according to their individual and collective nature and the spirit of the time. Imam Ali adopted this method in his sayings and precepts, which are unmatched after the sayings and precepts of the Prophet.

In some of his precepts Ali has addressed theoretical logic. In others he has addressed practical logic. And in many of them he has addressed both. The precepts referring to theoretical logic mean as to how a fact should be found out and those which relate to practical logic mean as to what should be done to acquire prosperity.

As regards the first kind of precepts it may be said that Ali found out the true nature of facts. With a subtle intellect he observed the good and evil of the time, arrived at correct conclusions after making necessary experiments, and made those conclusions known to the people. [1]

His precepts are so judicious and exact that it may be said that they have been deduced by means of geometrical calculations. They have been stated in such a beautiful manner that from the point of view of their meanings as well as their interpretation they form the foundation of the Arabic literature. All the thoughts and opinions of the Imam collected in Nahj al−Balaghah are of this standard.

In the precepts in which the Commander of the Faithful has addressed theoretical logic, he has left the people free in the matter of their reason and views so that they may find out the factual position and act according to their understanding and comprehension.

Such precepts are not in the form of orders, prohibitions or desires. On the contrary they are philosophical remarks in which the nature and habits of the friends and the enemies, the righteous and the wicked, the wise and the foolish, the generous and the miserly, the oppressor and the oppressed etc. have been fully explained. He has also explained many scientific laws with logical reasoning. Some of them will be mentioned later.

As regards his precepts which relate to practical logic, or both practical logic and theoretical logic, it may be stated as follows:

Those who think that only the laws, rules, regulations and system of government are sufficient for the administration of public affairs are mistaken, because one should take responsibility for the protection and observance of these principles and laws after due explanation of human rights. Just as it is necessary that one who enacts these laws should be wise, experienced and righteous, it is also necessary that one who implements them should possess these qualities and should obtain the desired results. This is so because the administration of public affairs depends very much on the good and bad qualities of those who promulgate the laws and is also related to the wisdom and attention of the people for whom those laws have been enacted.

In spite of all this it has to be admitted that the various new rules and laws which have been formulated are mostly different from one another. Owing to the differences which exist between the countries it is not possible to enforce all these laws without force and coercion and the law-enforcing authorities are permitted to avoid enforcing them to some extent. The rules and laws of the old governments were mostly compatible with the habits and morals of those who enforced them. This was for reasons which are beyond the scope of our present discussion. [2]

Let us suppose that it is possible for human beings to enact useful laws and to compel the people to act according to them However, if the responsibilities are not carried out according to the dictates of conscience and faith, they do not carry much value. We believe that any act which is not performed by man with the confirmation of practical logic, personal desire, and firm determination, and without coercion, cannot be treated to be a human act. The greatest and the most precious human action is that which is prompted by one's conscience.

The rules and laws formulated by a government are not at all sufficient to improve human relations unless the theoretical and practical wisdom makes man contented with them. In that event the determination and good deeds of the people will harmonize with each other and make the individuals and the groups reach their destination through the path of civilization, because such persons do not desire anything except good deeds.

Whatever we have said about the individuals and groups is very well known to the intellectuals and the philosophers as well as to the past ulema and research scholars, and we believe that conscience and faith obliged them to serve.

When we study carefully the history of those who served mankind and civilization, we come to know that though wisdom alone was their guide for understanding every matter, yet it was not alone in the history of their lives. The power of theoretical knowledge is stagnant and dry. By itself it can do nothing. It must have companions and friends of different kinds along with their quantities and numbers. This power shows you the path but not the speed and does not compel you to walk on the path. The thing which brings you to the stage of action is enthusiasm and inclination.

Marconi (an Italian scientist who invented wireless) liked it, on account of his enthusiasm and inclination, not to enjoy the amusements of the world and to remain in seclusion to serve mankind and civilization, for otherwise why did he choose seclusion for himself, if practical wisdom and enthusiasm did not prompt him to serve humanity? The same thing could be said about some other great men. Thus the noble-minded servants of mankind did good deeds with great enthusiasm and devotion.

As the wicked and unlucky persons were devoid of true practical wisdom and good intentions they could not do any service to humanity in spite of their theoretical wisdom. To this category belong Adolf Hitler, Hajjaj bin Yusuf, Changez Khan, Alexander of Macedonia and many great scientists of our own age who utilized their experiments in respect of man. All of them possessed power of intellect like the servants of mankind but in spite of this their performance was nothing but bloodshed, lack of regard for human life, destruction of the achievements of human civilization, and death and annihilation of innumerable innocent men and women. This was due to the fact that their theoretical wisdom and thoughts were not linked with practical wisdom and good sentiments. If these two things (viz. practical wisdom and good sentiments) are not present theoretical wisdom is useless and is in fact very harmful.

I do not mean to say that the different powers possessed by man viz. theoretical wisdom, practical wisdom, and inclination, are separate from one another. In fact these powers assist and influence one another. What I mean to say is that the theoretical wisdom comprehends the things themselves, connects causes and effects with each other and provides unalterable limits and rules which do not change on account of changes which take place in the morals and the nations, but the practical wisdom and sentiments are different according to differences in the people.

Theoretical wisdom is present in every person and comprehends a matter correctly. It is necessary that it should contain inclination and the practical wisdom should make it proceed on the path of goodness and prosperity. Failing this the person concerned will spend his wisdom on making discoveries which will become the cause of destruction of the human beings as well as of his own bad luck.

This is as true in the case of the law-giver as for those for whom the law has been enacted. Their conscience and inclination should be desirous of obeying the laws based on equity and justice and mere

intellectual admission of their goodness is not sufficient. Their hearts should be free from impurities to ensure the perfection of human prosperity so that they may make efforts with enthusiasm for the welfare of the nation. Furthermore, it is necessary that they should possess moral virtues, because the merits of a man protect the laws and orders from the evil-doers and the sinners like a fortress.

It was for this reason that Imam Ali awakened good inclinations in the hearts of the people and delivered sermons to promote good morals. In his sermons, testaments and conversations he always addressed the conscience of the people, because he knew that for the administration of the affairs of the people and their good relations it is necessary that they should possess good morals. Self-purification ensures human perfection and also supports justice, and protects its frontiers. Furthermore, it leads towards the sentiments and desires of the people which culminate prosperity and happiness.

Ali possessed unusual competence to counsel and refine the people and his words deeply impressed everyone. He knew their nature and their way and manners. He compared their good and bad qualities and embodied their realities in his statements. He explained their different kinds. He ordered the people to do certain things and forbade them from doing evil things.

He had a very favourable opinion about the conscience of the people being able to make distinction between good and evil. This favourable opinion of Ali about the conscience of human beings resembled a similar opinion held by other great benefactors of humanity (like Christ) and Muhammad who had enlightened minds and kind and affectionate hearts, and whose love for mankind knew no bounds. Every light became insignificant before that which was kindled in their hearts. Ali has based his precepts on this very favourable opinion and his addressing human conscience in his counsels and sermons is also on account of the good opinion which he held about human nature.

As Ali held a favourable opinion about the people, in spite of all the hardships which he had to suffer at their hands, he always endeavoured to inculcate good morals in their hearts. He knew that both goodness and evil are present in the nature of man. However, it behoves a forbearing person to turn his heart towards goodness and nourish it. He educated the people through examples as well as by his good conduct, because this method of education is more effective.

Imam Ali stressed the people time and again to hold a good opinion about human conscience. He has said: “If a person holds a good opinion about you try to prove his opinion to be correct”. He has also said: “If someone does something do not hold a bad opinion about it so long as it is possible to draw a good conclusion from it”.

If he has criticized some actions of treacherous and unjust persons it was because he considered their reformation possible by means of censure and advice, although it might necessitate a good deal of effort and time.

A righteous person rewards those who do good deeds, but punishes the evil-doers because he hopes that by this means it will be possible to correct them. If Imam Ali had not expected this he would not

have tolerated the unbearable hardships caused by the wicked persons.

Ali said about the world and the worldly people: “The worldly persons growl at one another like dogs and ferocious animals. Their strong ones devour the weak and the big ones humiliate the small ones”. He said this because he had suffered much on account of the usurpation and disobedience of the corrupt persons, and was very much vexed on account of the trouble caused by them. By saying these things he fought against the unjust, the cruel and the tyrants in the same way in which a physician fights against the germs for the welfare and health of a patient. He preferred death to life and hoped for the salvation of mankind.

Ali respected life, because it is a great blessing of God. He considered living beings to be respectable so that a specimen of the traces of creation might remain secure in their existence. He had a very favourable opinion about the conscience and the purity of nature of man and was very hopeful for the prosperity of mankind. He wished that men might remain as free as he ought to be.

In the absence of this favourable opinion and hope he would not have behaved so well with the people and would not have said: “If you hear something from someone do not hold a bad opinion about it so long as it is possible to draw a good conclusion from it”. In that event he would not also have addressed the conscience of the people kindly like the Prophets, and would not have guided them with a heavy heart, to goodness with his sermons and admonitions. He wished to protect the morals of the people with his sermons and precepts, and to rear up human enthusiasm in them so that they might do good deeds with the assistance of their own wisdom and intellect.

In every work Imam Ali appointed certain spies from among the people themselves to keep an eye on them and declared that the limbs of their body were sitting in ambush for them. As he had faith in their own assessment he said: “O people! Remember that your own self is sitting in ambush for you and your limbs are your spies who keep an account of your deeds and even your breathing”.

On account of his faith in the conscience of man and respect for his life he told the people of his time that human life cannot be kept in bondage, and cannot be kept in the cradle of childhood for long. It should not be kept in imprisonment lest it should become impure and be consequently annihilated.

In another chapter we shall quote some unique sayings of Ali which will remain alive so long as righteous persons live on the earth. Those sayings will last forever. We have selected these sayings from Nahj al-Balaghah and they relate to the acquisition of excellent morals and good character and to the purity of man.

1. According to Shiite belief whatever the Imam said was based on inspiration and celestial power i.e. the spirit of Imamate and it is not possible to acquire all the knowledge possessed by him by means of intellect and experience.
2. The author has proved here that it is the duty of the people to consider law to be a bounty for themselves. They should have faith in it and should hold themselves responsible to obey it, instead of the government being wholly responsible to enforce it and the people obeying it for fear of punishment. The Muslim scholars have explained this point in their books at length and all the Muslims know that man-made laws are not sufficient to ensure happiness in this world and salvation in

the world hereafter. As regards the celestial law it is necessary that the Prophet should enforce it through inspiration and the people should obey it as an article of faith.

Conditions prevailing after Ali

These calamities and social and moral evils began to appear in the Arab world, and gained strength in the East from the day on which the sinful hand of Ibn Muljim was stretched towards the specimen of justice and the embodiment of virtue viz. Ali son of Abu Talib.

It appears necessary to mention briefly the conditions of the Arab nation after the martyrdom of Imam Ali and to explain what shape the things assumed during the periods of Bani Umayyah and Bani Abbas, what the activities of these rulers, who deviated from the principles laid down by Ali, were, and how the common man became very cheap and was transferred like inheritance from one group to another.

The caliphate of Imam Ali was an interval between the period of Uthman and that of Mu`awiya and his successors. During this interval truth and justice enjoyed a very high position. However, during the period preceding it the rights of the people were violated. The people belonging to the upper class did not submit to the authority of government. The result was that injustice and oppression was rampant. The chiefs of the nation, the officers and the governors had become a cause of affliction for the people and were devouring their property. The advisers and associates of Uthman were perfect despots.

It will be better to explain here the condition of the rulers and the subjects during the periods of Bani Umayyah and Bani Abbas so that the value of the rules and principles laid down by Ali may be clearly understood and the readers may realize how sublime his wisdom and thinking was. His sword nipped selfishness in the bud and his righteous hand annihilated falsehood.

As soon as Ali was martyred at the hands of the accursed Ibn Muljim, Mu`awiya son of Abu Sufyan began planning against the opponents of his caliphate. He severely punished every person who declined to acknowledge him as the caliph of God. He had not yet completed his task when he began levelling the ground for the succession of his son, the notorious Yazid as caliph. He adopted all possible means which could be useful for the kingship of his son. He bestowed honours on some persons and deprived others of position and authority. Out of the numerous plans which Mu`awiya contrived for taking the oath of allegiance from the people for Yazid we make a mention of one which will go to show the foundation on which the caliphate of Yazid and his successors was established.

Mu`awiya arranged a gathering so that the people from different provinces should collectively take oath of allegiance to his son Yazid during his own lifetime. When the poeple assembled, Mu`awiya and Yazid were also present. At that moment a flatterer named Yazid son of Muqanna rose and said pointing to Mu`awiya: “This is the Commander of the Faithful” Then he pointed to Yazid and said: “If Mu`awiya

passes away it will be he". Then he pointed to his sword and said: "If any person does not agree to this his punishment will be this". Mu`awiya said: "Sit down for you are the chief of the orators".

The people of the Hijaz did not agree to take oath of allegiance to Yazid. They could neither be allured by wealth nor were they afraid of the military power. Mu`awiya's behaviour with those people is surprising. Once he threatened them saying: "I swear by God that if any person utters even one word here against me he will be beheaded before he utters the second word. You people should, therefore, take care of your lives and should not seek death". He posted two observers for each person belonging to the Hijaz and said to the police-officer: "Whoever from amongst these persons opens his lips to refute or to affirm, his head should be chopped off".

It was in this manner that Yazid son of Mu`awiya attained to the caliphate.

Abdullah son of Hanzala said: "We were afraid that if we did not oppose Yazid stones will rain on our heads from the heavens and all of us would be annihilated because of the divine wrath. It was for this reason that we opposed him".

It was the same Yazid who martyred Imam Husayn in a very tragic manner, besieged the Ka`abah and stoned it with the help of the catapult, made the blood and the property of the people of Madina lawful for his soldiers, and lived a life of sensuality and pleasure. He used to play with dogs and monkeys till he died and was succeeded by other members of the Umayyad family. They distributed the property of the public treasury among their relatives and associates. The place of justice which was founded by Ali was destroyed by them and an unjust group assumed the reins of government. One group of persons became very rich and the other was reduced to extreme poverty. When thousands were starving, the Umayyad caliph gave twelve thousand dinars to the singer named Ma`abad, because he had amused the caliph with his music. The nobles possessed innumerable slaves and slave-girls. Seventy thousand of them were set free by Sulaiman son of Abdul Malik alone. Partiality and bias on account of race, family or party, was very common during the Umayyad rule although Islam had destroyed such bias and Imam Ali had not permitted it.

During that age discrimination was made between the people of Yemen and Bani Qais. The Arabs claimed superiority over the non-Arabs and similarly the Qurayshites claimed to be superior to others. Their courts were full of pleasure-loving persons who got large funds from the public treasury without doing any public service. History tells that Walid bin Abdul Malik disallowed the stipends of more than twenty thousand stipendiaries. These were the ways and manners of all Umayyads except Umar ibn Abdul Aziz. They gained mastery over various regions by means of oppression, and performed the task of Mu`awiya and Yazid.

Abdul Malik bin Marwan used to issue orders according to his own wish and did not attach any importance to the lives and property of the people. He ordered the wells and the springs of Bahrain to be filled with dust so that the residents of that area might become indigent, and obey the government. He

appointed a cruel and bloodthirsty person like Hajjaj bin Yusuf as Governor of Iraq.

Amin Rayhani says thus about Bani Umayyah: “The Umayyad rulers had reversed justice which should necessarily be observed by a monarch. This was a group of mean and incompetent persons. If one of them was a fool the other was despicable. If one was humble and devoid of honour the other was a drunkard and an oppressor. At least one cannot overlook the abominable and wicked practice of theirs that they abused Ali and his sons from the pulpits”.

Amongst Bani Umayyah there was only one just caliph and he was Umar ibn Abdul Aziz. He started his rule with doing away with injustice. He wanted to get the looted property of the public treasury restored to it and to adopt a sensible policy for his caliphate. However, some people were not happy with this attitude of his and assassinated him.

Bani Umayyah attained to the caliphate by deceit, and converted it into kingship by coercion, and established a kingdom in which there was not a trace of equity and justice. At last the palace of their government became shaky and fell on their own heads.

After them came Bani Abbas and the impartial persons praised Bani Umayyah as compared with them.

Amin Rayhani says: “Bani Abbas gained control over the country by means of bloodshed. There were horrible scenes of massacres and bloodshed in Syria, Palestine, and Iraq and after which other chiefs also followed the example of Abu'l Abbas Saffah in killing and bloodshedding.

A man named Ameetar invited people to himself in Syria. The Yemenites obeyed him but Bani Qais rose against him. Ameetar launched a night attack on them and burnt their property and houses. Another person named Ibn Bahees fought against Ameetar, gained control over Damascus and punished the residents of that city.

During the time of Bani Abbas revolts and disturbances were rampant and the party spirit was gaining strength. And it was not only the cruel and blood thirsty rebels who were suffering, but the poor subjects who paid revenue and were always ready to partake in jihad were also involved in troubles”.

Thereafter, referring to the big and small principalities of the last days of Bani Abbas, Amin Rayhani says: “The people who lived in that dark age were very unlucky. Every ruler vied with another in bloodshed and warfare and was proud of his atrocities. He told his soldiers: “I hereby make it lawful for you to do anything you like with this city for three days”. With these words they permitted the plundering of a city and shedding of the blood of its residents. Mutanabbi says: “The women who befriended them were to be made prisoners, their children were to be killed, the wealth accumulated by them was to be looted and their crops were to be burnt”.

Fie upon that time, and upon the fear of the people of that time. May God bless those helpless people and may those rulers and soldiers be accursed! Does man who is God's best creation get

metamorphosed at one time into a ferocious animal? Do these savages deserve that fifty pages of history should be allocated to them? No; their acts should be summarized only in one line; they became fell enemies of one another, fought, killed, looted and burnt, and were guilty of atrocities or in other words they considered the lives, property and honour of others to be lawful for themselves.

These are the remarks of Amin Rayhani about the period of Bani Abbas and the plundering and bloodshed of the small principalities during the last days of their caliphate i.e. when the caliphs were only in name and real authority and gone out of their hands.

Now we shall speak briefly about the period of Bani Abbas. It has been mentioned earlier, that Bani Umayyah opposing the system of government which the Commander of the Faithful wished to introduce, and abandoning the just policy adopted by him, had treated the government to be their family property. They did not permit anyone to share their authority. They adopted Fascist policies as if the government and its revenues belonged to them only and none else had even the smallest share in them.

When Bani Abbas came at the helm of affairs after Bani Umayyah, they also based their administration on the same ideas.

They also held the view that the king was God's vicegerent on earth and it was his inherent right to rule. None else was entitled to bring about any change in this arrangement. It was on account of this very view that Mansur, the second Abbasid caliph, said while speaking before a public gathering: “O People! I am the king of the earth appointed by God. I rule over you with His blessing and help. I am the custodian of God's property. I utilize the public treasury with His will. Whatever I give to anyone is given with His permission, because He has made me the lock of His treasury. If He wants to give you something He will open that lock and if He does not like to give you anything He will keep it closed”.

The same policy was followed by other caliphs of the Abbasid family. Every one of them was the vicegerent of God on earth.

This goes to show very clearly that cruelty was the foundation of the government of Bani Abbas and their subordinate princes and rulers. According to them sovereignty was a divine gift. God bestowed this gift upon those whom He liked and when He willed the welfare of the people He provided them with a kind, wise and generous ruler.

The result of this way of thinking and this idea and belief was that the people remained obedient to the Abbasid rulers and patiently bore whatever befell them considering it to be from God.

Baghdad, the capital of Bani Abbas, was overflowing with wealth, but this entire wealth was meant only for the caliph and his relatives and associates. Others, however competent they might be and whatever services they might have rendered to the nation had no share in the wealth, and were doomed to poverty and abjectness unless they flattered the caliph and humiliated themselves before him.

As a consequence of this two classes of people came into being. There was a vast difference between these two classes. People belonging to one class rolled in wealth whereas those belonging to the other class, however skilled and efficient they might be, remained indigent and poor, and led very miserable lives. The revenues and income of the government were spent by the caliph, his relatives and courtiers, to lead lives of pleasure. They spent millions on their associates, flatterers, slave-girls and eunuchs.

From the point of view of wealth the caliph, the princes, the nobles and government officers belonged to the highest class. The tradesmen came next. Although their lives and property, too, were in constant danger on account of the high-ups, but as regards wealth they enjoyed a position next to the nobility. The only things which fell to the share of the common man were, however, abjectness, helplessness, hunger and death. In Baghdad the lofty palaces of the rich and the dilapidated huts of the poor stood side by side. It might be said that they presented a scene of paradise and hell. A poet of that time says about Baghdad:

"This Baghdad is fit for only rich people to live in, and not for the poor and the indigent.
If a rich man like Korah happens to come to Baghdad he too would be filled with sadness and perplexity.
Baghdad is the very paradise which has been promised us, but it has come prematurely into the hands of those who possess sufficient to eat and to wear.
In Baghdad there are houris and young servants and there is everything which you may desire. The thing which is not found here is human being".

A pleasure-loving rich man says: "Have you ever seen a city like Baghdad in the whole world? This Baghdad is the paradise on earth.
In Baghdad the fountain of enjoyment is pure and the tree of pleasure is green. At other places, however, life is neither pure nor happy.
One enjoys longer life in Baghdad. Its food and water is delicious and dainty. There is no doubt about the fact that the food and water of some lands is better than that of others".

It is not objectionable that Baghdad had been a paradise on earth during the Abbasid period or for that matter during all periods. It is also not something wrong that the fountain of pleasure in that city had been pure and the tree of happiness had been green. There is also no harm in the lives of the residents of that city being long. Nothing out of these things is wrong, man always seeks to live a life in a paradise, where there are all means of comforts - fruits and flowers and every good thing. But all these things can be good only if they have not been acquired by exploiting the poor and the helpless or by snatching away from the orphans and the widows. Where did these means of pleasure come from when there were thousands of indigent persons who did not eat to their fill even once throughout their lives in that city?

The famous poet Abu'l Atahiya addresses the caliph of his time thus expressing the sentiments of the people: "Is there anyone who should convey my frequent counsels to the caliph? I see that the cost of living of the people is very high and their incomes are very low. Their needs are innumerable and they

are attacked in the morning and in the evening by calamities and hardships.

The orphans and the widows are sitting empty- handed in their lonely homes. The men as well as the women are stretching their hands towards you so that you may do them some favour.

All complain of the hardships of life, and are raising cries in low tones. They hope for your kindness so that they may get rid of difficulties and see the face of comfort. Mothers, with children in their laps, go without meals during night and fast during day time. Who is there who should fill their empty bellies and dress their naked bodies? I am informing you about true facts on behalf of your subjects".

A man came to see the caliph Wathiq Billah. He draws a picture of the pomp of the caliph and the magnificence and grandeur of his palace in these words. (It should be remembered that this is about the magnificence of one palace only):

"One servant entrusted me to another and the second entrusted me to a third one. Having passed in this manner through the hands of many servants I arrived in a building, whose courtyard and walls were covered with painted brocade. Then I arrived in the royal court. Its ground and walls were also covered with brocade. In the middle of the hall Wathiq was sitting on his throne. The throne was bedecked with pearls. His slave-girl Farida was sitting with a guitar in her hand. Wathiq as well as the slave-girl were wearing costly brocade dresses.

This luxurious life and capitalistic pomp was a contagious disease from which all including the caliph, his relatives and courtiers as well as some businessmen were suffering. As regards other indecent acts which were done in the royal palace it is better not to mention them.

The purchase and sale of slaves and slave-girls for money which was not permitted either by the Prophet or by Imam Ali [1] was so much in progress that in every city there used to be separate bazaar for this particular trade.

In Baghdad, which was the capital of the Abbasids, Dar-al-Raqiq road is a well-known place which was used for this purpose. The dealers in slaves had slaves and slave- girls of every race and colour. Black coloured slaves were brought from the south to the Abbasid Cities and sold at two hundred dirhams per head. White coloured slaves and slave-girls were brought from Samarkand which was a big market for the slaves of this type. There were many kinds of slave-girls. Some of them belonged to Kandhar and Sind. They were slim and had black eyes and long hair, Some of them were those who had been trained in Madina. They were coquettish and adept musical performers. Those brought up in Mecca were matchless in their elegance and bewitching looks. Some slave-girls also came from the western countries.

The middleman Abu Uthman who possessed full information about the attributes of the slaves and slave-girls of that time says: "A slave-girl should be born in Barbary and should quit her country at the age of nine years. She should spend three years in Madina and three years in Mecca. At the age of

sixteen years she should go to Iraq and learn social manners there. She should be sold when she attains the age of twenty five years. Such a slave- girl will combine in herself her inherent charm, the coquetry of Madina, the elegance of Mecca and the decency and manners of Iraq.
Unfortunately Abu Uthman has failed to mention as to how much price such a slave-girl would have fetched.

Besides the slave-girls who belonged to Barbary there were also Ethiopian, Turkish, Cypriot, Roman and Armenian slave-girls whose attributes need not be mentioned here. The slave-girls belonging to each country had their particular qualities and characteristics which have been mentioned in detail by the experts of that time.

Not to speak of the poor people in the Abbasid period even the rich did not feel that their lives and property were secure. The lives of the people were in the hands of the monarch and they were afraid that they might lose their property or lives at any moment. Hence, if on the one hand the generosity of the caliph and his nobles knew no limits there was also no limit of the exploitation of the people by them. If at one time the caliph gave thousands of dinars to a person for his having uttered a beautiful verse, at another time he ordered that a person might be beheaded immediately and his property might be confiscated.

Attabi has drawn a very realistic picture of the conditions prevailing in his time. He was asked as to why he did not try to seek some position in the royal court when he was a man of letters. He replied: “I see that at one time the caliph gives thousands of dinars to a person without any justification and without his having deserved it, and at another time he orders that an innocent man may be thrown on the ground from the roof of his palace. If I join the royal court I do not know which of these two fates I shall meet”.

Once the caliph Mehdi summoned Mufazzal Zabi to his court. When the caliph's messenger approached him he feared that possibly someone had spoken ill of him before the caliph. He, therefore, wore a shroud under his clothes and reached the royal court fully prepared for his death. He saluted the caliph and the latter replied to his salutation. Then he stood quietly. After sometime he realized that the caliph had no intention of killing him and, therefore, became calm, Mehdi asked him: “Which Arab poet has composed the best verse on the subject of taking pride and glorying?” He also asked him some other questions and Mufazzal gave appropriate replies. Mehdi was pleased with his replies and questioned him about his personal affairs. Mufazzal told the caliph that he was indebted and thereupon the caliph ordered that he might be given thirty thousand dirhams.

Mamun executed his minister Fazal bin Sahl and then offered the ministry to Ahmad ibn Abi Khalid, but he declined to accept the post. On having been asked as to why he rejected the offer Ahmad replied: “My experience is that whoever has held this office has eventually lost his life”.

The result of affluence was that revelry knew no bounds and had spread like a contagious disease. In every house there were innumerable slave-girls who were experts in singing, dancing and coquetry. [2]

When the rich persons got tired of one means of enjoyment they invented another. At times when they were overjoyed on hearing a good song and did not know how to express their pleasure they were beside themselves and struck and wounded their own heads with anything they could lay their hands on. Abu'l Faraj Isfahani in his `Aghani' and many other historians have narrated numerous such incidents. The reason of their becoming beside themselves was that they did not know to express their mirth and joy; hence they invented new devices every day.

On the other side there were innumerable indigent persons, who living in misery and abjectness, were fed up with their lives. One group was leading an extremely luxurious life, while the people of the other group were fed up with their very existence. They despised their life as well as their society and culture. They had no hope of the condition of the society being better off. Abu'l Atahiya expresses the feelings of those people in these words: “The dry bread which you eat sitting in a corner and the narrow house in which you spend your days; or the corner of a Masjid in which you can live in seclusion are better than the moments which are spent under the shade of lofty palaces. This is a counsel from one who knows the real position fully well. Happy is he who hears my advice.
I swear by my life that this piece of advice is sufficient for him. Lend your ears to this advice of your well–wisher who is called Abu'l Atahiya”.

Both the conditions of committing suicide by drowning oneself in joy and mirth or by abandoning the world are opposed to human nature. The Almighty God has not created man either for this mode of life or for that; however, during the Abbasid period these two evils were very common.

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What has been stated above is a glimpse of the conditions of the people during early days of the Abbasid rule. Later their lives became so miserable that it is not possible to imagine their abjectness. The rich became richer and the poor became much poorer. The rich were small in number but the indigent were innumerable. However, the lives and property of neither of them were secure.

Only a few persons viz. the monarch and his relatives and associates felt secure and satisfied. None of the other rich persons enjoyed peace of mind. They were constantly afraid that the caliph might get annoyed with them at any time and this might result in confiscation of their property and loss of their life. This type of cruelty began during the time of Mutawakkil – the man who constructed hell side by side with paradise.

The rich had become absolutely shameless. They drank wine and became devoid of their senses. They arranged feasting and drinking in their palaces and became riotously festive. They at times tore their clothes and rolled on the ground. They lost all sense of decency and indulged in all sorts of evil deeds. While intoxicated some of them thought that they had made the earth tremble by striking their feet on it. Many such stories have been narrated by Abu Hayyan Tauhidi in his book entitled `Al–Mata`a wa al–Mawanisah'.

The number of the slave-girls in those times was unprecedented. Mutawakkil, who insulted the wise and zealous persons as much as possible, tried his best to drown Imam Husayn's grave in water and allowed the ruffians in his court to ridicule and insult Imam Ali, had thousands of slave-girls in his palace. Some Abbasid caliphs had as many as ten thousand slave-girls. Besides the slave-girls there were innumerable eunuchs in their palaces. Wealthy persons and those belonging to the aristocratic class kept eunuchs in their houses for the protection of their females. During the days of Amin the number of the eunuchs increased very much. The caliph Muqtadir had as many as eleven thousand eunuchs. The middle class also possessed many slaves who were very immodest. The masters took shameful services from their slaves.

The root cause of all these evils was that the nobility and the rich persons had ignored the principles laid down by the Prophet and Imam Ali. They did not consider human being equal to one another. The rich and the persons in high positions considered themselves to be superior to the ordinary people and led luxurious lives by exploiting the poor.

We would like to talk once again about the habits and morals of the people during the Abbasid period to throw light on the luxurious and voluptuous life led by the nobles and the rich, and the indigence and helplessness to which the poor were subjected. The fact is that in a society whose members are usually indigent there two things viz. affluence and indigence are bound to occur. We may notice this fact in the light of what Imam Ali said: “I have not seen excessive wealth with anyone except when side by side therewith I have seen a right being violated”.

Magnificent palaces were constructed and on them enormous amount of money was spent. Mutawakkil got constructed many palaces, whose beauty and splendour was beyond description. In one of these palaces a big swimming pool was constructed for the ladies and the slave-girls. When the famous poet Behtri saw that palace he was so much impressed by its grandeur that he thought that it had been constructed by the fiends and the genii. Describing the palace he says:

“It appears as if the genii subordinate to Prophet Suleiman had constructed this palace and worked hard on every detail.
If Bilquis, the queen of Sheba were to pass through this palace she would have mistaken it for Suleiman's palace on account of great resemblance of the two.
When you look at this pool at night and see the reflection of the stars in it you will think that the pool is the sky and the stars are studded in it. The fish cannot reach the bank of the pool, because there is a great distance between its beginning and end”.

Yaqut Hamavi writes in Mu`jam al-Buldan: “None of the other caliphs built such magnificent buildings in Samarrah as were built by Mutawakkil. Besides other buildings there were a number of palaces namely Qasr al-`Arus which cost thirty million dirhams, Qasr al-Ja`fari, Qasr al-Gharib, Qasr al-Shaidan, Qasr al-Burj and Qasr al-Bustan Aitakhyah which cost ten million dirhams each, and Qasr al-Maleeh and Qasr al-Subh which cost five million dirhams each”.

After giving a long list of the palaces Yaqut Hamavi says that a sum of three hundred million dirhams was spent on them.

Praising Mutawakkil's Qasr al-Ja`fari the poet Ali son of Jehm says: “There are such masterpieces of art in this palace as must not have been seen by the Roman and Iranian emperors during their long rule. There are such spacious court-yards in it that the eyes must travel long to see their rarities and curiosities.
And there are such high domes that it might be said that they are chatting with the stars.

Ibn Mu`tiz got built a palace, whose roof was constructed with bricks of gold, and trees were planted around it. Bahtri praises the palace in these words:

“Its roof was made of gold and was bright and luminous. Its light prevailed everywhere.
The breeze loitered in it and the fruitless trees and fruit trees were always swinging.
They were like delicate maidens who come out for a walk - some of them having ornaments and others being without them”.

One of the palaces got built by the caliph Mu`tazid was called Qasr al-Surayya. It was very spacious and was very finely decorated, so much so that Ibn Mu`tiz, who had built this palace himself, considered it to be the workmanship of the genii.

The historian Khatib Baghdadi has drawn a comprehensive picture of this palace while describing the meeting of the Roman ambassador with the caliph. He says:

“Muqtadir had eleven thousand eunuchs and thousands of Sicilian, Roman and Ethiopian slaves. This was one aspect of the palace. There were also other innumerable items which contributed to its beauty and elegance. Muqtadir had ordered that the ambassador should be taken round the entire palace and should also be shown the store-houses wherein very valuable articles had been stored in a very beautiful manner. Costly pearls had been set in cases which were covered with black-painted silken cloth. The ambassador was brought in a hall wherein stood a tree made of pure silver which weighed five hundred thousand dirhams. There were also many birds made of silver which were fixed to the branches of the tree and as and when the wind blew they began to whistle. The ambassador was wonder-struck to see all this.

The curtains suspended on the walls of this palace numbered thirty eight thousand. All these curtains were made of silk and brocade. They were painted in various ways and contained pictures of animals and boats. The big curtains were the best specimens of the workmanship of the Armenians and the Venetians. Some of them were plain and others were painted.

Thereafter the ambassador was taken to the stable. The porch of this building rested on marble pillars. In the right half of the stable there were five hundred horses fully equipped with bridles and saddles but without saddle-covers and in the left half there were also five hundred horses which were equipped with

bridles, saddles and silken saddle-covers. For every horse there was a servant clad in a costly uniform.

Then the ambassador was taken to the building wherein tamed wild animals were kept. They used to come to the visitors and smell them, and also ate things from their hands.

Then the ambassador was brought to another building wherein he saw four elephants covered with painted silken sheets. Many servants were posted there to look after the elephants. When the ambassador saw the elephants he was struck with terror.

Thereafter the ambassador was taken to a building where one hundred ferocious animals were kept. Fifty of them were kept in one portion of the building and fifty in another.

Then he was brought to a place called `Josaq'. This place was surrounded by gardens and in the middle of it a pool made of pewter had been built. A canal which was also made of pewter had been built around this pool. This pool, which was thirty cubits long and twenty cubits wide was more beautiful than one made of silver. It contained four boats in which golden chairs had been placed to sit in.
There were four hundred trees in the garden situated around the pool and each of those trees was five cubits in height. Every tree was covered from top to bottom with painted ebony wherein bronze rings were fixed. On the right bank of the pool there were fifteen statues of mounted soldiers, clad in silk, who held spears in their hands as if they were going to attack an enemy. Fifteen more statues had been installed on the left bank.

After the ambassador had been taken round twenty three magnificent palaces he was brought in a courtyard which was called "Tas`eeni". In this court-yard young slaves were standing and all of them were fully armed. Then he was brought before the caliph Muqtadir in Qasr al-Taj which was situated on the bank of the river Tigris. He was wearing a crown which was called Taweela and was dressed in silk and brocade from head to feet. His throne was made of ebony and its carpet was made of painted silk and brocade. Nine strings of very precious pearls were suspended on the right side of the throne and as many on its left side". (Sakhi al-Islam, vol. 1, page 100 - 102).

The Abbasid caliphs continued to spend large sums of money in this manner. Every caliph who ascended the throne tried to excel his predecessors in the matter of extravagance till the turn of Muhtada came. He was a devout person, but he was not destined to live long, for he was killed by his own kinsmen.

The ministers too did not lag behind in the matter of extravagance. Mutawakkil's minister Fateh bin Khaqan built such lofty palaces that their minarets appeared to touch the sky. The poet Behtri says: "The minarets which are as lofty as the sky appear like the plumage of white pigeons flying in the space".

The minister Ibn Maqla had collected so many wild animals and birds in his palace that it is not possible for a government treasury to bear their expenses.

The minister Ibn Furat owned vast tracts of land and possessed enormous wealth. He took his meals with crystal spoons. He used one such spoon for one morsel and did not use it again. More than thirty spoons were placed on his dining-table.

The minister Mohlabi was fond of flowers. A person who had seen him says: “Red roses worth one thousand dinars were purchased for Mohlabi in three days. The same were strewn in his assembly and in the spacious pool of his palace. Strange fountains had been built in the pool. The flowers were thrown into the pool and the fountains scattered them in the assembly of Mohlabi where they fell on the heads of those present. When the assembly dispersed the flowers were looted by the people”.

A thick silken cloth called Thiyab al-Na`al used to be purchased for the shoes of the mother of the caliph Muqtadir. Same silk was used for the upper part and the sole of the shoes, and they were joined by means of melted musk and ambergris. The queen-mother did not use these shoes for more than ten days. Thereafter the servants appropriated them, extracted the musk and ambergris and utilized them.

The ministers and high officials also endeavoured not to lag behind the caliph in the matter of pomp and wealth.

Ali bin Ahmad Razi the Governor of Jundishapur, Sus, and Mazaria left behind, on his death, gold, silver, pearls, precious stones and other articles which were so costly that if they had been distributed among the poor all of them would have become rich. Moreover, he left behind so many eunuchs and black and white slaves that if they had been sent in the capacity of an army to some country they would have conquered it.

The quantity of wealth possessed by other governors can be guessed from what has been stated above about the wealth of Ali bin Ahmad Razi. The rich merchants also lived a luxurious life. The lives of poor people depended on the will of the caliph, his chamberlains and ministers. They were safe and secure only so long as the persons at the helm of affairs were not displeased with them.

Where did the affluent persons get all this wealth from? What reply can be given to this question except that they accumulated all these riches by exploiting the common people, who were reduced to penury and helplessness? A most cruel system was adopted to realize government taxes and to collect wealth. The caliph and his ministers and agents sold the entire land revenue and other taxes to a single person. That person paid a few millions of dirhams or dinars into the government treasury and then realised as much money from the people on account of taxes as he liked. This was like the system introduced by the Turkish Sultans in the Islamic countries which were ruled by them.

The Justice Department, too, was topsy turvy. The dignitaries of the state constantly interfered with the working of the courts and no judge could dare give a judgment against the wishes of the rulers.

Bribery was rampant. The indigence of the people was on the increase and their difficulties and afflictions were multiplying. So much so that if a person died, he deserved congratulations rather than

condolences.

Ibn Luknak of Barah says: We are witnessing strange vicissitudes. If we were to see in a dream what we see while awake we would wake up in a state of distress".
He prays to God that He may grant Job's patience to the people. He himself cries for them like Jacob and says: "The people are so much afflicted that when one of them dies he deserves to be congratulated".
He adds: "By God we are caught in the clutches of cruel and oppressive time and pray to the Almighty to grant us Job's patience. The world has become devoid of its beauty. So cry like Jacob".

The wise, learned and distinguished persons about whom Ali had made recommendations to his sons Hasan and Husayn (for the guidance of the people) that they should associate with them, hear their words carefully and recognise their status. He had also instructed the governors to consult and honour them as they are light amongst the Muslims and shall remain till the world lasts. They were in an enviable condition during the Abbasid period, except those who had sold themselves to the rulers.

Abu Hayyan who was a great scholar and author of many valuable books says in his book entitled Al-Amta` wal Mawanisah: "I have been obliged to sell my faith and compassion and to resort to hypocrisy and to do such indecent deeds that no gentleman may like to record them".
He got so much fed up with the world during the last days of his life and was so disappointed with the government of the time that he burned up all his books.

Abu Ali Qali was also compelled to sell his books which were his dearest capital. He says: "For twenty years these books were a source of solace for me and I was immensely grieved when I had to sell them. I had never thought of selling them even though I might have had to remain in prison continuously on account of my being in debt. However, owing to indigence and with a view to feed my small children I was obliged to sell these books".

Khateeb Tabrizi had a copy of Azhar's book entitled `Tehzib-al-lughat' which was in many volumes. He wished to hear its contents from an expert and to investigate them. The people advised him to contact Abu'l `Ala Muarri. He put the book in a sack and proceeded to Muarratu'l No`man on foot carrying the sack on his back as he did not have enough money to hire a conveyance. During the journey he perspired so much that all the volumes of the book were spoiled. Complaining against adversity he says: "Others may get tired of journeying but I am tired of standing. In Iraq I had to live among people who are mean and the descendants of mean persons".

Complaining against the unsound judgment of time and its maltreatment of noble-minded person Ibn Lunak of Basrah says: "O time! You have made the noble persons wear the dress of humiliation and abjectness. I do not consider you to be `time'. You are paralysis. How can anyone expect anything good from you when you consider ability and perfection to be a shame. What is the reality of your condition as we see it? Is it insanity, shamelessness or impudence?"

During the entire period of the Abbasids 3 the people remained divided in two groups. One of them was that of the rich and the other of the poor. Both the groups suffered from numerous moral evils according to their respective environments. Moral degradation prevailed to the same extent during the last days of their rule as in the beginning. Rather it was at a higher level.

The rich led a life of luxury and pleasure and indulged in unlimited debauchery. As regards the poor enmity, envy, falsehood and deceit were rampant among them. Owing to indigence the people resorted too much to asceticism and mysticism. It was not, however, the mysticism, which emanates from good morals and from considering the world to be transient. It was the mysticism which is the consequence of helplessness, failure and despair.

Owing to indigence many other bad habits like love for magic, jugglery, and superstition, developed in the people. This was because when a person fails to earn his livelihood by honest means he resorts to foul means.

The governments which were established after the decline of the Abbasid empire had more class differences and their moral degradation was more dreadful. From the time when the hand of the oppressor (Ibn Muljim) was stretched towards Imam Ali son of Abu Talib and that supporter and defender of human rights was martyred, these calamities became the fate of the Arabs and befell them constantly in new forms.

In short the people of the East were permanently subjected to these sufferings and hardship.

1. Islam permits enslaving of only infidels deserving to be fought with, or prisoners who are captured as a consequence of jihad. During the period of the caliphs and thereafter, however, the conditions became such that whenever the ruffians found any unprotected person in an Islamic city they caught and sold him.
2. Islam does not permit enslaving a Muslim or a Zimmi or a non-believer with whom a pact has been concluded. It so happened, however, that during this period most of the slaves and slave-girls belonged to these categories.
3. No doubt, most of the Abbasid caliphs led lives of luxury and pleasure and were ill reputed on account of their having oppressed their subjects. However, there were a few amongst them who were just. Some of them promoted literature and industry and worked for public welfare in many ways. They constructed many observatories the like of which were not known to the Romans and the Greeks. They also established big hospitals and trained doctors and scholars. All these facts are recorded in the pages of history.

The two families of Quraysh

The Prophet had said very correctly: “My followers will meet destruction at the hands of the youngsters of Quraysh”. These youngsters mentioned by the Prophet who were to create trouble and to conspire, were born at a place which served as a cradle for the shameless persons like Yazid son of Mu`awiya.

The Prophet could see that this party was waging war at one time to safeguard its chiefdom and authority, and was surrendering and making a show of Islam at another time to acquire chiefdom and authority. When he glanced at different parts and saw these people he said with much grief and anxiety: “My followers will meet destruction at the hands of the youngsters of Quraysh”.

The readers are requested to keep before their eyes the history of the Quraysh, which I am going to narrate, so that it may be possible to identify each of them.

The enmity between Bani Umayyah and Bani Hashim was very old. They were opposed to each other, before struggle for rulership and authority had cropped up between them and even before Islam had gained predominance.

Their enmity with each other was based on various reasons. In fact all the strong internal and external reasons for opposition had combined. Among them were included tribal party spirit, superiority complex, old grudge, desire for vengeance of the murder of kinsmen, political views, personal sentiments, difference in ways of life and manner of thinking etc. Bani Umayyah and Bani Hashim were the chiefs of Mecca and held high offices even during the age of ignorance. However, the chiefdom of Bani Hashim was spiritual [1] whereas that enjoyed by Bani Umayyah was political and they were also tradesmen and possessed enormous wealth.

All the Muslim historians and European Orientalists agree that before the advent of Islam Bani Hashim were not habituated to cunning and deceit like the idolatrous priests. They did not deceive the simple-minded people on the pretext of their religious and spiritual leadership. They neither exploited others nor kept their personal benefit in view. They had faith in the Lord of the Ka`abah and sincerely believed in what had been permitted or disallowed by the Almighty God. According to their code helping the oppressed, sympathising with the helpless, warding off injustice, and meeting the needs of the indigent, was compulsory. They were sincere in their belief. They did not deceive anyone and did not consider hypocrisy to be permissible. For example, it was possible that Abdul Muttalib, the grandfather of the Prophet and Ali might have slaughtered one of his sons in the path of God because he had firm faith in his Lord and had vowed that if his ten sons survived he would slaughter one of them for the sake of God on the threshold of the Ka`abah. He was not satisfied about the fulfilment of his vow until he was convinced in the light of his faith that killing his son would not be a means of pleasing God.

His faith was so firm and he was so keen to assist the poor and the needy that he concluded a pact with some families of Quraysh to achieve this end. (Bani Umayyah did not become signatories to this pact). One of the special conditions of this pact was that they would side with the oppressed person and make the oppressor restore his right, help one another in financial matters and restrain the powerful persons from molesting the weak. The incident which led to the conclusion of this pact was as follows:-

A Qurayshite purchased some articles from a person belonging to another place and promised to pay the price after a fixed time. He did not, however, make payment on the due date. He was confident that

on account of his family dignity and the support of his kinsmen none would compel him to make payment. Furthermore, the person from whom he had purchased the articles was a non-Meccan and belonged to an ordinary family, and did not enjoy support from anyone. However, Bani Hashim decided to assist him. They made a mutual pact whereby they decided to realize the price of the articles purchased by the Qurayshite and to enforce justice. However, as this pact did not accord with the nature of Bani Umayyah they opposed it vehemently.

The religious and spiritual leadership inherited by Bani Hashim from their ancestors generation after generation, accorded with their nature. They had inherited pure disposition and nobleness from their ancestors. Every generation of theirs displayed the virtues inherited by it and Bani Hashim continued to maintain dignity and excellence till Almighty God appointed Muhammad to the prophetic mission and also created Ali son of Abu Talib as representatives of the morality and perfection of the Hashimite Family.

Have a look at the history of Bani Hashim (i.e. the descendants of Abu Talib) after the passing away of the Prophet, and you will find that, whether that history covers one hundred years or two hundred years or five hundred years, they have always been a specimen of the noble qualities and virtues. The manliness, bravery, piety and truthfulness which was possessed by their forefathers can also be observed in their sons and grandsons. History continued to turn its leaves, but whoever from amongst them came was a specimen of his forefathers.

If this family had not been virtuous and noble by nature it would not have become a specimen of piety and purity, because in those times egotism, selfishness, flattery and ambitiousness were so rampant that all were morally degraded and these vices were very common among them.

It is much easier to go down into an abyss as compared with ascending or standing firm at one's place. However, notwithstanding the fact that the atmosphere was unfavourable and corruption was prevalent everywhere Bani Hashim were not affected by these things and their noble qualities and virtues remained intact.

However, Bani Umayyah were quite the reverse of this. During the age of ignorance they were traders and politicians; and it is evident that whoever is engaged in trade and politics possesses wealth and authority and endeavours to continue to possess these things and make them remain within his family. No intelligent person can deny the reality that when a person is engaged in trade and his near ones are also tradesmen he can do anything which serves his interests. He can at least defraud his customers, hoard wealth, indulge in deception, and dilly-dally in the performance of his duties.

Bani Umayyah chose these things for themselves as they accorded with their nature. It was just as Bani Hashim chose purity of nature, honesty and chastity for them- selves as they accorded with their nature and disposition. Bani Umayyah were addicted to these abominable acts, because they had been engaged in their habits for long and they had become their second nature. They did not assist the

oppressed because this did not bring them any profit and in fact entailed great expenditure. They did not join the said pact (which condemned the oppressors) because this meant involving themselves in trouble.

Umayyah, the ancestor of Bani Umayyah was not as noble-minded and chaste as Hashim so he could not desist from molesting gentle women. When a dispute took place between Abdul Muttalib, the grandfather of Ali and Harb son of Umayyah, the grandfather of Mu`awiya, they referred the matter to Nafeel bin Adi. Nafeel decided the matter in favour of Abdul Muttalib and praised him. Addressing Harb he also recited a verse wherein he drew a complete picture of Umayyah and Hashim. The verse is as follows: "Your father was an adulterer and his father was chaste. He (Abdul Muttalib) compelled the army of Abraha to go back from Mecca".

In this verse Nafeel referred to the event of Abraha who, mounted on an elephant and accompanied by a large army, had come to demolish the Ka`abah. He also denounced the vices of Umayyah, the father of Harb and the ancestor of Bani Umayyah, who had earned an ill fame in the matter of women. Once, owing to this evil habit of his, he escaped death. He outraged the modesty of a woman belonging to the tribe of Zohra. The people of that tribe attacked him with swords but the injury sustained by him was not very effective. Many surprising stories have been narrated about his voluptuousness.

When Muhammad, the distinguished son of the Hashimite Family was appointed to the prophetic mission he met opposition from most of the people. However, foremost among his opponents was Abu Sufyan, who was at that time the chief of the Umayyah Family. He instigated all the polytheists against him. He was the central figure in all the conspiracies and the mobilization of forces against the Prophet. It was he who invented different kinds of torture for the Prophet and his companions and supporters.

If Abu Sufyan's opposition to the Prophet had been on account of religious faith and if he had done all that he could to defend his old principles and beliefs, there could be some justification for it, because when one sincerely believes in something, whether it be right or wrong, he is justified in defending his belief. However, that was not the case with Abu Sufyan. He never considered himself justified in opposing the Prophet nor did he make any such claim with his tongue. His opposition to the Prophet was not on account of any religious sentiments. What he really wanted was that the predominance and authority of Bani Umayyah should not be affected - the same predominance and authority which was based on monopolizing trade, profiteering, personal interests and enslaving the weak. He decided to oppose the Prophet when he saw that the power and authority of his family which had already been weakened and become shaky was going to be destroyed by the Prophet.

On account of his profiteering nature, which it will be right to call Umayyad nature, Abu Sufyan did not believe in Islam sincerely even after he had embraced it. He always weighed it in the scale of wealth and power and thought that Islam was nothing except that authority had been transferred from Bani Umayyah to Bani Hashim. He could not appreciate the character of the Prophet and his companions and the sacrifices made by them, and had never even thought of the human values for the pro motion of

which the Prophet had come in this world.

When at the time of the conquest of Mecca he saw a large army consisting of the devotees of the Prophet he said to Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet: “O Abul Fazal! Your nephew has acquired a very great kingdom”. He uttered these words because he could not even imagine the sublime objects and the spiritual teachings for which the Prophet had come. It was those very sublime objects and spiritual teachings which Bani Hashim had understood very well and in propagating them they even sacrificed their lives.

After the conquest of Mecca the Family of Abu Sufyan did embrace Islam but it was a very bitter pill for them to swallow. In the eyes of Abu Sufyan and his wife Hind, Islam meant their own humiliation. For a long time after embracing Islam Abu Sufyan continued considering the predominance of this religion as his personal defeat. He did not consider the success of Islam to be the result of its being a true faith. He thought that it was due to the weakness of his own people.

One day he glanced at the Prophet in the masjid like a perplexed man and said within himself: “O that I could know on what account Muhammad has gained victory over me”. The Prophet perceived the meaning of Abu Sufyan's look. He touched his shoulder with his hand and said: “O Abu Sufyan! It has been on account of God that I have gained victory over you”.

The Prophet tried to console Abu Sufyan before the conquest of Mecca as well as thereafter. Before the conquest of Mecca he married his daughter Umm Habibah, and after Mecca was conquered he declared his house to be a place of refuge by saying that whoever entered his house would remain unmolested. The Prophet placed his name at the top of ***`muallefatul-qulub'*** (those persons who were given a larger share of the booty as compared with other Muslims, so that they might be consoled and the hatred which they entertained in their hearts for Islam might vanish) and granted him many concessions.

In spite of all this the Muslims did not rely upon him. They were careful in dealing with him and refrained from associating with him. Abu Sufyan was worried on this account and wished that the Muslims might have a soft corner for him and his family in their hearts. He, therefore, requested the Prophet to appoint Mu`awiya as his scribe. When the Prophet breathed his last and differences arose about the caliphate between the Muhajirs and the Ansar and later between the Muhajirs themselves, Abu Sufyan considered it a good opportunity to exploit these differences and acquire the chiefship of Quraysh himself. He thought that after this achievement it would not be difficult for him to become the head of the entire Muslim nation. He, therefore, approached Abbas and Ali instigating them to oppose the caliph by assuring them of his own support. He said: “O Ali and O Abbas! How has the caliphate been assumed by a family (i.e. the Family of Abu Bakr) which is the meanest as well as small in number? I swear by God that if I so desire I can fill the streets of Madina with horsemen and foot-soldiers".

Abu Sufyan had not realized that he was talking to that Ali who would not be reluctant to give away the entire world to comply with one true order, and who was not unaware of the fact that his (i.e. Abu

Sufyan's) annoyance was not on account of Bani Hashim having been deprived of the caliphate, because if it had remained with Bani Hashim he would have been annoyed all the more, and might have made his family, his tribe, and the entire world, against them.

Ali reproached Abu Sufyan and said to him! “O Abu Sufyan! The believers are the well-wishers of one another and as regards the hypocrites they are deceitful and insincere, although their houses are adjoined and their bodies are connected with one another”.

Abu Sufyan belonged to the aristocratic class - the class which considers itself to be superior to others and the common people to be its slaves. He looked at Islam from this point of view. According to him the prophet's invitation to Islam was only a means of attaining to authority and power. According to him there was no difference between the principles and fundamentals of Islam and the idols, and both of them were sources of profit. He considered the principles of Islam to be a source of income for the founders of that religion in the same way in which the idols were the source of income for the idolatrous priests. He could not think on any line except that the people were to obey their elders and chiefs - whether they be the priests of the Ka`abah or the dignitaries of Islam.

According to Abu Sufyan the only difference between Islam and idolatry was that Islam was more profitable and in it there was a greater possibility of the people belonging to the lower class submitting to the nobility and the aristocratic class. In case, however, the common people were not submissive to the aristocrats in Islam this system, according to him, was worthless and deserved to be replaced by a more useful and profitable one.

When after Abu Bakr and Umar the caliphate was assumed by Uthman who was an Umayyad, Abu Sufyan thought that the power and authority which belonged to Bani Umayyah previously had returned to them. The grudge and rancour which he had in his heart for Hamzah made him go to his grave. He kicked the grave of Hamzah with his foot and said; “O Hamzah! Rise and see that the rulership for which we had been fighting with each other has once again returned to our family”. The bitterness and animosity which this sentence contains is self-evident. This is how he expressed his sentiments.

So long as the caliphate remained with Abu Bakr and Umar, Bani Umayyah could not disclose what was hidden in their hearts and the plan according to which they had made a show of the embracement of Islam viz. that as soon as they got an opportunity they would convert the Islamic government into a kingdom. They got this opportunity when Uthman attained to the caliphate.

Nobody can believe that Bani Umayyah were aware of the true concept of caliphate. According to their viewpoint there was no difference between caliphate and kingship and they could not visualize the good points of Islamic caliphate. Their faith in Islam was extremely superficial and they had embraced it reluctantly. Their party-spirit of the age of ignorance instigated them to readopt the ways and practices of that age. They could not forget that the prophet did not belong to their family but was a member of Bani Hashim and they had always been inimical to that family. They were, therefore, looking for an

opportunity to grab the rulership.

The caliphate of Uthman opened the way for the fulfilment of their desires. As soon as he became caliph all the Umayyads gathered round him and secluded him from the public. None could, therefore, see him and acquaint him with his problems. The Islamic government now became the Umayyad government. Only Bani Umayyah could benefit from it. It was only Bani Umayyah and their friends who could aspire to become governors and to hold other key posts.

Marwan son of Hakam headed them. He was the first person who instigated the Muslims against the Muslims and incited the people to rise against the caliph. He was the first person who declared that kingship was better than caliphate, and only Bani Umayyah were entitled to become kings. He compelled Uthman to dismiss the governors who were holding offices since the days of Abu Bakr and Umar and to replace them by the Umayyads. Wealth and sovereignty became the exclusive property of Bani Umayyah. None else could hope to benefit from it or to hold property and position.

We shall mention in the next chapter how vicious and ill-natured Marwan was, what malpractices he committed when he was in power, and how many innocent persons he slaughtered to satisfy his personal desires. It was the same Marwan bin Hakam who had suggested to the governor of Madina to kill Imam Husayn and had reproached him for not complying with his wishes when he (the governor) failed to take that heinous step.

Marwan coveted power, sovereignty and luxuries, just as his ancestors had coveted them during the age of ignorance, and was keen that even if he did not possess authority himself it should remain with any other Umayyad, but should not go out of their family. The methods which he adopted to acquire authority and rulership go to show that he did not possess even one quality which might create least love for him in the hearts of the people.

1. Shamsu'l Ulema Shibli No`mani writes thus in the twelfth volume of his book entitled Seerat al-Nabi. "He had vowed that if he saw his ten sons fully grown up he would slaughter one of them in the path of God. The Almighty God granted this wish of his. He then brought all his sons in the Ka`abah and asked the worshipper to draw lots. It so happened that the lot fell upon Abdullah. He then proceeded along with Abdullah to the place of sacrifice. Abdullah's sisters who were present began to cry and suggested that ten camels might be sacrificed instead of Abdullah.
Abdul Muttalib asked the worshipper to draw lots to find out whether the lot fell on Abdullah or on the camels. By chance the lot fell on Abdullah. Abdul Muttalib increased the number of the camels to twenty but the lot again fell on Abdullah. He continued to increase the number of the camels and the lot fell on them only when their number reached one hundred. Abdul Muttalib then slaughtered one hundred camels and the life of Abdullah was saved. Historians say that Abdul Muttalib was not satisfied even when the lot fell on the camels and said: "I swear by God that I shall not agree (to one hundred camels being slaughtered instead of Abdullah) unless the lots are drawn thrice and everv time they fall on the camels". This was done and Abdul Muttalib was satisfied only when the lot fell on the camels thrice.

Mu`awiya and his successors

Mu`awiya son of Abu Sufyan was a perfect specimen of the qualities and characteristics of Bani Umayyah. When we study the characteristics of Mu`awiya carefully we come to know that he did not possess even an atom of Islamic human values and did not have any quality of the Muslims of that neat and clean age. If we consider Islam to be a revolt against the ways and manners of the Arabs of the age of ignorance (for example acting with personal interests in view and treating common people to be animals and a source of income for the nobility and aristocracy) it can be said with certainty that, as we shall explain later, Mu`awiya had nothing to do with Islam.

And alternatively if Islam is the name of the religion whose orders apply to every individual it is quite clear that Mu`awiya had also no connection with Islam of this type. This was admitted by Mu`awiya himself. He used to wear silken dress and eat his food in gold and silver vessels. Abu Darda, a companion of the Prophet objected to this and said: “I have heard the Prophet saying that hell-fire will be poured into the belly of one who takes his meals in gold and silver utensils”. Mu`awiya, however, replied unconcernedly: “I do not consider it to be objectionable”.

When we find that the early Muslims were very strict in religious matters, paid due respect to what was ordered or prohibited by the Prophet, and sacrified even their lives for the sake of their faith, and then look at the impudent reply which Mu`awiya gave to Abu Darda in clear defiance of the Prophet we are convinced that Mu`awiya never joined the group of those Muslims who sincerely believed in the moral and spiritual teachings of Islam.

The conduct of Mu`awiya after embracing Islam was identical with that of his father Abu Sufyan during the age of ignorance viz. that of an aristocrat who took forced labour from the people and treated them like slaves. He became a Muslim reluctantly and also continued to remain a Muslim reluctantly.

Who can be more aware of the mentality of Mu`awiya and the worth of his faith in Islam than his contemporaries who had seen him with their own eyes. Did all his contemporaries not accuse him of the things which we shall mention later? Did Ali not know him more than anyone else and did he not draw a true picture of his when he said in his letter: “You are imitating your forefathers in making false claims, deceiving the people, claiming to enjoy a position higher than that which you possess and grabbing things which are prohibited?”

Was there even one among the Muslims of the days of the Prophet or the orthodox caliphs who was a false pretender or a liar and was called a Muslim? Was there a Muslim during that pure period of the Muslims about whom Ali had said: “All those members of your family who embraced Islam embraced it reluctantly”.

As regards some qualities of Mu`awiya like forbearance, softness, and generosity, it may be said that

they were all means to achieve his selfish ends. He had realized it on account of his intelligence that to realize his objects and to attain to kingship these things would be very useful for him. I think that Mu`awiya had understood it very well that the people did not like the characteristics and character of his forefathers and those of the Umayyads of his own time, and the power and authority, which his ancestors once wielded, had ceased to be of any value.

He endeavoured to beguile the people by making a show of forbearance and generosity so that the people might not know the facts and get enamoured of his forbearance and generosity, because if competence magnanimity and nobility of birth had been treated to be the criterion for rulership Bani Umayyah could not at all compete with Bani Hashim. He showed forbearance in order to gain support of the people, and thus acquire powers and what could be a more effective plan to win the people and hide the evils of his family than to bestow gifts on them?

The supporters of Mu`awiya praised him much for his forbearance and generority but in fact his policy was the one adopted by the oppressor with the oppressed it was the policy of cruelty, oppression, tyranny and looting which he left as a legacy for the Umayyad rulers who succeeded him.

What sort of forbearance and generosity of Mu`awiya is praised by his supporters when he sent Busr bin Artat with instructions to loot the people telling him: “Go on plundering and pass through Madina, and put the people to flight. Loot on your way every habitation whose people are supporters of Ali".

What kind of courtesy and forbearance was that when he sent Abu Sufyan son of Ghamadi to Iraq on a plundering expedition and gave him these instructions: “March on by the bank of the Euphrates and reach Hait. If you meet there the troops of Ali attack them, otherwise move on and reach Anbar and plunder its citizens. If you do not meet any resistence even there then march on till you reach Ctesiphon (Mada'en). You should know that attacking Ctesiphon and Anbar is as good as attacking Kufa itself. O Sufyan! These attacks will terrify the people of Iraq and those among them who are our supporters will become happy. Invite people to us and put those people who do not agree with you to sword. Loot every village you pass through, and snatch away every property that you can by your hands and plundering the property is like murder, rather more heart-rendering”. (Commentary on Nahj al-Balaghah by Ibn Abi'l Hadid, p.144).

Zuhhak bin Qais Fehri was sent by Mu`awiya to attack some cities, which were under the control of Imam Ali and was given these instructions: “Proceed and reach Kufa. Attack on your way all those Arabs who are supporters of Ali and loot their arsenals, if any”.
Zuhhak carried out Mu`awiya's orders in the same way in which Busr bin Artat and Sufyan bin Ghamadi had carried them out. He massacred and plundered the people and treated them with extreme brutality.

Mu`awiya made a strange display of his forbearance and kindness when he expressed his views about millions of non-Arabs. He said about them. “I find that the non-Arab Muslims are going to outnumber us, and if this state of affairs continues I am afraid that the day is not far off when they will obliterate the

names of our forefathers. I feel like letting only half of them to live so that the bazars and the highways may remain intact". If Akhnaf bin Qais had not dissuaded him from acting on his program in this behalf, Mu`awiya would have killed thousands of innocent persons whose only offence was that they were non-Arabs.

Mu`awiya was kind and forbearing only when he had to face a powerful person who, he feared, might curb his power and topple down his government. He tolerated whatever such a person said, flattered him and agreed to whatever he suggested.

Whenever he was sitting among his friends and associates and some distinguished person rebuked him he immediately showed meekness and forbearance lest the other person might attack him. He also asked his scribes to write down the words of rebuke saying; "It is a piece of wisdom". However, if the other party was not powerful and influential, Mu`awiya did not show any meekness. And even if that person had not said anything harsh he wished to kill him in a most ruthless manner.

Mu`awiya became meek, kind and forbearing when he expected some benefit from the other party. He agreed to whatever the other person said, even though he might be oppressive and unjust, provided that he assisted in making his rule stable. To such a person be could present Egypt and the inhabitants of Egypt as he did in the case of `Amr bin `Aas.

On the one hand Mu`awiya's kindness was so extensive that he bestowed Egypt and its inhabitants upon Amr bin Aas and on the other hand it was so limited that he took away the right of Egypt and the Egyptians to live and made a gift of them to one person. If this is what is called kindness and forbearance, then Nero, Genghiz (Changez) Khan and Halagri (Halaku) were also very kind and forbearing.

When a person studies Mu`awiya's policy carefully he is stunned to find what means he employed to win the people. The duplicity practised by him in statecraft was cent per cent Machiavellian. Murder, plunder and terrorism formed his basic policy and making attractive promises and administering threats were also parts of it. It also included murder of good and innocent persons, holding rogues and vagabonds in esteem, false propaganda and seeking assistance of cruel and characterless persons.

Mu`awiya admitted several times that his politics was devoid of equity and justice and he did not on any occasion lend support to truth. The incident narrated below throws light on his politics and explains his views about equity and justice. Mutraf bin Mughira bin Sho`ba says:

"I accompanied my father Mughira to see Mu`awiya. My father visited him every day and praised him very much on his return. When he came back one night he was very sad and he did not even take his dinner. On my having enquired about the reason for his sadness he said: My son! Tonight I have come after meeting the most evil person. On my having enquired as to who he was he said: "I told Mu`awiya in seclusion: You have achieved all your desires. It will now be in the fitness of things if you behave with the people kindly. You have grown old now. You should behave well with Bani Hashim who are your kith

and kin. There is no reason for you to be afraid of them now!

Mu`awiya replied: `Never! Never! The man belonging to the Family of Taym (Abu Bakr) became caliph. When he died he was no longer talked about. Now he is called only `Abu Bakr' by the people. After him Umar became caliph and ruled promptly for ten years. With his death he also ceased to be talked about and people now call him `Umar'. Then our brother Uthman became the caliph. He belonged to the noblest family. He ruled justly but when he died he too ceased to be talked about. However, the name of the son of Bani Hashim (i.e. Muhammad) is announced five times during the day and night (i.e. everyone says: I acknowledge that Muhammad is the Prophet of God). Now what else can be done with his name except that I should destroy it completely". (Murooj al-Zahab, vol. 2, page 241).

Mu`awiya was brought up in an atmosphere of people who denied prophethood. He belonged to a family which hated religion. From his very childhood he had seen his father preparing to fight against the Muslims, leading big armies against them, and planning to kill the companions of the Prophet as well as the Prophet himself, in order to safeguard his chiefship, authority and material gains. He had seen that his father wanted to remain a chief even though this might result in the annihilation of the spirit of justice created by the Prophet and the death of the Prophet and his companions, and the misfortune of entire Arabia.

In all these matters Mu`awiya had inherited the spirit of his great grandfather Umayyah son of Abd al-Shams.

Just as Abu Sufyan's nature had a great influence on the character of Mu`awiya, who was a true picture of his father in the matter of selfishness and greed for power, in the same way his mother Hind, the liver-eater, made a strong impression on his disposition. Both of them greatly influenced his nature and habits.

In the entire history of Arabia it is not possible to find another woman who may equal Hind in egotism, harshness, savagery and villainy. She was so hard-hearted that even the most blood-thirsty person cannot equal her.

The polytheists of Quraysh had come fully prepared to fight against the Prophet at Badr and a severe battle was fought. Many polytheists were killed. The women of Mecca mourned the death of their relatives for one month. Then they came to Hind, mother of Mu`awiya and said to her “Why don't you mourn like us?” She said in a tone full of grudge and rancour not found in any other woman: “Why should I weep? Should I weep so that the news may reach Muhammad and his friends, and they may feel happy and the women of the Ansar may also be happy? By God I shall not weep until I have taken revenge on Muhammad and his companions and I shall not oil my hair unless a battle has been fought against them”. Thereafter she continued to instigate the polytheists against the Muslims and eventually the Battle of Uhad took place.

The sentences quoted above show how cruel and hard-hearted she was. She did not believe in relieving

herself of grief by weeping and mourning. Women are tender-hearted by nature, but she was of a different disposition. She saw things with the eyes of a man. She believed that chiefship and sovereignty meant enduring hardships of warfare to keep the standard of one's superiority and dignity high.

When the polytheists of Mecca proceeded to Madina making full preparations to fight the Battle of Uhad, Hind also prepared a detachment of women and reached the battlefield accompanied by them to instigate men to fight bravely, so that she might satisfy her desire of vengeance by looking at the flowing blood and the dead bodies of those who were killed.

A man objected to the women going to the warfront. However, Hind shouted in reply: "We will certainly go and see the fighting with our own eyes".

Hind stuck to her decision and went to the battle- field along with other women. She did all she could to satisfy her desire of taking revenge. When severe fighting began she along with other women went to each row of the army of the polytheists. They played on tambourines and sang the following verses:

"O descendants of Abd al-Dar! Make haste there are at your back those persons (i.e. women) whom you must defend; unsheathe your swords".
"If you move to the battlefield we shall embrace you and shall place soft pillows under your heads. But if you fly away from the battlefield we shall forsake you, because in that case we cannot love you".

Hind had made many promises of reward with the Ethiopian slave named Wehshi if he killed some Muslim especially the Prophet's uncle Hamzah for whom she nursed an extreme grudge. In this battle the polytheists fared better and the Muslims had to sustain severe losses. Hind was very much pleased. One of those martyred at Uhad was Hamzah who was killed by Wehshi. When he was killed Abu Sufyan shouted: "Today we have taken the revenge of the Battle of Badr. We shall meet again next year".

His wife Hind was not however, satisfied that a valiant man like Hamzah had been killed. She approached the dead bodies of martyrs along with other women of Quraysh. They cut off the hands, feet, noses and ears of those killed and made necklaces out of them and thus manifested brutality, which even the most cruel tyrants could not think of. Then she tore off the belly of Hamzah like a butcher, and pulled out his liver. She wanted to munch and swallow it but could not do so. This act of hers was so abominable that even her husband Abu Sufyan expressed disgust at it. He said to a Muslim: "The dead bodies of your men, who were killed, were amputated. By God I was neither pleased nor displeased on this account. I neither ordered that this thing might be done nor forbade it". On account of this incident Hind began to be called the liver-eater.

When Abu Sufyan embraced Islam reluctantly at the time of the conquest of Mecca his wife Hind addressed Quraysh loudly in these words: "O Quraysh! Kill this evil and dirty man who does not possess any virtue. I have never seen a worse defence force than you people. Why have you not defended your city and your lives?"

Hind was not at all impressed by the kind treatment which the Prophet meted out to her husband and her children. It was the same Abu Sufyan and the same Hind who brought up Mu`awiya. Furthermore, he possessed the special traits of his forefathers by birth (viz. love for power and authority, use of all fair and foul means to achieve one's purpose, which is called `diplomacy' in modern terminology, bribery, simulation, oppression etc.) In short he was a perfect specimen of his forefathers.

He had been brought up by, and had imbibed the ideas of the people about whom Ali the Commander of the Faithful said: “They are corrupt and treacherous persons who lead a life of debauchery at the expense of others. If they are allowed to rule the people they would oppress them, consider themselves superior to others, display domination, indulge in violence and create trouble on the face of the earth”.

The Umayyads continued their nefarious activities to promote their family interests as in the age of ignorance even during the life time of caliph Umar but they did all this secretly and with great dexterity under the cover of flattery. However, when Uthman, who belonged to their family, assumed the caliphate their machinations became apparent. From that time onwards they endeavoured their best to ensure that the government should become their family government and should be inherited by their sons and grandsons. They had no regard either for the caliphate or for Islam. They grabbed as much wealth as possible. They also recruited a large army.

They treated the public treasury, which belonged to all the Muslims, to be their personal property. They bribed the influential persons with public money and won their support. They were awaiting an opportunity to secure rulership for themselves and their descendants. They were waiting to establish a kingdom for the family in the sense in which their ancestor Abu Sufyan had interpreted `prophethood' when he said to the Prophet's uncle Abbas: “Your nephew has established a grand kingdom”. He considered the prophethood of the Prophet to be kingship, while he (the Prophet) had never even thought of establishing such an institution.

The murder of Uthman provided another opportunity to the Umayyads. We shall show in the following pages that Mu`awiya himself had a hand in the killing of Uthman. From that time onwards the Mu`awiya's cunning, deceit, and conspiracy, was known to all, and from that time onwards contention started between two natures which were opposed to each other. On the one side there was virtue, steadfastness and purity of nature and on the other side there was greed for authority, egoitism, fascism, corruption and other vices Ali represented the first set of qualities and Mu`awiya and his kith and kin the second one. Ali's mottoes were:

“I shall not deceive anyone nor shall I do any ignoble or improper act.
Like for others the same thing which you like for yourself.
Do not like for others what you do not like for yourself.
Do not oppress others just as you do not like to be oppressed by others.
In comparison with the maltreatment ofyour brother, you should be competent enough to do good to him”.

On the other hand Mu`awiya used to say: “The army of God is in honey”. By `honey' he meant the poisonous honey with which he used to do away with his enemies, so that the path might be cleared for his attaining to rulership. Mu`awiya treated all those good and pious persons to be his enemies who stood in the path of his achieving nefarious ends.

As and when Mu`awiya feared that a person could become an obstacle in the achievement of his desires he finished him, even though he might have been a virtuous and pious man. So much so that he did not spare even his fast friends who had been his supporters. He killed Imam Hasan with the same honey. He purchased friends and bribed influential persons with the money of public treasury which ought to have been spent for purposes of public welfare.

When he went to Mecca to compel the people to take oath of allegiance to Yazid he kept a strong army on one side and stocks of gold and silver on the other and said to the Meccans: “I only want that Yazid should be a caliph only in name. Authority to appoint or to dismiss the officers or to incur expenditure will remain with you”.

However, when the people did not agree to accept Yazid as their caliph he (i.e. Mu`awiya) said to them threateningly. “I have informed you of the consequences for which I take no responsibility. I am going to address you. If any person stands up to refute me his neck will be severed before he utters a word. So you should take care of your lives”.

When Mu`awiya was reproached for squandering away the money of the public treasury – the same money which Ali used to spend for purposes of public welfare – he (Mu`awiya) used to utter this Umayyad sentence: “The earth is God's property and I am His representative. Whatever I take is mine and I am also entitled to take that which I do not take”.

When he was asked to allow freedom of opinion and beliefs to the people he used to reply: “So long as a person does not stand between me and my sovereignty I have nothing to do with him”.

In his book entitled `Islam and Political Dictatorship' Prof. Muhammad Ghazal while commenting on the dictatorial policy of Mu`awiya says: “It is the greatest offence to be selfish and obstinate. If a person attains to rulership he should hold that office and the people should lend him support only till such time that he fulfils the needs of the people and works according to their wishes.....”

At another place he writes: “Obstinacy and fascism of the kings is disliked by God and his Prophets as well as by the people. It is an undeniable fact that in all ages the way of thinking of the kings has remained the same. These kings do not forsake their egotism even if their supporters and well–wishers may love them beyond measure”.

Mu`awiya grabbed sovereignty by means of his Machiavellian policy. He converted the caliphate into kingship and left it as a legacy for his descendants.

In this regard Mu`awiya was a perfect specimen of the selfish nature of Bani Umayyah–the same Bani Umayyah who were ill–natured during the age of ignorance and remained so even after embracing Islam. After Ali met martyrdom at the hands of Ibn Muljim, Mu`awiya began planning to do away with any person who was not prepared to accept him as the caliph of God. He said openly: “We shall leave the people to themselves only when we have enslaved them”. He also said: “We have nothing to do with a person unless he stands between us and our sovereignty.

He told the people in clear terms: “Sovereignty belongs to me and after me it will belong to Bani Umayyah. People are free so long as they do not become an obstacle between Bani Umayyah and their rulership”. He began arresting and punishing people on mere suspicion, although this had never happened during the period of the former caliphs. He began killing relentlessly the companions of the Prophet, the companions of the companions and other believers, who represented public opinion and pursued the right path.

As soon as he gained control over the state he began registering the wealth and property of the people as inheritance for his wicked son. He used thousands of means to obtain oath of allegiance for Yazid by force. We narrate below an incident which will go to show on what bases the governments of Yazid and some other Umayyad caliphs were founded.

Mu`awiya decided to remove Mughira son of Sh`oba from the governorship of Kufa and to appoint Sa`id bin Aas in his place. When Mughira came to know about it he went to see Mu`awiya and suggested to him that he should nominate Yazid to be the caliph after him. Mu`awiya was pleased to hear this suggestion and said to Mughira: “I allow you to continue as Governor of Kufa. You should go back and put this proposal before the persons whom you consider reliable”.
Mughira came back to Kufa and placed the proposal before some such persons. They concurred; Mughira selected ten persons out of them and sent them to Mu`awiya in the form of a deputation. He also gave them thirty thousand dirhams and appointed his son Musa as their leader. These persons saw Mu`awiya and highly praised the proposal regarding Yazid's succession. Mu`awiya asked Musa: “What has your father paid these persons to purchase their religion?” Musa told him that Mughira had paid thirty thousand dirhams for the purpose. Mu`awiya said: “It is a good bargain”.

Mu`awiya then sent the proposal to all the governors and directed them to send deputations to him from every town and district. Many deputations came and exchanged views on the subject. Then Yazid son of Muqanna stood up and said pointing to Mu`awiya: “He is the Commander of the Faithful”. Then pointing to Yazid he said: “When he (i.e. Mu`awiya) passes away he (i.e. Yazid) will be the Commander of the Faithful”. Then he pointed to his own sword and said: “This is for him who does not agree with us”. Then Mu`awiya said, “Come, sit down you are the chief of the orators”.

The compulsion and force, which Mu`awiya used to obtain the oath of allegiance for Yazid from the people of the Hijaz is surprising as well as astonishing. In order to obtain their concurrence he went to them with an army as well as with many bags of dirhams and dinars. However, when they were not

intimidated by the army and were not ensured by wealth, Mu`awiya said: “I have done my duty. So far the practice has been that whenever I delivered a speech and some one from among you rose and refuted me I tolerated it and forgave him. However, I am going to deliver a speech now and I swear by God that, if anyone of you utters a sentence against what I say, a sword will reach his head before he utters the second sentence. You should, therefore, take care of your lives”. Then he ordered his police-officer to post two persons by the side of each one of the audience and ordered that if any person spoke anything in support of or against what he (i.e. Mu`awiya) said they should sever his head.

Mu`awiya and other members of the Umayyad Family put into practice the fascist authority of the age of ignorance. They were despots who owned everything, and the Muslims were as good as their slaves, who were not expected to raise any objection. They beheaded those who declined to take the oath of allegiance to Yazid. As regards those who took the oath their hands were tattooed, as it was a special sign of the person concerned being a slave.

The successors of Mu`awiya were even more crooked and perverted. Some of them excelled him in matters of crimes and perverseness, but did not possess in the least the apparent qualities which were possessed by him. The people therefore, suffered much during their time. They were compelled to place their wealth as well as their necks at the disposal of the rulers. Their agents and employees were cruel and corrupt. They oppressed the people wherever they were deputed.

They humiliated the non-Arabs who had embraced Islam. They also maltreated the Zimmis with whom good and kind behaviour has been enjoined by Islam. They did not spare even the Arabs and killed those who declined to feed them with their flesh and blood. They appointed as their rulers the persons who imposed heavy taxes on them and realized the same with extreme high-handedness and in a very shameful manner. That is why Sa`id bin Aas who was appointed by Uthman as the Governor of Iraq used to say: “Iraq is the garden of Quraysh, we shall take from it what we desire and leave what we do not desire”. And when a ***Zimmi*** enquired from Amr bin Aas as to how much tax they had to pay he replied: “You are our treasure” (i.e. we shall realize from you whatever we wish).

The Umayyad caliphs were keen to appropriate the public treasury to themselves and to make their friends and associates as wealthy as they could. The officers appointed in Islamic territories grabbed whatever they could and also realized large sums of money from the people as a proof of their faithfulness to the rulers. For example, Khalid son of Abdullah Qasra, who was one of the governors of Hisham son of Abdul Malik, used to take one million dirhams from the public treasury every year. He also took millions of dirhams besides this amount.

The edifice of justice erected by Islam and Imam Ali was pulled down by the Umayyads. Two classes viz. the rich and the poor appeared among the people. Consequently some of them were rolling in wealth whereas others could not make both ends meet. One of the Umayyad caliphs gave twelve thousand dinars to a singer named M`abad, because he liked his performance, while there were innumerable persons who longed to live as free men. Before Sulaiman bin Abdul Malik became caliph

the number of slaves had reached hundreds of thousands. This is proved by the fact that seventy thousand slaves and slave-girls were set free by him.

During the period of Bani Umayyah party-spirit had become acute to an extent which was not at all sanctioned by Islam, the Prophet and Ali. An inhabitant of Yemen did not enjoy the rights which were enjoyed by a member of the tribe of Qais, and a non-Arab did not have the privileges available to an Arab.

It was during the Umayyad period that the number of pleasure-loving courtiers had increased by leaps and bounds. They did not do any work but got huge stipends from the public treasury as is the practice even now in some Arab countries. History tells us that Walid son of Abdul Malik stopped payment of stipends which were being given to as many as twenty thousand persons.

The Umayyad rulers also committed grave atrocities to keep their hold on various cities. Abdul Malik was an absolute despot who ruled in a very shameful manner. He got the wells and springs of Bahrain filled with dust so that the people might become helpless and indigent and consequently submissive to the rulers (Vide Ibn Rayhani's books entiteld `Muluk al-Arab' vol. 2, p. 206) and al-Nukabat p.64. He entrusted the government of Iraq and the Hijaz to the despicable and bloodthirsty person known as Hajjaj bin Yusuf.

It would be sufficient to quote one example (that of Yazid son of Abdul Malik) to show what value the Umayyad kings attached to the common man and how they descreated the caliphate as well as looked down upon the people. One day he drank too much wine and became over-intoxicated. His favourite slave-girl Hubaba was sitting by his side. He said to her, “Let me fly away” she asked, “And to whom are you entrusting the Muslims?” “To you” was his reply.

Writing about Bani Umayyah Amin Rayhani says: “Administration of justice to the subjects is the foundation of a government. Those who occupied the throne, however, thought otherwise. As you have come to know there were among the Umayyad rulers worthless persons, drunkards and tyrants”. (al-Nukabat page 70).

It should also be not forgotten that the Umayyad rulers introduced the shameful practice of abusing Ali and his descendants. However, the noblest among them was Umar son of Abdul Aziz who gave dignity to the rulers of the East as well as to mankind. As soon as he ascended the throne he relieved the people of oppression, restored their rights, appointed just officers, and instructed the governors to deal with the people justly and leniently. He introduced real equality between the Arabs and the non-Arabs and the Muslims and the non-Muslims.

As a mark of respect to human dignity he stopped further conquests. He abolished all taxes except those which were paid by the people willingly. He also stopped the abusing of Ali which had continued for long. He took back from the nobles and the aristocrats the property and wealth, which had been grabbed by them illegally, and advised them to work for their living. The rule of this great man did not

continue for long and he fell a victim to the conspiracies of the Umayyads themselves and lost his life. They killed him just as they had killed Mu`awiya son of Yazid earlier – his only offence being that he had mentioned their evil doings, expressed displeasure over their violating the rights of the people, admitted that his father and grandfather had been at fault and preferred secluded life to rulership.

It is very surprising that some modern writers are very active in justifying the acts of the tyrannical and obstinate Umayyad rulers and their agents. They say things with which they themselves must not be satisfied. They do so only to support their ancestors and, therefore, put forth very funny and meaningless defence on their behalf. Were the contemporaries of Bani Umayyah who were eye-witnesses of their rule not more true? Do their statements not belie those of the modern writers and provide a true picture of the conditions during the Umayyad rule? What will these modern writers say after reading the following narration?

One day Ubaydah bin Hilal Yashkari met Abu Harabah Tamimi, Ubaydah said to Abu Harabah: “I want to ask you some questions. Will you give me correct replies?” Abu Harabah replied in the affirmative. Thereupon the following conversation took place between them:

Ubaydah: What do you say about your Umayyad caliphs?

Abu Harabah: They used to shed blood without any justification.

Ubaydah: How did they utilize wealth?

Abu Harabah: They obtained it illegally and spent it illegally.

Ubaydah: How did they behave with the orphans?

Abu Harabah: They grabbed the property of the orphans, deprived them of their rights and outraged the modesty of their mothers.

Ubaydah: Woe betide you O Abu Harabah! Are such persons fit to be followed and obeyed?

Abu Harabah: I have told you what you enquired about. Now you should not censure me.

Abu Harabah's words “you should not censure me” go to explain incidentally that during the rule of Bani Umayyah and their agents it was not possible for any person to form an opinion of his own and express it.

How will the modern defenders of Bani Umayyah explain the views of the people of Madina which they expressed before the Kharijite Abu Hamzah? After expelling the Umayyads from Madina Abu Hamzah enquired from the residents of that city as to what hardships they had to bear at the hands of the Syrian caliphs and their agents. They said in clear terms that they used to kill them on mere suspicion, and considered those things to be lawful which had been declared to be unlawful by Islam, and which are

also unlawful in the eyes of reason, conscience, and human dignity. In the speech delivered by Abu Hamzah on this occasion he also said these words:

“Don't you see what has happened to the divine caliphate and the Imamate of the Muslims? So much so that Bani Marwan have been playing with it like a ball. They devoured God's property and played with His religion. They enslaved God's creatures. Every elder of theirs made the younger ones his successors for this purpose. They grabbed rulership and stuck to it like self-made gods.

Their hold was the hold of the tyrants. They took decisions according to their whims and caprices. If they got annoyed they killed the people. They arrested the people on mere suspicion and suspended punishment on recommendations. They made dishonest persons the trustees and disobeyed those who were honest. They realized revenue from the people even if it was not due from them and spent it for unlawful purposes”.

How will these defenders of Bani Umayyah explain the verse of Bakhtari in which he has expressed the thoughts of the people of that age and drawn a true picture thereof: “We consider that group of Bani Umayyah to be infidels who acquired the caliphate through fraud and deceit.

The evil doings, oppressive administration, and nefarious designs of Bani Umayyah which were certainly known to the earlier people were also known to those who came later, and the non-Arab writers have mentioned their atro- cities and crimes in the same manner in which they have been described by the Arab writers. It is a reality which is admitted even by the Egyptian and other writers who actively support Bani Umayyah. They say: “Most of the eastern and western historians vehemently attack and censure Bani Umayyah only the attitude of Polios Wilharzan is moderate to some extent”.

It will be observed that the attitude of the single orientalist who is not in agreement with others is also not `moderate' but we can call it `moderate to some extent'.

This remark of the Egyptian writer is a clear acknowledgement of the fact that this solitary orientalist could not lay hands on sufficient evidence on the basis of which he could support Bani Umayyah more openly and his attitude towards them should have been moderate rather than moderate to some extent.

However, we would like to tell the Egyptian writer that there is also another orientalist, who has supported Bani Umayyah fully. He is the French historian La Mius who has lent complete support to that family for some special motive. We shall comment on the writings of this historian later. With the exception of these two orientalists most of them have drawn a picture of the son of Abu Sufyan and the descendants of Marwan, which will not be liked by their supporters. Among these orientalists the most prominent is Kazanofa who says:

“The nature of Bani Umayyah was composed of two things: Firstly love for wealth to the extent of avariciousness; and secondly love for victory to plunder and for chiefship to enjoy worldly pleasures”.

However, whether they are the Arab historians or the orientalists none of them has drawn as true a picture of Bani Umayyah as has been drawn by the Umayyad caliph Walid bin Yazid in the verses translated below.

“Do not mention the people of Sa`di's Family. We are superior to them in the matter of numbers as well as wealth. We wield power over the people and humiliate them in every manner and torture them in various ways. We humiliate them and bring them on the brink of ruination and destruction and there too they meet with only humiliation and annihilation”.

Even if the supporters of the Umayyads reject all that has been said by the old and modern historians and orientalists about Umayyad mentality, can they reject what has been said by Walid son of Yazid?

Husayn and Yazid

All those events which Husayn had to go through prove that from the point of view of morality he occupied the highest place of glory and all the events through which Yazid passed are an evidence of the fact that he was at the lowest ebb of ignominy. The tragedy of Karbala is a sufficient proof for it. This event speaks volumes for his stark wickedness.

Yazid was a drunkard. He used to wear silken clothes and played on a tambourine.

Husayn son of Ali and Yazid son of Mu`awiya were the persons who came in the world as perfect specimens of the qualities of the two families viz. the Hashimites and Umayyads. Husayn was a perfect Hashim of his time as Yazid was Abd al–Shams. If the special qualities of a man can be the true picture of the environments in which he is brought up there is no doubt about the fact that Husayn and Yazid were the true models of their families. Husayn represented the Hashimites and Yazid the Umayyads. The only difference was that Husayn was the best specimen of the Hashimite virtues and excellences whereas Yazid was devoid of even the good qualities which were possessed by Bani Umayyah.

Husayn was the son of the Prophet's daughter Fatima and Ali son of Abu Talib. When he was born the Prophet took him in his lap and pronounced `Azan' in his ears so as to infuse his own spirit into the spirit of his grandson, make him a part and parcel of his own being, and to impress upon him that he was born to perform a special mission, and that purpose of life had been fixed for him.

On the seventh day of his birth the Prophet said with great happiness: “I have named this son of mine Husayn”.

The child grew up day after day in such a condition that he had in him the soul of his grandfather, the beatings of the heart of his father, and a deep impression of prophethood on his mind. All the virtues and

excellences of his forefathers had combined in his person and as he continued to grow up these virtues and qualities of his also continued to become more apparent. Transmission of the qualities of forefathers to their children is a law of nature about which there cannot be any doubt whatsoever. Just as the children inherit the colours, facial appearances, material qualities etc. from their ancestors they also inherit their characteristic virtues.

Husayn remained under the supervision of his grand– father till the age of seven years. After the Prophet's demise his companions continued to imitate him in the matter of love for Husayn. A special reason for their displaying love for him was that his features very much resembled those of the Prophet. This is borne out by the statements of those persons who had seen the Prophet as well as Husayn.

The great names of the ancestors and their achievements have a great deal to do with the development of their children and the making of their future bright. When the child hears about the achievements of his ancestors from his very early age a picture of theirs is drawn on his brain, and consequently he acquires the qualities of his ancestors. A child naturally inherits the qualities of his forefathers, but his living with them at the same place casts a great influence on them.

Besides the Prophet, Husayn also saw his revered father. He saw his perseverance, steadfastness, justice, sympathy, help for the oppressed and anger for the oppressors as well as good treatment and kindness shown to the enemies. He accompanied his father in the Battles of Camel, Siffin and Nahrawan, and saw his astonishing bravery, and learnt from him the ways of fighting for the sake of goodness, and also knew from him how to sacrifice one's life to protect the oppressed and helpless from tyranny.

Husayn's revered mother was a very tender–hearted and kind lady. On account of this very tender–heartedness she was always grieved to see the hardships to which her father, the Prophet, and his companions were subjected by the Quraysh. She was extremely sad on the day of the Battle of Uhad when many Muslims were killed at the hands of the polytheist Quraysh and their dead bodies were cut to pieces. It was a very depressing scene for her to see her father weeping for his uncle Hamzah.

It is said that after the death of the Prophet, Anas bin Malik went one day to see lady Fatima and requested her to control her grief in the interest of her own health. She said only this reply: “O Anas! How did you tolerate to entrust the pure body of the Prophet to the grave?” Then she burst into tears, and Anas too began to weep. He came back with a heart which was shattered by the grief of Fatima.

Husayn used to see his grief–stricten younger sister Zainab and felt extremely sad for her.

Husayn looked at his mother and sister and then imagined the sufferings and hardships which time had in store for himself, his sister and their descendants. He felt that very soon he and his sister would have to shed tears on the death of their mother and then to mourn the martyrdom of their father, and their descendants would have to face great hardships.

A few days later Husayn heard his mother making the following recommendations to his sister Zainab: “Do not leave Hasan and Husayn. Take complete care of them. After me perform the duties of their mother”.

His mother breathed her last after three months of the death of her father. Husayn was standing by her side and saying goodbye to her. At times he glanced at his sister who was stunned with grief. Then he looked at his father and brother who were crying bitterly on the passing away of lady Fatima.

Husayn spent his childhood in such an atmosphere of sorrow and grief. When he grew up he saw the people contending with, and blocking the way of his revered father at every step. The attitude of the mother of the faithful Ayesha and her supporters made him all the more sad. He also saw the treachery committed by Mu`awiya, Amr bin Aas, and their henchmen with his father. This increased his grief all the more and he felt that unless evil was suppressed with that bravery and force with which his father endeavoured to suppress it, life would be meaningless.

The most grievous day was that on which the hand of a criminal and a sinner wounded the forehead of his illustrious father when he was offering his prayers in the Masjid Kufa. Imam Ali could not survive this injury and breathed his last after two days. Thus the impediment in the path of the oppressors and tyrants to establish their authority was removed.

After some time his brother Hasan met martyrdom due to poisoning. And his grief and wonder knew no bounds when he saw that Bani Umayyah and their supporters were shooting arrows on the funeral bier of his brother. He also came to know that Mu`awiya had ordered that Husayn's father and brother should be abused from the pulpits. In fact he heard Mu`awiya doing so himself. In short new causes for his grief continued to appear. These were the very causes which culminated in the tragedy of Karbala–the place where the most heinous crime was committed with the co–operation of mean soldiers of Yazid and his wicked officers. They committed atrocities on Husayn and a small group of his companions and members of his family which one shudders to imagine.

This was how Husayn was reared from the point of view of inheritance and training and these were the causes of his grief which he had to experience from the very time of his birth. As he had observed the sufferings of his grandfather, father and mother, grief and sorrow were ingrained in his nature.

It was on account of the qualities inherited and acquired by Husayn that he used to say: Forbearance is a ladder, fidelity is manliness, pride is folly and weakness and association with the wicked is something which makes one doubt and waver.

Try to acquire that thing which you deserve. It is humiliation and abasement to live with the oppressors. Truth is dignity and falsehood is helplessness.

Who was Yazid?

Yazid was a man who had inherited all the bad qualities of the Umayyad Family. His disposition, beliefs, way of thinking and the manner of looking at various matters were exactly the same as those of Bani Umayyah in general. Besides the evils inherited by him from his ancestors he had other mischievous tendencies and satanic qualities as well. He did not possess the apparent qualities of his father which are considered to be his (i.e. Mu`awiya's) merits although they were only tools to strengthen his rule. In fact it may be said that whereas all the bad qualities of his family had combined in him he did not at all possess any good quality.

There has been no other reveller amongst Bani Umayyah like Yazid and it was on account of his being wildly festive that he lost his life. It is said that one day, while mounted on a horse, he was trying to out-pace a monkey. During this competition, however, he fell down from the horse and died. His contemporaries have drawn a very precise and concise picture of his in these words: “He was a drunkard. He used to wear silken clothes and played on a tambourine”.

If Husayn proved to be a model of virtue and good morals, Yazid proved to be the worst specimen of his ancestral vices. If Husayn was sympathetic towards others as magnanimous persons usually are, Yazid had no human sentiments and was absolutely shameless.

Yazid had been brought up in a family which considered Islam to be a political movement. According to Bani Umayyah the prophethood of the Prophet was only a pretext to acquire power and authority and Islam meant transfer of power from the hands of Bani Umayyah to the hands of Bani Hashim. Yazid considered his countrymen to be only an army whose duty it was to remain faithful to the ruler. In his eyes the object of the existence of his countrymen was that they should pay land revenue and taxes and increase the wealth of the treasury which was to be spent according to the sweet will of the ruler.

As Yazid was born and brought up in such a family it was necessary that he, too, should adopt the ways which were adopted by his forefathers and other members of his family during the age of ignorance and after the advent of Islam. Furthermore, he was brought up in the house of a father who spent large sums of money of the public treasury at his pleasure. When wealth and ignorance are combined the result can be nothing else except profligacy and debauchery.

It was for this reason that like every ignorant person who possesses wealth Yazid was a drunkard and was fond of a life of pleasure and played with dogs. As soon as he ascended the throne he began spending money lavishly to lead a life of debauchery and sensual pleasure. He gave enormous sums to his asociates, slaves, slave-girls, singers etc. He had a large number of dogs who slept by his side and were made to wear ornaments of gold and silver and silken dresses, while the poor people, from whom taxes were realized under coercion, starved and suffered hard- ships. He ruled for three and a half years only but during this short period he combined in him all the disgrace, absurdity and impudence which were the result of Umayyad politics.

Besides the above-mentioned revelry and debauchery which Yazid inherited from his ancestors he also committed other most heinous crimes. During the first year of his reign he murdered Imam Husayn and his companions and made the people of his family captives. During the second year he plundered Madina without caring in the least for its sanctity. He permitted his soldiers to do whatever they liked with the people of the city for a period of three days. Consequently eleven thousand persons including seven hundred companions of the Prophet from amongst the Muhajirs and Ansar were killed and the modesty of more than one thousand virgins was outraged.

It was the natural disposition of Imam Husayn that he should fight against injustice and oppression following the example set by his grandfather and father. He used to say: "It is humiliation and disgrace to live with the oppressors". On the contrary Yazid always bestowed honours on cruel and wicked persons and gave them large presents for committing heinous crimes. He also asked others to respect and honour such persons. For example, one day when he was engaged in feasting and drinking along with his friends and Ubaidullah Ibn Zaid, the chief actor of the tragedy of Karbala, was sitting on his right hand side he addressed the cup-bearer as under:

"Give me such a wine that it should make my heart cool. Then give the same wine to Ibn Ziad who is my confidant and trustee and the source of my acquiring war booty and winning the battles".
(This incident took place only a few days after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn).
The honouring of Ibn Ziad by Yazid resembles the honouring of the greatest tyrant and criminal, Hajjaj.

In short if during the time of Mu`awiya `divine army' consisted of poisoned honey the `divine army' during the days of Yazid was only poison without the admixture of honey. During the reign of Yazid the Umayyad party-spirit of the days of ignorance was fully revived. None of the events of history can produce a man more ignorable than Yazid - the same Yazid who was the author of the tragedy of Karbala. And similarly none of the events of history can produce a person who should possess as lofty a character as Husayn - the same Husayn who was the martyr of Karbala.

The pages relating to Yazid are absolutely black whereas those relating to Husayn are replete with dignity and honour. On the one side there were the trade and chiefship of Umayyah and his slaves and executioners; and on the other side there were the lofty character and bravery of the Family of Abu Talib and their free and zealous persons and martyrs in the path of truth and justice.

Logic and reasoning are not so successful to prove a reality as are the events which are related to it. As events contain conclusive arguments within themselves there is no doubt about the fact that all those events which Husayn had to go through prove that from the point of view of moral character he occupied the loftiest rank; all the events through which Yazid passed are an evidence of the fact that he was at the lowest layer of degradation. The tragedy of Karbala is a sufficient proof for this fact. This event speaks volumes for, and shall always be pointing to the most noble character of Husayn, and the wickedness of the vilest of the vile Yazid.

Before the tragedy of Karbala there occurred another event, in which there was on one side Husayn the model of sincerity and human sympathy, and on the other there was Yazid who was an embodiment of debauchery and licentiousness. This event, besides bringing to light the respective characters of Husayn and Yazid, also reminds one of the pact made by Bani Hashim, which was called ***`Hilfal-Fuzul'.*** This pact was made by them with the co-operation of some Arab tribes. One of its items purported to say that the signatories of the pact would support the oppressed, and realize their rights from the oppressors, and would restrain the powerful persons from doing injustice to the weak and helpless. The ancestors of Yazid had opposed this pact and those of Husayn had lent it whole-hearted support.

Of course, one character of this event is Husayn and the other is Yazid. Yazid son of Mu`awiya came to know about the beauty of Urainab daughter of Ishaq who was the wife of the Qurayshite Abdullah bin Salam. Urainab was the most beautiful and accomplished woman of her time and possessed enormous wealth. Yazid fell in love with her without having seen her. He lost all patience and mentioned the matter to Mu`awiya's favourite slave named Rafiq. The slave informed Mu`awiya about this love and told him that his son was very keen to marry Urainab.

Mu`awiya called Yazid and enquired from him about the matter. Yazid admitted that whatever Mu`awiya had been told was correct. Mu`awiya said: “Be calm and patient. Something will be done in this behalf”. Yazid said: It is no use consoling me now because the matter is already finished. She has already been married. Mu`awiya said: My dear son! Keep the secret to yourself, because if it is divulged it will do you no good. God completes what He ordains and what has already happened cannot be helped.

Mu`awiya began thinking of solving the problem and meeting the wish of Yazid to marry Urainab. Abdullah son of Salam, the husband of Urainab was at that time the Governor of Iraq. Mu`awiya wrote a letter to him saying: “I have an urgent business with you. Please come and see me as early as possible. The matter is beneficial to you”

On receiving Mu`awiya's letter Abdullah proceeded to Syria at once and met Mu`awiya. The latter received him with great honour and respect. At that time Abu Darda and Abu Huraira, two companions of the Prophet were also available in Damacus. Mu`awiya called for them and said to them: “Such and such daughter of mine is now of age and I am anxious to give away her hand in marriage. I think Abdullah son of Salam is a good man and I wish that she may marry him”.

Both of them praised Mu`awiya for his intelligence and devoutness and said that whatever he had thought of was absolutely proper.

Mu`awiya said to them: “Both of you should meet Abdullah and mention the matter to him and find out his opinion about it. Although I have authorised my daughter to marry a man of her choice, but I am sure that she will like Abdullah bin Salam and will not refuse to marry him”

Abu Darda and Abu Huraira went to see Abdullah. In the meantime Mu`awiya went into his palace and said to his daughter: “Dear daughter! Just hear what I have to say. When Abu Darda and Abu Huraira

come to you and tell you that I want to get you married to Abdullah bin Salam, you should say: “Of course, Abdullah is a good man and a near relative and of equal status with us. However, he has already married Urainab daughter of Ishaq and I am afraid that if I marry him I may also become jealous of her like all other women. If, in that event, I say something unbecoming about Abdullah I am afraid that I may invite the wrath of God by doing so. However, if Abdullah divorces Urainab I am agreeable to marry him”.

When Abu Darda and Abu Huraira conveyed the message of Mu`awiya to Abdullah bin Salam he was overjoyed and told them to inform Mu`awiya that the proposal was acceptable to him. When they informed Mu`awiya of the developments he said to them: “As I have already told you I would like this marriage. However, I have authorised my daughter to marry a man of her own choice. You should, therefore, go to her and ask her whether she is ready to marry Abdullah bin Salam”.

When they approached the girl she gave them the same reply which Mu`awiya had taught her to give. They then conveyed her reply to Abdullah.

When Abdullah son of Salam came to know that it was not possible to marry Mu`awiya's daughter unless he devorced his wife he was overpowered by avarice and divorced Urainab. He said to Abu Darda and Abu Huraira: “Bear witness to the fact that I have divorced Urainab. You should inform Mu`awiya about this and also convey my proposal to him”.

When they came to Mu`awiya and told him what had happened he said: “Oh! What has Abdullah done? Why has he divorced his wife? He should not have been so hasty. Had he waited for a few days I might have arranged his marriage with my daughter without allowing things to come to such a pass. Anyhow, you should go now and ask my daughter whether she is agreeable to this marriage”.

Abu Darda and Abu Huraira approached Mu`awiya's daughter once again and told her that Abdullah had divorced his wife. They also stated that Abdullah was a very noble-minded and competent person and enquired from her whether she was prepared to marry him.

Mu`awiya's daughter replied: “Abdullah no doubt enjoys a high position amongst the Quraysh. However, as you are aware marriage is not something trivial so that one may agree to it without seriously pondering over the matter. It is a contract for one's whole life. You gentlemen may, therefore go now. I shall think over the matter and give you a reply later”.

Both of them blessed her and departed. They then went to Abdullah bin Salam and informed him about what the girl had said. Abdullah said: “All right. Let us wait. If it is not settled today, it will be settled tomorrow'.

It was the talk of the town that Abdullah bin Salam had divorced his wife and had proposed to Mu`awiya's daughter. As all were aware of the cunning of Mu`awiya and the loose character of Yazid they blamed and censured Abdullah for having divorced his wife without first winning the consent of

Mu`awiya's daughter.

After a few days Abdullah sent Abu Darda and Abu Huraira again to the daughter of Mu`awiya. They advised her to give a final reply whereupon she said: “I am sure God has decided well for me, because He does not forsake one who relies upon Him. I have pondered over the matter and have come to the conclusion that my marrying Abdullah bin Salam will not be a successful one. I have also consulted my well-wishers in the matter. Some of them have approved the marriage but others have opposed it”.

When Abdullah came to know about the reply which had been given by Mu`awiya's daughter he became sure that he had been duped. This grieved him very much. The news spread was the talk of the town. The people blamed Mu`awiya for having defrauded Abdullah and making him divorce his wife so that she might later marry Yazid.

Mu`awiya was successful at the first stage of his scheme to fulfil the desire of his son but eventually the divine will frustrated his program. His plan failed owing to the interference by Husayn who had grown up on the pattern of life of his illustrious father. Helping the oppressed had become his second nature.

When the waiting period (Idda) of. Urainab expired Mu`awiya sent Abu Darda to her to convey to her proposal for marriage on behalf of Yazid. Abu Darda left Damascus and reached Kufa. It so happened that Husayn son of Ali was also in Kufa at that time. Abu Darda considered it proper to pay his respects to the son of the Prophet in the first instance. He, therefore, presented himself before the Imam. Imam Husayn enquired from him the reason for his visiting Kufa.

Abu Darda informed him that he had been sent by Mu`awiya to propose to Urainab daughter of Ishaq on behalf of his son Yazid. He then related to the Imam in detail the events which had already taken place. Imam Husayn said: “I also thought that Urainab would marry some other person and intended to propose to her after her “Idda” ended. Now that you have arrived here it will be better if you convey my proposal to her. She may choose whomsoever she likes. However, I am prepared to give her dower equal to that which Yazid has promised her”

Abu Darda promised to convey the Imam's message to Urainab. Then he took leave of Imam Husayn and reached her house. He said to her: “Madam! It was destined that Abdullah son of Salam should divorce you. You are not going to be a loser on this account. Yazid son of Mu`awiya and Husayn son of Ali wish to marry you. Both of them have conveyed their proposals to you through me. You may choose whomever you like”.

Urainab kept quiet for some time and then said: “If some other person had brought these two proposals to me I would have called you for consultation and would have acted according to your suggestion. Now that you yourself have brought these proposals I leave the final decision to you”.

Abu Darda replied: “It was my duty to convey the proposals to you, but you are yourself the best judge in the matter”. Urainab said: “No; that is not so. I am your niece and cannot act in this matter without your

advice".

When Abu Darda saw that she was bent upon obtaining his opinion he said: "I feel that the son of the Prophet is a better choice". Urainab said: "I agree with you. Also I like him".
Imam Husayn then married Urainab and paid her the stipulated amount of dower.

When Mu`awiya came to know what had happened he was very angry and abused Abu Darda. Then he said to himself: "Abu Darda has not been at fault. It was my own mistake. If a person entrusts such a difficult task to a simpleton he must fail".

At the time of his departure for Damascus Abdullah bin Salam had entrusted a large sum of money to Urainab. Later when he divorced her and Mu`awiya's daughter also refused to marry him it became known to the people that Abdullah had been deceived by Mu`awiya and made to divorce his wife. This was a matter of disgrace for Mu`awiya and he held Abdullah responsible for it. He, therefore, dismissed him from service and stopped his stipend. Abdullah became penniless. He, therefore, returned to Iraq with the hope that he might get back from Urainab the money which he had left with her. He was, however, afraid that she might decline to return the money on account of his misbehaviour and for his divorcing her without a just cause.

After his return to Iraq he met Imam Husayn and said: "As you must be aware I was duped and made to divorce Urainab. While leaving for Damascus I left some money with her as a trust".
Then he praised Urainab much and said: "I shall be grateful if you speak to her and ask her to return that money to me. It is possible that with that amount in hand I may be saved from indigence".

Imam Husayn went to Urainab and said: "Abdullah bin Salam came to see me. He praised you very much for your honesty which pleased me much. He also told me that he entrusted some money to you at the time of his departure for Damascus. It will be only proper that you should return that money to him because I think that what he has stated is correct".

Urainab replied: "It is true that he left some bags with me, but I don't know what they contain. They are still lying sealed, as they were. I shall bring them to you and you may return the same to him".
Imam Husayn praised Urainab on hearing this and said: "Will it not be better if I call him here so that you may return the bags to him yourself?".

Then he met Abdullah bin Salam and said to him:
I have conveyed your message to Urainab. She admits your having left some bags with her; they are still lying sealed, as they were. It will be better if you come to Urainab and take back the bags from her".

Abdullah felt very much ashamed and said: "I would request you to make arrangements for the return of money to me". (i.e. I feel ashamed to face Urainab). Imam Husayn replied: "No. That cannot be. You should take back the money from her in the same manner in which you gave it to her".

He, therefore, brought Abdullah to his house and then said to Urainab: “Abdullah son of Salam has come and demands the things which he entrusted to you. Return the same to him in the same manner in which you took them from him”.

Urainab brought the bags and placing them outside the curtain said to him: “Here it is what you entrusted to me”. Abdullah thanked Urainab and praised her for her honesty. Imam Husayn then left the place leaving them alone. Abdullah broke the seal of the bag, took out some dinars from it and presented them to her requesting her to accept the same from him. Thereupon tears trickled from their eyes and they began to cry loudly. Imam Husayn heard the sound of their crying. He then re-entered the room and said with great kindness: “Just hear me. I call God to witness that I have divorced Urainab just now. I call God to witness that I did not marry her for the sake of her beauty or wealth.What I had desired was that it might become lawful for her to re-marry her first husband.

Thus Urainab became the wife of Abdullah bin Salam once again and Mu`awiya's scheme failed.
After re-marrying Urainab Abdullah said to her: “You should return the amount of dower which Imam gave you”.
She brought the money and gave it to Abdullah to give it to the Imam. However, Imam Husayn declined to accept the money and said: “The spiritual reward which I shall get in the Hereafter for this good deed is much better than worldly wealth”.

The Hashimite Ali son of Abu Talib said: “I swear by God that I have not accumulated a treasure from your world like others and have not collected wealth and property. I have not used any dress other than this worn out cloak. If I had desired I could have eaten honey and wheat and could also wear silken dress. However, it is impossible that passions may overpower me and greed may make me eat dainty food. It is possible that there may be a person in the Hijaz and Yamama who may not hope for even one morsel of food and may not have eaten his fill throughout his life. Should I satiate myself with food and sleep a sound sleep when there may be around me many persons who may be starving? Should I be the Commander of the Faithful only in name and should not share the difficulties and sorrows of the people?

He wrote to the Governor of Ahwaz: “I swear by God that if I come to know that you have misappropriated anything big or small which belongs to the Muslims I shall award you such a severe punishment as will make you indigent, burdened and disgraced”.

On the contrary Mu`awiya son of Abu Sufyan used to say: “The earth belongs to God and I am His caliph. I may take whatever I like out of the property of God and am also entitled to what I leave”.

Mu`awiya, Yazid, Marwan son of Hakam and other Umayyad rulers spent public money on their supporters and friends in order to strengthen their government and perpetuate their authority. They cut off the heads of the people. They had an army of honey mixed with poison and also of poison without honey. Both the parties i.e. Ali and his descendants as well as Mu`awiya, Yazid and other Bani

Umayyah had their respective supporters.

Supporters of the two parties

The chief characteristic or the best attribute of the supporters of the Family of Abu Talib was their magnanimity. The object of their lives was that they should always help the oppressed, promote true beliefs and sacrifice their lives in the path of truth. Their number was no doubt small. This did not, however, constitute a shortcoming, because magnanimous and noble-minded persons are always small in number, but the deep impressions which they leave behind are never obliterated and the result of their efforts is always far-reaching. The smallness of their number is a proof positive of the greatness of their object, and the loftiness of their aim. At times it so happens that a single person performs a feat which cannot be performed by thousands combined together. The supporters of the descendants of Abu Talib too were firm in their beliefs, and steadfast in promoting them, although their number was small.

These very friends of Imam Ali were offered wealth and positions by Mu`awiya so that they might abuse Ali and his descendants, but they declined to do so. He then threatened them with torture. They however, preferred to bear all hardships rather than abuse Imam Ali.

One day Mu`awiya was sitting with his associates and Ahnaf bin Qais was also present. In the meantime a Syrian came and began delivering a speech. At the end of his speech he abused Ali. Thereupon Ahnaf said to Mu`awiya: “Sir! If this man comes to know that you are pleased if the Prophets are cursed, he will curse them also. Fear God and don't bother about Ali any longer. He has since met his Lord. He is now alone in his grave and only his acts are with him. I swear by God that his sword was very pure and his dress too was very clean and neat. His tragedy is great”. The following conversation then took place between him and Mu`awiya:

Mu`awiya: O Ahnaf! You have thrown dust in my eyes and have said whatever you liked. By God you will have to mount the pulpit and curse Ali. If you do not curse him willingly you will be compelled to do so.

Ahnaf: It will be better for you to excuse me from doing this. However, even if you compel me I will not utter any such words.
Mu`awiya: Get up and mount the pulpit.
Ahnaf: When I mount the pulpit I shall act justly.
Mu`awiya: If you act justly what will you say?

Ahnaf: After mounting the pulpit I shall praise the Almighty God and shall then say this:
“O People! Mu`awiya has ordered me to curse Ali. No doubt Ali and Mu`awiya fought with each other.

Each one of them claimed that he and his party had been wronged. Hence, when I pray to God all of you should say ***`Amen'.*** Then I shall say: O God! Curse him who, out of these two is a rebel and let Your angels and Prophets and all other creatures curse him. O God! Shower Your curses on the rebellious group. O people! Say `Amen'. O Mu`awiya I shall not say anything more or less than this even if I have to lose my life.

Mu`awiya: In that case I excuse you (from mounting the pulpit and cursing). (`Iqd-al-Farid, vol.2 p.144 and Mustatraf, vol.1, p.54).

At times it so happened that Mu`awiya, in order to express his hatred against Ali, persecuted his supporters. Those persons could not tolerate this (i.e. cursing of Ali) and abused Mu`awiya and his descendants. They did so in spite of the fact that at that time Ali was in his grave, and no benefit could be expected from him, and the cruel and despotic Mu`awiya was the ruler of the time.

History has recorded many incidents which go to show that the people hated very much this attitude of Mu`awiya. He executed Hujr ibn Adi, a distinguished companion of the Prophet and his friends for the only reason that they refused to curse Ali and his descendants from the pulpit. We shall give details of this incident later.

The followers of Ali zealously kept on looking after the high morality and good qualities which were planted by him in their hearts till they bore fruit. All of them, whether men or women, big or small, were alike.

During his rule Mu`awiya once came to Mecca to perform Hajj. He enquired about a woman named Darmiyah Hajuniyah who belonged to the tribe of Kananah and was informed that she was alive. Darmiyah was a black-coloured well-built woman. He called her and on her arrival the following conversation took place between them: Mu`awiya: O daughter of Ham! 1 How have you come here? Darmiyah: If you are calling me `daughter of Ham' by way of ridicule I may tell you that I am not a descendant of Ham. I belong to the tribe of Kananah.

Mu`awiya: You are right, however, do you know why I have summoned you?

Darmiyah: Only God knows the hidden things.

Mu`awiya: I have called you so that you may tell me why you loved Ali so much and were inimical towards me.

Darmiyah: I would request you to excuse me from answering this question.

Mu`awiya: No; that cannot be. You must give me a reply.

Darmiyah: If you insist on having a reply, then hear what I say. I loved Ali because he was a just ruler and gave every person what was his due. And I was against you because you contended with a person

who was more deserving than yourself to be ruler, and you desired a thing which you did not deserve. I obeyed Ali because the Prophet had appointed him as our Amir and ruler. He loved the poor and the needy and respected the true believers. And I despised you because you shed the blood of the Muslims without a just cause, give unjust judgements and decide matters arbitrarily.

Mu`awiya: Is it on this account that your belly is swollen, your breast is protruding and your buttocks have grown so fat.

Darmiyah: I swear by God that these things are said proverbially about your mother and not about me.

Mu`awiya: Just wait. I have said something good. When the belly of a woman is big she gives birth to a healthy child. When her breast is big she can suckle her child properly. And when her buttocks are fat she looks beautiful while sitting. Well, tell me: Did you ever see Ali?

Darmiyah: Yes, by God, I saw him.
Mu`awiya: How did you find him?
Darmiyah: I swear by God that I saw him in such a condition that sovereignty had not made him proud like you and the office of the caliphate had not made him proud like you.
Mu`awiya: Did you hear him talk?
Darmiyah: Yes, by God I did, with his words he used to remove the darkness of the hearts and brighten them in the same manner in which gilding brightens a utensil.
Mu`awiya: That is true. Now tell me what can I do for you?

Darmiyah told him of her requirement. Thereupon Mu`awiya asked her: “If I meet your need will you treat me at par with Ali?” Darmiyah retorted: “You stand no comparison with him”. Mu`awiya met her need and said: “By God, if Ali had been alive he would not have given you so much wealth”. Darmiyah replied: “You are right. He never gave even a penny out of the property of the Muslims to any one unless he was entitled to it”. (Balaghat al-Nisa, p.72 and `Iqd-al-Farid, vol.1, p.216).

Once Adi son of Hatim came to see Mu`awiya during the period of his rule. Mu`awiya asked him ironically: What has happened to `Tarafat?' [2] Adi replied: “They were killed supporting Ali. Mu`awiya said: “Ali has not been just to you. Your sons were killed but his own sons remained alive”. Adi replied: “I, too, have not been just. Ali has already been martyred but I am still alive.

Mu`awiya was cut to the heart on observing this love and devotion of Adi for Ali. He said in a threatening manner: “One drop of Uthman's blood still remains. It can be washed away only with the blood of one of the nobles of Yemen. (i.e. Adi).

Adi did not care for Mu`awiya's threat and said: “I swear by God that the hearts with which we remained your enemies still exist in our bosoms, and the swords with which we fought against you are still on our shoulders. If you step forward towards us treacherously even to the extent of a finger we shall proceed towards you to the extent of a span. It is easier for us that our heads are cut off and our chests are

trampled upon as compared with our hearing even a word against Ali. Give the sword to the executioner (so that he may sever my head)".

Mu`awiya then resorted to flattery as was usual with him. Addressing those present he said: "These are words of wisdom. Write them down". (Murooj-al-Zahab v.2, p.309).

Mu`awiya once proceeded to Mecca to perform Hajj. When he reached Madina and met Sa'd son of Abi Waqas he asked him to accompany him. Sa'd agreed. After performing the ceremonies of Hajj both of them went to Dar-al-Nadwa and conversed there for a long time. As Sa'd had come to perform Hajj on the suggestion of Mu`awiya the latter thought that Sa'd supported him. In order to find out as to how far Sa'd supported his attitude towards Ali he began cursing and abusing Ali and asked Sa'd flatteringly: "Why don't you curse and abuse Ali?" Sa'd got annoyed and said: "You have made me sit on your carpet and then you began abusing Ali. I swear by God that if I had possessed even one of the many attributes possessed by Ali it would have been dearer to me than anything else on earth. I swear by God that I shall not come to see you so long as I live". Then he left that place in a state of extreme anger". (Murooj-al-Zahab, vol.2, p.317).

Amr bin Humq was also one of the staunch supporters of the Family of Abu Talib. Ziad bin Abih killed him for the only offence that he loved Ali. After killing him he severed his head and sent it to Mu`awiya. In the history of Islam it was the first head which was sent to any one as a present.

Another sincere supporter of Ali was Maitham Tammar. He was a close companion of Ali and was aware of the dignity and high position of the Imam. He remained associated with Ali for quite a long time. It has been said that Ali usually frequented his shop and if he went on some business leaving Ali in the shop he (Ali) even sold dates on his behalf.

When the Comannder of the Faithful Ali and Husayn were martyred and Ibn Ziad had nothing to fear any longer in Kufa he threatened Maitham saying that if he continued to love Ali and praise him for his equity and justice he would kill him. He tried to coax him by saying that if he became a supporter of the Umayyad regime his name would be recommended to the king for his being awarded alarge amount of money and other presents.

This happened at a time when Ibn Ziad heard Maitham delivering a speech and was very much impressed by his eloquence and sagacious reasoning. Amr son of Haris, a flatterer of Ibn Ziad's court asked him whether he knew who the man was; and upon his expressing ignorance about him he (Amr) said: "He is the liar Maitham, supporter of the liar Ali son of Abu Talib". Ibn Ziad became attentive and said to Maitham: "Do you hear what Amr says?" Maitham replied: "He is telling a lie. My Imam Ali was a truthful man and the true caliph and I, too, am truthful".

Ibn Ziad became angry and said: "Dissociate yourself from Ali and abuse him and express love for Uthman and praise him, or else I shall amputate your hands and feet and hang you". Maitham replied to this threat by narrating publicly the virtues of Ali and began crying recalling his justice and kindness, and

then censured and blamed Ibn Ziad and Bani Umayyah for their rebellion and opposition.

Ibn Ziad flew into a rage and said to Maitham: “I swear by God that I shall cut off your hands and feet but shall spare your tongue so that I may prove that you are a liar and your Imam Ali was also a liar”. The hands and feet of Maitham were cut off and he was sent to the gallows. Even then he said loudly: O people! Whoever desires to hear the Prophet's Hadith about Ali should come to me”.

The people gathered round him and he began to narrate the superior merits and virtues of Ali. In the meantime Amr bin Haris passed that way and enquired as to why the people had gathered there. On having been informed that they were listening to the traditions of Ali being narrated by Maitham he hurried to inform Ibn Ziad about the matter and said: “Please send some one immediately to cut off the tongue of Maitham, for I am afraid that if he continues to narrate the virtues of Ali the people of Kufa will turn against you and revolt”.

Ibn Ziad sent a man to cut off the tongue of Maitham. He arrived at the place and asked Maitham to take out his tongue so that it might be cut off in compliance with the orders of the governor. Maitham said: “Did not that son of a whore say that he would prove me and my Imam to be liars? Now you may cut off my tongue”. The executioner cut off his tongue and the blood flowed from it so profusely that Maitham passed away. Ibn Ziad then crucified his dead body.

Another devotee of Imam Ali and martyr in the path of God was Rashid Hujari who was a close companion of his. His story also resembles that of Maitham. Ibn Ziad told him that his life would be spared if he dissociated himself from Ali. He flatly refused to do so. Ibn Ziad enquired of him as to how he would like to die. Thereafter he got his hands and feet amputated.

The greatness and sincerity of the friends of Ali can be assessed from the fact that they loved him whole-heartedly and held him in great reverence without any pressure or coercion. They did not seek any reward or praise for doing so. Their only wish was that they should live and die supporting truth. Their love for Ali was similar to that the early Muhajirs and the Ansar for the Prophet.

Ammar Yasir, a zealous supporter of Ali, on seeing the large army of Mu`awiya in the Battle of Siffin truly mentioned the sentiments of the Shias of Ali in these words: “I swear by God that even if they fight with their arms and push us back upto a far off place we shall remain convinced that we are following truth and they are following falsehood”.

The companions and supporters of Imam Husayn were also like those of his father Ali. They had before them the same lofty object which the devotees of Ali had in view.

During the night of ***`Asbura*** when the only alternative left before Husayn was to fight and meet martyrdom and when only a few hours were left before this was to happen he addressed the small group of his friends and said to them: “These people want only my head. It is not, therefore, necessary for you to lose your lives. You may depart in the darkness of night so that nobody can see you”. It is possible

that he had suggested to them to depart at night, so that they might not feel ashamed of leaving him alone in the broad daylight, or that they might not be located and arrested. This was a manifestation of Imam Husayn's sublime character. However, his companions said with one voice: “We shall lay down our lives at your feet”.

Muslim bin Awsajah Asadi said: “Should we desert you? Why should we not make our excuse clear before God tomorrow by doing our duty to you? I swear by God that I shall not leave you till I break my lance in the breasts of the enemies. So long as the sword is in my hand and I possess strength I shall go on striking them. If I do not have any arms I will stone them and will continue to fight till I lay down my life before your very eyes”.
Muslim proved what he had said. He laid down his life bravely before the Imam.

When Muslim, having been wounded grievously, fell down from his horse Habib ibn Mazahir came by his side and said: “If I had not known that very shortly I am going to join you I would have asked you to make a will”. Thereupon Muslim replied and those were his last words:
“The only will I have to make is that you should sacrifice your life for the sake of this Imam”.

When Hur bin Yazid al-Riyahi saw the evil deeds and malpractices of Yazid and his supporters and observed the lofty character of Imam Husayn and the faith and steadfastness of his companions his conscience was awakened and he forsook worldly gains and offices.

This Hur was one of those commanders of the army of Bani Umayyah who had been promised great rewards for fighting against Imam Husayn and killing him and his supporters. Ubaidullah son of Ziad, the Governor of Kufa had specially entrusted this task to Hur. However, when he approached the camp of Imam Husayn he showed such perplexity and anxiety that his companions became doubtful (of his fidelity to the Umayyah regime). Eventually he galloped his horse, reached in the presence of Imam Husayn and said: “O son of the Prophet of God! I am very much ashamed for what I have done and pray to God to forgive me. I shall fight for you till I lay down my life at your feet”.

Hur achieved his martyrdom before Imam Husayn. All the supporters and companions of Imam Husayn were of the same calibre. Their number was very small but they faced the enemies who were thousands and thousands in number. They were overpowered by thirst and were in peril of their lives but the only thing they were fond of was the death of a martyr. These valiant persons laid down their lives at the feet of Imam Husayn. Every one of them longed to achieve martyrdom. They considered this death to be a great honour for themselves.

Husayn son of Ali was martyred and the government of Yazid and his associates became an established fact. There was now no hope that the caliphate would return to the Family of Abu Talib. Their supporters became sure that the bounties of the earth would no longer be distributed among the people through them. However, the Family of Abu Talib and their helpers and supporters neither sat still nor was their spirit curbed. In fact it got more awakened that before, and they became more active.

For example, when the news of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and his companions reached Kufa Ibn Ziad collected the people for congregational prayers. In a speech after offering prayers he said: “Praised be God who has manifested truth and granted victory to the truthful people. He helped the Commander of the Faithful Yazid and his people and killed the liar son of the liar father – Husayn son of Ali and his associates”.

He had not yet completed his sentence when an old man named Abdullah son of Afif Azadi, who was a companion of Ali and had fought valiantly along with him in the Battles of the Camel and Siffin, got on his feet and said loudly: “O son of Marjana! You kill the descendants of the Prophets and then dare stand on the pulpit, which is the place meant for the truthfulness! You are a liar and your father was a liar and he too is a liar who conferred rulership on you and your father”. Although as a result of this the old man was hanged the following day in the ground of Kufa, this incident goes to prove that the cruelty and oppression of Bani Umayyah did not curb the spirit of the supporters of Ali. Rather their will and determination gained momentum all the more.

The well-known poet Farazdaq recited openly and in the very presence of Bani Umayyah, the ***qasidah*** (panegyric) which he had composed in paise of Imam Zain-al-Abedin. At the time the rule of Bani Umayyah was at its zenith and none could dare utter even a word against them. However, Farazdaq did not care for his life. He did not praise the Imam to get a reward or to win favour. It was only a manifestation of love and an ardent desire for obedience to him, which roused him to compose the panegyric. The story runs as follows:

The Umayyad caliph Hisham son of Abdul Malik went to Mecca to perform Hajj when he was a prince. After circumambulation of the Ka`abah he wished to kiss the Black stone but could not reach it. Partly it was due to the hatred which the people had in their hearts for Bani Umayyah that they did not make a way for Hisham, and partly it was because the number of the Hajis (pilgrims) was so large that he could not reach there. Hisham had, therefore, no alternative but to go back and sit in a chair.

In the meantime Imam Sajjad son of Husayn came and proceeded towards the Black stone. The people immediately stepped back and made way for him and he kissed the Black stone without any inconvenience. Those who had come with Hisham from Syria asked him as to who that respectable person was. Who was he for whom all the Hajis had stepped back? Hisham knew who he was, but fearing that the Syrians might be influenced by the Imam he said: “I don't know who that man is”. Farazdaq could not tolerate this disrespect for the Imam by Hisham. He, therefore, stood up and said: “I know him”. Then he occupied an elevated place and recited with great zeal and courage the entire qasida which will for ever remain a lasting monument in the literary history of Arabia. Its first verse says: “He is that great personality whose foot-prints are known to Mecca, the Ka`abah, the Harem and its surroundings”.

Hisham was very much annoyed to hear the qasida and imprisoned Farazdaq. While in prison Farazdaq wrote a satire against Hisham and Bani Umayyah without caring for the atrocities they might let loose on

him. In that satire he said about Hisham: “He turns the head which is not the head of a chief. He is squint-eyed and his defects are evident”.

We have mentioned only a few instances which throw light on the conduct of the supporters of the Family of Abu Talib. They, however, show very clearly that they were steadfast in their love and reverence for that illustrious family and were prepared to lay down their lives for the sake of Ali.

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However, as regards the supporters of Bani Umayyah they could be divided into two groups. To the first group belonged those whose consience had been purchased by the Umayyads through bribes. And the second group consisted of those who were born criminals. Mean persons are by their very nature inimical towards those who are noble-minded and magnanimous. As they lack good qualities they nurse a grudge against those who are virtuous and befriend and support those who are base and ill-natured like themselves.

The persons who became the adherents of Bani Umayyah by means of bribes were the helpers and supporters of Abu Sufyan. The concept of bribe is different in respect of each individual. Each person is bribed in accordance with his position and status. Abu Sufyan bribed some persons by means of wealth and others by promising them freedom. For example, he promised Wahshi, an Ethiopian slave (the murderer of Hamzah) that he would be granted freedom if he killed anyone of Muhammad, Ali, and Hamzah.

Some persons were offered high position as bribe. There were many who sided with Bani Umayyah and fought against the Prophet and his companions with the hope that the offices and position held by them during the age of ignorance would remain intact.

One of the supporters of Mu`awiya was Amr son of Aas who was his right hand. We shall speak about him in detail later.

The Syrian soldiers whom Mu`awiya sent to Siffin to fight against Ali also belonged to this group. Their object was to serve the man who paid them their wages and made attractive promises of wealth and position in the event of victory.

To this group also belonged the army of Yazid. These persons had been bribed heavily by Yazid and his courtiers, who had promised them security of life in case they sided with them. Many of these soldiers had come to fight against the Family of Ali because they feared that if they declined to do so they would be subjected to harassment and torture. Evidently every person does not possess the spirit of sacrifice.

History records that while going from Mecca to Kufa Imam Husayn met the poet Farazdaq and enquired from him about the attitude of the people of Kufa. Farazdaq replied: “The hearts of those people are with you but they will draw their swords against you tomorrow”.

Husayn made a similar enquiry from Majm`a son of Ubaid Aamari, Majm`a replied: “The distinguished and influential persons have been bribed heavily. They are your fell enemies. As regards others they are your supporters in the heart but their swords will be drawn against you tomorrow”.

As regards the other group of the supporters of Bani Umayyah i.e. those persons who sided with them on account of their inherent meanness their number was very large. Had these sinners and criminals been the enemies of the descendants of Abu Talib for the only sake of pleasing their chiefs they could be excused to some extent, and it could he said that these were worldly-minded persons who fought against the descendants of Abu Talib for worldly gains.

Their enmity with this family was not, however, on account of wealth or position which they wanted to acquire. Their enmity was basic and natural just as darkness is opposed to light, deviation is opposed to guidance and falsehood is opposed to truth, and oppression and tyranny is opposed to justice and equity. They were more hard- hearted and cruel than the ferocious animals. They were the deadly enemies of every virtuous person on account of their inherent wickedness. Only such mean persons can amputate the bodies of the dead, slaughter the children and harass the helpless women.

One of these tyrants was Busr son of Artat who has been given the name of executioner by the historians. When one studies his character the mentality of the second group of the supporters of Bani Umayyah can very well be realized. He was the right hand of Mu`awiya in the matter of tyranny and oppression. He committed atrocities which one shudders even to imagine. He killed old men whose backs were bent. He pulled out children from the laps of their mothers and slaughtered them. And all this was done by him to strengthen Mu`awiya's rule. When Mu`awiya sent him to Yemen with an army to loot and plunder he displayed such tyranny and cruelty as is unparalleled in history. Before his departure Mu`awiya called him and said: “Adopt the Hijaz route and reach Yemen passing through Mecca and Madina. If you pass through a place whose residents are supporters of Ali threaten them so much that they may become convinced that their lives are not going to be spared. Then compel them to take oath of allegiance to me. Kill those who decline to do so. Kill the supporters of Ali wherever you find them”.

Having obtained these instructions Busr departed and reached Madina. The Governor of Madina was Abu Ayyub Ansari, the first host of the Prophet in that city. Finding it difficult to oppose Busr he left Madina. Busr entered the city and delivered a speech. He hurled abuses on the people and said: “May your faces become black! “ Then he addressed the Ansar in particular and said: “O Jews and descendants of slaves! I shall torture you in such a way that the believers will come to their senses. He then put many houses to fire. Thereafter he reached Mecca. Qasham bin Abbas, the Governor of Mecca, ran away. There also Busr abused and threatened the people.

Kalbi says that on his way from Madina to Mecca Busr killed and plundered a large number of people. When the people of Mecca came to know about it they flew away from the city. Two sons of Ubaidullah bin Abbas also left the city. Busr caught them and put them to death. Some women of the tribe of Kanana also came out. One of them said: “I can understand the killing of men but I do not know what

offence the children have committed. The children have never been killed either during the age of ignorance or after the advent of Islam".

Then, passing through Taif, Busr reached Najran where he killed Abdullah bin Abdul Madan and his son Malik. This Abdullah belonged to the family of the in-laws of Ubaidullah bin Abbas. Then he assembled together the people of Najran and addressed them thus: "O Christians! O brothers of apes! If I am informed of any such act of yours as I do not like I shall mete out such a treatment to you that your race will become extinct, your fields will be destroyed and your houses will become desolate".

Thereafter he reached San`a and killed a large number of people in the city. A deputation of Ma'arib waited on him but he killed all its members. On departing from San`a he again killed thousands of the inhabitants of the city. He again came to San'a and killed some aged persons who belonged to Persia. (Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah, Ibn Abi'l Hadid vol. 1, p.271).

Historians say that Busr killed as many as thirty thousand persons. They do not include those whom he burnt alive. (Ibn Abi'l Hadid vol. 1, p. 30). The poets composed many verses about the atrocities committed by this hard-hearted criminal. Yazid son of Muzr`a says: "To whichever place Busr goes he plunders it and sets it on fire. His entire life history is full of such crimes".

Another criminal belonging to this group was Ziad bin Abih who massacred and plundered the people of Iraq in a very dreadful manner. In the first instance Mu`awiya acknowledged him to be his brother and gave him the name of Ziad son of Abu Sufyan to win his support. Then he appointed him as the Governor of Basra. On reaching Basra he delivered his well-known speech called ***`Khutbah-al-Batra'***. Then he busied himself in strengthening the Umayyad rule. He killed some and awarded punishments to others on mere suspicion and doubt.

There was nothing easier for the supporters and agents of Bani Umayyah than to amputate the hands and feet of their opponents, to hang or imprison them, to plunder their property, burn them alive, and to humiliate them during their life and also after their death. During the rule of Ziad people suffered untold miseries and hardships. None excelled him in cruelty and tyranny from among the deputies and agents of Bani Umayyah except Hajjaj who was even a greater criminal than he.

Commenting on his own policies and modus operandi Ziad said thus in the above-mentioned Khutbah-al-Batra. "I swear by God that I shall arrest the master in lien of his slave, the person available instead of one who has run away, the obedient one instead of the disobedient, and the healthy one instead of the invalid till one of you will say to the other: "O Sa`d! Run away for Sa`id has been killed. I shall not eat or drink anything till I set you right and destroy Basra and burn and pull down its houses. Beware! None of you should come out of his house during night. Whoever does so shall be beheaded. I swear by God that many of you will be killed at my hands. Everyone should take care that his blood is not shed by me".

After Basra he became the Governor of Kufa. On the very first day sitting at the gate of the Masjid and got the hands of eighty persons cut off. He followed the policy of oppression and terrorism to please

Mu`awiya. Madaini writes: “He kept searching the Shi`a of Ali and, as he had been one of them during the time of Ali, it was easy for him to find them out. He found them out from everywhere. He harassed and intimidated them, amputated their hands and feet, made them blind, hanged them on date-palm trees and expelled them from Iraq. The result was that no distinguished Shi`a remained there. We shall shortly narrate the story of Ziad and Hujr b. Adi, who was one of the supporters of Ali”.

To this very group of criminals belonged Ubaidullah son of Ziad, the founder of the tragedy of Karbala and murderer of Amr son of Hamq, Maitham Tammar, the aged Abdullah son of Afif Azdi and thousands of other innocent persons. It was the most ordinary thing for him to arbitrarily hang, kill and amputate others. Muslim son of Aqil said about him: “Merely on account of anger, enmity and suspicion he kills those whose killing has been forbidden by God. And this does not affect his merry-making and enjoyment. He feels as if he had done nothing. The worst type of cruelty and hard-heartedness manifested itself on the day on which he martyred Imam Husain. Even after the holy Imam's martyrdom Ibn Ziad's shamelessness, wickedness and meanness knew no bounds”.

Shimr son of Zil Jaushan, too, was as nasty in his meanness and wickedness as his master Ibn Ziad. He had a distinguishing quality of nursing grudge and enmity against all noble and magnanimous person. He made many small children of Husayn die of thirst, although the Euphrates was flowing just in front of them. He ordered his soldiers to trample the body of Imam Husayn with the hooves of their horses as a consequence of which his back and many of his ribs were broken to pieces. His dress, which was torn on account of arrow shots and strokes of the swords, had already been looted. If the small children of the Imam's family had come out of the tents, the Syrian soldiers would have cut them also to pieces.

Another such criminal was Hasin ibn Numayr. Imam Husayn had been deprived of water since the seventh day of Muharram. On the tenth of Muharram he reached the bank of the Euphrates after fighting with the enemies and took some water in the palm of his hand to drink and quench his thirst. This despicable person suddenly shot an arrow which struck the Imam's mouth and as a consequence of this his mouth and palms were filled with blood. On observing this the wicked person laughed shamelessly and went back.

Another such sinner was Amr Sa`d. He obeyed his wicked master Ubaidullah bin Ziad and made his best efforts to carry out his orders, although he could choose not to participate in the tragedy of Karbala (because Ubaidullah had not compelled him to assume the command of the Umayyad forces but had told him that he was prepared to entrust the expedition to some other commander).
After the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and his companions Amr Sa`d made the ladies of the Prophet's family captives and made them pass by the dead bodies of the martyrs whose heads had been severed.

Amr Sa`d was the first to shoot an arrow on Imam Husayn's forces and initiate the battle. He then said to the soldiers: “Bear witness to the fact that the first arrow has been shot by me”.

Amongst these criminals was also a Syrian who pointed towards Fatima daughter of Husayn and said:

“This slave-girl may please be given to me”.

Another supporter of Bani Umayyah was Muslim bin Uqbah who committed the most dreadful and abominable atrocities. Yazid sent him to Hijaz in the capacity of the commander of an army. He displayed extreme savagery there. In Madina he killed so many persons that blood began to flow in the streets of the city. He made it lawful for his soldiers to commit any unlawful act in Madina for three days.

As a consequence of this men and women were killed indiscriminately and their property was looted. The modesty of the women was outraged. Children were pulled away from the laps of their mothers and thrown on the walls so that their bones cracked and they died. Houses were razed to the ground. The descendants of the Muhajirs and the Ansar of the Prophet were not spared. During these three days seventeen hundred Muhajirs and Ansar were killed besides ten thousand other men and women.

Here we reproduce some sentences of the letter which Muslim bin Uqbah wrote to Yazid after this event. In this letter he has indulged in self-glorification on account of his achievements and has surprisingly enough associated all his crimes and atrocities to the will and determination of God. He says: “I have to inform the Commander of the Faithful - may God preserve him - that I left Damascus. The preparations which we made before departure were seen by you. Marwan bin Hakam also returned from Damascus and accompanied me. He proved to be very useful for combating our enemies. May God accord dignity to the Commander of the Faithful. Marwan behaved excellently and was so harsh with our enemies that I hope that his services will not remain unrewarded by the Imam of the Muslims and the vicegerent of God.

May God keep the supporters of the Commander of the Faithful hale and hearty! None of them was inconvenienced and none of the enemies faced them during day time. I did not offer my prayers in the Masjid of Madina until thousands of persons had been killed and their property had been freely looted. Every person who came before us was put to sword. Whoever tried to escape was pursued. He who was dying of wounds was done away with. As the Commander of the Faithful had ordered we plundered Madina for three days. I thank God who cured me of my worry when I killed the old opponents and hypocrites. Their stubbornness had exceeded all bounds and they were old rebels”.

The greatest criminal amongst the supporters of Bani Umayya was Hajjaj bin Yusuf Saqafi.

In compliance with the orders of the Umayyad caliph Abdul Malik bin Marwan, Hajjaj proceeded to the Hijaz to fight against Abdullah bin Zubayr. He besieged Mecca where Abdullah had taken refuge. He threw stones and fire on Mecca by means of catapults and consequently a part of the Ka`abah was burnt. When he achieved victory he cut off the heads of many opponents of Bani Umayyah and sent them to Abdul Malik at Damascus. He severed Abdullah's head and then sent him to the gallows. Not only this but he allowed the dead body to remain on the gallows for many days.

Asma, daughter of Abu Bakr, who was the mother of Abdullah was very old at that time and her son's death had grieved her much. Her eyesight had also grown weak. She came to the place where the dead

body of Abdullah was hanging and said: “Has the time not yet come when this rider should dismount?”. This displeased Hajjaj much and he insulted and rebuked the poor old woman.

As a reward for this achievement Abdul Malik appointed Hajjaj as Governor of Hijaz. He then killed innumerable persons and inflicted very harsh punishments upon others. Hajjaj praised himself in these words: “I am very quarrelsome, extremely revengeful and highly jealous”. It is not possible to asses how much this man hated mankind.

After some time Abdul Malik appointed him as Governor of Iraq to suppress disturbances in that region and restore law and order. Hajjaj reached Kufa accompanied by only twelve soldiers. However, he sent one man in advance so that the people might become aware of his impending arrival. Everyone began waiting for him in the masjid. It was the month of Ramazan. While the people were expressing their displeasure and hatred on his appointment as the governor, he arrived on the scene. He was wearing a red silken turban on his head with which a large part of his face was covered, and was holding a sword and a bow in his hand. He walked on step by step silently. The gathering was also silent. Eventually he mounted the pulpit and ordered the people to be called. The people of Kufa came into the masjid.

Hajjaj kept sitting silently on the pulpit for quite some time. The people got tired of waiting and began abusing him in low tones. Some of them even picked up pebbles to throw on him. Suddenly, however, he began speaking and the pebbles fell down from the hands of the people on account of fear.

Removing his turban from his head Hajjaj said: “I am the son of a very brave and terrible person who plunged himself into dangers with closed eyes. When I remove the turban from my face you will come to know who I am. “By God I am observing the raised looks, and stubborn necks, and the heads the time for whose chopping off has arrived, and it is I who will chop them off. I can see only blood between the heads and the beards. Look here! The Commander of the Faithful (Abdul Malik bin Marwan) spread his quiver and examined its wood. Then he found me to be the most solid wood and has sent me to you”.

“O people of Iraq! I swear by God that you are the sources of rebellion and treachery; you are the people of most immoral character. I shall peel you in the same manner in which a wood is peeled and shall beat you as the alien camels are beaten. You are like the people of a village whose inhabitants were leading comfortable lives and had enough to eat and drink, and when they showed ingratitude in respect of God's bounties, He subjected them to fear and hunger. O people of Iraq! O slaves of sticks and sons of slave-girls! I am Hajjaj bin Yusuf. I swear by God that when I swear to do something I do it. Now these groups are before me. You should follow the right path for I swear by Him who controls my life that I shall make you such that everyone of you will remain busy with his own body (i.e. I shall give you such a beating that it will take you sufficient time to recover from its effects).

You should, therefore, accept justice and forsake injustice before I mete out such a treatment to you that your women should become widows and your children orphans. I swear by God that if all of you do not go and join Mohlab's army within three days I shall kill those who are found here and shall confiscate

their property and demolish their houses". These were not empty threats. He treated the people of Kufa more harshly than what he had threatened them with.

Hajjaj was an equal partner in all the heinous crimes committed by Bani Umayyah as detailed above. He killed innumerable innocent persons. He himself used to say: "The thing which I enjoyed most was bloodshed, and doing things which none else can pick up courage to do, and which have not been done by anyone earlier. (Murooj- al-Zahab Mas`udi, Vol.3, p.67).

As soon as his name is mentioned one automatically is reminded of cruelty and oppression. It appears that Hajjaj and injustice are concomitants of each other.

The historians say: After Ubaidullah ibn Ziad, - the murderer of Imam Husayn, came Hajjaj bin Yusuf. He killed the supporters of Ali one by one on mere suspicion and groundless charges. He liked it more that a person might be called an infidel and an atheist in his presence rather than a supporter of Ali. In fact in his view the infidels and atheists deserved indulgence and even presents and prizes, but the supporters of Ali were fit to be killed.

Hajjaj began his rule in this oppressive manner and was never satiated with the horrible atrocities which he indulged in.

In Kufa he conscripted the people into the army for three days and sent everyone of them to the theatre of operations. There was none who did not go to the battlefield. So much so that children who had not yet come of age were also recruited and sent to fight. In the meantime Umayr bin Zabi Hanzali came to him and said: "May God bless the Amir! I am an old man. My son is young and quite strong". Hajjaj said: "This son will prove to be better than his father". Then he asked: "Who are you?" Umayr replied: "I am Umayr bin Zabi Harzali". Hajjaj said: "Are you not the same man who fought against Uthman bin Affan?" Umayr said: "Yes. I am that man".

Hajjaj said: "O enemy of God! Why did you do so?" Umayr replied: "I did so because Uthman had imprisoned my father who was old and weak. He did not release him till he died in the prison". Hajjaj said: "Did you not compose this verse: "I wished to kill him but I did not. O that I had done so, so that Uthman's wives might have mourned his death". Then he added: "I think the two cities namely Basra and Kufa will benefit, if you are killed. Your excuse is quite clear and your senility is evident. However, I am afraid that if I spare you others may also have the courage of disobeying my orders".

He was then beheaded in accordance with the orders of Hajjaj, his property was looted and his house was razed to the ground.

Hajjaj appointed Abdur Rahman bin Ubayd Tamimi, who was a very harsh person, to serve as his deputy in Kufa. When he was satisfied with the conditions prevailing in Kufa he proceeded to Basra. At Basra great opposition prevailed against Bani Umayyad dynasty and the city was in a riotous condition. There he delivered a speech and abused the people of Basra very much. He also threatened them in the

same manner in which he had threatened the people of Kufa. He told them that if they did not join Mohlab's army within three days they would be punished severely.

When he descended the pulpit it so happened that an old man named Sharik bin Amr Yashkari who was one-eyed and was suffering from hernia came to him and said: “May God bless the Amir! I am a patient of hernia. Bushr bin Marwan, the brother of the caliph and the former Governor of Basra, had also excused me from military service”. Hajjaj said: “I think you are speaking the truth”. However, immediately after saying this he ordered his head to be chopped off. The result was that every young and old man of Basra joined Mohlab's army.

One day this very Hajjaj was taking his meals and some associates of his were also present at his dining table. In the meantime the policemen brought a man and said that he was disobedient. The man was trembling with fear. He said to Hajjaj: “For God's sake do not take my life. I swear by God that I have never borrowed money from anyone nor have I joined any army. I am a weaver and I was arrested and brought here while I was at my loom”. Hajjaj ordered the man to be beheaded at once. When the poor man saw the sword he prostrated himself and his head was severed while he was in that posture.

Hajjaj continued eating as if nothing had happened. However, his associates stopped eating. They were astonished to see this cruelty. Hajjaj got annoyed and said. “What has happened to yon? Why has the colour of your faces changed and why have the morsels of food fallen from your hands? Is it because one single person has been killed? A disobedient person sets an example for others to disobey. The ruler is entitled to kill him or spare him".

According to Hajjaj the people of Kufa and Basra could be brought to their senses only when they were subjected to tyranny and cruelty of this kind.

What we have mentioned here is only a very brief account of the atrocities committed by him, otherwise a voluminous book is needed to record his cruel acts and the murders which he committed in different ways.

Ibn Jarood revolted against the cruelty and oppression of Hajjaj but the revolt did not succeed and Hajjaj was victorious. He cut off the heads of a large number of the rebels and sent them to Mohlab asking him to display them extensively so that those who might be thinking of rebellion might ponder over the consequence of such an act.

Then he conscripted hundreds of thousands of the people of Kufa and Basra to fight against the enemies of Bani Ummayyah. By doing so he wanted to take revenge on the followers of Ali, and at the same times he used those soldiers to serve his own interests. As a consequence of this there was not a single young man left in those two cities who was not compelled to meet death. They were killed either at the hands of Hajjaj or with the swords of his enemies.

The people of Iraq revolted against Hajjaj time and again but these revolts were weak and the rebels

were soon overpowered by Hajjaj and became target of his indignation. Most of them were killed, their houses were set on fire, and their properties were confiscated. Hundereds of people were put to death evcrvday. The men and women who were imprisoned in the prisons of Iraq were subjected to extreme torture and awaited their turn to be killed. If Hajjaj or his soldiers did not find time to do away with them they died of hunger.

The people were spending their days in great distress.Their condition became worse when Hajjaj was victorious in the Battles of Zawiah and Dayr Jamajam. As a consequence of the Battle of Zawiah in which Hajjaj was victorious and Muhammad bin Ash'ath was defeated he captured eleven thousand Iraqis. In the first instance he promised that their lives would be spared, but, when thev surrendered their arms, he beheaded all of them. As a result of the Battle of Dayr Jamajam the Iraqis were completely vanquished. Besides there being shortage of food plague also broke out. All the rebels were captured by Hajjaj and he did not spare even one of them.

Even after all this widespread destruction, havoc, and loot, Kufa and Basra did not enjoy peace. Hajiaj continued to harass them and the number of those killed increased day after day. Before killing them he wildly insulted and humiliated them and ridiculed their views and beliefs. Just as his slaughtering the people knew no bounds, his insulting and humiliating them also was at its extreme, so much so that whenever people met in the masjids and bazars they did not talk of anything except that such and such person was killed the other day, such and such would be sent to gallows that day, and how someone was maltreated before his being put to death.The well-known sentence of Hajjaj: “Soldier! Chop off his head” was common talk of the town in Iraq.

He had such a spite against the Shi'a of Ali that he killed those persons who bore the names of anv of the members of the Family of Abu Talib) (e.g. Ali, Husayn) Many persons came and offered excuse for their names.

It is said that a man came before him and said: “O Amir! My parents have been very unjust to me. They named me Ali, although I am a poor and helpless man and need your kindness and assisstance”.
In short the cruelty of Hajjaj had become proverbial and the supporters of Ali were his special target. When those who were killed in compliance with his orders were counted, it transpired that they numbered 120 thousand. At the time of his death fifty thousand men and thirty thousand women were in prisons.

However, the Umayyad caliph - Abdul Malik bin Marwan made this recommendation to his sons: “Honour Hajjaj, because it is he who has trampled upon the pulpits, destroyed the cities and subjugated the enemies for your sake”. This recommendation was fully acted upon. After Abdul Malik's death his son Walid allowed Hajjaj to continue as Governor of Kufa, Basra and the eastern regions.

Before ending this chapter it seems necessary to mention an extremely tragic event. This event shows apparently the traits and characteristics of Bani Umayyah and the descendants of Abu Talib and of their

respective supporters. If on the one hand it displays the greatness and dignity of the supporters of Ali it manifests on the other hand the meanness and wickedness of Bani Umayyah.

Briefly the story is this: Hujr bin Adi Kandi was a sincere devotee of Ali. When Imam Hasan was obliged to make peace with Mu`awiya Hujr also along with others took oath of allegiance. But this did not make him forsake his love for Ali, and express hatred for him. Rather he wished to follow in the footsteps of Ali. He wanted his character to be a specimen of Ali's character.

Hujr was was a very sincere and upright person. He liked peace and hated fighting and conflict. He whole- heartedly supported social justice. He did not consider authority to be anything other than a source of public service. In all these matters his views were the same as those of Ali. If a ruler helped the people he supported him, but otherwise he was his sworn enemy. Hence it was natural that he should not like Bani Umayyah abusing Ali from the pulpits and should openly express his resentment against this practice even though he might have to suffer hardships at the hands of the ruler of the day.

History says that once Mughayrah bin Sho`ba, the Governor of Kufa abused Ali from the pulpit. Hujr bin Adi rose to his feet and said loudly: “What is all this extravagant talk. Pay us the stipends which you are withholding. The money is not for you, and the previous governors never coveted it. You abuse the Commander of the Faithful and praise and eulogize the criminals. Many other persons supported Hujr and consequently Mughira had to descend the pulpit without finishing his speech. Hujr continued to criticize Bani Umayyah and did not sit quiet as and when he saw the religious laws being infringed.

In the meantime Mughayrah died and was succeeded by Ziad bin Sumayyah. At one time Ziad and Hujr were friends, but their friendship came to an end on account of an incident. It so happened that a Muslim Arab killed a Zimmi unbeliever. The case came before Ziad who decided that the Muslim need not be punished for the crime but should pay blood-money. The heirs of the Zimmi declined to take blood money. Their stand was that:

- In Islam all the people are the family of God.

- Every human being is the brother of another human being whether he likes it or not.

- No Arab is superior to a non-Arab. It is only piety and doing good which can make one superior to others.

Hujr believed in the justice which Imam Ali had made his motto and for the sake of which he laid down his life. He, therefore, disliked Ziad's decision. He could not keep silent. He insisted that in the matter of retaliation the Muslims and the non-Muslims were equal. Many other Muslims lent support to Hujr. Ziad and his men feared that a disturbance might take place. Ziad, therefore, ordered reluctantly that the criminal might be awarded punishment. Thereafter he wrote to Mu`awiya complaining about the conduct of Hujr and his companions. Mu`awiya advised Ziad to watch the activities of Hujr and his companions so that he might find something done by them which might serve as a proof against them. From that time

onwards the differences between the two parties increased.

Ziad sent some residents of Kufa to Hujr so that they might advise him to refrain from his activities. They came back after meeting Hujr and said that he was adamant in his views. Ziad then summoned Hujr but he declined to come. Eventually Ziad deputed a police-officer to arrest Hujr. A fight however took place between Hujr and the police-party, and Hujr went underground. Ziad was very much annoyed.

He called Muhammad bin Ash`ath bin Qais who was a supporter of Hujr and a distinguished personality of the Kandi tribe and threatened him that if he did not bring Hujr he would put him into prison, and his hands and feet would be cut off and he would be executed. Hujr did not like that another person should suffer on account of him. He, therefore, came before Ziad but before doing so he obtained an undertaking from him that he would not molest him but would instead send him to Mu`awiya with whom he would settle the affair himself.

However, as soon as Hujr came he was arrested and thrown into the prison. Thereafter a search was made for his supporters. After some bloodshed some of them were arrested and also put into the prison.

Ziad then called the people of Kufa and asked them to give evidence against these persons and threatened them. Some of them however deposed that Hujr and his friends loved Ali and none else, and they criticized Uthman and abused Mu`awiyah. Ziad was not satisfied with what they said because he required some decisive evidence. In the meantime Abu Burdah bin Abu Musa Ash`ari prepared an evidence deed against Hujr: “This is the evidence which Abu Burdah son of Abu Musa Ash`ari has given for the sake of God. He deposes that Hujr and his companions have ceased to be obedient and have left the paty. They have ceased to have any affinity with the caliphate of Mu`awiya and have decided to start fighting once again”.

When Abu Burdah finished writing the deed, Ziad asked the people of Kufa to affix their signatures on it. About seventy persons signed it. Ziad fraudulently wrote on it the names of some such persons who were neither present at that time nor had affixed their signatures. One of them was the Judge Shurayh. He at once sent a message to Mu`awiya dissociating himself from the evidence deed and said in clear terms: “I testify that Hujr is a pious person and is one of the distinguished personalities of the age”.

Hujr and his friends were then taken to Mu`awiya. Ziad's letter and the evidence deed also reached him. He read out the two documents before the people. Thereupon some persons advised him to imprison the persons concerned. Others suggested that they might be kept in different cities of Syria and might not be allowed to go back to Iraq. Mu`awiya corresponded with Ziad on the subject. He replied: “If you want to keep Iraq in your hands you should not let them come back here”.

After a few days Mu`awiya sent a man to Hujr and his companions and offered that if they dissociated themselves from Ali and abused him and praised Uthman, their lives would be spared, but those who declined to do so would be killed”.

Hujr and his friends turned down the offer and were consequently put to death. This tragic story is also recorded in all the history books. It shows the loftiness of character, the steadfastness ot these brave men, for they could see their graves with their own eyes and the swords hanging on their heads and yet they could not for a moment forsake their love for Ali. What Mu`awiya and his men had done in their case was that they had dug a grave in front of each of them so that whoever declined to show disgust against Ali might be beheaded and thrown down into the grave.

Some historians have also stated with regard to these persons that two of Hujr's companions were terrified when they saw the swords and the graves and asked Mu`awiya's guards to take them to the caliph, saying that they had no difference with Mu`awiya about Ali and Uthman. They were, therefore, taken to Mu`awiya. One of them expressed hatred against Ali outwardly, but the other praised Ali and his companions, abused Mu`awiya and his supporters and said extremely harsh words about Uthman,which Mu`awiya could not tolerate. He ordered the man to be sent back to Ziad with instructions that he should be killed in a manner in which none had ever been killed in the Muslim world till that time. Ziad buried him alive.

It is said that when Hujr was going to be killed he uttered only this sentence: “There is God between us and these Muslims. The Iraqis gave evidence against us and the Syrians killed us”.

There is no doubt about the fact that the example of despotic and dictatorial rule set by the Umayyads dynasty and the atrocities committed by them were unparalleled and the lives of Ali and his descendants were on the other hand the best specimens of purity of intellect and action, and of democracy. They did not exploit the people like the Umayyads but considered the produce of the land to be the right of common men rather than that of the rich and the influential persons.

The nature of the followers and supporters of Bani Umayyah had a sharp contrast with that of the descendants and followers of Ali. The worldly-minded influential persons, therefore, inclined towards Bani Umayyah for the sake of material gains and the common people also became their adherents in large numbers. This happened because at that time the people did not assess the moral values and did not understand what would be beneficial for them in future and what would be harmful to them. They, therefore, thought of immediate gains and did not realize what sort of people they were supporting. And when they did realize it the time had already passed and it was too late.

On the other hand the persons whose nature, morals and ways and manners resembled those of Ali and his descendants, inclined towards them, and remained steadfast on the path of truth. They were subjected to severe persecution and torture by Bani Umayyah and their supporters but they never wavered or faltered. Following the example of their Imam, the Commander of the Faithful Ali, they laid down their lives but did not tolerate the extinction of social justice.

Just as the supporters and friends of Ali and his descendants became virtuous and acquired the high qualities of magnanimity, mercy and piety, in the same manner the followers of Bani Umayyah became

the victims of vices like egotism, obstinacy, oppression and exploitation.

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It will be better if we mention once again the views expressed by some Arab writers without commenting on them because what we have said in this chapter completely refutes their idle talk. Out of these Arab writers we may take Muhammad Kurd Ali and what has been stated by him about the importance and greatness of Bani Umayyah may be treated as a specimen of the praises showered upon them by others.

Praising Mu`awiya and his blood thirsty army officers who committed innumerable atrocities as detailed in the foregoing pages Muhammad Kurd Ali says in his book entitled ***"Al-Islam wa al-Hazarat al-Arabiyah":*** "The most important action which Mu`awiya took was that he increased the salaries of the army and due to his good luck he also acquired the support of some very efficient persons like Ziad bin Abih, Mughira bin Sho`ba, Zuhhak bin Qais, Muslim bin Uqbah, Busr bin Artat etc".

Praising these bloodthirsty persons Kurd said that they were very efficient and great personalities of the country although it was necessary for him to explain that Islam has nothing to do with such tyrants and oppressors and all civilized people, whether Arabs or non-Arabs, hate such cruel persons.

It is very surprising that Muhammad Kurd Ali does not feel the prick of conscience while writing such things, nor does he do justice with those living in the 20th century by falsifying historical facts. He also fails to remember that earlier he himself has written in his book: "During the days of Mu`awiya a pious person was asked: "In what condition have you left the people?" He replied: "I have left them in two conditions - the oppressed who do not get justice and the oppressors who are not tired of injustice".

1. Prophet Noah had three sons named Ham, Sam, and Japheth. The black-coloured races are the descendants of Ham. Mu`awiya called her `daughter of Ham' by way of ridicule on account of her black colour.
2. Tareef, Tarif and Turfa, the sons of Adi.

Murderers of Uthman

The brief account which we have given of the nature and habits of Bani Umayyah and the descendants of Ali and their respective supporters shows clearly that love for authority and sovereignty, and egotism and selfishness had taken deep roots in the hearts of Bani Umayyah, and their followers, who possessed habits and nature similar to their masters were also as ambitious as them.

As we have stated earlier Bani Umayyah and their supporters opposed the Prophet and Islam, because they possessed the mentality of the chiefs of Quraysh who could not tolerate that Islam should restrain

them from their evil acts and destroy their social laws which were no doubt beneficial for the traders and the rich persons, but were death warrants for the poor and the helpless.

From the day on which the Prophet announced his appointment to the prophetic mission till the conquest of Mecca the chiefs and dignitaries among Quraysh had embraced Islam but the hopes and objects of each of them were different. The events show that these persons can be divided into three categories as detailed below:

Firstly there were persons who considered Islam to be a true religion and embraced it willingly. Their number amongst the chiefs of Quraysh was the smallest.

Secondly there were those who were watching as to which of the two parties – the Muslims and Quraysh was going to succeed. They wanted to join the successful party. To this category belonged Amr Aas. We shall explain later the circumstances in which he embraced Islam.

Thirdly there were persons who embraced Islam reluctantly. They had lost their dignity and honourable position and had joined the ranks of the Muslims with the intention of replacing Islam by ignorance as soon as an opportunity arose. To this category of the chiefs and elders of Quraysh belonged Mu`awiya's father Abu Sufyan bin Harb and those tribal chiefs who became apostates immediately after the death of the Prophet.

The chiefs and elders of Quraysh who belonged to the first category remained steadfast in their faith but their Islam was unconsciously mixed up with their sentiment of belonging to high families.

As regards the persons belonging to the other two categories the pivot of their politics was only the economic aspect and its social aggression. The chiefs of Quraysh belonging to these categories united for their personal advantages. If their interests were common they helped one another but if they were divergent they worked separately.

The responsibility for corruption and mischief devolves on the chiefs belonging to all the three categories although the chiefs belonging to the last two categories had a larger hand in it. They did not wish to miss any opportunity of gaining wealth and money and did not care as to how many responsibilities rested in those days on the shoulders of the Muslims in connection with the promotion of Islam. Signs of love for wealth and profit had begun appearing from beginning of the period of the caliphate of Abu Bakr.

An evidence of this is the incident of Khalid bin Walid and the harsh words exchanged in that connection by Abu Bakr and Umar. The story in short is that Khalid killed Malik bin Nuwaira cruelly and unjustly to acquire booty, and outraged the modesty of his wife, who was very beautiful. When the news reached Abu Bakr he was asto- nished and also felt grieved and uttered this well-known sentence. “War booty has made the Arabs greedy and Khalid has disobeyed my orders”.

When Khalid came to see Abu Bakr he had three arrows in his turban. When Umar saw him he said: “O

enemy of God! All these acts of yours are hypocritical. By God if I gain control over you I shall stone you to death". He then pulled the arrows from Khalid's turban and broke them. Khalid could not pick up courage to say anything as he was under the impression that Umar was acting in accordance with the instructions of Abu Bakr.

Later Khalid saw Abu Bakr and put up excuses before him. Abu Bakr believed him and accepted his excuses. When Umar came to know about this he incited Abu Bakr against Khalid and suggested that Khalid must be punished for killing Malik. Abu Bakr said: "O Umar! You had better keep quiet. Khalid is not the first person who has committed a mistake in the matter of interpretation (of law)".

During the days of Umar the distinguished persons of Quraysh also coveted worldly gains and there are innumerable instances which go to prove this fact. The best proofs of it are the verses which a poet composed and sent to Umar. In those verses it had been said that in some cities and provinces the distinguished persons and dignitaries misappropriated public property and took care that he (Umar) should not come to know about it. It was added that the people were very much distressed owing to this exploitation.

The poet says: "When they determine we also determine. When they perform jihad we also perform jihad. Then where have they acquired wealth from, while we are empty-handed?
When an Indian trader brings musk it is found flowing in the heads of these dignitaries. Obtain God's property from whomever you can. These persons will remain satisfied even if you let them retain half of their wealth".

Umar ordered some of these persons not to leave their places or residences and dismissed others from their posts. He also made some of them render accounts of their earnings and confiscated their wealth.

Uthman gave complete freedom to the dignitaries and the curbs which had been imposed by Umar on their greed were removed. These dignitaries became victorious under the leadership of Bani Umayyah which appeared at one time and disappeared at another. The result was that the people had to suffer great hardships and the dignitaries indulged in such nefarious activities as had never been observed during the time of Prophet or during that of Abu Bakr and Umar

It will not be out of place to mention here what Ali said about Uthman and Bani Umayyah before Uthman became caliph. He had said to his uncle Abbas: "I am sure the Quraysh will make Uthman occupy the caliphate, and Uthman will introduce innovations. If he lives I shall remind you of these words of mine and if he is killed or dies Bani Umayyah will keep the rulership revolve around themselves". How true the prediction of Imam Ali proved in the matter of Uthman!

When Uthman occupied the caliphate he had to face problems which were very intricate. Bani Umayyah, instead of assisting Uthman in solving them, made them more complicated. Furthermore, they took as much advantage of Uthman's mildness as they could, and based their policies on family bias, personal influence and authority and disregard for public welfare. Utilizing all resources of governmental authority

they reserved all posts and positions for themselves and converted the Islamic system of government into a pure capitalistic system and the caliphate into kingship. All resources of the State became the monopoly of their friends and slaves.

Immediatelty on assuming the caliphate Uthman began making the people subservient to Bani Umayyah. He made Bani Umayyah rulers of all Islamic cities and provinces and gave them large tracts of land. He made the property of the Muslims a plaything for the wealthy, and openly supported the capitalist class which had been crushed by Islam earlier. The result was that the dignitaries and powerful persons grew much richer and the common men became their slaves.

We narrate below a few instances which will go to show what position Bani Umayyah enjoyed during the days of Uthman and how the state had become a plaything in their hands.

Uthman gave one-fifth of the war booty received from the conquest of African countries to his cousin Marwan bin Hakam. This innovation was resented very much by the people! Abdur Rahman bin Hanbal representing the views of the public says: “I swear by God that God has not left anything in vain, but you O Uthman have created a mischief for us. It is a test for you or maybe a test for us”.

Fadak, which had in fact been inherited by Fatima, was given by Uthman to Marwan. Uthman also gave him one hundred thousand dirhams out of the public treasury. The Umayyad - Abdullah bin Khalid bin Usayd requested him for assistance and he gave him one hundred thousand dirhams, although there was no justification for such extravagance. He was especially kind to Hakam bin Aas who was a sworn enemy of Islam, and the Prophet had expelled him from Madina. Uthman gave him one hundred thousand dirhams.

There was a bazaar named Mehzool in Madina which was endowed by the Prophet upon the Muslims. Uthman gave it away to Harth bin Hakam.

There were around Madina pasturages, which had been declared by the Prophet to be the common land for grazing the animals belonging to all Muslims. Uthman snatched away those pasturages from the Muslims and reserved them exclusively for Bani Umayyah. From then onwards only the camels belonging to Bani Umayyah could graze there.

The entire amount of taxes received from the African region i.e. from Egypt to Tangiers was given by him to Abdullah Bani Sarah. The day on which he gave one hundred thousand dirhams to Marwan bin Hakam, he also gave two hundred thousand dirhams to Abu Sufyan bin Harb. Upon this Zaid bin Arqam, the treasurer, came to Uthman and, with tears in his eyes, threw the keys of the Public Treasury before him. Uthman said: “Why are you weeping? I have shown regard to these persons on account of our kinship”. Zaid said: “Even if you had given one hundred dirhams to Marwan it would have been too much, but you have given him one hundred thousand dirhams!” Uthman said: “Let the keys remain here. It will be possible for me to find many treasurers”.

A large quantity of wealth was received from Iraq. The whole amount was distributed by Uthman amongst Bani Umayyah. When he gave his daughter Ayesha in marriage to Harth bin Hakam he gave him one hundred thousand dirhams besides what he had already given him. He also gave Harth a large number of camels which were received from various Islamic countries. He also deputed him to collect zakat from the tribe of Qaza`ah and gave him the entire amount collected by him. It was three million dirhams. (Sharh Nahjul-Balaghah, Vol. 1, p.98).

Once some distinguished companions who were headed by Ali met Uthman and had a talk with him about Harth. Uthman said: "He is my near relative". The companions said; "Did Abu Bakr and Umar not have near relatives? Why didn't they bestow favours on them?" Uthman replied: "Abu Bakr and Umar sought recompense from God by keeping their relatives deprived, whereas I seek recompense from God by bestowing favours on them". The companions said: "We prefer their conduct to yours".

Uthman did many such things as encouraged the persons in position to accumulate wealth by unlawful means. He left the influential persons free to do whatever they liked; rather he made matters easy for them so that they might become participants in the crimes of Bani Umayyah and might not get any occasion to criticize their activities.

Talha bin Ubaidallah erected a lofty palace in Kufa which became known amongst the Arabs, after three centuries, as Dar al-Talhatain. As regards his income Mas`udi has said in ***Murooj al-Zahab*** that only from Iraq he received daily grains worth a thousand gold coins, rather more than that. An equivalent amount was received from Kanas. The income from Sirat and its suburbs was even larger. In Madina he built a magnificent palace which resembled that of Uthman.

Abdur Rahman bin Auf erected many large and spacious palaces and buildings. He had many stables and in everyone of them one hundred horses were kept. He also owned one thousand camels and ten thousand goats. Besides all this wealth he had three million gold coins.

Zaid bin Thabit left behind so much gold that it had to be cut into pieces with an axe to be distributed among his heirs. Besides this he left behind a large quantity of other properties.

Laila bin Umayyah left behind half a million gold coins. Mas`udi writes about Zubayr bin Awam that during the time of Uthman he owned one thousand slaves and one thousand slave-girls. He built splendid palaces at various places like Basra, Kufa and Alexandria and owned fifty thousand gold coins in cash and one thousand horses.

After writing all this Mas`udi says: "It needs volumes to narrate how the wealth of the rich increased during the period of Uthman. This was not the position during the days of Umar.

The wealth of a person with whom Uthman and other Umayyads were pleased knew no bounds. The common people starved while the relatives and friends of Uthman rolled in wealth. They collected so much wealth that the people had never seen or heard of it. He himself was also very rich. At the time of

his assassination his treasurer had one hundred and fifty thousand gold coins and thousands of dirhams. He had property worth about one hundred thousand dirhams in the valley of Qura' and Hunayn. He also possessed innumerable camels and horses (vide the book entitled ***`Uthman'*** written by Sadiq Arjun, printed in Egypt).

Jewels and ornaments of the Iranian emperors which were acquired as war booty during the time of Umar were kept in the Public Treasury. During the time of Uthman, however, they were seen shining on the bodies of the daughters of Uthman. The people saw with their own eyes their rights being trampled upon. The persons in authority ridiculed the poor subjects who could not dare say anything in reply.

Mas`udi says about Uthman in ***Murooj al-Zahab:*** "Uthman was very prodigal. His governors and other persons also followed his example. Uthman built in Madina, a palace, whose doors were of teak wood. He also acquired large properties, gardens and springs in Madina.

Uthman gave an open licence to Bani Umayyah to appoint or remove the officers. They accumulated wealth and created zones of influence and authority for perpetuation of their rule. The source of all these evils was Marwan bin Hakam who was appointed by Uthman as his minister. Uthman followed his advice in all matters.

Similary Uthman divided the people financially into two classes. One class consisted of the officers and relatives of Uthman who rolled in wealth and committed all sorts of atrocities, and the other class belonged to the common people who were deprived and helpless.

Previously the practice was that the revenue which was collected from a certain city or province was spent in the first instance to assist the needy persons belonging to those very places and the surplus amount was sent to the capital, so that the caliph might spend it on the needy persons there. Uthman ordered that the entire amount should be sent to the capital. The self-seekers took much advantage of this change in policy".

Dr. Taha Husayn says: "The first trouble which arose on account of this practice was that capitalism spread in Iraq and other provinces on a large scale. This practice benefited those who were big capitalists and could purchase the property of the persons belonging to less priviledged class. Thus Talha and Marwan bin Hakam purchased large properties. From then onwards began the practice of purchase and sale, mortgage, lease etc. not only in Hijaz and Iraq but also in other Arab countries and conquered areas, and the large estates came into existence. In the circumstances all sorts of people got engaged in making money as a result of which a class of rich rulers came into existence. It was more distinguished than the class which possessed ancestral estates.

The second trouble which arose was that the persons who purchased properties in the Arab cities in general and in Hijaz in particular endeavoured to gain maximum profit from their lands. They purchased a large number of slaves. Very soon Hijaz was like a paradise. Thus a class of landlords came into existence in cities like Madina and Ta'if. They did not work themselves, and spent their time in merry-

making, and the entire work was done by their slaves. All the affairs of these masters were managed by their servants. These masters were in fact the slaves and the slaves were the real masters. On the other side there were the bedouin who were deprived of all amenities of life. They did not possess any land in Hijaz which they might sell to purchase land in Iraq and they did not also have any land in Iraq which they might sell to purchase land in Hijaz.

These actions, resorted to by Uthman of his own, or on the suggestion of his advisers, produced very evil political and social results.

The political result was that only a few persons became the owners of enormous wealth. Every capitalist drew the people towards himself by means of his wealth, organized a group of his adherents and began thinking of becoming a ruler. Such persons endeavoured to take advantage of the disunity of the people.

From the social point of view the people got divided into various classes.To one class belonged the persons who were wealthy and enjoyed influence and authority and to the other class belonged the poor and the helpless. Persons belonging to the former class had big estates and slaves and servants who worked for them on their lands and rendered other services. In between these two classes was the middle class. Those who belonged to this class lived in far offcities. They attacked the enemies and defended the frontiers. The lives and property of the people were safe because of this class.

The rich persons made these middle class people their tools. They created dissensions among them and divided them into various groups. The history of the Muslims shows that dissensions first appeared among the affluent persons. In the first instance the capitalists opposed one another, and later differences appeared between the middle class people and the rich people. As regards the third class those belonging to it served the rich and worked on their lands. Apparently they did not wield any influence in the society and did not take part in the dissensions of others. Their differences appeared at a later stage. (***Al-Fitnatu'l Kubra,*** Vol. 1, `Uthman' p. 105 – 109).

Till that time the Arabs were not accustomed to class distinctions and none had been seen enjoying a distinctive position or receiving special gifts without proper justification. It had also not happened till that time that the welfare of particular persons should have been given priority over the welfare of the masses. The character of the Prophet, his justice and generosity were deeply imprinted on their minds. They were habituated to the government which was the government of the people and not of a few persons, the government of justice and not of tyranny – the government which shared the woes of the people and not the one which created disorder and chaos.

When Uthman succeeded Umar as caliph and adopted the policies mentioned above the people were greatly perturbed. They complained against these policies to Uthman time and again and also expressed disgust against the Umayyad governors and officers who followed those policies. At times it so happened that Uthman felt ashamed on account of the malpractices of the Umayyad rulers, heard the complainants patiently and promised to remove the corrupt officers. Soon afterwards, however, those

officers prevailed upon Uthman and continued to occupy their positions, indulged in greater malpractices and ruthlessly took revenge on their opponents.

Very often the Arabs approached Uthman in the form of deputations and complained against the Umayyad officers. Uthman promised them that their grievances would be redressed. However, when they returned to their home-towns, the governors and officers concerned put their leaders to death. Those who escaped punishment went to Madina again and complained to the distinguished companions of the Prophet. The companions approached Uthman and supported the cause of the complainants. Uthman issued orders dismissing the oppressive ruler and appointing a new one in his place. However, before the new nominee proceeded to his place of duty a messenger was sent to the dismissed ruler with a letter containing instructions that the new appointee as well as the persons who had approached the caliph in the form of adeputation should be put to death as soon as they arrived. Consequently the old ruler remained at his post and carried out the orders of the caliph meticulously and became more violent in his oppression.

These were the policies which Uthman adopted on the advice of influential persons to ensure their welfare and safeguard their interests. The common people were subjected to great oppression during his period. Some times they remained silent and at other times they opposed and criticized the regime openly. Some poets have drawn very true pictures of the capitalists of that time.

There were some magnanimous persons also in the society, who possessed enlightened minds and speaking tongues and enjoyed great respect among the Muslims. They were also extremely frightened like other persons on account of the prevailing conditions. However, they strongly opposed the plutocracy of Bani Umayyah and the policies adopted by Uthman and his associates. Their opposition was, nevertheless, based on principles and without any bad intentions whatsoever. Their objections were quite sensible and free from personal bias.

We shall see later how cruelly these well-intentioned, truthful and pious critics were dealt with.

The volley of criticism

As we have explained above, Bani Umayyah and their supporters and the wealthy and influential persons of the time were responsible for the shortcomings in the administrative, political and financial policies of Uthman which resulted in great evils, disturbances, and chaos. Uthman himself was responsible for this state of affairs in no lesser a degree because he relied on Bani Umayyah and favoured them, ordered whatever they desired and forbade what they disliked. In fact they were the real rulers and Uthman was their obedient servant.

Imam Ali has drawn a very true picture of the caliph by saying: “He is like a man who is choked by drinking water” (because the remedy for being choked is drinking water, but if a person is choked owing to drinking water there can be no remedy for him). He further says: “A person whose favourites and confidants are corrupt is like one who is choked by drinking water”.

Just as Uthman had given complete freedom to Bani Umayyah to acquire influence and authority and allowed the dignitaries to accumulate and hoard wealth by exploiting the common people, he had also permitted his advisers to curb the freedom of the distinguished companions of the Prophet if they raised any objection, and asked them to do justice to the public.

It so happened very often that only placing restrictions on the truthful and justice-loving believers was not considered sufficient but Uthman awarded them severe punishment either of his own accord or on the suggestion of Marwan. He considered them to be his enemies as if they wanted to deprive him of the goodness of Marwan and his brother Harth. Uthman in all matters, whether big or small followed the advice of Bani Umayyah who were his chief advisers and had eventually lost his life on account of them. They took all powers in their own hands, whether with or without Uthman's willingness, and made him helpless. They really wanted his death, and secretly revolted against him, so that another Umayyad might become the caliph. All their supporters helped them in this matter and when Uthman got encircled by his enemies, they (i.e. Bani Umayyah) flew away leaving him in the lurch just as his other supporters had slipped away.

Uthman kept away from himself all those well wishers of his with whose help the conditions could improve, and made Bani Umayyah his confidants and advisers. They advised him to keep at arm's length all those persons who were considered to be his enemies although in fact they were not his enemies.

A mischievous and ill-natured person, Marwan, was his chief adviser, but he did not consider Ali fit to be trusted, although if his views had been accorded weight he would have given Uthman sincere and far-sighted advice and would have stopped him from nepotism and showing special favour to his friends. He would have set the government on a stable and profitable path, and preference would have been given to welfare of common people, who have been protected from oppression and tyranny.

Marwan enjoyed such an influence on Uthman that he never acted then, went up to Uthman and told him that Ali and other distinguished companions were conspiring against him. He used to say: These people are instigating the public against you. The only way to maintain law and order and to save the caliphate is that you should kill Ali and all other distinguished companions of the Prophet so that the affairs of the State should be set up according to the advice of Bani Umayyah. It is they who are your relatives and real well-wishers who would like your rule to continue.

When general revolt against Uthman took place in all the cities he called a conference to consider ways and means to restore law and order. Only Bani Umayyah and their supporters were invited to attend this

conference.

It was these very Bani Umayyah against whom the companions of the Prophet and the public had complaints and it was on account of them that the people had revolted. However, instead of calling the companions of the Prophet and holding consultations with them to improve the situation Uthman called those who were the root-cause of all troubles, and because of whom the people had became the enemies of Uthman.

All those who participated in the conference expressed their views and suggested ways and means of tackling the situation. It would appear that some of them wanted disturbances to continue because their interests could be served better by this. Others wanted the trouble to flare up for the same reason. Still others wanted improvement of the situation provided that their own influence and authority did not suffer.

All those who participated in the conference were inimical towards Ali. They were afraid that his justice, truthfulness and piety might spoil their own game and repress their oppressive activities, and his policy of equity and equality might make their capitalist government fall to the ground. The most active members of the conference were Mu`awiya, Marwan and Amr Aas. It can, therefore, well be imagined what the result of those consultations should have been.

Ali did not care if Uthman did not consult him in those difficult circumstances. He was anxious that the conditions of the Muslims should improve and justice and equity should be established, even though Uthman and his supporters might become his enemies. He continued to advise Uthman till the last moment to redress the grievances of the people and compensate them for the oppression suffered by them so that his caliphate might not be endangered. Once when the people became furious and wanted to attack Uthman he pacified them, and also advised Uthman in these words: [1]

“People are waiting for me outside and they have sent me to you to settle the differences between you and them. I swear by God that I cannot understand what to tell you when I do not know anything of which you are not aware, and have not to communicate to you any news which has not already reached you. I know what you know. I did not know anything which I might tell you nor have I heard anything in private of which I might inform you. You saw as I saw and you heard as I heard. You have been in the company of the Prophet as we have been. The responsibility to act rightly did not rest more on the sons of Abi Quhafa and Khattab than it rests on you. In fact you are nearer to the Prophet on account of kinship than they were, and you are in a way the son-in-law of the Prophet, while they were not so.

You must feat God, I swear by God that I am not tendering you this advice because you cannot see anything and I am not telling you all this because you do not know it. And there is no question of your ignorance because the path of religious law is quite evident and clear. Take it to your heart that out of His slaves God likes most the just ruler, who is a guided person himself and guides others also, strengthens known practices and destroys unknown innovations. And the most despicable of the people before God is that unjust ruler who remains misguided and others too are misguided on account of him. I

have heard the Prophet saying that on the Day of Judgment an oppressor will be brought in such a manner that there will be none who will help him or intercede for him and he will be thrown into the Hell straightaway".(Nahj al-Balaghah)

Uthman was nonplussed when he heard logical remarks of Ali. He only said: "I have done nothing wrong. I have been only kind and benevolent to my kith and kin".

Truth was intermingled with falsehood and good with evil. The malpractices of Bani Umayyah went on increasing. Uthman gave them plenty of rope and himself became helpless before them. Ali has drawn a concise and precise picture of the caliphate of Uthman in these words: "He supported his kinsmen in the most absurd manner".

About his Umayyad kinsmen he says: "With him stood up Bani Umayyah, the descendants of his father, and they began to munch God's property just as a camel grazes spring grass".

Thus Bani Umayyah and their supporters brought Uthman on a path which was the path of annihilation and ruin. It was for his nepotism that he lost his life. His wife Na`ela also knew to what direction Bani Umayyah were carrying him. She also knew that Ali was the most sincere and truthful person and the real well-wisher of Uthman. She, therefore, insisted upon him persistently that he should consult Ali. However, the wicked and mischievous advisers who were constantly hovering around Uthman opposed Na`ela's suggestion and said that she was an imprudent woman and he should not lend ears to what she suggested.

Once Marwan said to Uthman: "I swear by God that it is better to stick to your sins and apologize to God, than that you should repent with fear".

It means that Marwan admitted that Uthman's policy was wrong and his methods were the methods of wrong-doers, but according to him (i.e. Marwan) it was better to stick to one's sin and evil-doing than to feel ashamed and repent of it.
No advice could reach the ears of Uthman except that which was uttered by Marwan. Uthman agreed immediately to what Marwan said but did not listen to what was said by others.

Marwan spoke to the people in the name of the caliph and what he said consisted of nothing except censure, threats and obstinacy, and was sufficient to create an uproar against Uthman. Once he said, addressing the insurgents who had besieged Uthman's house: ``What has happened to you people? Why have you gathered here? Do you want to take away the government from us?" This sentence of Marwan is sufficient to indicate the way of thinking of all the Umayyads, according to them all those oppressed persons who had come to get their grievances redressed had come only to loot and plunder.

Demand for the restoration of usurped rights and a just government, and stopping oppression and taking action against those who had violated the rights of the people, and similar other things in connection with which the people had come to lodge their complaints, were things which, according to Marwan, did not

deserve any attention.

According to him the caliphate, sovereignty and rulership were the means of displaying power and authority and had nothing to do with the protection of the rights of the people or the safeguarding of the faith and the religious law. According to him it was the kingship of Bani Umayyah which they had been waiting for a long time to seize, and thus re-establish their power and authority which had been destroyed by Islam. And that being so he could not understand why the people should endeavour to deprive Bani Umayyah of their hereditary government.

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All those persons who disliked the financial and administrative policies of Bani Umayyah and criticized them sincerely became the target of Uthman's wrath on the suggestion of Marwan and his other associates and advisers. One of those persons who opposed these policies and methods was Abdullah bin Mas`ud, a distinguished companion of the Prophet. In order to explain how much the people were grieved on account of the oppression to which this companion of the Prophet was subjected, it appears necessary to give a brief account of his life history.

Abdullah bin Mas`ud was one of those persons who embraced Islam first of all. It is said that his number was sixth on the list. He had the honour of migrating twice in the first instance to Ethiopia and then to Madina. He always remained in the company of the Prophet. He was one of those whom the Prophet loved and respected for their truthfulness, honesty and piety.

The Muslims of the early era considered Ibn Mas`ud to be one of the greatest scholars. It was on account of his profound knowledge that Umar sent him to Kufa to guide and educate the people of that city, although he himself needed his advice in Madina. While sending him to Kufa Umar sent a letter to the citizens of Kufa. He wrote: “I am sending Abdullah bin Mas`ud to educate you. By sending him to Kufa I have given you preference over myself. You should acquire knoweldge from him”.

Many Kufans benefited from Ibn Mas`ud. The number of his pupils increased day after day and they became renowned scholars. The famous Tabe`i (companion of the companions of the Prophet) Sa`id bin Jaybar used to say: “The pupils of Abdullah bin Mas`ud were the lamps of this city”. (i.e. Kufa).

All the Muslims acknowledged Abdullah bin Mas`ud to be an erudite scholar. So much so that during the time of Umar it was he to whom the Kufans referred their religious problems and only his judgments were accepted by them. In the matter of exegesis also he was one of the topmost authorities, and his rank was almost equal to that of Abdullah bin Abbas. He had many pupils who distinguished themselves in this branch of learning, such as Qatada and Masrooq ibn Ajda`.

In short Abdullah bin Mas`ud was the most respectable personality of his time. He was honoured in all Islamic cities more than every other companion of the Prophet. How did Uthman behave towards this distinguished companion? Ibn Mas`ud was one of those distinguished companions who openly

disapproved and fearlessly criticized the policies and the modus operandi of Bani Umayyah. On every Friday he used to say in Kufa: “The most correct word is the Book of God and the best guidance is that provided by Prophet Muhammad and the worst things are innovations. Every innovation is deviation and every deviation leads one to Hell”.

The above statement of Ibn Mas`ud contained clear criticism of Uthman and the actions which he took for the benefit of only Bani Umayyah and the wealthy and influential persons ignoring the welfare of the common man. He said many things criticizing Uthman, for example, he said: “In the eyes of God Uthman does not have even as much value as the feather of a fly”.

Walid bin Uqbah, the Governor of Kufa, resented very much the remarks of Ibn Mas`ud about Uthman. This Walid was a brother of Uthman from his mother's side and was a great drunkard and a licentious person. Uthman had appointed him as the Governor of Kufa notwithstanding the displeasure of the residents of that city.

Walid wrote to Uthman informing him that Ibn Mas`ud criticized and abused him (Uthman). Uthman asked him to send Abdullah to him. It has been narrated that when Abdullah left Kufa for Madina many persons came to bid him farewell. Everyone of them requested him not to leave Kufa and assured him that they could not let him suffer any harm. He, however, replied: “There is something which must happen soon”.

Abdullah bin Mas`ud reached Madina on Friday night. When Uthman came to know about his arrival he made the people gather in the masjid and said to them: “Just see a mean animal is coming towards you who tramples on his food, vomits and excretes”. Ibn Mas`ud said: “I am not like that. Of course, I am a companion of the Prophet. I was with him in the Battle of Badr and also participated in ***Bai`at al-Rizwan*** (the oath of allegiance taken under a tree at Hudaibiya).

Ayesha said loudly from her house: “Uthman! You are saying these words about a companion of the Prophet!” Others also disliked these remarks and expressed their resentment. As ordered by Uthman his officials and slaves turned Ibn Mas`ud out from the masjid in a very rude manner. They dragged him to the gate of the masjid and there they threw him down on the ground. Then they beat him so mercilessly that he broke his bones and from there he was carried home like a dead body.

Uthman was not satisfied with the beating and insulting to which this great companion of the Prophet was subjected. He stopped the stipend which he used to get from the Public Treasury and deprived him of all his sources of livelihood. He also ordered the people not to visit him to enquire about his health. Eventually Ibn Mas`ud passed away and Ammar Yasir offered his funeral prayers and buried him secretly. When Uthman was informed about it he became very furious.

Another respectable person who became the target of Uthman's wrath was Ammar Yasir. He was one those great personalities of Islam who are well-known for their virtues, high morals and piety. His worth and value was best known to the Prophet and he knew what great merits he possessed. That is why he

paid him glowing tributes which he amply deserved. For example he said about him: “When dissensions take place between the people the son of Sumayyah (i.e. Ammar) will be on the side of right”

Many differences arose between the Muslims during the early days of Islam and Ammar always sided with Ali. It was on account of these qualities and virtues that the Muslims loved him and Bani Umayyah and their supporters were his sworn enemies.

The first action of Uthman which Ammar disliked was that he made wealth a plaything in the hands of the affluent persons. As explained by Ammar himself he used to meet Uthman very often and advised him to administer justice, avoid nepotism and refrain from making Bani Umayyah the overlords of the people. Consequently Uthman got annoyed with him as he was annoyed with other virtuous people.

It has been narrated that there was a casket in the Public Treasury which contained ornaments and gems. Uthman removed this jewellery from the treasury and gave it to one of his wives to wear. The people objected to this and criticized him severely which made him furious. Speaking in a public gathering he said: “I shall take whatever I like out of the war booty, and damn care if some one dislikes it”. Thereupon Ali said: “In that event you will be restrained from doing so and a wall will be raised between you and the Public Treasury”. Ammar said: “I call God to witness that I am the first person to dislike this misappropriation”. Thereupon Uthman said: “O Ammar! How dare you speak against me? Arrest him”.

Suddenly Marwan got up and said to Uthman: “O Commander of the Faithful! This slave (Ammar) has instigated the people against you. If you kill him others will learn a lesson”.

Uthman got ready immediately to act on Marwan's suggestion. He picked up his stick and beat Ammar mercilessly. His slaves and other members of the Umayyad Family also helped him. Uthman also kicked him in a very insulting manner and inflicted him so many kicks on his belly below the navel that he developed hernia. Thereafter he was thrown on the road while it was raining and thundering, and he became almost dead.

The third distinguished companion of the Prophet who was subjected to dreadful torture by Uthman and other members of the Umayyad Family was the great reformer Abu Dharr Ghifari. It was the same Abu Dharr who is renowned for his philanthropy and love for justice. He was a supporter and most devoted follower of Ali.

In order to explain the true position of the opponents of Uthman's policies and the conduct of Bani Umayyah we give below a brief account of the life history of Abu Dharr who was one of the greatest men of his time.

During the age of ignorance Abu Dharr was an indigent person but in spite of that he was the chief of his tribe. When he heard about the Prophet he came to Mecca in such a condition that he was wearing a worn out and tattered cloak. On reaching Mecca he began roaming about on the streets. At last when he

got tired he lay down on the ground near the Ka`abah, placing his cloak under his head. In the meantime Ali chanced to pass by him and took much pity on him, because it appeared that he was a poverty-stricken stranger, who was not acquainted with anyone in the city. They got themselves introduced to each other and Ali took Abu Dharr to his house. Later he took him to the Prophet. On meeting the Prophet Abu Dharr immediately embraced Islam. He was the fifth to adopt this religion.

Abu Dharr was so sincere and brave that after embracing Islam he stood near the Ka`abah where a large number of Quraysh – the fell enemies of Islam – were assembled. There he ridiculed the idols and invited those present to Islam. Till then none had been able to show such valour. Quraysh assaulted him and beat him so much that he was almost dead.

Abu Dharr was the most favourite and dear companion of the Prophet on account of his foresight, prudence, wisdom, zeal for reform, and love for the poor. The people also relied upon him and respected him very much. All the companions held him in great respect. Ali has said about him: "Abu Dharr has such vast knowledge that none has been able to equal him".

When Uthman attained to the caliphate Abu Dharr's astonishment knew no bounds. He could not understand why Uthman had been made caliph in the presence of a learned and pious person like Ali. However, he did not open his lips against this selection because Ali did not want that any disturbance should take place for his sake. Soon afterwards, however, Abu Dharr saw that whereas the common people were leading very miserable lives Bani Umayyah were amassing wealth and living in luxury. He felt that Uthman showering wealth upon his relatives by depriving the common people of their rights, and this disturbed him very much. He openly criticized this policy which had divided the people into two groups – the affluent and the indigent.

Abu Dharr often addressed the people in these words: "Such things are taking place as were never seen or heard of previously. I swear by God that such actions are neither sanctioned by Qur'an – the Book of God nor supported by the Sunnah of the Prophet. I swear by God that I see that truth is being suppressed and falsehood is being encouraged. Things which are right and true are being refuted and impious persons are being preferred. O assembly of the wealthy and persecuters of the poor! Inform "..***those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend their wealth in the path of God..***" of burning from the Fire ***"..with which their foreheads, flanks and backs will be branded..".*** (***9:34-35***)

He added: "You have adopted silken curtains and seats and have become habituated to lying in azrabi silk whereas the Prophet used to sleep on a mat. You eat food of various kinds whereas the Prophet did not eat even barley bread to his fill".

Abu Dharr demanded from the party in authority to do justice to the poor people who had been deprived of their rights. He encouraged the people to wrest their rights by force and to put an end to indigence which is the source of humiliation and an enemy of virtue. He used to utter the following sentences often:

- "I wonder as to why a person who has nothing in his house to eat, does not draw a sword and attack

the people".

● "When poverty proceeds towards a town infidelity asks it to take it with itself".

He was so disgusted with the egotism and profiteering of Bani Umayyah that he left Hijaz and went away to Syria, so that he might not see the extravagance of Uthman and Marwan with his own eyes. However, on reaching there he found that the activities of Mu`awiya were even more objectionable than those of Uthman and Marwan. (The fact is that Abu Dharr did not go to Syria of his own free will. He was exiled there by Uthman). There he said that Mu`awiya's extravagance had far exceeded that of Uthman and Marwan.

He saw that Mu`awiyah had become the master of the Public Treasury as well as of the lives and property of the people. He observed that he squandered away the property of the Public Treasury, grabbed the earnings of the Muslims and killed whomsoever he wished to. All this made him too furious. When Mu`awiya constructed the Green Palace Abu Dharr sent him a message saying: "If you have built this palace by spending the property of God you have been guilty of misappropriation and if you have spent the money from your own pocket you have been very extravagant".

Bani Umayyah could not tolerate such a truthful, freedom loving and out-spoken person, nor could they permit him to mix up with the people. Marwan instigated Uthman every now and then to get rid of him. Uthman asked Mu`awiya to take repressive measures againt Abu Dharr.

Mu`awiya turned Abu Dharr out of his court and issued orders that none should associate with him. It was at Uthman's behest that Mu`awiya said to that distinguished companion of the Prophet: "O enemy of God! You instigate people to be against me and do whatever you like. If I had killed any companion of the Prophet without the prior permission of the ruling caliph it would have been you". Abu Dharr replied: "I am not an enemy of God or of His Prophet. Rather it is you and your father who have been the enemies of God. Both of you embraced Islam only outwardly and infidelity still lies hidden in your heart".

Abu Dharr did not attach any importance to Mu`awiya's threats, and continued reforming the Syrian society with so great a zeal and enthusiasm, that Mu`awiya was out of his wits. The rich people of Syria were as scared of his reformative activities as the people of Madina were. They feared that the common people might attack them.

They, therefore, considered it necessary that Abu Dharr should be turned out of Syria as early as possible, and should also be restrained from making any speeches so that he might not bring their malpractices to light. In the meantime a man named Jundab bin Fehri came to Mu`awiya and said as a sincere adviser and in a meek tone: "Abu Dharr will create trouble for you in Syria. If you need Syria, you should take care of it immediately".

Mu`awiya thought of killing Abu Dharr but feared that the people might revolt. As said by Hasan Basri: "Mu`awiya did not refrain from killing a distinguished companion like Abu Dharr, because he feared

Uthman's displeasure. He did not kill him, because he was afraid of the displeasure of the public. He therefore, wrote to Uthman and sought his advice. Uthman replied: “Send Abu Dharr to me mounted on a vicious animal along with a man who should subject him to as much trouble as possible on the way”.

Mu`awiya did as he was advised by Uthman. He made Abu Dharr mount a camel with a saddle on which there was no cover. By the time he reached Madina pieces of flesh were cut off from his thighs and owing to the long journey he had broken his back. From Damascus to Madina he was accompanied by cruel and savage soldiers who did not care either for the hot weather or for his fatigue. He was very much tired and had become lean and weak when he reached before Uthman.

Immediately on seeing Abu Dharr Uthman protested against his activities. Abu Dharr replied: “I wished you well but you decieved me. Similarly I wished your friend (Mu`awiya) well but he also deceived me”. Uthman said: “You are a liar. You want to create trouble. You have turned the entire country of Syria against us”.

Abu Dharr said with great confidence and composure: “You should follow in the footsteps of Abu Bakr and Umar. If you do so none will say anything against you”.

Uthman said: “May your mother die! What have you to do with this matter?”

Abu Dharr replied: “So far as I am concerned I had no alternative but to order the people to do good and to restrain them from evil”.

Ite contention between Abu Dharr and Uthman became much more serious. Abu Dharr accused Uthman of being subservient to his wishes was disobedient to God, and unkind to His creatures. Uthman got very much annoyed and cried out: “O people! Tell me how to deal with this aged liar. Should I beat him or kill him or banish him from the Islamic territories? He has created a split among the Muslims”.

At that time Ah was also there. He was very much grieved to see the treatment meted out by Uthman to a great reformer and distinguished companion like Abu Dharr. He turned towards Uthman and said: “I heard the Prophet saying that between the earth and the heavens there is none more truthful than Abu Dharr”.

Uthman continued harassing Abu Dharr. He ordered the people not to associate with him. Then he thought of becoming reconciled with Abu Dharr. He, therefore, sent him two hundred gold coins to meet his needs. Abu Dharr asked the man who had brought the money to him: “Has Uthman given the same amount to every Muslim?” The man replied in the negative. Abu Dharr returned the money to Uthman and said, “I am a member of the Muslim society and should, therefore, get only as much as others get”. When he returned the gold coins there was nothing in his house to eat except a stale loaf of barley bread!

In the first instance Uthman handed over Abu Dharr to the executioners. On reconsideration, however,

he decided to banish him to Rabazah. It was a barren region where neither man, nor animal nor vegetation could survive.

When the time of Abu Dharr's departure drew neat Uthman prohibited the people, in order to grieve, insult and humiliate him, to see him off. None except five persons, therefore, picked up courage to see him off. The five persons were Ali, his brother Aqil, Hasan, Husayn and Ammar Yasir.

The responsibility to supervise the departure of Abu Dharr rested with Marwan who was the source of all evils. It was he who had enforced Uthman's order that none should converse with Abu Dharr and the members of his family or see them off. He was so bold as to prevent Ali and his companions from seeing off Abu Dharr. Ali rebuked him, struck him with his stick and shouted: “Be off from here! May God throw you into the Hell”.

Then he bade farewell to Abu Dharr in these words: “O Abu Dharr! You were annoyed with these people for the sake of God. So you should expect your recompense also from Him only. They feared you because on account of your activities they might lose the world (i.e. worldly gains) and you were afraid of them because you wanted to safeguard your faith. So leave to them that thing on account of which they feared you (i.e. worldly gains) and keep aloof from them along with your faith. See how much they need that faith on which you did not permit them to gain control, and see how independent you are of the world of which they have deprived you!

You will come to know tomorrow (i.e. on the Day of Judgment) who has been the winner and who has displayed envy. Even if a person is precluded from the earth as well as from the heavens but he fears God, the Almighty certainly opens a path for him. You will always remain in love with truth and will shun falsehood. If you, too, had accepted their world they would have liked you and if you had borrowed from this world they would have provided you asylum”.(Nahj al-Balaghah).

Then Ali asked Aqil and Ammar to bid farewell to their brother and also asked Hasan and Husayn to say goodbye to their uncle. When Uthman came to know about this incident he was very much annoyed with Ali.

One may ask as to how it happened that Ali saw Abu Dharr being subjected to torture and oppression but took no steps to save him from the tyranny of the caliph of the time? Abu Dharr was a distinguished companion of the Prophet and a great supporter of Ali and was opposing the caliph not for any personal gain but to ensure the welfare of the people. Then why did Ali remain quiet?

If he had so desired he could restrain Uthman from banishing Abu Dharr and could use all his resources to make the people stand up in opposition to Bani Umayyah. And there is no doubt about the fact that the Muslims would have supported Ali whole-heartedly. Then what was the reason for this silence of Ali?

Just as this question occurs to everybody's mind, it occurred to my mind also. I thought that whereas one

aspect of Ali's remaining quiet on this occasion is quite clear and evident and the other is very intricate and not understandable by everyone.

The intricate aspect is that Ali's time was not the present one. He lived more than 1300 years ago. Circumstances and conditions which existed at that time cannot be assessed properly in the present twentieth century nor can we understand all their aspects. Probing the real causes has not been possible in spite of deep investigations conducted by many researchers. Ali knew and understood many subtleties of his own time which were not visible to others, and his line of action was based on the exigencies of the time which were known to him only.

However, the aspect of his quietness which is quite evident is that the spirit of sacrifice was present in the very nature of Ali and he was prepared to suffer any hardship for the sake of the welfare of the people. He was so mindful of the safety of Islam that he did not care for anything except that.

The more deeply we study the conduct and character of Ali, and examine all aspects of his life, the more we are convinced of this reality. He could not tolerate that the advancement and propagation of Islam should slacken in the least. He knew very well the mentality of Bani Umayyah before and after their embracement of Islam, but he was afraid that if the Muslims arrayed themselves against them dissensions would take place among the followers of Islam and they would be harmful for this religion.

Ali knew that Bani Umayyah wanted to kill all the true believers who constituted the real support for Islam so that they might free themselves from the restrictions imposed by Islamic law and there should be none left to object to their activities.

Is it not a fact that Marwan bin Hakam instigated Uthman to kill Ali and other distinguished companions like Abu Dharr and Ammar? His object in making this suggestion was that with the removal of these persons from the scene Bani Umayyah should be free to do what they liked, because while these pious and dauntless companions of the Prophet were present Bani Umayyah could not create mischief and act as despotic ruler.

Had Marwan's desire been fulfilled it cannot be assessed how much trouble Bani Umayyah would have created. It was, therefore, the height of Ali's foresight and prudence that he expressed only so much resentment in the matter of injustice done to Abu Dharr as he used to express in connection with the oppression to which he himself was subjected.

He did this so that the Muslims might not become the enemies of one another.

This had happened earlier also on the occasion of ***Saqifa***. Umar came to Ali's house and dragged him at the point of sword to take oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr. The Muslims were gathered round Ali at that time. Some of them were astonished whereas others were beside themselves with rage. All were expecting a hint from him so that they might fight for his defence. No doubt Ali, who was rhe pillar of Islam, the citadel of justice, and the Imam of all the people, but what did he do for himself?

When the people saw Umar taking Ali before the caliph at the point of the sword, they were much surprised. However when they looked at his face they did not find any sign of anger on it. He neither incited the people nor raised his voice, nor allowed them to draw their swords. The people were surprised all the more when a few moments later they saw Ali standing before them (i.e. Abu Bakr, Umar etc.) very calmly and arguing his case with a view to convincing them about his right. None dared to open his mouth in reply. He was establishing his right with solid arguments but tolerated the usurpation of his right in the interest of the people. Ali was justified in proving his right through protests and arguments, and was also justified in showing patience, calmness, forbearance and forgiveness. He knew himself very well.

The supporters of Ali were surprised at the attitude adopted by him. But there was one thing which Ali knew but others did not know. And that was the thing which Ali aimed at and which was the source of his peace of mind. This refers to the fact that he had worked with the Prophet to lay the foundation of Islam. He equally shared the responsibility of propagation of Islam. How could he tolerate that this religion should suffer destruction? That was the reason why he sacrificed his own rights, and he acted in the case of Abu Dharr in the same manner in which he had acted in his own case.

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What happened to Abu Dharr after his banishment?

The aged and great companion of the Prophet died of hunger. He and the members of his family lived in extremely hard conditions and had to suffer unprecedented miseries. Their children also passed away due to lack of food.

It has been narrated that after the death of their children Abu Dharr and his wife grew very weak on account of hunger. One day Abu Dharr said to his wife: “Let us go upto that mound. It is possible that we may find some wild fruits there”. They went upto the mound. Inclement winds were blowing and they could not find anything to eat. Abu Dharr began to faint. Although very cold wind was blowing but Abu Dharr was perspiring and wiped his sweat again and again. When his wife looked at him she realized that he was going to die. She began to weep. Abu Dharr asked her why she was weeping. She replied: “Why should I not weep? You are breathing your last on this barren land, and I don't have even a piece of cloth which maybe used as a shroud for you and me”. Her words grieved Abu Dharr very very much. He said to her: “Go and stand by the side of the road. It is possible that you may meet a believer who may be passing that way”. She replied: “Who will pass this way now? The caravan of the pilgrims has already passed and the road is deserted”.

Abu Dharr recalled the words which the Prophet had uttered about him. He said to his wife: “Go and see carefully. If you find someone coming you will be relieved of your worry. And if you don't find anyone you should cover my dead body and place it by the side of the road. As and when you chance to meet the first rider tell him: “Abu Dharr the companion of the Prophet has died. Now assist in bathing and

shrouding him".

Abu Dharr's wife ascended the mound time and again but could not find any human being. After some time, however, she saw some riders at a distance and beckoned them by moving her cloth. They came up to her and said: "O bondwoman of God! What is the matter?" She replied: "Here is a Muslim who is dying; please arrange for his bathing, shrouding and burial. God will recompense you for this". They asked: "Who is the man?" She replied: "His name is Abu Dharr Ghifari".

The men could not believe that such a distinguished companion of the Prophet could die in the desert. They, therefore, asked her: "Who is this Abu Dharr? Is he the companion of the Prophet?" She said "Yes". They said: "May our parents be his ransom! God has granted us a great honour". They then hurried to the place where Abu Dharr was lying. Abu Dharr was feeling the pangs of death. He fixed his eyes on their faces for some time trying to recognise their faces, and then said: "By God I have not told a lie. By God if I had sufficient cloth for my and my wife's shroud I would certainly have been shrouded in that cloth. I ask you in the name of God that if anyone of you has been a ruler or a government employee or a messenger or a chief at any time he should not shroud me".

Those present were bewildered to hear these words because almost all of them had held these offices at one time or another. Suddenly a young man from amongst the Ansar stepped forward and said: "O uncle! I shall shroud you with this mantle which I had purchased with the money that I had earned through hard work. I will shroud you with this cloth whose thread was spun by my mother so that I might use it as ***Ehram*** (pilgrim's garb)".

He said to the young man: "Shroud me with these pieces of cloth, for they are pure". Now he was happy and satisfied. Then he cast a glance at them again and passed away peacefully. Then the dark and thick clouds covered the sky. Strong and severe winds began to blow and the desert sand sprang up and darkened the atmosphere. It might be said that the desert of Rabazah got converted into a roaring ocean.

The Ansari young man stood by the grave of Abu Dharr and prayed in these words (The historians have attributed them to Malik Ashtar): "O God! This Abu Dharr is one of the companions of Your Prophet. He worshipped You amongst the worshippers. He performed jihad against the idol-worshippers. He did not alter any Sunnah (practice) of the Prophet nor did he tamper with any law. He saw bad and indecent things being done and expressed his disgust at them with his heart and tongue. As a result of this people oppressed and insulted him and turned him out of his house. They deprived him of his rights and humiliated him and eventually he passed away in a helpless condition. May God break the feet of the person who deprived him (of the amenities of life) and banished him from the sacred city of Madina to which he had migrated".

All those who were present said "Amen!" very sincerely. Blessed be Abu Dharr who rose and endeavoured, to establish truth till he breathed his last. He had faith in the greatness of man and his

rights. He was a magnanimous and kind man. He was never afraid of death, nor was he never enamoured by life.

The tragic events of Abu Dharr and his wife and children stirred the blood of the people and every one of them sympathised with the oppressed family. While many other actions of Uthman had raised the people against him this one incident added to their resentment against him and Bani Umayyah. It was considered to be a very wicked policy that anyone who objected to nepotism and family bias should be treated savagely as was done in the case of Abdullah bin Mas`ud, Ammar Yasir and Abu Dharr. They were insulted and beaten and their pensions and stipends were stopped.

On the contrary, Bani Umayyah were showered with all the benefits, wealth, and ranks. Uthman bestowed honours on them and gave them enormous wealth, although it was necessary for him that he should have ousted them from important positions on account of their nefarious activities.

Another action of Uthman which aroused the anger of the people was his maltreatment of the persons who went to him to complain against Walid bin `Uqba. The details of this incident are as follows:

Uthman dismissed Sa`d bin Abi Waqas from the governorship of Kufa and replaced him by Walid bin `Uqba, who was Uthman's brother from the side of his mother. The people of Kufa were very much displeased on account of this appointment. It is said that when Walid arrived in Kufa and passed by the house of Umar ibn Zararah Nakh`i Umar stood up and said: “O Bani Asad! Uthman has treated us very badly. Was it just on his part to remove from amongst us Sa`d bin Abi Waqas, who is a mild and well-behaved person, and to oppoint in his place his brother Walid who is an idiot, a madman and an old debauchee. After the appointment of Walid it was commonly said by the people of Kufa that Uthman had humiliated the followers of Prophet Muhammad and had tried to honour his brother.

Many complaints were lodged with Uthman against Walid but he did not remove him from the governship, although most of the complainants were the companions of the Prophet. Uthman's conduct in respect of Walid was the same as it was with regard to his kinsfolk. Just as he did not accept any suggestions, or entertained any complaint against his near relations, he never paid any heed to the complaints against Walid as well.

Allama Bin Abd Rabbih quotes Sa`id bin Musayyab in his book entitled ***`Iqd al-Farid*** as saying that the companions of the Prophet disliked the caliphate of Uthman very much because most of the officers appointed by him belonged to Bani Umayyah and they did things which were abhorred by the companions. Complaints were lodged against these officers with Uthman but he did not remove those officers.

The poet Hati'ah says about Walid:

“Hati'ah will give evidence on the Day of Judgment that Walid is innocent”.
“When the prayers were finished he asked the people in a loud voice: “If you say, I may increase it”.

“He wanted to make an increase upon something good. If the people had agreed he would have led the dawn prayers which would have exceeded ten ***rak`ats*** (units)”.
“But O Abu Wahab, the people refused to agree. If they had accepted your suggestion you would have combined ***Shaf`*** with ***Witr”***.
“You moved on, but the people held your bridle. If they had released it you would have walked on and on”.

A number of men came from Kufa and complained to Uthman against Walid. Uthman, however, rebuked and threatened them instead of paying any heed to their complaints and flogged those who gave evidence against his malpractices, although their only offence was that they brought the evil deeds of Walid to the notice of Uthman.

The most severe treatment meted out by Bani Umayyah to their opponents or to those whom they considered to be in the category of their opponents (because they desired that the masses should have a right in caliphate, and it should not become property of Bani Umayyah) was seen in their treatment with Muhammad bin Abi Bakr and the Egyptians who were going to Egypt. As this incident has a very close connection with the murder of Uthman we shall discuss it in detail in the following chapter.

1. In order to make the bitterness of advice palatable Imam Ali spoke at the outset in such a way that instead of getting irritated Uthman should feel his duties and responsibilities. Ali wanted to draw his attention towards his obligations, and with that purpose in view he mentioned his (Uthman's) companionship of the Prophet as well as his importance and proximity to the Prophet on account of kinship. Otherwise this was evidently no occasion to praise him and these words should not be treated to be a panegyric ignoring the latter part of the remarks of Ali. The opening words simply go to show that whatever Uthman did was done by him intentionally.
It was not that he committed unintentional mistakes, which might be overlooked. If it be a virtue that even after remaining in the companionship of the Prophet and knowing all the rules and regulations of Islam a man should act in such a way that the entire world of Islam should begin to cry on account of his oppression, these remarks may be treated to be a praise. If it is not a merit, then its being mentioned cannot be termed as praise. In fact the words that have been used as praise are a proof of the seriousness of his offences. An offence committed intentionally is much more serious than the one committed inadvertently.
It is said that Uthman is entitled to great honour in the capacity of the son-in-law of the Prophet as the Prophet married to him, his two daughters named Ruqayya and Umm Kulthum one after the other. Before considering these matrimonial alliances a source of honour, however, the nature of this son-in-lawship should be looked into. History tells us that Uthman did not enjoy precedence in the matter. Ruqayya and Umm Kulthum were previously married to Atba and Ateeba, the son of Abu Lahab. In spite of this these two persons were not treated to be entitled to any honour or respect even before the advent of Islam. In the circumstances how can this relationship be treated to be a source of honour for Uthman without taking into account his personal qualities?
Furthermore, it is also not an established fact that the two ladies were the real daughters of the Prophet. There are some who do not admit them to be his real daughters but say that they were the daughters of lady Khadijah's sister named Hala or her own daughters from her former husband.
Alkuti (died 352 A.H.) says: “A short time after lady Khadijah getting married to the Prophet her sister Hala died and left behind two daughters named Ruqayyah and Umm Kulthum. They were brought up by Khadijah and the Prophet. It was customary before the advent of Islam that if an orphan was brought up by someone it was called his son or daughter”. (Kitab al-Istighatha, p.69).
“Before marrying the Prophet lady Khadija was married to Abi Hala bin Malik and had one son named Hind and one

daughter named Zainab from him. Earlier than that she was married to `Atiq bin `Aa'ez and had one son and one daughter from him". (Seerah Ibn Hisham, Vol.4, p.293).
This shows that lady Khadijah had two daughters before she married the Prophet. As mentioned above, according to the custom then prevailing, they were to be called the Prophet's daughters and their husband was to be called his son-in-law. However, his position as son-in-law would be commensurate with the position of the daughters. Hence, before treating these marriages to be a source of honour the actual position of the daughters (i.e. their real parentage) must be kept in view.

Facts about Uthman's murder

Eleven years and many months passed. The resentment of the people against the policies of Uthman went on increasing day after day. The citizens of all Islamic territories were deadly against Uthman, so much so that there was tension all round. The thing which frightened the Muslims most was that during Uthman's rule all the ways and practices prevalent in the days of the Prophet and Abu Bakr and Umar which they liked most, were made topsy-turvy and nothing of the past period remained intact.

They were used to see that the caliph protected their rights and promoted their interests. As and when the governors and the officers oppressed someone or mis- behaved, the caliph dismissed them and redressed the grievances of the people. However, as soon as Uthman became caliph he ignored the rules and regulations based on justice, and founded his government on the policy of nepotism, which the people had never previously seen, and which they could not tolerate.

The thing which disgusted the people most was that Uthman's relatives usurped their rights and became richer day by day and the common man was deprived even of the necessities of life. They also resented the treatment meted out by the caliph to their deputations which approached him to complain against the governors and other officers.

The people were also very much annoyed on account of the insults and humiliation to which the distinguished companions of the Prophet like Abu Dharr, Ammar, and Ibn Mas`ud, were subjected. They also disliked his policy of removing reliable and popular governors and officers and replacing them by the persons who were unjust and oppressive.

The pious Muslims did not also like that the rulers should oppress the ***Zimmis***, because, after all, they too were human beings. They did not wish that the society should be poisoned with discrimination and egotism, and incompetent persons should be given preference over honest and competent ones.

During the last days of the caliphate of Uthman the people became so impatient that they revolted against him. This was quite natural because the seeds of revolt were present in his own policies. It is said that one day Uthman chanced to pass by the house of a man named Jabala bin Amr Sa`di. Jabala was sitting amongst the people of his tribe and held a chain in his hand. Uthman saluted them and those

present replied to his salutation, with the exception of Jabala. He said to his tribesmen: “Why have you replied to the salutation of a man who has done such and such thing”. Then he addressed Uthman saying: “I swear by God that unless you turn away your wicked favourites like Marwan, Ibn Aamir and Abi bin Sarah, I will put this chain round your neck”.

Allama Ibn Abi'l Hadid says that the people had become so daring that one day when Uthman was addressing the people holding in his hand the stick which was held by Prophet and Abu Bakr and Umar while delivering sermons, a person named Jehjah Ghifari snatched the stick from his hand, pressed it on his knee and broke it.

In the beginning the people did not pick up enough courage to misbehave towards Uthman. However, when the malpractices of Marwan and others continued to increase and Uthman, instead of restraining them from their evil deeds showed indulgence to them the disturbances and rebellion also became widespread. Till then only the people individually opposed and criticized Uthman and only one or two persons misbehaved towards him. However, as time passed on the entire Muslim nation became his enemy. The people of Madina wrote letters to the Muslims of other cities on these lines: “If you are desirous of undertaking jihad you should come here, because the religion of Muhammad is being made corrupt by your caliph. Come and remove him from the caliphate”.

The residents of all the cities turned against Uthman. By the year 35A.H. the events took such a turn that the inhabitants of various cities wrote letters to one another suggesting that something should be done to get rid of Bani Umayyah and Uthman and all his governors and officers should be removed from their offices. The news about these activities reached Uthman also. He wrote letters to the residents of different cities and tried to reconcile them.

Then he called his governors and senior officers and held consultations with them. Some of them suggested to Uthman that he should rule justly and adopt the policies of Abu Bakr and Umar. Others minced their words and did not give any clear-cut advice. One of those belonging to the latter group was Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan. There were still others who were not fit to tender any sincere advice because their suggestions were always based on selfishness. One such person was Sa`id bin Aas who said that the state of affairs then prevailing was only transitory and the only remedy for them is the unsheathing of the sword.

The conference ended without taking any unanimous decision to tackle with the situation. The reason for this was that all the governors and officers of Uthman liked his policy through which they could encroach upon the people's rights and make as much money as they could. They did not, therefore, give any sincere advice.

There were some amongst them however, who thought that their interests would be best served if they could get rid of Uthman and were, therefore, endeavouring secretly, and some of them even openly, to achive this end. Reasons for this attitude of the persons concerned will be explained later. And the most

important thing about the conference was that Marwan was keeping a very close watch on all the participants. Hence, even if some of them had made good suggestions they would have been of no use because the last word on the subject was to be that of Marwan. Uthman always acted on his advice.

Eventually rebellion broke out. The Muslims of all the countries and provinces had turned against Uthman's administration, policy, and caliphate, which were virtually in the hands of Marwan and his associates.

In the meantime some persons from Egypt approached Uthman to complain against Ibn Abi Sarah, the Governor of Egypt. Uthman heard them attentively, reproached Ibn Abi Sarah for his malpractices and promised those people that their grievances would be redressed. Then he wrote a letter to Ibn Abi Sarah asking him to mend his ways and threatened him that if he disobeyed his orders he would be punished. Marwan did not like these developments. When the complainants came out of the caliph's palace he too came out and rebuked them. Then he insisted that the caliph should ignore the promises made by him to those persons and should not take any notice of their complaints.

The Egyptians returned with the letter and handed it over to Ibn Abi Sarah. He was very much displeased on reading it and declined to obey the caliph's orders. He became so furious that he killed one of the members of the deputation. This arrogance of Ibn Abi Sarah was due to the fact that he was the foster-brother of Uthman and it was on account of this relationship that he had appointed him the Governor of Egypt.

The people of Egypt resented the treatment meted out to them by Ibn Abi Sarah. They decided to send another deputation to Madina consisting of one thousand persons. They stayed in the masjid of the Prophet and proclaimed that they would not interfere with those who remained within doors and did not take up arms against them. Thereafter some of their distinguished persons met the companions of the Prophet. They explained to them the atrocities committed by Ibn Abi Sarah including the murder of an innocent person whose only offence was that he was a member of the deputation which had waited on Uthman earlier. Some companions saw Uthman and discussed with him the state of affairs prevailing in Egypt.

Thereafter many other persons headed by Ali met Uthman in this behalf. They spoke to him in a very rational and logical manner and said: “These people only want that you should remove Ibn Abi Sarah from governorship and appoint some other person in his place. Earlier also they had complained about the murder of an innocent person. You should remove Ibn Abi Sarah from office and also take a decision on their complaint. If Ibn Abi Sarah proves to be guilty you should punish him and thus provide justice to these people”.

Uthman swore before the people and assured them that he would try his best for the good of the people. He also asked them to suggest the name of a person who might be appointed Governor of Egypt in the place of Ibn Abi Sarah. The Egyptians after due deliberations suggested the name of Muhammad bin Abi

Bakr. Uthman appointed him as governor and sent with him a party consisting of the Muhajirs and the Ansar to investigate the malpractices of Ibn Abi Sarah.

Three days after their departure from Madina Muhammad bin Abi Bakr and his companions saw on the way an Ethiopian slave who was driving his camel hastily towards Egypt. These people felt surprised. They therefore stopped him and enquired of him why he was running so fast and what was the purpose of his journey. After some questioning he said: “I am the slave of the Commander of the Faithful Uthman and have been sent to go and see the Governor of Egypt”. The people said to him: “The Governor of Egypt is here with us”. The slave replied: “I don't mean him”. When Muhammad bin Abi Bakr was informed of the matter he called for the slave and asked him as to who he was. He said: “I am a slave of the Commander of the Faithful”. Then contradicting himself he said: “No, no. I am a slave of Marwan”. He thus went on saying contradictory things. Then Muhammad asked him: “Where are you going?” He replied: “I am going to Egypt to see the governor”. “What for?” asked Muhammad. The slave replied: “I have to convey a message to him”.

Upon Muhammad asking the slave whether he was carrying a letter he replied in the negative. Thereupon Muhammad ordered his person to be searched. After a very minute search a letter was found with him which was addressed by Uthman to Abdullah Ibn Abi Sarah. Muhammad opened the letter in the presence of the Muhajirs and the Ansar who were accompanying him. It read as follows: “When Muhammad son of Abu Bakr and other such and such persons arrive in Egypt you should kill them on one pretext or another. Consider the letter which Muhammad is bringing to you as cancelled and continue to occupy your office until further orders. Imprison any person who approaches you with a complaint and then await instructions from me”.

When the letter was read out all those present were bewildered and complete silence prevailed. No one could imagine that the caliph could make such a wicked plan to take the lives of his subjects including the Muhajirs and the Ansar.

Muhammad bin Abi Bakr closed the envelope again and affixed on it the seals of the Muhajirs and the Ansar. The party then decided to return to Madina and to show the letter to the companions of the Prophet. When the letter was read out in Madina before the companions, including Imam Ali all of them were deeply grieved. This conspiracy against the Muslims and Islam which was unprecedented made them furious.

The wrath of the people who were already annoyed on account of the treatment meted out to Abu Dharr, Ammar Yasir, etc. knew no bounds. A deputation headed by Ali which included Sa`d bin Abi Waqas and Ammar Yasir was formed and they went to see Uthman. They also took with them the letter, the slave and the camel on which he was mounted. The following conversation took place between Ali and Uthman:

Ali: Is this your slave?

Uthman: Yes
Ali: Is this camel also yours?
Uthman: Yes
Ali: Is the seal affixed on the letter also yours?
Uthman: Yes

Ali: Then does it mean that this letter was sent by you?
Uthman: No. I swear by God that I neither wrote this letter myself nor ordered anyone else to write it, nor sent this slave to Egypt.

The companions got the impression that Uthman was telling the truth. On further scrutiny they realized that the letter was in the hand-writing of Marwan. They, therefore, asked Uthman to call Marwan before them so that they might inquire into the matter, and ask him as to why he wrote the letter. Uthman declined to summon Marwan. Although Marwan was then present with him in the capital he did not have the moral courage to appear before those persons, admit his fault, and thus prove the innocence of Uthman.

The companions, therefore, returned to their house in consternation. They believed that Uthman could not swear falsely, but some of them said that they would consider him to be innocent only when he handed over Marwan to them so that they might question him and investigate the matter, and find out the real facts about the letter. They also said that if the letter had been written by Uthman they would depose him, but if it had been written at his behest by Marwan they would ponder over the matter and decide as to how Marwan should be dealt with. However, Uthman did not agree to surrender Marwan. The insurgents now began insisting all the more vehemently that Marwan should be handed over to them, so that they might question him and inquire into his activities. Uthman, however, flatly refused to agree to this demand.

Thereafter many developments which are recorded in the books of history took place. Imam Ali tried his level best to bring about reconciliation between the insurgents and Uthman so that bloodshed might be avoided. He saw Uthman again and suggested to him that he should come before the public and deliver a speech which should be heard by all, and in that speech he should confirm the promises made by him with the people so that they might be satisfied. He also said to Uthman: “I swear by God that all the Islamic territories have turned against you. I am afraid the people of Kufa and Basra may also come to Madina like the Egyptians and you may be obliged to ask me to cool them down”.

Uthman came out of his house and delivered a speech before the gathering. He expressed his regret for his past lapses and promised that such things would not happen in future. He also promised that their demands would be met and Marwan and his associates would be cast aside.

Uthman's speech had a salutary effect. While he was speaking tears trickled from his eyes. Others also began to weep and their beards became wet with tears. When he dismounted from the pulpit of the

masjid and went home, he saw Marwan, Sa`id bin Aas, and some other members of the Umayyad Family waiting for him. They had not been present when Uthman was speaking but had become aware of what he had said. When Uthman sat down Marwan asked him: “O my chief! Should I say something or keep quiet?” Uthman said: “Say what you want to say”.

Marwan then said in a reproaching manner: “You have only encouraged these people and done nothing else”. Uthman replied somewhat regretfully: “I have said what I have said. I cannot take back my words”. Marwan said: “The people are crowded before the gate of your house like a mountain and this is so because you have encouraged them. If one of them complains of oppression the other demands the dismissal of a governor. You have been very cruel to your caliphate. It would have been better for you if you had remained patient and quiet”.

Uthman said: “I feel ashamed of going back on my words. You may, however, go and talk to them”.

Having got the permission Marwan came at the gate of the house and said to those who were gathered there: “What is all this crowd? It appears that you have come to plunder the house. May your faces be blackened! Have you come to wrest the government from us? By God, if you intend doing harm to us we shall deal with you in a manner that you will never forget. Go to your houses. We cannot tolerate interference with our authority by anyone”.

The people went away in despair, abusing and threatening the rulers. Some one informed Ali about the new development. As Uthman had ignored his suggestion and acted on the advice of Marwan, Ali could very well refrain from going to Uthman again and tendering him any advice. However, pity for the aged caliph, heart-felt desire for reconciliation among the Muslims, and a slight hope that Uthman might follow the path of prudence compelled him to advise Uthman once again.

When night fell and Uthman came to see Ali for consultations on the suggesttion of his wife Na`ela, Ali said to him: “After making a speech from the Prophet's pulpit you went home and then Marwan came out and abused the people. Thereafter what is left to be done and what can I do for you?”

Uthman cursed himself much for his lapse. Ali then said to him: “I swear by God that I have endeavoured more than anyone else to keep the people away from you. However, whenever I suggest to you something which I hope will please you Marwan intervenes. And unfortunately you accept what he says and ignore what I suggest”. Ali was quite correct in saying this because this time also Marwan had spoiled the case.

The insurgents began insisting on their demands once again. They wanted the fulfilment of all the promises made with them. They also demanded that Marwan, who was the root-cause of all the mischief, should be surrendered to them so that they might take revenge on him. However, Uthman's attitude hardened and he sternly refused to hand over Marwan to them. The insurgents also became adamant. The disturbance and rebellion became acute and the insurgents besieged the house of Uthman.

In fact the insurgents did not want to harm Uthman. All they desired was that he should repent for his lapses and abdicate. This is proved by the fact that a man named Nayyar bin Ayaz who was one of the companions of the Prophet took his place in the first row of the insurgents and said to Uthman loudly: “You should abdicate and I assure you that you will remain unhurt”. While he was saying this Kathir bin Salat Kandi, who was a supporter of Uthman and was in his house at that time shot an arrow and killed Nayyar bin Ayaz. The insurgents cried: “Hand over the murderer of Ibn Ayaz to us”. Uthman replied: “How can I surrender to you a man who is defending me?”

The insurgents attacked the gate of the house which was closed immediately. They then put it on fire and their archers began to shower arrows on the caliph's palace.

Eventually Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr and his two companions entered the house from the side of the house of Muhammad ibn Abi Khurram Ansari. When they reached near him they found his wife Na`ela with him. The two companions of Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr attacked him with a sharp weapon and put him to death. 1 Then they escaped through the way they had entered the house. Na`ela cried: “The people have assassinated the Commander of the Faithful!”

Uthman met his death in this manner. The people who were responsible for his murder were of two kinds. To one group belonged those who became furious for the sake of truth. They asked Uthman to repent of his lapses and when he declined to do so they besieged his house and killed him. Amongst them were included the people of the Hijaz, Egypt and Iraq and all the Islamic cities. To the second group belonged those who were mad after the war booty. With them there was a leader who was obeyed and these people left Uthman in the lurch. We have already written about the persons belonging to the first group. As regards the second group we shall speak about them in the chapter entitled. “The greatest conspiracy” because these people are closely concerned with the treatment which was meted out to Ali and the fraud and deception to which he was subjected.

1. Although it is said that Ali tried to save Uthman and sent his two sons Hasan and Husayn to guard the gate of his house but the factual position is that Ali was not present in Madina when Uthman was killed and the assertions made in this behalf are not correct.
Refuting a similar narration Allama Haithmi says: “It is quite clear that this narration is not authentic. Ali was not present in Madina either when Uthman's house was besieged or when he was killed. (Majma` al-Zawaid, Vol.7, p.63).
Uthman had himself asked Ali to go to his estate at Yanb`u so that people might not suggest his name for the caliphate. Such a request had already been made many times as has been mentioned by Ali in Nahj al-Balaghah: “Uthman treats me like a camel which carries water to and fro. At times he tells me that I should go to Yanb`u. When I go there he calls me back to solve some problems. And when I have relieved him of his difficulties he again asks me to go back to Yanb`u”.

Some false statements

There are some writers in the world who do not care either for the historical facts or for the conditions and environments of life. They mention strange causes for the revolt which the oppressed persons made agaist Uthman and insist that the events of that time were the result of the will and desire of a particular person who had toured all the Islamic territories and instigated the people to rise against Uthman and his government.

The explanations put forth by these writers will no doubt make you laugh, because their only object is that the persons who were actually responsible for the murder of Uthman should not be censured, or else the people would begin to doubt the very faith of these writers. These writers are like those who try to reverse the direction of the water falling from above. They consider their readers to be simpletons and ignorant.

One of these writers is Sa`id al-Afghani, the author of ***"Ayesha wa al-Siyasah".*** He has tried his best to make his readers believe that the events which took place in the Islamic territory leading to the murder of Uthman and thereafter were due to the activities of only one man namely Abdullah bin Saba. [1] This claim and accusation leads one to the conclusion that the government of Uthman and his minister Marwan was an ideal one and Bani Umayyah and their governors and officers were the standard-bearers of human brotherhood and social justice in Arabia, but unfortunately one single person named Abdullah bin Saba brought all their capabilities and good deeds to nought. He toured all the districts and provinces and instigated the people to rise against the governors and officers who were very pious as well as great reformers. But for this man (Abdullah bin Saba) the people would have led happy and peaceful lives under the auspices of the bounties of Marwan, the justice of Walid and the forbearance of Mu`awiya.

Such a claim amounts to distortion of facts, injsutice to the people and an indecent attempt to support certain points of view. It also amounts to misguiding the people in respect of the basic truths on which history is based, because the object of such a futile attempt is that the responsibility for the events of a period, rather many periods, should be placed on the shoulders of one man who roamed about from area to area and the people of all those areas rose against the government owing to his vicious propaganda and not on account of anything else.

As regards the policies of the government, the deplorable condition of the economic and social system, the refractoriness of those associated with the government, misappropriation of public funds and adoption of dictatorial methods by Bani Umayyah and maltreatment of respectable personalities like Abu Dharr and Ammar Yasir, the author does not attach any importance to them and does not think that these things were the cause of general revolt of the people. According to him all the uproar against Uthman was due to the activities of Abdullah bin Saba who restrained the Muslims from obeying the

religious leaders of Islam and created disturbances and dissensions.

What a dangerous mentality it is that important events which were continuos and correlated with one another and had a great bearing on the society and the economic and social system of that time should be explained away by saying that the root-cause of all these things was the conspiracies of one man who according to Sa`id Afghani, roamed about from town to town and sowed the seeds of dissension and mischief in a pure society. And by pure society he evidently means the society which was headed by Marwan bin Hakam.

It deserves notice that Sa`id Afghani attaches such a great importance to Abdullah bin Saba or Ibn al-Sawda in his above mentioned book and he elevates Mu`awiya unconsciously and degrades Abu Dharr, though Mu`awiya was Mu`awiya and Abu Dharr was Abu Dharr. Afgani writes: "Abdullah bin Saba toured the Islamic territories and visited every place. He commenced his nefarious activities in Hijaz and then went to Syria. At that time Syria was ruled by an experienced and far-sighted person namely Mu`awiya ibn Abi Sufyan, who sensed the danger immediately and expelled him from there. However, his mischief did cast some effect on him. Ibn Saba assessed the situation and sowed the seeds of mischief. He instigated a distinguished companion of the Prophet to rise against Mu`awiya.

Abu Dharr was a man whose words were believed by the Syrians. Mu`awiya, who was a forbearing person as well as a diplomat, was very much upset. He, therefore, requested Uthman to remove that man from Syria, that distinguished companion was Abu Dharr whose story is well known (***Ayesha wa al-Siyasah***).

What this author purports to say may be summarised thus: During the caliphate of Uthman the people in various provinces were leading very happy and prosperous lives. The province of Syria, in particular, was then governed by a very farsighted and experienced person namely Mu`awiya. As regards the great reformer Abu Dharr he was a nonentity and would have remained so if Abdullah bin Saba had not contacted and awakened him. And when he awakened him he did so to make him create mischief, because, according to the author he (i.e. Abdullah bin Saba) was the source of all troublesand his object in touring the Islamic territories was to create mischief. The result was that Abu Dharr did what Abdullah bin Saba desired i.e.he created mischief, misguided the people and made them rebel against the leaders.

According to the said author the activities of Abu Dharr were dangerous for the Arabs, Islam and history, because he incited the poor to rise against the rich. For this very reason Mu`awiya got fed up with him and he showed kindness to the newly-converted Muslims as well as to history by expelling Abu Dharr from Syria.

As is evident the logic of Sa`id Afghani reminds one of the logic of those rulers who declare all truth-loving persons to be rebels and mischief-mongers. Is it not something odd that whereas the old historians should be aware of the reasons of the disturbance, the modern historians should not be able

to know it although the sources of information of the latter are much larger. The author of "Ayesha wa al-Siyasah" attributes the revolutionary movement against Uthman to the activities of Abdullah bin Saba, whereas Tabari and the historians of the earlier and the later period explained the events correctly and give their causes which are quite convincing.

While enumerating the causes of the movement Tabari says: "Those persons who did not enjoy precedence in the embracing Islam, nor had any position in Islam, could not be equal to those who embraced Islam at its early stage and enjoyed great dignity and importance. These very early Muslims found fault with the bestowal of large gifts and considered it to be injustice, as their own share used to be very small.

When new converts to Islam or the bedouin Arabs or freed slaves met them they were very much impressed by what they said. The result was that the number of the opponents of Uthman went on increasing. So much so that those who opposed Uthman became larger in number than those who were pleased with him. The result was that the disturbances prevailed".

It is surprising that other contemporary writers have also committed the same mistake. Among others was Ahmad Amin, the author of ***"Fajr al-Islam".*** He thinks that Abu Dharr Ghifari was a simpleton who was enticed by Abdullah bin Saba into believing in Mazdakite (communist) ideas so that he might prove useful for spoiling the atmosphere of various cities.

And even more surprising is the fact that in order to prove that Abu Dharr was influenced by Mazdakite ideas he has mentioned his (Abu Dharr's) remark which is quoted by Tabari. Abu Dharr is reported to have said, addressing the people of Damascus: "O wealthy people! Sympathise with the poor. Those who hoard gold and silver announce to them a painful chastisement" (***Fajr al-Islam*** p. 110).

Ahmad Amin may very well be asked whether sympathetic treatment with the poor by the rich is only a Mazdakite theory and not a pure Islamic injuction and whether Abu Dharr's remark "O wealthy people! Behave sympathetically with the poor" is not closely related with the Quranic verse:
"..Those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in God's way, announce to them a painful chastisement". (***9:34***)

At another place in ***Fajr al-Islam*** Ahmad Amin treating Abdullah bin Saba to be the root cause of mischief says: "This man prompted Abu Dharr Ghifari to propagate communism, and he was the ring-leader of the insurgents who came from different places to attack Uthman. It was he who endeavoured to corrupt the faith of the Muslims. He toured Hijaz, Basra, Kufa, Syria and Egypt extensively. Hence it is possible that he might have acquired the Mazdakite ideas from the Mazdakites of Iraq or Yemen and Abu Dharr too might have liked these ideas and adopted them".

It is very unfortunate that the author of ***Fajr al-Islam*** does not ponder as to what new thing appeared in the Islamic beliefs of Abu Dharr. Does Islam itself not announce that the poor enjoy certain rights over the rich and all Muslims are equal and does the Qur'an not say that the foreheads, flanks and backs of

those who hoard gold and silver will be branded in the Hell with the same gold and silver? Then what are those Mazdakite ideas in which Abu Dharr began to believe? The fact is that Abu Dharr was fighting against those persons with whom Islam itself fought and promised them the fire of Hell.

The question also arises as to whether Abu Dharr, who was a distinguished companion of the Prophet, foremost among the Shi`ah of Ali, and the fifth person to embrace Islam, did not know himself that all the Muslims were entitled to share the wealth of the nation and not that a few should hoard it. And could he not realize that during the caliphate of Uthman the public property had been appropriated by a few persons and the people were being subjected to tyranny and oppression and as these things are opposed to the teachings of Islam it was the duty of the Muslims to rise against them?

And then the question is: Was Abu Dharr such a simpleton that he had to depend on Abdullah bin Saba to tell him that Uthman was practising nepotism and going the ways of Kaiser and Kisra? Did Abu Dharr and the people come to know only on Abdullah bin Saba telling them that the rulers had gone astray and the people had been deprived of their rights and consequently Abu Dharr and others expressed resentment?

These writers have understood Abdullah bin Saba and Mazdak's creed but they have not understood Abu Dharr and Islam! They have found the rebellious movement of Abdullah bin Saba and his instigating the people to rise against the caliph to be dreadful. But they have not found to be dreadful those acts of Uthman which annoyed the Muslims – acts which annoy all nations during all ages viz. nepotism, favouritism and adopting a discriminating policy.

Researchers differ about the causes which led to the murder of Uthman. The most prominent event about which there is difference of opinion between them is the letter written from Madina to Ibn Abi Sarah, the Governor of Egypt, who was directed to kill the governor–designate Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr on his arrival in Egypt. This event has been mentioned in detail earlier.

As regards those who do not consider it to be a true incident it appears necessary to mention the views of one of them namely Dr. Taha Husayn, because he enjoys great respect as a research scholar of the history of Islam and the Arab world. He says thus in the first volume (entitled Uthman) of his book ***Al–Fitnatu'l Kubra:***

"Here the story of the letter is related. The traditionists say that when the Egyptians were returning after having been satisfied with the promises of Uthman they were able to lay their hands on the way on a slave who was carrying a letter to Ibn Abi Sarah. I think this story is fabricated. The greatest proof of this is that the companions of the Prophet contended with the Egyptians on this point and asked them: "When you and the people of Kufa as well as those of Basra were going your respective ways how did the people of Kufa and Basra come to know that you had found such a letter?" To this the Egyptians could not give any reply and they said: "Whatever you may be thinking we do not need this man (Uthman). We shall certainly remove him from his office and appoint a new caliph in his place".

“It cannot be believed that Uthman could deceive the Muslims by removing the Governor of Egypt and replacing him by another and then writing a secret letter to the governor to kill them on their arrival”.

“It cannot also be believed that Marwan could dare write a letter purporting to be from Uthman and affix his seal on it and then send it through his slave mounted on his camel”.

“The matter is, however, quite simple. Uthman might have promised to accept the demands of the insurgents of Kufa, Basra and Egypt and they believed in him. Later they came to know that he had not fulfilled his promises. They, therefore, became furious and returned with great anger to finish the matter and not to return to their homes until they had removed Uthman from his office or killed him and made some other arrangement for the caliphate. When they reached Madina they found that the companions of the Prophet were ready to fight with them. They, however, refrained from fighting with the companions and returned from Madina deceitfully. When they became sure that the companions had laid their arms aside and were resting in their houses they (the insurgents) returned and assumed the control of Madina without any bloodshed”. (***Al-Fitna tu'l-Kubra,*** Vol. 1, `Uthman').

It is time that the historical events about which the writers differ deserve to be doubted, especially those events which serve sectarian interests or support any particular creed. This doubt cannot be removed unless history itself provides a conclusive proof or it is analysed and interpreted in a way which by itself serves as a sufficient proof. The incident of the letter in question is no doubt such that it should make Dr. Taha Husayn doubt its authenticity and the reasons for his treating it as doubtful may also be accepted, provided that certain facts which stand in the way of accepting those reasons as sufficient do not exist.

Dr. Taha Husayn says that when the companions of the Prophet asked the people of Kufa and Basra as to how they came to know that the Egyptians had acquired such a letter when each party was going its own way they could not give a reply. This is not, however, something which may make one deny the incident of the letter outright.

According to the narrations as well as the sequence of events it is an established fact that Uthman had appointed Muhammad bin Abi Bakr as the Governor of Egypt and had also sent a party of the Muhajirs and the Ansar with him. Muhammad and his companions had complete reliance on the letter which Uthman had given them and they therefore, left Madina for Egypt. However, before reaching their destination they returned to Madina. Now the question arises as to why those people returned very much annoyed? And why did they await an opportunity to enter the city without bloodshed? Neither history nor those who deny the existence of any such letter mention any cause for the return of Muhammad and his companions to Madina. Only one cause is mentioned and that is the letter in question.

Furthermore, the Muhajirs and the Ansar who were sent with Muhammad to Egypt to investigate the activities of Ibn Abi Sarah and to make the atmosphere favourable for the governorship of Muhammad were all obedient to Uthman and some of them, if not all, enjoyed the position of Uthman's supporters and associates. How can one imagine that these persons who were the well-wishers of Uthman, could

forge a letter signed by him? And if it is said that the letter was not forged by the Muhajirs and the Ansar but it was signed by someone else, then the question arises as to how these people accepted it as having been written by Uthman. And if it is said that no such letter was found then it must also be admitted that Muhammad bin Abi Bakr and his companions did not return to Madina on account of any letter and the story of the letter was fabricated by the enemies of Uthman after his murder.

In that case the question arises as to why Dr. Taha Husayn and other historians and narrators admit the existence of such a letter and say that the companions of the Prophet contended with the insurgents on account of the letter and enquired as to how the people of Kufa and Basra came to know about the Egyptians having located the letter when each of the three parties was going its own way?

In the circumstances the existence of the letter cannot be denied. The question, therefore, remains as to who wrote that letter and engineered a plot to kill Muhammad bin Abi Bakr, the Muhajirs and the Ansar accompanying him, and the opponents of Ibn Abi Sarah?

As mentioned above Dr. Taha Husayn does not believe that Uthman could write such a letter and deceive the Muslims. This view of Dr. Taha Husayn is correct. Uthman could not practise such a deception. It is however, a fact that Uthman was of a very mild nature. This very mildness occasionally made him surrender to the wishes of Bani Umayyah and deceit and cunningness of Bani Umayyah is too well known. We learn from the life history of Uthman that at a certain time he issued some orders, later withdrew them, expressed regret for having issued them, and began weeping.

The treatment meted out by Uthman to Abu Dharr is a clear example of the way in which Bani Umayyah prevailed upon him to do things opposed to justice and good conscience and then he had to express regret. He subjected Abu Dharr to extreme humiliation and torture and then did his best to reconcile him. Soon afterwards, however, he got annoyed with Abu Dharr again and banished him as a result of which he and the members of his family died of starvation.

Another such instance was the insult to which Uthman subjected the distinguished companion of the Prophet namely Abdullah ibn Mas`ud. In compliance with his orders a man picked up Abdullah and threw him on the ground as a result of which his bones got broken. He also stopped his stipend. Soon afterwards, however, he felt ashamed and apologized to Abdullah.

Uthman's biography also shows that he asked Ali to leave Madina and then sent messengers asking him to return. This happened many times. So much so that Ali had to say: “Uthman wants to make me a camel which carries water so that I may continue to come and go. He asked me to leave Madina and then called me back. Now he again wants me to go away from here”.

Uthman gives general licence to Abdullah Ibn Abi Sarah to deal with the people of Egypt as he liked. Ibn Abi Sarah subjects the Egyptians to severe oppression. The Egyptians come to Madina and complain to Uthman. Uthman addresses them. He praises them, expresses regret, and repents for the past deeds. So much so that he begins to weep and promises that he would replace Ibn Abi Sarah by a governor of

their choice. Then he returns to his palace where he meets Marwan. Marwan makes him go back on his word and he does not keep any promise made to the Egyptians!

For Uthman the matter of Abu Dharr and Ibn Mas`ud was not easier than that of Muhammad bin Abi Bakr or the Egyptians. The admonitions made by both of them to his kinsmen were more painful to him than the Egyptian's attack once on the capital of Madina and once on the Governor of Egypt. When he could misbehave with Abu Dharr and Ibn Mas`ud to comply with the wishes of his own kinsmen, Muhammad and Fgyptians were evidently of no consequence in his eyes.

Furthermore, it is an established fact that Muhammad bin Abi Bakr was an opponent of Uthman's politics whereas Ibn Abi Sarah was one of his confidants and liked very much his policies and methods of Government. In the light of these facts it is possible that Uthman might have regretted the appointment of Muhammad bin Abi Bakr instead of Ibn Abi Sarah as well as the promises made by him with the Egyptians and might have decided to go back upon his word under the pressure of Marwan and other Umayyads.

By mentioning the incident of the letter we do not mean to support those who claim that the letter was written by Uthman himself. What we mean to say is that Uthman had such a mild nature that Marwan and the descendants of Hakam who were all in all in Uthman's administration could prevail upon him and dupe him very easily to achieve their own ends. Hence if it cannot be accepted that Uthman could deceive the Muslims it can very well be accepted that Marwan could exert pressure on Uthman to get things done according to his desire.

Now we turn to Dr. Taha Husayn once again. He thinks that for two reasons which we have mentioned earlier the story of the letter is fabricated and baseless. Then he advances another reason in support of his claim which, in our opinion, is very weak. He says. “It is not something rational and acceptable that Marwan might dare to write a letter as if it was written by Uthman, affix his seal thereon, and send it through his (Uthman's) slave”.

We say in reply that it is not surprising that Marwan should have taken such a step. What suprises us is that Dr. Taha Husayn considers Marwan's action to be beyond reason. He holds this view notwithstanding the fact that it was the same Marwan who considered himself to be the master and the people to be his servants and slaves, whom he could allow to live or put to death at his own free will.

Now we should like to comment on Dr. Taha's view that these narrations do not stand to reason. There are narrations which tell that the letter was written by Marwan and the entire plot was the outcome of his policies and methods of administration, because he was the de facto ruler of the Islamic territories.

In this connection it is necessary to keep some points in view.

Firstly all the narrations unitedly say that a deputation headed by Ali waited on Uthman. It included Ammar, Talha, Zubayr and Sa`d bin Abi Waqas. Ali held the letter in question in his hand. He also took

with him the slave and the camel. He had a talk with Uthman about the letter and then the companions came to know that the letter had been written by Marwan. They then asked Uthman to call Marwan before them so that they might question him. Uthman did not agree to this and the companions went away very much annoyed. We have already quoted this narration at length in the foregoing pages.

Secondly Marwan's opinion about Uthman's caliphate must also be kept in view. In this connection the question arises whether, in his eyes Uthman was a caliph like Abu Bakr and Umar or an Umayyad through whom Bani Umayyah were to regain the power and authority which had been destroyed by Islam.

Marwan was a perfect model of Umayyad opportunism. According to him the Caliphate had nothing to do with the fact that Uthman was a Qurayshite, a Muhajir, a companion of the Prophet and a believer in his Prophethood. Rather he only considered Uthman to be a member of the Umayyad family.

According to Marwan the caliphate was not something which meant a just government based on the principles of public welfare and which was expected to follow the ***Sunnah*** of the Prophet and the conduct of the previous caliphs. It was a kingship which slipped away from the hands of Abu Bakr and Umar because they did not nominate their children as their successors. It was, however, incumbent upon Uthman, who was an Umayyad, not to repeat this mistake so that the people might imagine that the caliphate belonged to Bani Umayyah only.

It was therefore necessary for Uthman that he should behave towards the people in the same manner in which a careful monarch behaves towards his subjects. If Uthman was not able to rule in this way there was Marwan to guide him. The sentences uttered by Marwan while addressing the insurgents which have been reproduced earlier, depict a true picture of his mentality. He had said: “Why have you people gathered here? Do you want to snatch our kingdom?”

During those days the caliphate was in fact the kingdom of Marwan. The subjects were not entitled to raise their voice and claim their sustenance and freedom from the king. Marwan was a king belonging to the Umayyad Family and people were his slaves.

How could a person, who viewed the caliph and the caliphate in the manner explained above and issued orders according to that conception, be expected to tolerate that the people should put up their demands before the government of his relative Uthman (which was as good as Marwan's own government) and the king should surrender before their wishes and dismiss the governor who was an important member of the Umayyad regime and appoint in his place Muhammad bin Abi Bakr who was an opponent of Uthman's government and a staunch supporter of Imam Ali?

We cannot also ignore the fact that it was the insurgents and the companions of the Prophet who were annoyed with Uthman and had recommended the name of Muhammad for appointment as governor and Marwan had not been consulted in the matter. Of course, Marwan could not tolerate that his authority should be violated in this manner.

When Marwan's views about the caliphate are known it becomes evident that he could not ignore the superiority which had returned once again to the Umayyad Family. And when it is realized that instead of considering Uthman to be the caliph of the Muslims, Marwan treated him to be member of the Umayyad Family and a representative of Umayyad Government it should not be difficult to understand that he could be presumptuous vis-a-vis Uthman. However, if he was presumptuous he was so from our view-point. So far as Marwan himself was concerned he was only acting for protection of his rights.

Dr. Taha Husayn's saying that Marwan could not dare write a letter in the name of Uthman and affix his seal on it, does not stand to reason. History tells us of many instances in which he showed presumption and boldness. For example, he suggested to Uthman to kill those companions of the Prophet who criticized his government (viz. Ali, Ammar, Abu Dharr etc).

He suggested to Uthman that he should not give a chance to Ibn Mas`ud to turn Syria against him as he had already made the people of Kufa his opponents. Uthman readily accepted his suggestion.
He tried to obstruct Ali, his sons, and Aqil and Abbas from saying good bye to Abu Dharr, and did not desist from doing so until Ali struck his animal of riding and was about to strike him also.

He was presumptuous on very delicate occasions. He abused and turned out of the capital members of various deputations which had come from other places. Uthman heard and saw what he did but said nothing. He openly suggested to Uthman to kill Ammar.

In many other matters also Marwan was much more presumptuous. He spoke impudently to Na`ela, Uthman's wife, in the presence of her husband, but Uthman kept silent. This incident was as follows:

Na`ela was a wise woman. She disliked Marwan's policies very much and repeatedly suggested to her husband to act on the advice of Ali. When Uthman delivered a speech before the representatives of Egypt, Basra and Kufa he promised them to accede to their demands and then returned to his house, Marwan said to him: “O Commander of the Faithful: “Should I speak or keep quiet?” Thereupon Uthman's wife said: “You better keep quiet. I swear by God that you people will kill Uthman and make his children orphans. It is not proper that Uthman should go back on and violate the promises made by him”. Marwan said to her: “What have you to do with these matters. By God, your father who is now dead did not know how to perform ablution correctly”.

Evidently when Marwan could speak in such an impudent manner to the caliph's wife in his presence one should not be suprised on his having written a letter with the name of the caliph without his knowledge.

During the period of Uthman's caliphate also people knew how Marwan misbehaved towards him and how presumtuous he was in dealing with the caliph. The people did not conceal his presumptuousness but reprimanded him and also warned Uthman against him. Even then Uthman did not disregard the suggestions made by Marwan. Representing the views of the public Imam Ali had said to Uthman: “You will be pleased with Marwan and he will be satisfied with you only when he deprives you of your faith

and reason and drives you to any place he likes like a tame and weak camel".

Marwan's presumptuousness also encouraged others to misbehave towards Uthman. We have already narrated in the foregoing pages the story of Jabalah ibn Umrah Sa`edi. It was the presumptuousness of Marwan which encouraged Jabalah to tell Uthman: "I swear by God that I shall put this chain round your neck unless you turn away your wicked kinsmen from around you".

Dr. Taha Husayn may well be asked whether this presumptuousness of Jabalah is more against reason or that of Marwan who wrote a letter as if it was written by Uthman when he was a favourite son-in-law of Uthman and enjoyed great influence on him!

1. In the book cntitled "Abdullah bin Saba" (in three volumes) written recently by an erudite scholar namely Allama Murtaza al-Askari (which has fortunately been translated into Urdu, English and Persian as well) justice has been done to the subject in a very competent manner and the veil has been removed from the ambiguous face of this mythical person who has been the real hero of the concocted stories written against the Shia during the span of the last thirteen centuries.
In this book Allama al-Askari has, as a true researcher adopted a correct method for showing the real face of this mythical personality. He has commenced his study with the well-known documents like Kamil Ibn Athir, Tarikh Ibn Khaldun, Tarikh Tabari, Ibn Kathir, Ibn Asakir and Zahabi and has endeavoured to find out the source of this story. After complete research and study he has found that it is now more than a thousand years that the historians have quoted the story of Abdullah bin Saba and his activities from a person named Saif bin Umar. Many of them like Tabari have quoted from directly and other writers of recent, past and present have quoted this story from Tabari and other historians mentioned above.
Thereafter he has directed his research to the identification of Saif bin Umar because all talks about Abdullah bin Saba culminate in him. As a result of this research he has introduced Saif bin Umar to us in the following terms in the light of clear documentary proof.
He was a person who died after 170 A.H. and handed down two books namely "al-Futuh-wal-Raddah" and "al-Jamal-wa-Masiru Ayesha-wa Ali".
The study of the particulars of Saif in books on biographies and of what has been written about him by scholars from 3rd century upto 10th century Higira shows that he was a forger, a writer of mythical stories and a coiner of Hadith who was sometimes referred to as "Saif bin Umar Zindiq" (Atheist or Dualist) as well.
Study of his two books also confirms the fact that he possessed those qualities, because most of his narrations do not tally with any historical documents and have a perfect air of fiction.
All the documentary evidence collected in this behalf goes to show that Saif bin Umar created a number figures and it is also not improbable that he was commissioned to do so. One of these fictitious figures is this very Abdullah bin Saba.
In this manner we find with the deepest regret that this man (Abdullah bin Saba) who has, for more than one thousand years, served as a pretext for propaganda against the Shia and has been introduced as a Jew and the founder of Shi'ite Islam has had in fact no real existence and was the creation of the brain of a forger and a visionary person named Saif bin Umar!
We invite the enlightened conscience of the Muslim sages for arbitration and ask: Is it proper that a religion whose root has been watered by the purest sources of inspiration viz. the Family of the holy Prophet should be subjected to such calumnies and unholy remarks may be passed against it on the authority of fictitious stories without any research or study? Is this the justice to which the holy Qur'an invites us to adhere? And is this the meaning of the commandment which we have been given regarding acceptance of statements?
"O faithful! Whenever a sinner or a libertine brings you a news, verify it, lest you may subject a community to adversity on account of ignorance and repent thereafter." (Sura al-Hujurat:6)
Further details on the subject may be a reference made to Allama Murtaza Askari's masterpiece research work "Abdullah bin Saba".

A great conspiracy

Persons Responsible for the Assassination of Uthman

We have explained fully in the foregoing pages that people developed hatred in their hearts against the policies of Uthman in Madina as well as in other Islamic territories. Originally the people became dissatisfied at heart, but later began complaining and thereafter the complaints assumed the shape of disobedience which ended in the siege of the house of Uthman and his murder. We have also mentioned that those who criticized Uthman's policies and gave him good and useful advice were not ordinary persons but distinguished companions of the Prophet.

However, instead of Uthman abandoning his wrong policies and nepotism he and his kinsmen subjected the companions to harassment and torture and severe punishment. If these companions criticized the methods and policies of Uthman it was not due to their desire for any personal gain but on account of their love for justice and faith. They were the pick of the bunch. They knew fully well their responsibilities, which resembled those of the Prophets.

If Ali criticized Uthman's policy of granting big estates to his relatives without any justification it was not because he himself wanted any estate. And if he objected to his financial policies it was not because he was himself inclined to gain wealth. Everyone knows that he never cared for wealth. If he found fault with the nepotism of Uthman and his Umayyad mentality it was not because he wanted the welfare and superiority of his own family. It is impossible even to imagine that Ali could be prompted by such motives.

Ali was a pillar of Islam, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet and the father of his dear grandsons. It was he who uttered this sentence: “The worth and value of every person is judged by his actions. One whose actions are better will enjoy more worth and dignity”. This sentence of his demolished the edifice of family and tribal dignity which one inherits.

The opposition to and hatred against Uthman's policies by Ammar and Abu Dharr was based on the same reasons on which Ali's opposition was based. Hence, their opposiuon did not mean that it should have culminated in Uthman's death. What they desired was that he should abandon Umayyad mentality and nepotism and equity and justice should prevail. None of them wished him to be killed.

The Islamic State during the days of Uthman had covered vast areas and it was natural that in such a big State opposition of another kind should also take place. This opposition was from those persons who coveted power and authority and more gains, and wanted to expand the area of their influence. They opposed Uthman with the hope that if he was removed from office and was succeeded by another person more favourable to them, their dignity and influence would increase. Opposition of this type takes

place in every region and in every age. The associates of every ruler change their attitude from time to time to achieve their personal ends.

The opponents of this kind during the time of Uthman were not all alike. His favourites who were accumulating wealth as a consequence of the gifts bestowed by him were opposed to him, and so also were those who were deprived of such bounties. And similar was the case with his relatives, officers and supporters, whom he had permitted not only to control the people but himself as well. These people were his real murderers.

We have already explained in the foregoing pages how Uthman provided the means of his own death and how Marwan and his favourites turned the Islamic world against him by their nefarious activities.

The reality was understood very clearly by those persons who had close connections with Uthman. One of them was Muhammad bin Muslimah. When he was about to die someone said: “Uthman has been killed”. Thereupon he (Muslimah) said: “Uthman himself has been responsible for his death”. Uthman's wife Na`ela said to Marwan and other favourites of her husband: “I swear by God that you will kill Uthman and make his children orphans”. And addressing Uthman she said: “If you act on Marwan's advice he will kill you”.

As regards the Umayyad governors, officers, and his supporters, whom Uthman had allowed to subjugate the people, and some of whom availed of his bounties and others, who were dissatisfied with him, we shall discuss them one by one soon, because a large number of these people hatched a great conspiracy against Ali– a conspiracy which was unprecedented in the East.

The conspiracy was engineered by those very persons who instigated the people against Uthman and thus besmeared their own hands with his blood. The conspiracy was that they accused Ali of the murder of Uthman. They took away the blood–stained shirt of Uthman and said that they wanted to avenge Uthman's murder.

Mu`awiya who ostensibly wanted to avenge the murder of Uthman was in reality keen to strengthen his own rule as well as that of his descendants. His efforts were directed towards strengthening his rule in Syria in the first instance. Then he wanted to expand his kingdom by grabbing other countries and eventually to hecome the despotic ruler of all the Islamic territories. He did not pay any heed to Uthman either during his lifetime or after his death. All that he wanted was that Uthman might make him powerful day after day so that he might eventually achieve his final goal. Thus he desired that Uthman should allow him maximum freedom of action and should become a shield for him, so that he might achieve his objectives.

Even when Uthman was killed Mu`awiya did not care for his death. He only wanted to avail of the opportunity to claim to be the caliph's heir, and to get rid of the new caliph. What did he do with the murderers of Uthman when he himself became the sole ruler of the Islamic territories? Had he really been grieved on account of the murder of Uthman he could then locate and kill every one of his

murderers. However, he completely forgot Uthman's murder and revenging him, although it was on this very pretext that he had revolted against the new caliph and thus became the cause of bloodshed of hundreds of thousands of the Muslims.

Furthermore, he could send a large army from Syria to defend Uthman when his house had been besieged by the insurgents. He was the permanent Governor of Syria and Uthman had allowed him maximum freedom. He could do what he liked and there was none who could call him to account. Thus he could send a large Syrian army to Madina before as well as after the house of Uthman was besieged. In fact he could also advise Uthman not to be adamant to public opinion. However, he did not do any of these things, because he was keen to grab the caliphate after Uthman and could not think of anything else.

From the very day on which Uthman called a conference of his confidants, which was also attended by Mu`awiya, and which ended without taking any decision, Mu`awiya decided finally to seize the caliphate, because he became sure that Uthman would be killed. As Syria was in his hands and the inhabitants of that region were obedient to him, he realized that if Uthman was killed he would acquire the best weapon (viz. vengeance of the murder of Uthman) to achieve his purpose.

He also knew that amongst the governors of Uthman none was as powerful and as competent to mobilize an army by threatening the elders and chiefs of the tribes as he himself was. Hence, on that very day he decided to become the caliph one day and became active towards achieving his goal. He himself said once: “None is as powerful and as competent to rule as I am. Umar appointed me as governor and was also satisfied with my conduct”.

Mu`awiya was sure of Uthman's murder and he also possessed sufficient power in Syria to seize the caliphate.

Allama Ya`qubi writes that when the insurgents tightened the siege of Uthman's house, he wrote a letter to Mu`awiya asking him to come to his help. Mu`awiya left Damascus with a large army, but when he reached the Syrian border he left the army there, saying that he would in the first instance meet the Commander of the Faithful himself to assess the situation. He then reached Madina and met Uthman. The latter asked him as to where his army was. He said in reply: “I have left the army behind because, in the first instance, I wanted to hold consultations with you. I shall now return and shall meet you again along with the army”. Upon this Uthman said: “O Mu`awiya! That is not true. The fact is that you want me to be murdered so that you may be in a position to claim that you are entitled to avenge my blood. Go at once and bring the people to help me”.

When quite some time had passed since the murder of Uthman, Mu`awiya came to Madina and visited Uthman's house. Uthman's daughter Ayesha then remembered her father and began crying. Mu`awiya consoled her and began crying. He said: “Dear niece! The people have become obedient to me and I have given them peace. I have displayed forbearance under which anger was hidden and they showed

obedience which had enmity and rancour under it. Every man has a sword in his hand and he also knows who his supporters are. If we deceive them they too will deceive us and it cannot be said as to who will win. You should be satisfied that at present you are called the daughter of the Commander of the Faithful Uthman and niece of the Commander of the Faithful Mu`awiya. If I rise to take revenge on your behalf and consequently I am deprived of government you will become an ordinary woman".

Hence, when Mu`awiya himself became the Commander of the Faithful and consequently Uthman's daughter became the niece of the Commander of the Faithful he ceased to think or talk about Uthman, although, so long as the caliphate remained with Ali, Uthman's murder was the most burning topic with him. Now the government was with Mu`awiya and he had acquired an opportunity to fulfil his father Abu Sufyan's wish which he had expressed when Uthman had assumed the caliphate. Abu Sufyan had said: "O children of Umayyah! Play with this government as children play with a ball. I swear that I have always been desirous of this government for you. Now it will go down to your children as inheritance".

Evidently, after Mu`awiya the caliphate was to go to Yazid and then to other children of Bani Umayyah.

In the letters written by Ali to Mu`awiya he has mentioned clearly that when Uthman sought help from Mu`awiya he did not accede to his request. He neither came himself nor sent any army to defend Uthman. In a letter to Mu`awiya he says:

"Then you have mentioned the matter about me and Uthman. You are entitled to get a reply in this behalf, because you are related to him. Well, then tell me (correctly) as to who out of us two was more inimical towards him and who provided means for his death? He who offered help which was refused by Uthman, or he from whom he sought help and who failed to help him and provided means of his death till death overtook him in the manner in which it was destined for him".

In another letter Ali writes: "You helped Uthman when helping him served your own interests and refrained from helping him when Uthman was likely to benefit". (What is meant by Ali's above remarks is that Mu'awiya stood in support of Uthman after his death, because he could collect people in his own interest by raising the slogan of vengeance of Uthman's murder but when Uthman was alive and his help could be beneficial to him he withheld it. Uthman remained besieged and Mu`awiya did not allow his army to proceed to Madina to defend him).

Whatever has been said above about Bani Umayyah and their prominent persons like Mu`awiya and Marwan in connection with Uthman's murder can also be said about other persons mentioned above. In fact the same things can be said about the enemies of Ali and those who conspired against him. Those persons were responsible for Uthman's murder and not Ali. It is possible that there might be some persons who did not smear their hands with Uthman's blood but it is an undeniable fact that they were pleased when he met his death.

Amr ibn al-Aas, who had a great hand in hatching conspiracies against Ali and slandering him, had instigated everyone he met to rise against Uthman and had encouraged the people to kill him, because

he had dismissed him from the governorship of Egypt. He himself used to say: “Not to talk of the dignitaries and the chiefs I instigated even the herdsmen to rise against Uthman”.

When the disturbances broke out in Madina he went away to Palestine where he had built a palace. One day while he was sitting in his palace with his two sons named Muhammad and Abdullah a rider was seen coming from the side of Madina. People made enquiries from him about Uthman and he told them that he had been assassinated. Thereupon Amr ibn al-Aas said: “I am Abdullah. When I scratch a wound I ensure that blood comes out of it”! (He meant to say that he instigated the people to rise against Uthman as a result of which he (Uthman) lost his life).

Talha bin Ubaidullah, who first took oath of allegiance to Ali, and then fought against him on the pretext of avenging Uthman's murder was another such person. He took an active part in inciting the people to rise against Uthman. It has been narrated that Uthman sought assistance from Ali against Talha a number of times and Ali always acceded to his request. On one such occasion Ali went to Talha and saw that a large number of insurgents were gathered round him. He felt that Talha had a great hand in Uthman being besieged and he (Talha) was thinking of doing away with him.

Ali reprimanded him and said: “O Talha! What treatment have you meted out to Uthman?”He also endeavoured to restrain Talha from his activities but he declined to act on Ali's advice. Ali then went to the Public Treasury and desired that it might be opened. Keys were not, however, available. The door of the treasury was then broken under his instructions and he divided the entire money found in it, amongst those whom Talha had collected to kill Uthman. When Uthman came to know about it he was very happy and realized (although at a very late stage) that none else was as sympathetic and sincere, and capable of solving the problems of the Muslims, as Ali.

Then Talha came to Uthman and apalogized to him and said: “I repent before God. I had decided to perform an act but God intervened”. Uthman said: “You have not come as a repentant, but like one who has become helpless. May God punish you!” (Tarikh al-Kamil, v.3, p.7. Tarikh Tabari, v.6, p. 154. Tarikh Ibn Khaldun, v.2, p.297).

Tabari narrates that as soon as the insurgents besieged the house of Uthman Talha began getting ready to become the caliph. He was certain that after Uthman the people would choose him as the next caliph. The first action taken by him was that he assumed control over the Public Treasury, obtained its keys, and appointed his watchmen to guard it.

When the siege of his house became serious Uthman said, “God! Help me against Talha. He has incited the people to revolt against me. I swear by God that I hope, he will not attain to the caliphate and will lose his life also”. This sentence uttered by Uthman shows that Talha wanted to finish him and to become the caliph himself. Uthman had given freedom to Talha to utilize the property of the Public Treasury in any manner he liked, but he was a man who could not be satisfied with anything lesser than the caliphate. Uthman used to utter this sentence time and again during the last days of the siege of his

house: “Woe betide Talha! I gave him so much gold and now he is thirsty for my blood”.

Those who have recorded the events related to the siege of Uthman's house have said that on the day on which Uthman was killed Talha had veiled his face and was shooting arrows secretly towards Uthman. It has also been related that when the besiegers could not find a way to enter the house, Talha arranged their entry from an adjoining house belonging to an Ansar and then they killed Uthman.

Tabari has narrated through Hakim bin Jabir that when Uthman's house had been besieged Ali said to Talha: “I ask you for God's sake to save Uthman from the people”. Talha replied: “By God this is not possible until and unless Bani Umayyah liquidate the entire debt”. (Tarikh Tabari, Vol.5, p.139).

After Uthman's assassination Ali used to say: “May God curse Ibn Sa`abah (Talha)! Uthman gave him so much and he (in return) behaved towards him like this”.

A remark of Ali about Talha shows that he was the person who incited the people most to revolt against Uthman and he was more keen than anyone else to see Uthman killed. He says: “By God Talha hurriedly put forth a demand for avenging the murder of Uthman lest revenge might be taken on him, because he, too, was involved in the matter. None was more thirsty for Uthman's blood than he. By ostensibly claiming revenge he tried to mislead the people so that the reality might remain hidden and the people might be involved in doubt”.

As regards Zubayr bin Awam it has been narrated that he did not do anything to turn away the insurgents from Uthman, rather it is said that his sympathies were with the insurgents. The policy adopted by him with regard to Uthman shows that he too desired that he might be finished as early as possible and he was very hopeful of becoming the next caliph. He told Ali openly that he wanted the caliphate for himself. When Ali asked him a few moments before the commencement of the Battle of the Camel as to how he had come there he replied: “You have been the cause of my arrival here. I do not consider you fit to be a caliph nor do I consider anyone else to be more deserving for this office than myself”.

Every student of history knows how vehemently Ayesha instigated revolt against Uthman. She often criticized him very severely and incited the people to kill him. She was annoyed with him from the very day he reduced her stipend and was always seeking an opportunity to harm him. One day she heard him delivering a speech from the pulpit of the prophet. She immediately took out a shirt of the prophet and showing it to the people said with a loud voice: “O Muslims! The shirt of the prophet has not yet worn out and Uthman has corrupted his ***Sunnah”.***

Ibn Abi'l Hadid says on the authority of his contemporary scholars that Ayesha instigated every person she met to rise against Uthman. He further says: “Ayesha took out a piece of the prophet's dress and suspended it on a wall in her house. Whoever came to see her she said to him: “The dress of the prophet has not yet worn out but Uthman has polluted and ruined his ***Sunnah”.***

Balazari says: “Once Ibn Abbas chanced to meet Ayesha. That year Uthman had appointed him as the Amir of Hajj. Ayesha said to him openly: “O Ibn Abbas! God has given you intellect, wisdom and power of speech. Make the people turn away from this rebel (Uthman)”.

Balazari has quoted a sentence of Ayesha which shows that she hated Uthman more than anyone else can hate another human being. She said to Marwan: “O Marwan! I wish that Uthman had been in one of my bags so that I might have picked up that bag myself and drowned it into the sea”. She used to say very often: “Kill Na`athal. Na`athal has become an infidel”.

Ayesha so much wished Uthman's death that she began asking the people openly to kill him. It was because of this that she was sure that after Uthman's death Talha and not Ali would become the caliph. This is proved by the fact that when the news of Uthman's assassination was communicated to her at Mecca she said at once: “A curse upon Na`athal! Very good, O man with the fingers! Very good Abu Shabal! What a great man you are, O my cousin! It appears as if I can see with my own eyes his fingers and the people taking oath of allegiance to him”.

The man with the fingers means Talha. His fingers were cut off in the Battle of Ohad and from that day onwards he was called the man with the fingers.

When Talha's son Muhammad was questioned about the details of Uthman's murder he accused his father as well as Ayesha of being involved in it. The author of Al-Badr wa al-Tarikh says: “The greatest enemies of Uthman were Talha, Zubayr and Ayesha”.

There were many other dignitaries who instigated revolt against Uthman and thus participated in his murder. For instance when Abdur Rahman bin Awf whose wealth had increased many times during the period of Uthman fell ill, and the people went to enquire about his health he said to them: “Do away with Uthman before he assumes strength”. Among the enemies of Islam who instigated the people to rise against Uthman were also included many persons who later fought against Ali, and demanded revenge on him for the murder of Uthman.

The author of ***`Halif Makhzum'*** writes in his book: “Those of the Quraysh who were Uthman's fell enemies became his supporters after his death, and possibly the role of Ayesha in this tragedy is a clear example of being more dreadfully contradictory as compared with that of the greedy Qurayshites. She openly instigated the people to kill Uthman because she hoped that the government would then return to the Family of Tayim (Ayesha's family) and her cousin Talha would become the caliph.

Uthman was killed by Talba, Zubayr and Sa`d bin Abi Waqas. He was killed by Mu`awiya and his party through their wealth and conspiracies. They left him in the lurch. He was killed by Marwan and his descendants and the friends of Bani Mu`iz, on account of their egotism, and their failing to give any importance to Uthman's affairs.

However, when Uthman was killed and the Muslims selected Ali unanimously as the new caliph all these

persons suddenly changed their attitude. The same Uthman who was called a tyrant and an infidel during his lifetime begun to be called by them an oppressed person and a martyr after his death".

It will not be out of place to mention here the sentences which were uttered by Sa`id bin Aas and Mughayrah bin Sho`ba when they met Ayesha and her army at Khaybar while she was going from Mecca to Basra to fight against the army of Ali. What they said shows clearly that Talha and Zubayr were fully responsible for Uthman's murder. On that occasion Sa`id met Ayesha and the following coversation took place between them:

Sa`id: O Mother of the Faithful! Where are you going?
Ayesha: I am going to Basra.
Sa`id: What for?
Ayesha: To take revenge on the murderers of Uthman.
Sa`id: The murderers of Uthman are already with you. Why don't you kill them?

Then Sa`id addressed Marwan and they conversed as follows:
Sa`id: Where are you going?
Marwan: I am going to Basra.
Sa`id: What will you do there? Marwan: I shall take revenge on the murderers of Uthman.

Sa`id: The murderers of Uthman are already with you.
He has been killed by Talha and Zubayr. They coveted the caliphate themselves. However, when they were vanquished (i.e. when people took the allegiance to Ali) they said: "We shall wash away blood with blood and atone for our sins with repentance".

Then Mughayrah addressed the people thus: "If you have come to accompany the Mother of the Faithful it will be better for you if you return along with her. And if your anger is on account of Uthman's murder, you should know that these very chiefs of yours have killed Uthman.
And if you are annoyed with Ali for some cause let me know what that cause is. I ask you for God's sake not to create two disturbances in one year". (Al-Imamat wa al-Siyasah, Vol.1, p.58).

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This was the method and the conduct of the persons who instigated revolt against Uthman and caused his death. And when Uthman was murdered they procured his shirt and rose to claim revenge on Ali. As regards Ali we have already explained his position during the episode, described earlier.

As we have stated above Uthman was pessimistic about Ali. Marwan advised Uthman time and again to kill Ali and other companions as soon as an opportunity was found. His object was that these magnanimous persons who watched and criticized the nefarious activities of Bani Umayyah should depart from the scene so that they (i.e. Bani Umayyah) might do what they liked and there should be none to find fault with them. However, Ali was too magnanimous and noble-minded a person to

entertain personal grudge in his mind for anyone.

Ali was much above those petty considerations, that he should have entertained grudge against Uthman on account of his not consulting him, and should have become happy if Uthman favoured him. Distance from Uthman and his proximity were immaterial to him. The things for which Imam Ali was anxious were Islam and public welfare. He always avoided contention, unless it was necessary to resort to it to get rid of tyranny and establish equity and justice.

Hence, whenever it was possible for Ali to give useful advice to Uthman he did not withhold his sincere advice, even though it might have been unpleasant to Uthman's favourites. Nor did he show laxity in helping Uthman, turning away his enemies from him and saving him from the jaws of death. People approached Ali many times with the request that he might assume the caliphate himself but he turned down their request very sternly and dismissed them from his presence. He restrained people many times from creating disturbance, and saved Uthman from his own favourites and associates who were themselves the root-cause of all the troubles.

We have already explained in the foregoing pages how Ali assisted Uthman when the latter's house had been besieged by the insurgents although Ali's action must have displeased the advisers and associates of Uthman.

It was Ali's ardent wish that the gulf of differences between the insurgents and Uthman should not widen and no untoward incident, which might harm the Muslims should take place. He sincerely believed that bloodshed was not the only remedy for improving the conditions. They could achieve their purpose without resorting to bloodshed.

It is not possible to imagine how magnanimous and noble-minded Ali was. When Uthman's house had been besieged by the insurgents he at times asked Ali to leave Madina and after his departure he felt ashamed and sent a messenger to call him back. Ali complied with his instruc- tions every time and never asked him why he wanted him to leave Madina and why he wanted him to come back. It was Ali's spiritual loftiness that he was always kind to others.

Uthman asked Ali to go away from Madina so that he might not be present before his devotees, and they might not hear his name. He called him back so that he might advise the insurgents and save him from them. This happened a number of times Once when Ibn Abbas was deputed to convey the caliph's message to Ali to leave Madina Ali said: “O Ibn Abbas! Uthman wants to make me a camel which carries water to and fro. He first asked me to leave Madina, and then he asked me to come back. And now he has sent a message that I should go away from here. By God I have defended him so much that I fear I may be treated to be a sinner”.

Muhammad bin Hanafiya reports him to have said: “If Uthman orders me to go away I shall obey him”. He said this only to protect Islam and to eliminate the causes of mischief.

The following sentence appearing in a letter written by Imam Ali to Mu`awiya fully depicts his innocence as regards Uthman's murder. “You want to take revenge on me for something in which neither my hands nor my tongue are involved. I gave him suggestions and showed him the right path. If that is my offence then it often happens that one is blamed unjustly for the sins which have not been committed by him”.

Ali helped Uthman during his lifetime and was very sympathetic to him even after his death. However, when Uthman was killed some persons accused Ali unjustly of having taken part in his murder. Muhammad bin Sirin has remarked very correctly when he says: “I am not aware whether anyone accused Ali of having participated in the murder of Uthman till the oath of allegiance was taken to him. Such a blame was levelled against him when the oath had been taken”.

Revolt against Ali

Silence prevailed in Madina for many days after the assassination of Uthman. The residents of Madina, the Muhajirs and the Ansar, as well as those persons who had arrived there from other places were on the look-out for a new caliph. The Egyptians specially insisted that Ali should become the caliph but he declined to accept this office. During this struggle of insistence and refusal he addressed the people and said inter alia: “Leave me and find out someone else for this caliphate. If you leave me alone my position will be the same as yours. In that event it is possible that I may be more attentive and submissive to the ruler whom you choose than you are. It is better (from the point of view of your material interests) that I should be an adviser rather than a ruler”.

He continued refusing to accept the caliphate till the entire population of Madina gathered at his door and insisted that he should accept the office. The crowd was so huge that he feared some of them might be trampled upon by others. All of them were saying with one voice: “We cannot find anyone more deserving of this office than you, and we do not choose any other caliph. Kindly accept our oath of allegiance. Thereafter there will be no differences or grouping among us”.

Malik Ashtar Nakhai's held Ali's hand in his own hand and took the oath of allegiance and all others also followed suit. Every one of them was saying: “None except Ali is fit for the caliphate”.

Every person was repeating the name of Ali and all were filled with joy. They were happy because they knew that they had taken oath of allegiance to a person who knew their needs and recognized their rights and was sincere, learned and wise, and was like a father to them. They were happy that Ali had accepted the caliphate. As they had suffered great hardships for a long time during the dark Umayyad rule, they had pinned high hopes on him.

The Commander of the Faithful himself draws a picture of the oath of allegiance taken to him by the

people in these words: “The people were so happy when the oath of allegiance was taken to me that the children began to rejoice, the old men came forward with trembling legs to take the oath, those who were unwell also managed to come somehow, and even the young girls came out of seclusion”.

When Ali mounted the pulpit on the first Friday those who had not been able to take the oath of allegiance earlier did so on that day. On that day Talha was the first to take the oath and he was followed by Zubayr. They were the same Talha and Zubayr who said later: “When we took the oath of allegiance to Ali the conditions were such that a sword was hanging on our necks”.

It may very well be asked as to what Talha and Zubayr meant by saying this. It may be said in this connection that this was not the view of Talha and Zubayr only but the majority of Quraysh had similar ideas about the caliphate of Ali.

They did not like Ali's caliphate on account of envy, or because they feared that Ali would not allow them the power and authority to which they had become accustomed, and would not tolerate their making unlawful gains. They knew that he did not consider it permissible to be improperly kind to incompetent persons or to give money to undeserving persons. He could not waste the property of the Public Treasury which was meant for the needy and the poor.

Now consider the fact that all the persons of dignity and rank among them were desirous of attaining to the caliphate. Ali has mentioned in unambiguous terms the grudge which Talha and Zubayr and other Quraysh nursed against him in their hearts. He says: “What relation do I have with Quraysh? In the past I had to fight against them on account of their infidelity, and now I shall have to fight against them because of their being rebellious. For them I am the same today as I was yesterday”.

The majority of Quraysh disliked Ali and many of them rebelled and conspired against him. The foremost of his opponents among Quraysh were Talha and Zubayr. These persons could not, however, avoid taking oath of allegiance to Ali because the inhabitants of all Arab and non-Arab conquered lands and especially the Egyptians were not prepared to accept any other persons as caliph. It was only Ali who possessed the qualities which the opponents of Uthman wanted to see in their ruler.

Talha and Zubayr were the two great rivals of Ali in the matter of the caliphate. They were most keen to attain to this office. However, none of the attributes which the opponents of Uthman wanted to see in their caliph were found in them. Both of them were just like Uthman, and those things which made the people revolt against him were present in them. They were dying for power and authority. In the foregoing pages we have already quoted Uthman as saying about Talha: “May Talha be cursed! I gave him so much gold and still he wants to take my life”.

The people were fully aware of these things in the aspirants to the caliphate and had no doubt about their unsuitablity for that office. That is why all of them inclined towards Ali and compelled Talha and Zubayr also to take the oath of allegiance to him. (We have already discussed in detail under the caption ***`Hazrat Amir al-Mo'mineen'*** part III), whether Talha and Zubayr took oath of allegiance to Ali willingly or

unwillingly and have also quoted the verdict of the Egyptian scholar Dr. Taha Husayn that both of them took the oath voluntarily with the hope that Ali would make them his partners in the affairs of the caliphate but when he declined to fulfil their wishes they broke the oath and joined Ayesha, saying that the oath was obtained from them under duress.

As regards their taking the oath of allegiance to Ali and then breaking it and revolting against him Ali says:

“These two entered the allegiance with the faces of the sinners and went out of it with the faces of the disbelievers”. (It means that whereas other people took the oath of allegiance to Ali so that the matters might be set right but these two did not take the oath with that object in mind and when they broke the oath it was mere unfaithfulness and treachery with Ali's creed which was based on truth and justice).

From the very first day Ali assumed the reins of the caliphate he became busy making reforms. He removed the oppressive and unjust governors and officers from their offices and started investigations regarding the wealth taken by various persons unlawfully from the Public Treasury. In taking these steps he did not care for the enmity of those who were opposed to him and to the reforms which he intended to introduce.

During the period of his caliphate Imam Ali had to face very difficult situation. All the influential persons had united against him. Same was the case with the self-seekers whose number was very large. Ali decided to fight on both the fronts. He decided to establish justice and destroy oppression. He also decided to establish a government based on true economic, social and moral values. And he fought on these two fronts with bravery and steadfastness which was unparalleled and unusual. He made a firm resolve that he would remove all darknesses and that his knowledge like the rays of the sun will illuminate all the corners of the globe.

As soon as the people elected Ali as their leader to reform the society Bani Umayyah and their friends in Madina and other cities collected their wealth and arms and went underground. Later, as soon as they got an opportunity, they went away to Mecca, where they could indulge in subversive activities against Ali's government, and instigate the people to revolt against him, and if they did not meet success there they could also go to Syria and join Mu`awiya. If these people had thought of public welfare and had not coveted the caliphate it was not at all necessary for them to make all this planning.

However, they indulged in such activities with the hope that they would regain the caliphate and if they were successful in removing Ali from their path this office would never slip off their hands. Futhermore, they had accumulated fabulous wealth during the days of Uthman and this also prompted them to go beyond the reach of the just caliph, because they could utilize this wealth to strengthen themselves for the achievement of the objective.

Ali was not unaware of the plan of Bani Umayyah. He knew with what object they had run away with their wealth and arms. He, therefore, imposed restrictions on their leaving Madina so that they might not

become a danger to the new government.

During these difficult circumstances some companions of the prophet, including Talha and Zubayr, came to see the Commander of the Faithful and said: “We took the oath of allegiance on the condition that penal laws would be enforced. You should, therefore, punish those persons who revolted against Uthman”.

Ali replied to them: “Dear brethren! As you are aware I am not unmindful of this matter. However, the question is whether I possess sufficient strength to achieve this purpose. At present the insurgents are very powerful. It is they who dominate us (at present) and not we who dominate them. Furthermore, your slaves and the desert Arabs have also joined them and they are in a position to do you every harm. In the circumstances is there any possibility of achieving what you desire?” All of them replied in the negative. Ali then continued: “I swear by God that I do not think as you do. When this matter is discussed the people will have different views about it. Some of them will have the same view which you have, whereas others will have a view opposed to yours. And there will be still others who will be neutral. You should, therefore, wait till the conditions settle down, the people get peace of mind and it becomes easy to acquire rights. So far as I am concerned you should rest satisfied and await my orders. It is only then that you should come to me”.

These persons had come to see Ali with doubts in their minds regarding his government and its attitude towards the people. He, however, gave them a reply which changed their doubts into certainty. They had laid down a condition for his holding the office of caliph that he should punish those persons over whom neither he nor they themselves had any control. Their own slaves and the desert–Arabs were among the opponents and murderers of Uthman.

He gave them such a convincing reply that they had to acknowledge that he had a better knowledge of the conditions than they had, he was making greater efforts to improve the matters, and he understood the delicacy of the situation better than they did. Unfortunately, however, these persons were oblivious of the reality which the Commander of the Faithful had perceived very clearly and while it was necessary to remain patient, they wanted him to take a hasty action.

These persons were under the wrong impression that all the Muslims viewed the murder of Uthman alike, and considered that his blood must be avenged. However, as Ali had a better knowledge of the situation than they had, he removed their misunderstanding by saying that if the question of punishing Uthman's murderers was taken up at that stage the opinions of the people on the issue would be divided.

Those people had come to Ali with their sentiments, desires and personal aims. However, Ali faced them with arguments and logic. Instead of addressing him as ***`Amir al–Mo'mineen'*** (Commander of the Faithful) they said: “O Ali!” The harshness and boldness of these words are quite apparent whereas the word brethren used by Ali for them carried the sense of love and affection.

They came in connection with the claim of revenge for the murder of Uthman, although many of them were themselves responsible for his murder. However, in reply to their demand Ali displayed the unparalleled forgiveness which was inherent in his nature.
Ali began keeping Quraysh under strict observation lest they might create disturbance. Of course, this action on his part was perfectly correct and based on farsightedness and prudence.

Ali began removing Uthman's governors from office one by one. There was no question of retaining any of them and dismissing others because they were all alike in the matter of corruption, oppression and disrespect for the Islamic law. It was because of oppression and corruption that unrest took place in various parts of the Islamic territories as a consequence of which Uthman had to lose his life. Ali did not agree to allow these people to continue in their offices even for a short period of time because truth and falsehood cannot go together and tyranny injustice and corruption cannot be eliminated unless the root-cause of these evils is removed.

Ibn Abbas and many others suggested to Ali to allow the former governors to occupy their position till his government was firmly established but he did not agree to resort to political contrivances or to strengthen his government by pleasing the self-seekers. He, on the contrary, relied upon his responsibilities, reason and sword, and remained steadfast in his determination to eradicate all evils.

Syria was his greatest worry. We have already mentioned in the forgoing pages the opinion which Ali held about Mu`awiya. He decided to remove Mu`awiya from the governorship, and Mu`awiya was adamant that he would not take oath of allegiance to him. One day Ziad bin Hanzala met Ali to find out what decision he had taken about Mu`awiya so that he might inform the people about it.

Imam Ali said to Ziad: “O Ziad! Get ready”. Ziad asked: “O Commander of the Faithful! For what should I get ready?” Ali replied: “To mobilize the forces to attack Syria”. Ziad said: “O Commander of the Faithful! It will be better to be mild and forbearing”. Thereupon Ali recited a verse which meant: “You will become free from injustice only when a mind with quick understanding, a sharp sword, and a nose possessing sense of honour combine”.

Ali started making preparation to advance against Syria and punish Mu`awiya. On observing his enthusiasm the people also became active and got ready to support him. However, there were also some persons who were bent upon opposing him and Talha and Zubayr belonged to this group. They came to see him and said: “O Commander of the Faithful! Permit us to go to Mecca and perform ***Umra***. If you are still here till we have performed the ***Umra*** ceremonies we shall return and join you. And in case you accompany us we will follow you”.

Ali looked at their faces for sometime and then said: “Your real purpose is not to perform Umra, but to commit treachery against me. However, you may go wherever you like”. Talha and Zubayr then left for Mecca.

Bani Umayyah, Talha and Zubayr combined to conspire against Ali. They practised every kind of

deception and fraud and spent money lavishly to turn the people against him. The governors who were appointed by Uthman, and had been removed by Ali helped these persons in every manner. They had already shifted their wealth and arms to Mecca which was now their headquarters. Ayesha, daughter of Abu Bakr and wife of the prophet was busy making preparations for war against Ali from the day she received information about his being chosen as caliph. How she received this news and what her reaction was can very well be assessed from the incident narrated below.

Allamah Tabari says that when returning from Mecca Ayesha reached a place named `Sarf'. She met a man named Abd ibn Umm Kilab who was a relative of hers from her mother's side. She enquired from him about the conditions prevailing in Madina. The following conversation took place between them:

Abd ibn Umm Kilab: The people killed Uthman and then waited for eight days.
Ayesha: What did they do then?

Abd ibn Umm Kilab: The entire population of Madina found a way out unanimously. All of them agreed to Ali becoming the caliph.
Ayesha: If what you say is true I wish that the sky may fall on the earth. Take me back. Take me back.

Ayesha was going from Mecca to Madina after performing Hajj. However, when she heard about Ali having become the caliph she immediately returned to Mecca saying: “Uthman has been killed unjustly. By God I shall avenge his murder”.

Abd ibn Umm Kilab: What is all this? I swear by God that you were the foremost in accusing him. You used to say: “Kill Na`sal. He has become an infidel”.
Ayesha: The people killed him after he had repented. I did utter these words but what I am saying now is better than what I had said earlier.

Abd ibn Umm Kilab: O Mother of the Faithful: It is a very lame excuse.

Here Tabari has quoted some verses of Abd ibn Umm Kilab, who has thrown the entire responsibility for the murder of Uthman on Ayesha. He says: “It was you who took the initiative. The changes were brought about by you, and all the trouble started from your side. You ordered us to kill Uthman. You said that he had become an infidel. We obeyed you and killed him. We hold the view that Uthman's murderer is the person who ordered that he should be killed. Neither the sky fell upon us nor were the sun and the moon eclipsed”. (Tarikh Tabari, Vol. 5, p. 140).

Ayesha returned to Mecca and was engrossed in her own thoughts. When she reached Mecca Talha met her. He told her how Ali became caliph and what the people did with him (i.e. with Talha). He said: “The people took the oath of allegiance to Ali and then came to me and pressed me so hard that I, too, had to take the oath”.

Ayesha said: “How can Ali exercise control over us? So long as his government exists in Madina I shall

not return to that city".

From that moment onwards she started a mischievous movement against Ali. She began instigating the people to avenge the murder of Uthman and kill Ali.

On scrutinizing the attitude adopted by Ayesha at this juncture one can very well realize the grudge she had been nursing against Ali in her heart. To understand this attitude of hers it is necessary to know the reasons for her enmity against Ali.

Ayesha's hatred and enmity against Ali was very old, and according to many historians it commenced from the very day on which she entered the Prophet's house as his wife. One great reason for her enmity against him was that he was the husband of Fatima. Fatima was the daughter of Khadijah and Khadijah was the lady who was highly esteemed by the Prophet during her life as well as after her death for her sincerity, magnanimity, and excellent morals and manners. In spite of all her best efforts Ayesha could not make the Prophet forget Khadijah. In this connection the following extract from the magazine `Al-Azhar' which is the organ of Al-Azhar University deserves consideration:

"Besides other qualities which Ayesha possessed she was very courageous and was keen to attain the highest degree of greatness She was not contented with the superior position which she enjoyed in the heart of the Prophet vis-a-vis his other wives, but wished to find a place in his heart equal to that of lady Khadijah, the first truthful one, whom he loved most. The Prophet was never tired of talking about lady Khadijah and praising her. It was on account of her that he also showed consideration to the women, who had been her friends. With all her attributes and accomplishments Ayesha made vain efforts to make the Prophet believe that God had given him a better wife than lady Khadijah. She ought to have acknowledged the superiority of Khadijah and should have realized that it was useless to contend with the Prophet on account of the wife who was the greatest amongst all the noble and distinguished women, was the most truthful one, and was the first to embrace Islam. This jealousy of Ayesha did no harm to Khadijah. On the contrary it made her greatness known to the entire world and gave her a lasting fame". (The Magazine Al-Azhar May 1956).

Ayesha herself says: "I never felt as much jealous of any other wife of the Prophet as of Khadijah, although I had not even seen her. The Prophet talked about her every now and then. At times he slaughtered the sheep and sent pieces of meat to her friends as presents. I told him many times that (from the manner in which he talked about Khadijah) it appeared that there was none else in the world except Khadijah. He, however, replied that she had such qualities and she also bore him children".

Thus Ayesha admits that the Prophet preferred Khadijah to all his other wives and this made Ayesha jealous of her. And naturally enough as this extreme love of the Prophet for Khadijah, was the cause of Ayesha's jealousy against her. She also felt jealous of Fatima and also hated her husband Ali and her sons Hasan and Husayn.

Another reason for Ayesha's nursing grudge against Ali was the suggestion made by Ali to the Prophet

at the time of the incident called Ifk (false accusation). On that occasion he had said: “O Prophet of God! There is no scarcity of women for you. You can marry many other women besides Ayesha”.

Furthermore, it is also a fact that Ayesha was confident that after Uthman was murdered the caliphate would return to her own family (i.e. Bani Tayim) and Talha would become the caliph. We have already mentioned before, how happy she felt on hearing the news of the assassination of Uthman, hoping that Talha must have been chosen as the caliph in his place.

Immediately on her arrival in Mecca Ayesha began recruiting an army to fight against Ali and his government. Her open enmity with Ali strengthened the hands of Bani Umayyah as well as those of Talha, Zubayr and their supporters. All were united on the issue of waging war against Ali. At this juncture the members of the Umayyah family had gone underground in Hijaz etc. On Ali's having become caliph they reappeared. They tried to make the maximum profit from the revolt of Quraysh against Ali. They joined hands with Ayesha, Talha and Zubayr, and placed at their disposal the wealth which they had grabbed during the period of Uthman; so that they might utilize it to make preparations for war, and the government of Ali might be nipped in the bud. They left the places where they were hidden and reached Mecca to assist Ayesha.

The stand taken by them was that Uthman had been killed unjustly and as Ayesha, Talha and Zubayr had risen to avenge his murder it was necessary to support them. Mu`awiya considered the situation very favourable to him.

However, his interests differed from those of Talha and Zubayr because each one of them aspired to become the caliph. Mu`awiya wished that Talha and Zubayr should fight with Ali, because as a a result of the clash one party was sure to be defeated and the party that won would also become weak and it would be easy for him (Mu`awiya) to subdue it.

It was due to her own personality and because of being the wife of the Prophet that Ayesha was able to mobilize a very large army in Mecca. However, when the army was ready differences arose between Talha, Zubayr etc. as to where they should proceed and what the next step should be.

If the activities and affairs of the persons who were acting as the leaders of this gathering are scrutinized and an effort is made to find out their motives for mobilizing such a large army the real position will become clear. It will then become known that they had not gathered to avenge the murder of Uthman, as claimed by them, nor for correcting the prevailing conditions, which according to them, Ali had not been able to do, nor for any other thing about which they talked in their speeches to instigate the people to revolt against Ali. In fact they had aims and objects different from one another.

If one of them was against Ali, because, on account of him, he could not attain to the caliphate, another had joined this gathering on account of some old grudge against the new caliph and still another wanted to regain the lost glory and power of his family which was not possible in the presence of Ali in the capacity of caliph.

Ayesha was of the view that the army should march towards Madina so that the capital might be conquered before Ali was in a position to defend it, and his caliphate brought to an end. Some others suggested that they should go to Syria which was a safe place. Bani Umayyah, however, opposed this suggestion. They were of the view that the security of a region in which they were already firmly established should not be endangered. They knew very well that Mu`awiya had been ruling Syria for a long time and the people were obedient to him.

They did not, therefore, wish that Syria should become the theatre of war. Furthermore, Bani Umayyah considered Syria to be their last resort in case they were defeated by Ali and they did not, therefore, consider it in their interest to create problems for Mu`awiya, who was busy establishing a kingdom there, and to make it a battle field.

Talha and Zubayr rejected the idea of going either to Madina or to Syria and suggested that they should go to Basra, because they had a large number of supporters in Kufa and Basra. By suggesting that they should proceed to Basra, Talha and Zubayr had a deep plan in their mind. They knew that if they succeeded against Ali with the help of the poeple of Kufa and Basra one of them would be chosen as caliph, because the caliphate would naturally go to a person whose supporters were more in number.

The Umayyads also supported this suggestion. All of them, therefore, went to Ayesha and said to her: “O Mother of the Faithful! You had better abandon the idea of going to Madina, because the people with us will not be able to fight against the insurgents successfully. You should, therefore, accompany us to Basra. It is possible that the people of that place may disagree with us and put forward the excuse that oath of allegiance to Ali has already been accomplished. In that event you should prepare them to avenge the murder of Uthman in the same manner in which you have prepared the people of Mecca for this purpose”.

Bani Umayyah spent large sums of money for the procurement of war equipment. A public announcer made the following announcement in the streets of Mecca: “The Mother of the Faithful Ayesha, Talha, and Zubayr are proceeding to Basra. Whoever sympathises with Islam, desires its glory, and wants to fight against the enemies and avenge the murder of Uthman, should accompany them. If a person has no animal of riding and other necessary equipment, he should take it from them”.

When Ayesha had mobilized the army and was ready to depart for Basra, Umm Salamah, another wife of the Prophet, met her and remonstrated with her. She said: “Till recently you used to instigate the people to revolt against Uthman, and spoke ill of him. You did not call him with any name other than Na`thal”.

Then she insisted upon Ayesha that she should stay at home and not lead an army against Ali. However, when she realized that Ayesha was bent upon waging war against Ali she sent her son Umar bin Abi Salamah to Ali with a letter which read as follows: “O Commander of the Faithful! If it had not amounted to disobeying God and if I had not also been sure that you would not like my accompanying

you, I would have accompanied you in this battle. I am sending my son Umar. I swear by God that he is more dear to me than my own life. He will remain with you and will participate in every battle on your side".

Ayesha also invited other wives of the Prophet to accompany her to Basra. All of them, except Hafsa daughter of Umar, declined to accede to her request. Hafsa got ready to join her to fight against Ali. However, her brother Abdullah bin Umar prevented her from doing so saying: "You must stay in like other wives of the Prophet". Hafsa, therefore, sent a message to Ayesha to excuse her as her brother was not agreeable to the proposal.

The entire army proceeded to Basra under the command of Ayesha. When they reached Khaybar, Ayesha, Talha, Zubayr and Marwan met Sa`id bin Aas and Mughayrah bin Sho`ba. We have already reproduced their conversation in the foregoing pages.

Then according to the general plan of Bani Umayyah Sa`id bin Aas endeavoured to divide these people and make them fight with one another so that by doing so they might lose their strength and the government should revert to Bani Umayyah. He, therefore, conversed privately with Talha and Zubayr as follows:

Sa`id: Tell me solemly, whom will you make caliph if you are successful?
Talha and Zubayr: Whosoever from among us two is chosen by the people.

Sa`id: No. You should give this office to one of the sons of Uthman, because it is his murder which you propose to avenge.
Talha and Zubayr: Pooh! Should we elevate a youngster to this position in the presence of so many distinguished pesons?
Sa`id: Of course, then I must endeavour that the caliphate should not go out of the hands of the descendants of Abd Munaf.

Marwan also tried time and again, like Sa`id bin Aas, to divide these people. He did so with the machinations which were the best specimens of fraud and deceit.

Imam Ali also came to know that a large army had proceeded from Mecca to Basra on the pretext of taking revenge on the murderers of Uthman. He was very much disturbed on account of the differences and dissensions between the Muslims. It also pained him that owing to these differences and dissensions it would not be possible to continue and accomplish the reformatory program introduced by him, because following the example of these rebels others would also be encouraged to revolt and various governors appointed by Uthman might also follow in the footsteps of Mu`awiya and refuse to acknowledge the authority of the central government.

As soon as he heard this news he gathered the people of Madina, and addressed them in these words: "Almighty God has promised forgiveness for the unjust of this nation and success and salvation for those

who are obdient and firm. Only that person who cannot bear truth resorts to falsehood. You should know that Talha, Zubayr and the Mother of the Faithful Ayesha have combined against my government and caliphate and have invited the people towards reformation. So long as I do not feel any danger from them to you and myself I shall remain patient and so long as they withhold their hands, I, too, shall withhold mine. And I am contenting myself with the news about them which I have received so far".

Imam Ali considered it necessary to nip the mischief in the bud and to stop the Meccans on the way before they should reach Madina, because this was the best way of avoiding disturbance and bloodshed. He, therefore, appointed Sahl bin Hanif as his representative in Madina and proceeded to Mecca along with the army which he had previously collected to attack Syria.

On the way many persons belonging to Kufa and Basra also joined him. When Ali reached Rabazah along with his army he came to know that Zubayr and Talha had left Mecca and had already crossed Rabazah on their way to Basra. He stayed in Rabazah for a few days and made necessary preparations. In the meantime he made all possible efforts that the conditions which had deteriorated on account of the activities of Talha, Zubayr and Ayesha might improve.

He, therefore, sent a letter to Ayesha saying: "You have disobeyed God and His Prophet by stepping out of your house. You are aspiring something with which you do not have the least concern. You also claim that you want to reform the people. Will you please tell me as to what women have to do with the command of the armies? You also claim that you want to avenge the murder of Uthman.

Now Uthman was an Umayyad whereas you are a woman of the tribe of Taym Bani Murrah. I swear by God that the crime of those who have tempted you into adopting this course of action and made you disobey God and His Prophet is much greater and more dreadful than that of the murderers of Uthman. You did not become indignant yourself but you were made indignant. You did not get excited yourself but other persons have been instrumental in exciting you. Ayesha! Fear God and return to your house and remain indoors. Good wishes to you".

Ali wanted to treat Ayesha as excusable in the matter of her revolting and commanding an army. That is why he said: "You have not become indignant yourself but you have been made indignant, and you did not get excited yourself but other persons have been instrumental in exciting you". The regard for the sentiments of women and the respect for Ayesha which this sentence contains is evident. By saying that she was disobedient at others behest he also provided her a path for dissociating herself from revolt and mischief.

He held at fault those people who had incited her to be disobedient and made her leave her house. He also declared their action to be a much greater and dreadful sin than that of the murderers of Uthman. In the end he advised her to fear God and return to her house, because only in that case peace could be restored in the country and the people would also have liked such a development.

Ayesha did not, however, pay any heed to Ali's advice. She stuck to the decision already taken by her. In

reply to the letter of Ali the Commander of the Faithful, she wrote only one sentence which, though brief, indicates fully the personal enmity and the grudge which she nursed against Ali in her heart. She wrote: “O son of Abu Talib! No room is now left for reconciliation. We shall never submit to you. You may do whatever you like. And peace (be upon you)”. Talha and Zubayr too, sent him similar replies.

When Ayesha's army reached near Basra the commanders held consultations as to whether or not they should enter the city. They knew very well that the number of the supporters of Ali in Basra was not small. Hence they considered it expedient to hold mutual consultations and to correspond with the people of Basra to find out to what extent they were faithful to Ali. Eventually it was decided that before entering the city the elders and distinguished persons should be instigated to rise against Ali and efforts should be made to win their sympathies. Talha and Zubayr, therefore, wrote a letter to the judge Ka`b bin Soor saying: “You are a distinguished person of Basra and a chief of the Yemenites and were appointed as judge by the caliph Umar. You were angry with Uthman on account of the injustice done by him to you. Now you should be angry with those who murdered Uthman”.

Ka`b bin Soor wrote back in reply: “If Uthman was killed because of his being unjust why are you anxious to avenge his murder, and how does he deserve that his murder should be avenged? And if he was killed without justification there are others who deserve more than you to take revenge on the murderers. And if the matter of Uthman was difficult for those who were present at the time of his murder it is more difficult for those who were not then present”.

These two (i.e. Talha and Zubayr) wrote a letter to Manzar bin Jarood also which read as follows: “Your father was the head of your tribe during the age of ignorance and also a chief in Islam. Your position vis-a-vis your father is the same which a horse which stands second in a horse race enjoys as compared with a horse which stands first. Uthman has been killed by people who are inferior to you, and those people who have become angry on account of the murder of Uthman are better than you And peace (be upon you)”.

Manzar bin Jarood said in reply: “I shall associate with the righteous persons only if I can remain better than the evil-doers. Uthman's right was as much essential and mandatory yesterday as it is today. He was among you but you left him undefended and did not help him. When have you made this new discovery and how has this new idea occurred to you?”

Ayesha wrote a letter to Zaid bin Sauhan on these lines: “From Ayesha, daughter of Abu Bakr, Mother of the Faithful and the beloved wife of the Prophet to her sincere son Zaid bin Sauhan.
“Rush to my help immediately on receiving this letter of mine and even if you do not come restrain the people from supporting Ali”.

Zaid bin Sauhan wrote in reply: “I am, no doubt, your sincere son, provided you dissociate yourself from this affair and return to your house. Otherwise I shall be the foremost among your opponents”.

In `Iqd al-Farid, Jamhra Rasail al-Arab and Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah of Ibn Abi al-Hadid the reply of

Zaid bin Sauhan has been quoted in these words: “Peace be upon you. Almighty God has given you one order and has given us another. You have been ordered not to leave your house and we have been ordered to fight so that evil may be suppressed. You have, however, abandoned what you were ordered to do and are restraining us from doing what we have been ordered to do. Your wishes will not be complied with and your letters will not be replied to. And peace (be upon you)”.

Bani Umayyah did not write letters to their supporters openly like Ayesha, Talha and Zubayr. They conducted secret correspondence with those, who, as they expected, would be ready to oppose Ali and assist them in pulling down the edifice of his caliphate. This secret correspondence fully explains their psychological condition. If these people rose to avenge the murder of Uthman it was not necessary for them to contact their individual supporters secretly, and in case they had revolted against Ali only to assist Ayesha, Talha and Zubayr, even then it was not necessary for them to consider their own affairs separately from others. The fact is that all their efforts were directed towards creating favourable conditions for themselves and they contacted only those persons about whose support they had no doubt in their minds. That is why their correspondence was usually secret.

When the commanders of Ayesha's army were carrying on correspondence with the people of Basra, the son of Abu Sufyan, sitting in Damascus, was watching the conditions of all those who had revolted against Ali as well as of those who had declined to fight against him. He had made separate assessment in regard to both the parties and also knew the fate which both of them were destined to meet. It was his earnest desire that Talha and Zubayr should weaken Ali's government by fighting against him. It was only then that he could convert the Islamic government into Umayyad dynasty because he knew that as regards other Bani Umayyah none of them was as powerful and influential as he himself was.

Mu`awiya began instigating secretly every person to revolt against Ali particularly those who were not already opposed to him. He was well aware that as soon as Ayesha, Talha, Zubayr and other ring–leaders of their army were successful in gaining a victory, they would start fighting with each other. All this contention and mobilization of forces against Ali was only for the sake of the caliphate. After his defeat Talha and Zubayr were bound to quarrel with each other to become caliph, and then Mu`awiya, whose strength had been safe throughout, could very well step in and grab the caliphate,

Mu`awiya wrote a letter to Sa`d bin Abi Waqas saying: “It was incumbent upon the members of the consultative council to assist Uthman because it was they who had elected him as caliph. Talha and Zubayr assisted him, (by claiming revenge for his murder). Both of them were the members of the council like you, and the importance which you enjoy in Islam is also enjoyed by them. The Mother of the Faithful Ayesha has also decided to assist Uthman. Hence you should not dislike the thing which they have liked and should not reject that which they have accepted”.

It can very well be observed how dexterously an effort was made to instigate Sa`d bin Waqas (who was one of the candidates for the caliphate nominated by Umar) to revolt against Ali without disclosing the real object. How ever, Sa`d bin Abi Waqas sensed the deceit and was not trapped. After all he too was

one of Quraysh and was fully aware of machination which Bani Umayyah always employed to achieve their ends.

He, therefore, sent Mu`awiya a blunt reply which he must not have expected. He (Sa`d) praised Ali for his virtues and attainments and declared that none else could equal him. He also told Mu`awiya that the intention with which he was instigating the people to revolt against Ali was known to him and it was obviously that he wanted to attain to the caliphate. He, however, added that all his efforts in this behalf were useless because it was not permissible for a man like him (Mu`awiya) to hold that office.

He wrote: “Umar nominated to the consultative council only those persons, who were elegible to become caliph. None of us had a prior right to that office vis-a-vis others except that we might have selected one of us as the caliph. Of course Ali possessed all the qualities which we possessed, but he also possessed some special attributes which none of us possessed. As regards Talha and Zubayr it would have been better for them to stay at home. And as regards the Mother of the Faithful may God forgive her”. This reply sent by Sa`d to Mu`awiya clearly shows what views Sa`d held about those who had risen to fight against Ali and create mischief in the land.

The letters, which were exchanged between the people of the camel and the citizens of Basra and also between the citizens of other cities, some of whom were the supporters of the people of the camel and others were not, make it clear that the people were fully aware of the causes of the disturbance. They also manifested the personality of Ali. It also becomes known that the righteous persons loved Ali very much and considered his words and deeds to be true and correct.

Another important thing also becomes known and that is that the supporters of Ali tried their level best to prevent the people of the camel from creating mischief and disorder and to act according to wisdom and reason. This shows that they thought and spoke on the same lines on which Ali did. Ali had impressed upon them with his words and deeds that creating disturbance and disorder is a satanic action and peace and tranquillity is the best thing. Hence, the attitude adopted by him before as well as after assuming the office of caliph keeping in view the exigencies of time was considered by them to be absolutely correct.

One could very well ask: What did these people of the camel want Ali to do when his newly-formed government was not yet fully established? What action of Ali could they dislike when they had displayed great enmity with him and started inciting people to revolt against him immediately on hearing the news of his selection as caliph? Why were they annoyed with him when they could not face his rational arguments? And how could they treat him to be responsible for Uthman's murder when they them selves were his murderers?

These questions were asked by the supporters of Ali time and again in their correspondence with the people of the camel. Furthermore the representatives of the citizens of Basra who came to see them also asked them these questions again and again When Ayesha's army had not yet reached the

surroundings of Basra, and the persons carrying the letters written by her and Talha and Zubayr to the people of Basra were still on their way, Uthman bin Hanif sent Abu'l Aswad Du'ali and Imran bin Hasin to Ayesha to find out from her as to why she had revolted against Ali and to advise her to refrain from pursuing the object with which she had come out from her house.

He then sent a deputation to Talha and Zubayr also with the same purpose but they repeated what they had been saying and tried to enter Basra forcibly. However, Uthman bin Hanif could not tolerate their entry into the city. He collected the people, equipped them with arms and proceeded to the quarter called Marbad where Ayesha's army had encamped.

When the two armies stood face to face with each other Talha stepped forward and delivered a speech. Standing between them he praised God and then spoke about Uthman. He enumerated his virtues, stated how he was murdered unjustly and asked the people to avenge his murder after peace was restored. Then Zubayr stood up and delivered a similar speech. After both of them had spoken, their supporters said from his right hand side: "Whatever you have said is true". However, the people with Uthman bin Hanif said from the left side: "Whatever you have said is wrong. You took oath of allegiance to Ali and then violated it and formed a front against him". This resulted in an uproar and everyone started shouting.

Then Ayesha stood up to speak. She said: "The people criticized Uthman and found faults with his officers. They used to come to Madina and consulted us. When we pondered over the complaints of the people against Uthman we found him to be innocent, pious and truthful, and those, who created disturbance, to be sinners and liars. They had something else in their hearts. When their numbers increased they entered into Uthman's house without any justification, for he was not at fault, and shed the blood which it was not lawful to shed. They looted the property unlawfully and desecrated the land which they were duty bound to respect".

The people of Basra got annoyed and interrupted her speech by making a noise. She, however, cried: "O people! Keep quiet". Thereupon the people became silent.Continuing her speech she said: "Of course, the Commander of the Faithful Uthman did make innovations but he continued to wash his lapses with repentance till he was slaughtered unjustly like a camel. You can see that Quraysh shot arrows on the targets and wounded their own faces. They gained nothing by killing Uthman and they did not also pursue the policy of moderation. I swear by God that they will have to face very violent afflictions – afflictions which will awaken those who are asleep and make those who are sitting stand up. And they will be dominated by a people who will not take pity on them and will subject them to the severest torture".

"Look here! Uthman has been killed unjustly. Find out his murderers and when you have them in your grip kill them. Then let the consultative council take a decision regarding the selection of a caliph. The members of the council should be the same as were nominated by the Commander of the Faithful Umar, with the exception of that person who may have participated in the murder of Uthman. You have taken

oath of allegiance to Ali ibn Abi Talib under coercion and sentimentally without consulting the nation".

Ayesha thus began instigating the people to assassinate Ali. She said that the oath of allegiance taken to Ali had been taken under coercion and sentimentally without consulting the nation. She added that Ali deserved to be killed as he had taken part in the murder of Uthman and on that score it was necessary to select a new caliph through the committee constituted by Umar of which Ali could no longer be a member.

The hearers were bewildered to hear the speech of Ayesha. Many of them including Ahnaf bin Qais and Jariyah bin Qadamah Sa`di asked her some very incisive questions. When she finished her speech Jariyah said to her: "O Mother of the Faithful! I swear by God that Uthman's murder is not at all important as compared with the dreadful situation that a personality like yourself should step out of her house to fight against the Muslims.

You have torn the veil which God had provided you, and have violated the sanctity which He had ordained. You should just reflect that whoever decides to fight against you will certainly also intend to kill you. In case, therefore you have accompanied this army voluntarily you had better return to Madina and if they have brought you forcibly you should seek help against them from the public. I shall then be with you".

Talha and Zubayr were also asked many questions by various persons, to whom they could not reply. Prolonged debate took place but without any result except that Ayesha, Talha and Zubayr got very much annoyed and became more determined to fight.

Ayesha herself was the Supreme Commander of her army and she commanded it mounting on a camel. It was for this reason that the battle fought at Basra came to be known as the Battle of the Camel. She appointed the junior commanders and wrote letters in her own name to those persons who were expected to help her. We have already reproduced above one of her letters addressed to Zaid son of Sauhan.

Ayesha's letters were mostly of this kind: "From Ummul Mo'mineen Ayesha daughter of Abi Bakr, to such and such of his sons: "As soon as you receive this letter you should get up and come to help me and if you are unable to come to my help, you should at least prevent people siding with Ali". Many persons responded to her call and there were also many who declined to follow her.

God! Be a witness

Ayesha's army forced its way into the city of Basra during a very cold night. They killed many citizens in

the masjid. Then they entered the house of Uthman bin Hanif and maltreated and insulted him.

Talha and Zubayr resented very much the treatment meted out by the soldiers to Uthman bin Hanif because he too was one of the distinguished companions of the Prophet. (We have already written in detail in ***"Hazrat Amirul Mo'mineen"*** part III that the ill-treatment with Uthman bin Hanif at Basra was done on Talha and Zubayr's orders). They went to Ayesha and expressed their grief over that incident. In reply she ordered that Uthman bin Hanif might be put to death. The order was about to be complied with when a woman cried: "O Mother of the Faithful! For God's sake take pity on the son of Hanif. Just have regard for his being a companion of the Prophet".

Ayesha thought over the matter for a while, and then said: "All right. Do not kill him but make him a prisoner". (Tarikh Tabari etc.)
An officer of Ayesha's army however said: "Beat him (Uthman bin Hanif) severely and pull the hair of his beard".
The soldiers beat him mercilessly, pulled the hair of his head, beard, eyebrows and eyelashes and then made him prisoner.

Talha and Zubayr began roaming about in both the armies and delivered speeches asking the people to take revenge of Uthman's murder on Ali. While Zubayr was delivering one such speech a man belonging to the tribe of Abd al-Qais stood up and said to him: "Please keep quiet for a while because I want to say something". Then he addressed the Muhajirs who formed part of the people of the camel in these words: "O Muhajirs! You are the people who embraced Islam earlier than others and are, therefore, superior to them in this respect.

After the Prophet's death you chose a man for the caliphate without consulting us. After his death you chose another man as caliph without consulting us and we accepted him. After the second caliph the question of selecting his successor was decided by a six-man committee and you took the oath of allegiance to Uthman without consulting us. Then you were dissatisfied with him and killed him without consulting us. Now you have taken oath of allegiance to Ali without consulting us. We have not declined to accept either of them as Head of the State and have endorsed your choice.

Now you should tell us why you have got ready to fight against Ali. Has he misappropriated the war booty, and deprived you of it? Has he done anything unlawful? Has he committed any offence which has disqualified him for the caliphate? And then the questions: Why are you so keen that we, too, should join you in fighting against Ali?" He ended his speech with these words: "When no such thing has happened why have you created all this nuisance?".

None could give any reply to his speech. All were dumbfounded. However, brute force follows no logic. The supporters of Talha and Zubayr attacked the man but his kinsmen came to his help. Fierce fighting took place and eventually the speaker was killed along with seventy persons of his tribe.

The people of the camel gained control over all the key points and took hold of the amount of revenue as

well as the Public Treasury. Zubayr and his son Abdullah distributed the entire property of the Public Treasury among their supporters.

Hakim bin Jabalah who was obedient and faithful to the Commander of the Faithful was very much disturbed on account of the activities of these people. He gathered many of his supporters and attacked the people of the camel. He said about Talha and Zubayr: “They took oath of allegiance to Ali voluntarily and promised to obey him. Now they have come to fight against him as his opponents and want to avenge the murder of Uthman. They have created differences between us although we belonged to the same city and were the neighbours of one another. O Lord! It is not the intention of either of them to avenge the murder of Uthman”.

Hakim was killed and so was his son and brother. Thereafter Talha and Zubayr mercilessly put the people of Basra to sword. The people of the camel had now full control over Basra, and had become its despotic rulers. The people of Basra took oath of allegiance to Talha and Zubayr – some of them voluntarily and others in duress. After having subdued Basra, the people of the camel became over-joyous. Zubayr said: “If I had one thousand horsemen I would have proceeded to meet Ali and I am sure that I would have killed him before he arrived here.”

Ayesha conveyed the good news of her success to Hafsa who was in Madina. She wrote: “I have to inform you that Ali has halted at a place called Zi Qar. He is very much afraid because he has received news about our large army and equipment. At present his position is that of a camel whose feet would be cut off if it steps forward and who would be slaughtered if it goes backward”.

Talha and Zubayr now resorted to mean and indecent propaganda against Ali . Propaganda really means that news is spread according to one's own wish. Truth is shown to be falsehood and vice versa, and they make a mountain of a mole-hill.

As has been narrated by Ibn Abi'l Hadid on the authority of Madaini and Waqidi they (Talha and Zubayr) began addressing the people thus: “O people of Basra! If Ali is victorious he will kill you one by one, and destroy your honour and dignity. He will kill your children and enslave your women. You must, therefore, defend your dignity and honour and fight against him like one who is prepared to lay down his life for the sake of his honour and family.”

Notwithstanding this open enmity and organised attack the Commander of the Faithful did not take any immediate steps against them, but waited for them to take the initiative. He hoped that they might even then forsake rebellion and avoid bloodshed, because the pretext on which they wished to fight against him was absolutely flimsy. He hoped that they might realize that the path which they were pursuing would deprive the caliphate of its dignity and the public who had pinned high hopes on the justice, piety and steadfastness of Ali would be disheartened.

From Rabazah Ali sent letters to the people of Kufa and invited them to join him against the people of the camel. Abu Musa Ash`ari, the Governor of Kufa, refrained from assisting him and also prevented

others from rendering him any assistance. The Commander of the Faithful dismissed him immediately from his office.

After the people of the camel had occupied Basra the people belonging to the tribe of Abd al-Qais left the city and gathered at a place between Zi Qar and Basra. They were waiting for Ali to arrive there so that they might join his army. Nine thousand Kufans also joined him. Imam Ali delivered a lengthy speech before them. He said inter alia: “I have called you to assist me against the people of Basra. My only object is reconciliation. If the people of Basra desist from their activities my object will be fulfilled. However, if they persist in their stubbornness we shall deal with them mildly and shall refrain from fighting till they commit oppression and resort to fighting. We shall leave no stone unturned to achieve reconciliation and shall prefer peace to disturbance in all circumstances”.

From what has been stated above it becomes evident as to what a great difference there was between the two parties. On the one side there were the people of the camel who accused Ali of something of which they should have accused themselves. Ali was absolutely innocent of any such accusation. These persons accused him unjustly, violated their oath of allegiance to him, and rebelled against him. They decided to fight against him and also incited others to do so, although those persons had sworn allegiance to him. They raided one of his cities under his control, insulted and beat the governor, maltreated and killed the citizens and divided the property of the Public Treasury among themselves although it belonged to all the Muslims. They also thought of attacking Ali with one thousand horsemen and assassinating him.

On the other side was the Commander of the Faithful the true Imam to whom all the people had taken the oath of allegiance. Of course, he was not prepared to accept their oath but they insisted upon it, and said that they could not find anyone else fit to be their leader and if he agreed to accept the office of caliph their differences would come to an end. These people then asked others also to take the oath. Ali accepted the allegiance of those who took the oath and let go those who did not. He never compelled anyone to swear allegiance to him.

A few days later, however, he saw that some persons were instigating others to revolt against him and were trying to create mischief and disorder. They were attacking his treasurers, governors and followers and planning to remove him from the caliphate and to assassinate him. He received news about all their activities, but he did not nurse any grudge against them in his mind. He addressed his supporters in words which show what a high regard he had for humanity. He said: “O People of Kufa! I have called you to assist me against our brethren in Basra .....”.

He did not content himself with the manifestation of this kindness but also sent messages to Ayesha, Talha and Zubayr asking them to refrain from rebellion and oppression and invited them to help him towards unity and good will.

Here we quote an incident which will go to show what idea he had about his opponents, and what

responsibilities he felt after his being selected as caliph, about equity and justice, and why the people were inclined towards him.

When the Commander of the Faithful reached near Basra the people of that city sent to him a man named Kulaib Jarmi to find out the causes of differences between him and the people of the camel, so that the position which was till then doubtful in their minds might become clear.

Ali explained to him the entire position. He told him how those people had taken oath of allegiance to him but later violated it in order to grab the caliphate themselves. Kulaib was convinced that Ali's stand was just, and he admitted it before the Commander of the Faithful. Thereupon Ali asked him to swear allegiance to him. He, however, said in reply that he had come as the representative of the people of Basra and could not take any such action till he returned to the city and submitted a report to those who had sent him.

The Commander of the Faithful then said to him: “Suppose those people had sent you to locate vegetation and water and you had informed them that these things were present at such and such place, but they had declined to go there and had gone instead to a barren place, what would have been your line of action? Would you have gone to the place where a spring and vegetation were there, or followed those people to the barren land?” Kulaib replied: “I should certainly have gone to the place where there was water and verdure”. Thereupon Ali said: “Then stretch your hand and take oath of allegiance to me”. The man said: “By God! After being reduced to silence by your convincing argument there is no reason for my opposing you. Now stretch your hand and I swear allegiance to you”.

When the people of the camel arrayed themselves against him the Commander of the Faithful Ali said to his army: “O People! Control yourselves and do not attack them, nor say anything with your tongue. They are your brethern-in-faith. Bear injustice with patience, and do not begin fighting because whoever quarrels today will have to account for it on the Day of Judgment”.

Ali continued to make efforts for peace in this manner. At the time of leaving for Basra with twenty thousand men his real intention was to advise the people of the camel to refrain from mischief and rebellion and to invite them to peace and unity.

He loved peace so much that even when the two armies were arrayed against each other and there was no hope for reconciliation, he made an earnest effort at the last moment to avoid bloodshed. On seeing Talha and Zubayr he stepped forward absolutely unarmed, to indicate that he wanted peace and not war, and called out “O Zubayr! Come to me”. Zubayr came forward fully armed. When Ayesha saw this she shouted with fear “No fighting!” because she was aware that fighting with Ali meant sure death for Zubayr. She believed that Ali's enemy however strong and brave he might be would surely meet his fate.

However, when Ayesha and her supporters saw that Ali and Zubayr were embracing each other they were very much perplexed.

Ali kept Zubayr stuck to his bosom for a long time and began conversing with him in a very kind and affectionate manner. He said: “Woe be upon you! Why have you revolted against me?” Zubayr replied: “We want to avenge the murder of Uthman”. Ali said: “May God kill that one from among us two whose hands have been besmeared with Uthman's blood”.

The part played in the murder of Uthman by Talha and Zubayr was as much known to themselves as it was known to Ali and others like Ibn Abbas who had made the following suggestion to him on his assuming the office of caliph: “Appoint the son of Talha as the Governor of Basra and that of Zubayr as the Governor of Kufa, and allow Mu`awiya to continue as the Governor of Syria, till the conditions become normal and the people feel safe and secure, and the murderers of Uthman and those who want to avenge his blood are pacified”.

Ali had all these things in view and the following words of Talha and Zubayr were also ringing in his mind: “We are taking the oath of allegiance to you subject to the condition that we shall be allowed to participate in the affairs of the caliphate”. As such all their activities were only means of securing the caliphate, none had in view the revenge for the murder of Uthman.

Before the two armies came face to face with each other Ali ordered his troops to array themselves. Then he gave them instructions: “Look here! Don't shoot an arrow and don't attack with a spear or a sword to start the battle, so that you may not be blamed (for starting the battle)”.

A few moments later the people of the camel killed a soldier of Ali's army with their arrows. Ali said loudly: “O God! Bear witness”. Then another man was killed and the Commander of the Faithful again said: “O God! Bear witness”. Then Abdullah bin Badil was killed and his brother brought his dead body before Ali. Thereupon he said again: “O God! Bear witness”, and ordered his army to attack. Then fierce fighting started.

With sword in hand Ali attacked the rebels. His sword flashed like a flame of fire. He drove back the Quraysh and put their centre as well as the right and left wings in disorder. The infantry which was being commanded by Zubayr flew away. Zubayr became encircled by the soldiers of Ali's army, but none attacked him and allowed him to escape. Ammar Yasir launched a severe attack. When Zubayr felt that Ammar might strike him with his sword he said: “O Abul Yaqzan! (Kunyah of Ammar) are you going to kill me?” “Not at all, O Abu Abdillah!” said Ammar, and stepped aside.

Ammar's treatment of Zubayr was just like that which was meted out by Ali in the Battle of Siffin to Amr bin Aas. Its details will be given later. In fact Ammar and his compatriots had been trained by their teacher Ali – the real Commander of the Faithful, to respect human life, as far as possible, even in the battlefield.

Zubayr quitted the battlefield and went away to a valley called al-Saba`. It has been said by some narrators that ever since Ali had embraced him and reminded him of old love and affection his conscience had heen awakened and he was not inclined to fight. However, Ayesha and his son Abdullah

reproached him on this account and he was obliged to stay on in the battlefield. After Ammar had spared his life he decided to go away.

Ayesha tried her best to keep up the morale of her army which consisted of thirty thousand men. She called the members of various tribes by name and asked them to fight bravely to avenge the murder of Uthman. The result was that the fighting became all the more intense. Some of the warriors threw away their weapons and attacked each other with their hands.

Ayesha's standard was fixed on the back of her camel and her supporters were guarding it with great zeal. When one of them was killed another took his place. There were no signs of either party winning the battle. Ayesha's supporters were also fighting very bravely. Slogans in favour of Ayesha and against Ali and vice versa could be heard from both the sides. The fighting was so intense that it is difficult to find its example in history.

So many persons were killed in the battle that the whole battlefield was strewn with dead bodies. This state of affairs worried Ali very much. He, therefore, thought of a plan which, when implemented, might ensure the safety of those who were still alive. He ordered his soldiers to cut off the feet of Ayesha's camel. Some brave men rushed forth at once and struck their swords on the feet of the camel. The camel staggered and fell down. Thereupon all those who were guarding it ran away and the entire army followed suit. Talha and Zubayr were also killed.

As regards Zubayr's death the versions differ. One of them is that a man named Amr bin Jazmooz pursued him upto the valley of al-Saba` and killed him there with his spear. Talha was killed by Marwan with an arrow, although he had been fighting side by side with him so long as the battle lasted. It is reported that while shooting the arrow Marwana had said: “After this time I may not get an opportunity to avenge the murder of Uthman”.

Those who are aware of the mentality and past actions of Marwan can very well understand that this action of Marwan was not something unusual for him. He acted according to the general policy of Bani Umayyah viz. to remove from the path everyone who aspired to become a caliph, so that there should be none left to contend with Bani Umayyah on this account.

As regards Marwan himself he was made captive and brought before the Commander of the Faithful. He hoped to be forgiven and his hope was fulfilled. Ali forgave him.

The result of this battle was very dreadful. Seventeen thousand supporters of Ayesha and one thousand and seventy persons belonging to the army of Ali were killed. All these poor men fell victims to the greed of the opponents of Ali.

When some companions of Ali thought of killing Ayesha (as she was responsible for all this trouble), Ali at once stopped them and issued the following proclamation: “None who is wounded should be killed and none who flees should be pursued. Whoever lays down his arms or remains indoors shall be safe”.

The entire history of warfare in the world goes to show that Ali was the most magnanimous, noble-minded and forgiving person and the treatment which he meted out to his opponents was extremely gentle.

After the hostilities were over Ali looked at the battlefield and tears trickled down from his eyes when he saw the human misery and bloodshed which could not be avoided in spite of his best efforts. He then prayed to God in these words: “O God! Forgive us and also forgive these persons who were our brethren, although they had been unjust to us”.

Then he performed funeral prayers for the dead of both sides. As regards Ayesha he sent her back to her house in Madina in a very honourable way.

Two impostors

The organized conspiracy which was afoot against the Commander of the Faithful did not come to end even after the defeat of his opponents in the Battle of the Camel, because the aspirations of his opponents and the causes of their enmity against him were still there. If one group of those who conspired against him was in Hijaz the other was in Syria and both of these groups had many supporters of Ayesha, Talha and Zubayr. The ring-leaders of these people were the governors and other officers who had accumulated large wealth illegally during the period of Uthman and did not expect any such indulgence from Ali.

The supporters of Ali in Hijaz were all indigent believers or the pious companions of the Prophet. His position in Hijaz was similar to that of his cousin, the Prophet and if there was any difference it was only due to the time and circumstances. The similarity is proved by the fact that his enemies were mostly the Quraysh, who had been the enemies of the Prophet earlier. Ali says: “Let the Quraysh involve themselves in deviation and do not bother about the dissensions which they create or the egotism which they display. They have united to fight against me just as they had united to fight against the Prophet of God”.

In Syria Mu`awiya was busy in his nefarious activities against Ali - the lawful caliph. He was spending enormous sums of money and making very attractive promises to win the support of the people. He had also a large army of which he was the despotic head. This army may briefly be described thus: “They were foolish mercenaries. They were paid by Mu`awiya who took care that as far as possible they should remain devoid of intellect”.

We mention below an incident which explains the nature of the soldiery of Mu`awiya and also shows that he was convinced that his rival Ali was on the right, and it was not difficult for him to achieve success

against him because he was to face Ali having with him (Mu`awiya) the soldiers, who did not possess the capability of differentiating between injustice and justice or in other words between Mu`awiya and Ali.

After the army of Ali returned from Siffin, a Kufan came to Damascus mounted on his camel. One of the Syrians claimed that the she-camel belonged to him and had been snatched away from him by the Kufan during the Battle of Siffin. The matter came up before Mu`awiya and the Syrian produced fifty witnesses to prove that the she-camel was his. Mu`awiya, therefore, decided the case in his favour. The Kufan said to Mu`awiya: "May God forgive you! It is a he-camel and not a she-camel. Mu`awiya said that as the decision had been taken it was not possible to reverse it. When the court was dispersed and there was no one there, he called the Kufan secretly and enquired from him about the value of his camel. When he mentioned its cost Mu`awiya gave him double the amount and something more and said: "When you reach Kufa tell Ali that I will bring to fight against him one hundred thousand such persons who don't differentiate between a he-camel and a she-camel".

Jahiz has also confirmed these remarks of Mu`awiya and has explained as to why the Syrians were so obedient to him. He says: "The reason for the Syrians being so submissive was that they were very stupid and foolish. It was in their nature to follow others blindly and to stick to the views once formed by them. If someone was slandered before them in his absence, they never cared to verify if it was true or false".

As mentioned above the conspiracies of the enemies of Ali were not limited to the Battle of the Camel but it was only a link of the chain of even greater conspiracies againt him. After defeating the army of Ayesha, Talha and Zubayr, he started making preparations to bring Mu`awiya to his knees. His sole object was to guide the people towards high morals and good deeds, to prevent them from committing oppression and to establish a government which should consider the protection of their rights to be its foremost duty.

Ali's method was quite different from those who flatter the powerful, forgive the rebels to seek their assistance, and approach the influential persons to help them in establishing their rule.

We have already mentioned before that Ali did not seek any recompense from the people for the services rendered by him to them except that they should obey him. He often uttered this sentence: "If knowledge, wisdom and justice could be measured I would have measured them for you gratis. However, what is necessary for it is that I should get competent persons and intelligent brains".

Mu`awiya was not a receptacle in which knowledge, wisdom and justice could be contained. Justice and public rights were not safe in his hands and if they were left with him there was no surety that he would pass them on to the people. That was why Ali did not allow him to continue as the Governor of Syria. If Ali had been lax in administering justice it was possible that he might have practised simulation with Mu`awiya.

Mu`awiya did not take oath of allegiance to Ali and did not obey his orders. This shows that he was

planning to establish a kingdom of his own. Opposition to Ali by Ayesha, Talha and Zubayr and the consequent Battle of the Camel provided him an opportunity to strengthen himself.

After the Battle of the Camel was over Ali wrote letters to Mu`awiya impressing upon him to refrain from antagonism and asking him to take oath of allegiance to him as had been done by others. Mu`awiya replied to him as follows: “I swear by my own life that I do not mind whosoever may have sworn allegiance to you. You would have been like Abu Bakr and Umar if you had been innocent of the murder of Uthman. However, you instigated the Muhajirs to revolt against him and restrained the Ansar from helping him. The ignorant people obeyed you and the weak became powerful because of you.

The Syrians will not refrain from fighting against you unless you hand over to them those persons who murdered Uthman. Thereafter the question of the caliphate will be decided through a consultative council. The people of Hijaz were the rulers of the people so long as they supported truth. They have now forsaken truth and consequently the Syrians now deserve to rule. The argument advanced by you against Talha and Zubayr does not hold good in the case of the Syrians. They took the oath of allegiance to you but we have not done so.

As regards your excellence and greatness in Islam and your kinship with the Prophet it is something which I cannot deny. And peace (be upon you)”.

The letter reproduced above makes the intention of Mu`awiya quite clear. He wanted to avoid taking oath of allegiance to Ali on one pretext or another. He knew that he could not deceive Ali with his words. He was also aware that Ali had nothing to do with the murder of Uthman. He, therefore, said that even if those persons who had taken oath of allegiance to Umar and Abu Bakr had also taken such oath to him and he deserved to become the caliph it was incumbent upon him to hand over to the Syrians the murderers of Uthman who had been given asylum by him.

However, even Ali's innocence in regard to Uthman's murder was proved Mu`awiya was not prepared to acknowledge him as the lawful caliph but wanted the matter to be referred to the consultative council. Furthermore, he was not prepared to allow the people of Hijaz and Iraq to select the caliph, because, according to him this right had been transferred to the Syrians because they were the rightful rulers.

It is evident that if all these conditions were fulfilled none other than Mu`awiya could become the caliph.

Ali showed unusual patience. However, this patience was not due to any lack of resolution or laxity on his part. The position was that at that time the Arabs were divided into two groups and one of them was bound to be defeated in spite of the differences between them. On the one side were the weak and helpless persons who wanted a life of peace and security for themselves as well as for their brethren. There were also the pious companions of the Prophet who longed for a country where justice should prevail. And on the other side were those who wanted to exploit the helpless people and to accumulate wealth by all possible means.

The first group was headed by Ali ibn Abi Talib. All those who desired justice were his supporters and well wishers. The chief of the second group was Mu`awiya bin Abi Sufyan, and all those who were accustomed to oppress others were his followers. The recompense for the first group was their clear conscience and the gift for the second group was Mu`awiya's treasure. There were numerous truth-loving persons who left Mu`awiya and joined Ali and similarly there were many worldly-minded persons who left Ali and went over to Mu`awiya. We mention here some cases in which some persons left Ali and joined Mu`awiya. It will become clear what sort of people they were and why they sided with Mu`awiya.

A man named Yazid bin Hujiyah Tamimi was appointed by Ali as Governor of Ray and the adjoining areas. He accumulated a large amount of wealth and misappropriated it. When Ali came to know about it he called him back and imprisoned him. He appointed a man named Sa`d as a sentry. When Sa`d went to sleep Yazid slipped away from the prison. He mounted his animal of riding and reached Damascus where he joined Mu`awiya.

He composed the following verses with regard to his escape: “I mounted my animal of riding deceiving Sa`d and came over to Damascus. I chose a superior person”.
“When Sa`d went to sleep I escaped. Sa`d is nothing more than a misguided and perplexed slave”.

This Yazid satirized Ali in his verses which he sent to Iraq and made it known to Ali that he (Yazid) was his enemy. Mu`awiya gave him a large sum of money whereupon he praised him and the people of Syria, and said that Syria was a sacred land and the Syrians were true believers.

He said: “I loved the Syrians in preference to others and wept bitterly for Uthman”.
“Syria is sacred land and its inhabitants are the true believers and the followers of the Qur'an”.

Another man named Za`qa` bin Sa`d was appointed by the Commander of the Faithful as the ruler of Kaskar. He accumulated a large quantity of wealth by all possible means and spent it lavishly. So much so that he married a woman and gave her one hundred thousand dirhams as dowry. When he came to know that Ali had become aware of his malpractices he left for Syria taking away as much money as he possibly could.

Ali punished a man named Najashi for drinking wine. He was one of the supporters of Ali and, therefore, thought that he deserved indulgence as compared with others. He did not like that Ali the Commander of the Faithful should punish him as he had punished others. When Mu`awiya promised him asylum he, therefore, ran away to Syria. On arriving there he composed this verse satirizing Ali.
“Who will convey this message of mine to Ali that I am safe now and do not feel any danger”.

When Najashi was punished many Yemenites were annoyed, as he, too, was one of them. They, therefore, deserted Ali and joined Mu`awiya.

Just as the worldly-minded people are numerically larger than others the number of those who deserted Ali and joined Mu`awiya was also large.

Every person is not capable of tolerating the truth or of saying or doing the right thing. Therefore every person could not love Ali who was very strict in the matter of truth and justice and could not deviate from truth and righteousness even for his very near relatives. In the circumstances why should that governor have not left him and joined Mu`awiya whom Imam Ali wrote as under: “I swear by God that if I come to know that you have misappropriated the property of the Muslims even to a very small extent I shall award you a punishment which will make you indigent, heavy-laden and disgraced”.

Similarly why should that governor not have deserted him when he addressed in these words: “I know that you have made the Public Treasury empty and have grabbed whatever you could lay your hands on. You have misappropriated whatever came into your hands. Will you please send me the account that you have maintained?”

How could mean persons attain to the heights of piety and the truthfulness and how could such a ruler like the following message of the Commander of the Faithful?
“If the information which I have received about you is correct, your camel and the lace of your shoe are better than you”.

How could the powerful capitalists and their unjust associates tolerate that Ali should be the caliph - the same Ali who wanted to spend the wealth for the welfare of the common man and was always at war with the oppressors and their associates? How could they like a caliph who said: “I swear by God that it is preferable for me to lie on thorns and be chained rather than that I should oppress anyone or usurp even the most ordinary thing”.

Why should these people not have rebelled against him who openly said: “It is my duty to wage a war against oppression and the oppressors, and against those who unlawfully grab the wealth of others, and I shall have to account for it on the Day of Judgement”. Had Ali not considered this responsibility essential, he would have left matters as they were. He would have left the people to their own fate. Some would have been the oppressors and some the oppressed.

He says: “If the Almighty God had not taken a promise from the rulers that they will not sit quiet in the event of the oppressor becoming oversatiated with food and the oppressed one remaining hungry, I would have thrown the reins of the caliphate on his shoulders (i.e. would have allowed the affairs to continue to take the turn they had already taken) and would have satisfied its last one like the first one. You would then have found your world to be more worthless in my eyes than the sneezing of a goat”.

How could the treacherous persons let such a person assume the administration of their affairs when Ali held the following view about them and his contemporaries: “A person who knows how he will have to render his account cannot be treacherous. We are living during a time in which the people commit treachery and deceit considering it to be prudence, and the ignorant persons treat it to be a good policy”.

That is why a large number of powerful persons who opposed Ali were those who had amassed large quantities of wealth by unlawful means and wished Mu`awiya to make them richer at the cost of the

common man and through the Public Treasury. As regards persons other than these capitalists who were against Ali they were those foolish persons who did not know what was good and what was harmful for them.

As we have mentioned above the Arabs of that time were divided into many groups. Evey group was obedient to a chief. They obeyed their chiefs blindly and did not ask them as to why they were pleased or displeased with someone. Ali has referred to his contemporaries of this kind, time and again. In his remarks about them there is grief as well as annoyance of a kind father with regard to the children who disobey him and provide intentionally or unintentionally, the means of their own ruin. He says about them: “I complain to God against those people who are spending their lives in ignorance”.

Addressing those people he says: “Your enemies are not unmindful of you whereas you have forgotten everything on account of your heedlessness”.

Explaining how such people feel when they are called upon to fight against the rebels he says: “Some of them come unwillingly, others make false excuses and still others withhold assistance intentionally”.

He adds: “The questioner from amongst them tries to confuse and one who gives a reply gives it without reflecting on it. Usually the sentiments of pleasure and displeasure make a man holding correct views deviate from the right path. As regards that person from amongst them whose intellect is mature it is possible that one look may impress him and one word may bring about a revolution in his mind”.

In his last sentence the Commander of the Faithful has described the mental condition of the distinguished personalities of his time in a very lucid manner. He says: “During this time if there are some sensible persons their sensibility is subservient to their greed and avarice and their views depend on their pleasure and displeasure. If they are pleased with somebody they take decisions in his favour without any justification; if they are displeased with someone they give wrong decisions in his case simply on account of their displeasure.

As regards those with mature intellect one look at the things which they like is sufficient to make them deviate from the path already being followed by them, and one word of an influential and powerful person or a briber is sufficient to make them support injustice and assist the oppressor”.

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When, after the defeat of the people of the camel, the centre of conspiracies against Ali shifted to Damascus, Mu`awiya bin Abi Sufyan the leader of Bani Umayyah intensified his preparations to fight against Ali and topple down his government. On the receipt of the first letter of Ali wherein he had asked him to take the oath of allegiance to him like others, he summoned to Damascus for consultation all those persons, from whom he could expect assistance. The most prominent among them was Amr ibn al-Aas. On receipt of Ali's letter Mu`awiya wrote immediately to Amr:

“You must have come to know the fate which Talha, Zubayr and Ayesha have met. Marwan, after having left Basra, has since joined me. Now Jarir bin Abdullah has brought to me a letter from Ali. I do not wish to send him a reply without consulting you. You should, therefore, come as early as possible”.

On receiving Mu`awiya's letter Amr called his sons Abdullah and Muhammad to consult them about the reply which might be sent by him. Abdullah said: “I think that when the Prophet breathed his last he was pleased with you, and Abu Bakr and Umar were also pleased with you when they died. In case you corrupt your faith now by siding with Mu`awiya, you and he both will go to Hell on the Day of Judgment”.

Then Amr asked his second son Muhammad to express his views in the matter. He replied: “You should go expeditiously and join Mu`awiya. It is better to reach early and become a chief rather than go later and become a camp-follower”.

In the morning Amr ibn al-Aas called his slave named Durdan and asked him to saddle his animal of riding. Then he asked him to unsaddle it. He got it saddled and unsaddled thrice. Durdan asked him: “Sir! What is the matter? I hope you won't mind if I tell you what is in your heart”. Amr said: “Speak out what you have to say”. Thereupon Durdan said: “At present this world and the hereafter have created a storm in your mind. You reflect that the hereafter is with Ali but not this world and this world is with Mu`awiya but not the hereafter. You are wavering between these two. My suggestion is that you should stay at home. If the believers succeed, you may pass your day amidst them and if the worldly-minded are victorious, they will certainly need your assistance”.

However, the promises made by Mu`awiya to Amr ibn al-Aas were not so insignificant that he might have ignored them and might have stayed at home acting on the advice of his son Abdullah or his slave Durdan. He decided to oppose Ali and joined Bani Umayyah and Mu`awiya.

As Amr ibn al-Aas was active in plotting against Ali in no lesser a degree than Mu`awiya it is necessary to give briefly his life sketch so that we may know the reason why he left Ali and joined Mu`awiya's company and what the value he had for his company.

Before he adopted Islam Amr ibn al-Aas was well known for his bargaining and profiteering. This is a fact which cannot be denied. He has himself explained clearly this trait of his in these words: “On return from the Battle of the Ditch I gathered together some men from amongst the Quraysh who usually accepted my views and heard me attentively. I said to them: “I swear by God that I can foresee that Muhammad is going to succeed.

In the circumstances it will be better for us to migrate to Ethiopia permanently and settle there. It is better to live under the Negus than to submit to Muhammad. If Muhammad overcomes our people we shall remain beyond his reach and if our people overpower him we shall stand to gain much. They agreed with me and said: “Whatever you have said is absolutely correct. Then I asked them to procure some presents for the Negus.....”.

Dr. Hasan Ibrahim Hasan of Egypt who is a great admirer of Amr and has obtained a doctorate from the London University on the basis of his thesis entitled "Amr son of Aas" writes thus while commenting on the nature of his Islam:

"When we look into the affairs of Quraysh that in the beginning every one of them was bent upon destroying Islam. Every victory of the Prophet and every defeat of the Quraysh instead of dismaying them, made them more furious. However, after they had suffered successive defeats and all their chiefs and distinguished men were killed the young men felt very uneasy and began thinking about their future line of action. They could see darkness on one side and a ray of hope on the other.

They knew that even if they sided with the ever-increasing strength of Islam at that stage they would stand to gain. However, they also feared that by doing so they would lose the honour and dignity which they enjoyed among their people and they would also lose their former freedom. Some of them ignored all these misgivings and reaching Madina took the oath of allegiance to the Prophet. Others who could not take any decision desisted from opposing Islam and when it became perfectly clear to them that in any case Muhammad was going to gain victory over Quraysh they also decided to avail of the opportunity before it was too late and adopted Islam. This happened before the conquest of Mecca.

The foremost persons among the two respective groups were Khalid bin Walid and Amr ibn al-Aas. Amr had gone away from Arabia to Ethiopia to study the conditions there. However, when he realized that very good relations existed between the Prophet and the Negus, and in Arabia Islam was going to reach the height of success and the fall of Mecca was a matter of days only, he decided to join those who had already embraced Islam and to do voluntarily what he would have to do willy-nilly later". (***Amr ibn al-Aas*** by Dr. Hasan Ibrahim Hasan Egyptian also Urdu translation published by Idara Maktaba Jadid, Lahore. p.43-44).

Opportunism remained alive in the heart of Amr ibn al-Aas throughout his life. In this respect he was just like the chiefs of the tribes and other distinguished persons against whom Abu Bakr, Umar and Ali had to wage war. We have explained in the foregoing pages that when, Amr ibn al-Aas was the Governor of Egypt, he accumulated a large amount of wealth. Umar ordered him to surrender half of it to the Public Treasury. He tried to evade payment on different pretexts but Umar was not satisfied. He wrote to Amr ibn al-Aas saying: "I swear by God that I am not going to be deceived by your fraudulent words. You people have amassed wealth and are not afraid of anything.....Look here! You collect disgrace and leave fire behind you as inheritance. I am sending Muhammad son of Muslima to you. You should hand over half of your wealth to him".

When Muhammad son of Muslima met Amr with the letter in question he got very sumptuous dishes prepared for him, but Muhammad declined to eat them. Amr asked him: "Do you consider it unlawful to take meal in my house?" Muhammad replied: "If you had placed before me the food which is ordinarily offered to the guests I would not have refused to eat it. However, the food which you have arranged for me is a prelude to corruption (i.e. it is nothing short of bribe). You should, therefore, remove this food

from here and surrender to me half of your property.

Amr, therefore, handed over to him one half of everything belonging to him. A pair of shoes was left with him out of which Muhammad took one shoe also, and let the other shoe remain with him. Amr ibn al-Aas could not tolerate this. He, therefore, said to Muslima: “Woe be to the time when I was appointed as governor by Umar. By God I am aware of the condition of Umar's father Khattab when he used to carry a bundle of firewood on his head and Umar too carried another bundle. Both of them did not have enough clothes to hide their bodies. Each of them wore a loin-cloth which did not reach even upto their knees. And I swear by God that my father Aas lived such a luxurious life that he was not satisfied even with a silken coat with gold buttons on it”.

This incident shows how keen Amr ibn al-Aas was to avail of every opportunity to acquire wealth. It also shows the complex mentality of the distinguished persons. Amr could not find any fault with Umar and his father except that they were poor and did not have enough clothes to wear and worked with their hand and carried bundles of firewood on their heads and he could not mention any quality of his own father except that he used to wear silken clothes.

It would be wrong to imagine that what Amr ibn al-Aas said about Umar was occasioned by sudden agitation and anger. No. That was not so. The fact is that he had always been thinking that as Umar and his father were poor and his own father Aas was a rich man his father was better than Khattab and he himself was better than Umar. Amr's point of view was that all human beings were not equal.

According to him some persons were mean and others were noble and the criterion of nobleness was one's descent and nothing else. Whoever belonged to a noble and rich family was noble and one was low-born was despicable. The noble persons possessed rights which were not admissible to others and it was the duty of the people to obey them. All historians agree that as regards the administration and government of Egypt Amr's view was that it was necessary for one who wanted improvement and development not to lend ears to the complaints made against the nobility by the persons belonging to the lower classes”. (Al-Islam wa al-Hazarat al-Arabiyyah).

In this way Amr ibn al-Aas was completely occupied with greed for indulgence and luxury. He believed that exploitation of the lower classes was the birth-right of those who belonged to the noble families. At times his mind wavered as to whether he should keep his conscience alive or to kill it for worldly gains, but he soon decided in favour of luxury and wealth. As mentioned above the same thing happened when Mu`awiya called him. He reflected for some time as to whether he should side with Ali or with Mu`awiya, but eventually he decided to proceed to Syria.

The historians and narrators attribute some verses to Amr ibn al-Aas. He composed them while he was going to Mu`awiya. In these verses he has clearly expressed his views about Ali and Mu`awiya. In his eyes Ali was a very great man and Mu`awiya stood no comparison with him. It might he said that he had two hearts in his bosom. One of them stopped him from going to Mu`awiya whereas the other ordered

him to go and see Mu`awiya. He concludes his poem with the following verses:

“I adopted the world intentionally on account of avarice, although there was no sound reason for adopting the world”.

“I know very well the losses involved in adopting the world, but it is also a fact that I possess various worldly desires”.

“The real thing is that my mind desires to lead a life of honour and dignity. Who can agree to lead a life of humiliation”.

According to Amr ibn al-Aas life of honour and dignity was confined to immediate worldly gains and Umayyad promises. Just as in the days of Umar the criterion of dignity in his eyes was such that his own father used to wear silken clothes, the standard of humiliation, according to him, during the time of Ali was assisting who neither did any bargaining himself nor allowed others to do it. This standard of humiliation was like that of the poor clothing of Umar and his father.

When Amr ibn al-Aas reached Mu`awiya's court the latter said to him: “O Abu Abdillah! I invite you to perform jihad against that man (i.e. Ali ibn Abi Talib) who has disobeyed God created dissension among the Muslims and dispersed the nation”. Amr ibn al-Aas said: “What will you give me if I join you to fight against Ali knowing as you do that the matter is so dangerous”.

Mu`awiya said: “I shall give you whatever you ask for”. Amr ibn al-Aas said: “I want the Governorship of Egypt”.

Thereafter a long deceptive conversation took place between them. Each of them tried to dupe the other. Each of them had his personal gain in view.

Their deceptive conversation, however, ended with bargaining with each other. Amr ibn al-Aas acknowledged Mu`awiya as the caliph and took oath of allegiance to him and in return Mu`awiya gave him absolute authority over Egypt and its inhabitants and promised non-interference from his side. Ali has drawn a picture of this bargaining in the following words:

“He did not swear allegiance to Mu`awiya until he agreed to pay the price of his allegiance. May the hands of one who swore this allegiance be not victorious and successful! And may the purchaser of this allegiance be disgraced and humiliated! (The time has now come that) you should get ready for war and procure the necessary equipment”.

Ali further says about this bargaining: “I have been given to understand that Amr ibn al-Aas has not taken oath of allegiance to Mu`awiya for nothing. He made him agree beforehand that he would have to pay its price - that he would have to give a present for forsaking the faith”.

Amr ibn al-Aas did not content himself with the aforesaid bargain. His motive was something else. He

advised Mu`awiya to organize a propaganda movement against Ali so that it might be useful in connection with a war which might be fought later. He said to him inter alia: “Send reliable persons to different cities to propagate that it is Ali who has killed Uthman”.

Amr ibn al-Aas did all this in spite of the fact that he knew very well that Ali was not at all involved in the murder of Uthman and in fact the party to which he himself belonged had a great hand in the matter, as we have explained in an earlier chapter.

When at the time of the Battle of Siffin Mu`awiya asked Amr ibn al-Aas to array the forces he did not comply with his wish until he had obtained a promise from him once again that when Ali was killed and his (Mu`awiya's) govern- ment was established he would give him the Governorship of Egypt.

Another proof of the fact that Amr ibn al-Aas was very skilled in bargaining and safeguarding his own interests is that when he and Abu Musa Ash`ari sat together in connection with the well-known event of Arbitration and those who were representing the two parties suggested the names of different persons for the caliphate, Abu Musa put forth the name of Abdullah bin Umar al-Khattab. Others also supported him saying that Abdullah was the most deserving person for the caliphate. Abu Musa said time and again: “I would like to revive the name of Umar al-Khattab) if I could. Thereupon Amr ibn al-Aas said to Abu Musa: “If you want to make Abdullah bin Umar the caliph for his religiousness why don't you select my son Abdullah for that office? You are well aware of his merits and competence”.

This was how Amr ibn al-Aas used to bargain. He had come as an arbitrator nominated by Mu`awiya but as soon as he felt that there was a possibility of his son becoming the caliph he tried to avail of the opportunity and put forward his name for that office. At that time he also forgot that in the Battle of Siffin he was the Commander-in-Chief of Mu`awiya's forces and in the event of success he had promised him the Governorship of Egypt, and ignored the fact that he was the arbitrator from Mu`awiya's side and the arbitration was also taking place on account of his machinations and deceit.

The fact is that both Mu`awiya and Amr ibn al-Aas knew that they were doing injustice to Ali. In the heart of their hearts they were aware that Ali was better than them. Both of them were endeavouring to achieve their own purpose. Apparently they were friends and well-wishers of each other but in reality they were very much inimical and their enmity became manifest from the colour of their faces and from the sentences they uttered. After the Battle of Siffin was over Mu`awiya asked his courtiers one day: “What is the most surprising thing?” Every one of them expressed his views on the subject. When the turn of Amr ibn al-Aas came he said: The most strange thing is, that falsehood should gain victory over truth”. By saying this he alluded to Mu`awiya and Ali.

Mu`awiya said in reply at once: “No. The most strange thing is that a man may, without fearing another man and knowing that he can do him no harm, give him something which he does not deserve”. He meant that he had given the Governorship of Egypt to Amr ibn al-Aas although Amr could do him no harm and did not also deserve to be the governor.

The views held by Amr ibn al-Aas about Ali and Mu`awiya become manifest from the acknowledgement made by him in these words: "I have been deceived. It was a great mistake to leave Ali and to support Mu`awiya". This admission and acknowledgement by Amr shows the extreme moral degradation of Mu`awiya's associates and supporters. They were deceiving themselves intentionally.

When Ali was martyred and soon afterwards Mu`awiya became the sole ruler of the Islamic territories he began to adopt dilly-dallying tactics in appointing Amr ibn al-Aas as the Governor of Egypt. Amr demanded that Mu`awiya should fulfil his promise. However, when Mu`awiya did not comply with his request he wrote a long poem and sent it to him. Some of its verses are as under:

"O Mu`awiya! Do not forget the prize which you promised me. Do not deviate from the right path".
"O son of Hind! I assisted you against the greatest and the most distinguished chief (i.e. Ali ibn Abi Talib) on account of my ignorance".
"What comparison do you bear with Ali? How can a sword be compared with an axe, the Milky Way with the last layer of the earth, or Ali with Mu`awiya".

On receiving this poem Mu`awiya immediately appointed Amr ibn al-Aas as Governor of Egypt.

How much Mu`awiya and Amr ibn al-Aas, whom their personal interests, and give and take matters had brought together, hated each other is also proved by the following incident:

When Mu`awiya deputed Amr ibn al-Aas to strengthen the plot of Arbitration and to take advantage of the foolishness of Abu Musa Ash`ari, he (Mu`awiya) said something which displeased Amr. He, therefore, recited a satirical verse about Mu`awiya which is well-known. Thereupon Mu`awiya asked one of his courtiers named Abdur Rahman bin Umm Hakam to reply to that verse and write a satire on him. Abdur Rahman satirized Amr in a number of verses wherein he threatened and cursed him and also censured him for having run away from the battlefield of Siffin while he was facing Ali. Abdur Rahman said: "You should give up rebellion and stubbornness because a rebel is an accursed person. Did you not run away on the day of Siffin while facing Ali? You were very keen to save your life and feared you might have to face death, although every person has to die one day".

Evidently both of these persons possessed a strange mentality. On the one hand they had joined hands to claim revenge for the murder of Uthman and to declare Ali to be an oppressor and take revenge on him, and on the other hand they threatened, abused and censured each other.

There was a sect among the Muslims who decided most of the matters according to the dictates of reason and good conscience. They have treated both Mu`awiya and Amr ibn al-Aas to be treacherous, because they fought against Ali who was the lawful caliph. The Mu`tazilah held this view. The Mu`tazilah were more bold as compared with other Muslim sects in the matter of analysis and criticism of the actions of the people. As explained by the author of ***al-Munyah wal-Amal,*** most of the Mu`atazilites have dissociated themselves from Mu`awiya and Amr ibn al-Aas and declared them to be thieves and robbers, who looted public property. (See ***Fajr al-Islam*** p.240).

Mu`awiya was exactly as depicted by Ali. He says: “He is a man with a big mouth and a swollen belly. He ate what he could find and was on the look-out what he could not get”.

As regards Amr ibn al-Aas he says: “He told lies and broke promises. If he wanted to borrow something from another person he pestered him for it, and if someone else asked him for something he showed stinginess. And if he made any pact or promise he violated it”.

All these qualities were common in Mu`awiya and Amr ibn al-Aas and that is why they joined hands with each other. When a man with a big mouth also possesses a big belly he naturally eats what he finds, and remains on the look-out for more. He does not care whether the thing being utilized by him is lawful or unlawful nor is he acquainted with the sense of equity and justice, cruelty and oppression, good and bad, and virtue and meanness. And when a person is a liar he breaks the promises made by him. When he wants to borrow something from another he presses him hard but shows stinginess when he himself is asked for something. He violates the pacts and promises made by him. He does all these things for his personal gain.

What Ali has said about both of them means that their actions were based on their selfish motives. In the circumstances nothing could prevent them from collaborating with each other on treachery and rebellion especially when both of them stood to gain by it, although in the heart of their hearts they hated each other. Ali refers to this fact when he says:

“I have read the letter of these two evil-doers (Mu`awiya and Amr ibn al-Aas) who have joined hands to disobey the orders of God”.

* * * * * * * *

The enemies of Ali plotted against him with great dexterity. The conspirators were many and their aims and objects were also different from one another. They were, however, united on one point and it was that Ali should not be their ruler. Mu`awiya had a great hand in organizing and strengthening the conspiracy. He was the ring-leader and all others were his supporters and followers. In fact it was he who caused the Battle of the Camel also. If he had not provided equipment to the insurgents, without himself coming into the forefront, this battle would not have taken place. This claim is also proved by the fact that immediately on receiving information about Ali's having assumed the caliphate he sent a letter to Zubayr through a man belonging to the tribe of `Amis. The letter read as follows:

“From Mu`awiya bin Abu Sufyan to the Commander of the Faithful Abdullah al-Zubayr. After salam (greetings) I have to inform you that I have obtained the oath of allegiance to you from the people of Syria and they have promptly acknowledged you as their caliph. Now it is necessary for you to endeavour that the people of Basra and Kufa should also join you, because if the citizens of these two cities submit to you, the matters will become very easy for you. After you I have obtained the oath for Talha bin Ubaydullah. Now you claim the revenge of the murder of Uthman on Ali and should invite the people to yourselves. Both of you should make utmost efforts in this matter and quickly too. May God

grant you success and destroy your enemies".

When Zubayr received the said letter he was very happy and showed it to Talha also. Both of them were deceived by Mu`awiya's show of sincerity. They immediately broke their allegiance to Ali, acting on the advice of Mu`awiya, and decided to fight against him. Consequently the Battle of the Camel took place. Mu`awiya's desire was fulfilled as he wanted that the caliph of the time Ali and the aspirants of caliphate Talha and Zubayr should fight together so that their strength might be weakened.

When the Battle of the Camel was over Mu`awiya spent enormous sums of money to bribe those about whom he felt that they would assist him or would not at least support Ali. And if he knew that someone would neither help him nor would remain a silent spectator when he (Mu`awiya) revolted, he adopted novel methods to deceive and misguide them. Amr ibn al-Aas was Mu`awiya's chief adviser and helper in all these conspiracies. Ali did not try to coax or flatter Amr ibn al-Aas and to win him over even when he came to know that he was collaborating with Mu`awiya. He remained as upright and truthful as ever and even the alliance of Amr ibn al-Aas and Mu`awiya did not affect his steadfastness. He, therefore, wrote a letter to Amr ibn al-Aas as follows:

"You have made your faith pursue the world of a man, whose deviation is not something hidden, it is known to all. He is one who brands even a noble-minded who sits with him, and befools one who is judicious and forbearing. You have followed him and crave for his crumbs just as a dog followed a lion looking at its claws greedily and expecting to get the remains of its prey. By doing so you have ruined your present world as well as the hereafter, although you would have gained your object even if you had stuck to truth. Now if God grants me victory over you and the son of Abu Sufyan I shall punish both of you properly for your misdeeds and even if I cannot gain control over you and you continue to live after me your fate will be extremely bad".

The disaster

Soon afterwards Mu`awiya left for Iraq along with one hundred and twenty thousand men and encamped near the bank of the Euphrates in the valley of Siffin near Raqqa. He marched on and occupied an open and even tract of land. Sitfin is a valley near the Euphrates. During those days there were many water springs in that valley as well as a large number of trees between it and the Euphrates.

Ali also left Kufa along with his army and reached Siffin after having passed through Mada`en and Raqqa. His intention was to prevent Mu`awiya from rebellion by means of advice and kindness and to resort to fighting only if he showed stubbornness. When he reached Siffin he saw that a huge army which had encamped on the bank of the river had blocked the way of his own army to have access to water. Ali sent a message to Mu`awiya saying: "We have not come here to fight for water. If we had

arrived here earlier than you we would not have prevented you from taking water".

Amr ibn al-Aas advised Mu`awiya not to block the way of Ali's army to the water. He said: "Ali's courage and valour is well-known to the world and he is accompanied by a large army of brave warriors. It is not possible that they will accept the present position and remain thirsty". Mu`awiya replied: "By God this is my first success. May God not satiate me from the fountain of Kauthar if these people drink the water of the river. In case, however, they are victorious the matter will be different". The companions of Mu`awiya had been so much emboldened that they told Ali to his face! "You will not get a drop of water until you are dead".

Strategically the position of Ali was very weak. He, however, sent Malik Ashtar to acquire control of the bank of the river. He put Mu`awiya's men to flight with his unusual valour. Now the bank was under the control of Ali's forces. According to Allamah Ibn Qutaibah Amr ibn al-Aas felt happy over this defeat of Mu`awiya and said to him: "O Mu`awiya! Just tell me one thing: Suppose they also stop water for your army as you stopped it for them, can you fight against them to get the control of the bank of the river? However, it is certain that Ali will not allow the same thing which you considered permissible".

Some of the companions of Ali wanted to pay Mu`awiya and his army back in their own coin and to stop the supply of water to them, but that great man turned down their suggestion and allowed free use of the water to the enemies. His companions insisted very much saying: "O Commander of the Faithful. Stop water for them as they had done for you. Don't let them drink a drop of water. Let them die of thirst. There will be no need for fighting. You can catch them with your own hands". Ali replied: "I can't do what they did. Let them have access to water".

Had Mu`awiya's supporters been of noble character they would have understood the difference between Ali and Mu`awiya and would have realized as to who was on the right path and who was on the wrong. They would then have known that to assist Mu`awiya against Ali was just like helping a thief or a dacoit, or one who was fighting against a Prophet.

Whatever faith Amr ibn al-Aas had he had already sold it to Mu`awiya for the Governorship of Egypt. Otherwise there could be no justification for his helping Mu`awiya when he knew that he stood no comparison with Ali.

In the Battle of Siffin the Syrians abused and imprecated on Ali. Mu`awiya was delighted to hear all this. Most probably he himself instigated and ordered them to do so in the same way in which he had ordered during the period of his own rule that Ali should be abused from the pulpit. This villainous act is an indelible mark of disgrace on his fate, and for that reason he will be looked down upon by others for ever.

When the Iraqis heard the Syrians using such abusive language they also wished to reply in the same manner. But when Ali came to know about it he considered it a slur on the nobleness and good name of his army. He, therefore, delivered before his men a speech, which made a brilliant addition to the lofty

principles of his government. He told them to behave honourably towards everyone – whether he was a friend or an enemy.

He said: “I don't like that you should begin abusing them. If you point out their misdeeds and mention the true facts about them it will be something justifiable and you will have done your duty. Instead of using abusive language you should say: ‘O Lord! Protect our faith as well as theirs. Make our reconciliation possible and guide them from ignorance to wisdom so that they may be able to distinguish between truth and falsehood and forsake deviation and rebellion’”.

As was usual with Ali he made his best efforts to avoid bloodshed and bring about reconciliation, but he did not succeed in this task. He kept the door of goodwill and generosity open for quite some time but the Syrians were so muddle-headed that they did not develop the capacity of distinguishing between good and evil.

Ali's companions were surprised to see that he was delaying the commencement of the battle, and was not permitting them to fight. To them he said: ``As regards your asking whether I am delaying the commencement of the battle because I abhor death and want to avoid it, I swear by God that I do not care at all whether I proceed towards death or death proceeds towards me. And similarly as regards your saying that I am doubtful about the justification of jihad against the Syrians, I swear by God that I have not delayed the battle even for one day except for the reason that I thought some of these people might join me and be guided through me and see my light with their dazzled eyes. I prefer this to killing them while they are in a state of ignorance, although, to all intents and purposes they themselves will be responsible for their sins”.

When Ali became sure that the Syrians would not at all come to the right path, and fighting was unavoidable, he took his place between the two armies and said: “O Lord! If I had known that You would be pleased if I placed the point of the sword on my belly and bent over it, and pressed it so hard that it might pierce my body and come out of my back, You are well aware that I would have done so. O God! I know only that which You have taught me. Today I cannot think of anything better than performing jihad against these wicked people. If any other act had been more pleasing to You I would certainly not have refrained from performing it”.

Then he said: “O Lord of the earth which you have made an abode for the human beings and the place for roaming about of the reptiles and the animals and other countless visible and invisible beings! O Master of the solid mountains which you have made as nails for the earth and as the means of life for the creation! If you make us donimate over our enemies guard us from injustice and keep us steadfast on the path of truth, and if you make our enemies victorious, grant us martyrdom and protect us from the temptations of life”.

A little before the battle started Amr ibn al-Aas composed some verses and sent the same to Ali. One of them read as follows:

“O Abul Hasan! Do not remain unbothered about us. When we take a matter in hand we make it absolutely firm".

One of the companions of Ali gave a reply to this in the following words:

“Beware of Abul Hasan who is the lion of the wood of bravery and the father of the lions. He is always wary and extremely vigilant. He will crush you just as something is crushed with a pestle in a mortar. O ignorant man! How foolish you have become that you bite your hands and gnash your teeth!”

Most of the members of the Rabiyya and Mazar tribes were the supporters of Ali. Addressing one another they said: “Woe betide you! Are you not fond of Paradise?” Saying this they attacked the Syrians and dispersed their rows. They killed so many enemies that a considerable reduction in the Syrian army became clearly visible. The entire army was turned topsyturvy. Mahraz bin Saur who belonged to the Rabiyya tribe recited this epic verse:

“I kill the Syrians with my sword, but I do not find Mu`awiya who is squint-eyed and with a big belly. The fire of hell has devoured him. There the barking dogs are his neighbours. He is extremely wicked and misguided”.

The tribesmen of Rabiyya and Mazar were fully convinced that they were supporting truth. One of their poets said:

“The people of Rabiyya tribe hurried post-haste to support truth. Truth is their highway”.

A fierce fighting took place and many persons were killed. Ali attacked them like sudden death; whoever was attacked by him was sent to hell. He was not using the sword, but Fate was using the sword. When he attacked a revolting leader, the latter saw death on his head and ran away with fear. They were extremely terror-stricken.

The Syrians suffered great losses due to the bravery and the firm faith of the Iraqis. The battle lasted for three months and twenty days during which ninety encounters took place. However, the most fierce fighting took place for two weeks. This very fighting is known as the event of Harir. In this battle one hundred and twenty thousand men belonging to both the sides were killed. Those fighting from the two sides were brothers, friends and relatives of one another and they killed their dear and near ones with their own hands. People of Azd tribe said at this juncture: “We are cutting off our hands with our own hands. These persons whom we are killing are our hands and arms”.

During the battle Ali's soldiers reached the tent of Mu`awiya four times and were about to arrest him. When Mu`awiya saw that his defeat was imminent he became very much afraid. He, therefore, decided to run away and ordered a horse to be brought for him. On the other side Ali continued cutting the Syrians to pieces. However, Mu`awiya ordered his soldiers to fight on, hoping that Satan for him and for Amr ibn al-Aas would be able to find a way of safety.

Terrible fighting started again and continued for three days. Historians say that the loss of life during these three days was unparalleled in any battle in the history of Islam. Ibn Qutaiba says that at midnight Ali got a proclamation made in his army for departure. When the sounds of the camels reached Mu`awiya's ears he called Amr ibn al-Aas and enquired from him as to what the matter was. The latter replied: "I think Ali is preparing to quit the field.

However, when the sun rose they saw that Ali had reached quite near them. Mu`awiya then said to Amr: "You told me that Ali was planning to run away but the position is quite the reverse of that". Amr laughed and said: "This was also a part of the war strategy of Ali". Mu`awiya then became sure that his death was imminent. In the meantime, how- ever, the Syrians shouted: "There is the Book of God between you and us".

The Syrians had become very much demoralized and had no competence left to fight. They tied copies of the Qur'an on the spears, ascended a hill and began crying: "O Abul Hasan! Do not reject the Book of God. You are more entitled to act upon it and to obey its judgment". This scheme had been engineered by Amr ibn al-Aas. Ali's companions hated that man very much because he had sold his faith for material gains and had preferred Mu`awiya to Ali.

Ali knew very well that this scheme had been acted upon by the Syrians to save their lives, because otherwise they had nothing to do with the Qur'an. He, therefore, rejected this offer of arbitration but differences appeared between his followers on this point. Some were of the view that as the battle was being fought to ensure obedience to the Book of God and the Syrians were putting forward that very Book to decide the point at issue, their offer might be accepted and fighting stopped forthwith. Others had, however, realized that an effort had been made to deceive them when they were going to be victorious.

They, therefore, insisted that fighting should be continued. None of the two groups was prepared to abandon the stand taken by it.

Ali suffered more troubles at the hands of his friends than at the hands of his enemies. As Jibran Khalil says he was like a Prophet sent for a nation other than his own and during a period other than that to which he belonged, because even his closest companions could not understand him properly. There were always some rough and hot- tempered persons in his army who violated the promises made by them and created trouble. Those who were devoted to him and those who had joined him half-heartedly were alike in this matter. One such person was Ash`ath bin Qais. He was very greedy and treacherous at heart. He betrayed Ali many times but the betrayal committed by him at Siffin was the worst.

When Mu`awiya's soldiers raised the Qur'an on the spears and said that the Book of God was between them, and it should decide the point at issue, this man (i.e. Ash`ath) approached Ali and said: "It appears that these people are ready to agree with the Syrians and to accept the Qur'an as the arbiter. If you agree I may go and see Mu`awiya to find out what his intention is".

At this moment the contention between the two groups of Iraqis (i.e. those who wanted to continue the fighting and those who wanted to stop it) became acute. Ash`ath came to Ali again and insisted that the offer of arbitration by the Qur'an should be accepted. Ali and his companions were not ready to accept the proposal, but gradually the number of Ash`ath's supporters increased and some of them became so bold as to threaten Ali saying: "O Ali! You should respond to decision by the Qur'an to which you are being invited, failing which we will kill you with the same swords with which we killed Uthman, or will surrender you to Mu`awiya. Mu`awiya has asked us to act according to the Book of God and we have agreed to do so. By God you too will have to agree, otherwise we shall deal with you in the manner which we have mentioned already".

Now Ali's position became very critical. There were two alternatives before him – either to act in such a way that a split might take place between his followers or to agree to what the rebels said.

The situation became extremely dangerous when the rebels headed by Ash`ath son of Qais asked Ali to call back Malik Ashtar, the Commander of his army, from the battle– field and threatened him that they would depose and assassinate him if he failed to do so. Ali called back Malik Ashtar from the battlefield reluctantly and accepted the proposal of arbitration under coercion.

Mu`awiya and the Syrians nominated Amr ibn al–Aas as the arbitrator from their side. Ash`ath said to Ali: "We nominate Abu Musa Ash`ari as arbitrator from your side".

Amr ibn al–Aas was a perfect rogue whereas Abu Musa was a mere simpleton – rather a foolish person. Ali knew both of them very well. He, therefore, said: "I don't like Abu Musa Ash`ari. He deserted me at the critical time and prevented the people from helping me. Then he ran away to save his life and it was I who provided him asylum. However, I nominate Ibn Abbas to act as the arbitrator".

Ash`ath and his supporters replied: "We wish the arbitrator to be a person who is neutral and has no inclination either towards you or towards Mu`awiya".

This sentence shows how treacherous these persons had been towards Ali. They were either the agents of Mu`awiya or wanted to help him.

The Commander of the Faithful was not at all willing to nominate Abu Musa as arbitrator. He, therefore, said: "All right. If Ibn Abbas is not acceptable to you, you may nominate Malik Ashtar".

However, the rebels did not agree even to this suggestion. Ash`ath bin Qais was very jealous of Malik Ashtar. Malik Ashtar was an embodiment of truth and since– rity. He was a far–sighted person with firm determination. He was a great warrior. Ash`ath did not, however, possess any of these qualities. It was on account of his extraordinary virtues that Ali had so much regard for Ashtar. He did not have such regard for anyone else including Ash`ath. Ash`ath said furiously: "It is Ashtar who has kindled this fire. It is he under whose orders we have been pressed".

Ali and his friends could not prevail upon the rebels, whose number had increased enormously. Possibly one of the reasons for the stubbornness of those persons was that the battle had lasted too long. They had got tired and were no longer in a mood to fight. It was for this reason that they adopted this attitude towards the Commander of the Faithful and supported Ash`ath. When Ali observed their intransigence and also assessed that the number of his supporters had dwindled he said: “Are you bent upon nominating Abu Musa as the arbitrator?” They replied in the affirmative. Thereupon he said: “When I have no say in the matter you may do whatever you like”.

In the army of Ali those who had not agreed to arbitration and wanted to continue fighting were very much annoyed that any human being might be appointed as the arbiter in the matter of the Book of God. And why should he be appointed when the matter was quite clear? There was no doubt about the fact that Ali was right and Mu`awiya and his supporters were wrong. This was the basis which the battle had been fought against Mu`awiya. In that battle a large number of the supporters of Ali had been killed. All of them believed that they were supporting truth by fighting from the side of Ali. Hence it was wrong for Ali to entertain any doubt himself about his being on the right and to agree to arbitration.

One of the soldiers coined the slogan: “There is no judge but God”. (Later this sentence became the basic slogan of the Kharijites and all their beliefs were contained in it).

This slogan penetrated into the entire army within the shortest possible time. Everyone was shouting: “There is no judge but God”. Those who opposed arbitration made it the basic principle of their new religion.

These persons began to oppose Ali openly and demanded that he should admit his mistake, rather his apostasy, because of his having agreed to arbitration, although the decision rested with God. They also demanded that he should forsake the argreement made by him with Mu`awiya. They added that they would support him and fight against Mu`awiya only if he acceded to their demand and failing that they would fight against him (i.e. against Ali).

The Commander of the Faithful did not accede to their demand. An agreement had already been concluded with Mu`awiya and both the parties had agreed to abide by the word of the arbitrators and he was not the person who might have gone back upon his word. He could also not acknoweldge his apostasy, because he had been the most faithful Muslim throughout and had not violated any religious law or wronged any person. If he had been like Mu`awiya and Amr ibn al-Aas who never cared for any agreements made by them he too would have agreed to the suggestion of the Kharijites, utilized the support offered by them and eventually gained victory over Mu`awiya.

It was in these circumstances that Ali said with much pain, keeping in view his own helplessness and the disobedience and rebellion of the Kharijites:

“O you people on whom dishonest trick was played and who suffered deceit! You, who were duped in spite of being aware of the deception and fraud of the deceiver. You, who remained intransigent,

followed your passions, lost the way and began to wander hither and thither. Truth was fully manifest, but you turned away from it. The path was clear but you abandoned it and went the wrong way. I swear by Him who split the seed and created the soul that had you obtained knowledge from its origin, collected goodness from its proper place, adopted the clear path and traversed the highway of truth, the paths would have welcomed you and the signs of truth would have become clear to you. Then no one would have been victim of indigence and none of the Muslims or non-Muslims would have been oppressed".

The outcome of arbitration is well-known. The Kharijites revolted against the Commander of the Faithful. As was his wont Ali tried his best that those people might forsake rebellion, and fighting should not take place. The Kharijites claimed that Abu Musa and Amr ibn al-Aas had opposed God's orders by acting as arbitrators, and their brothers (i.e. the people of Ali's army) had become infidels by agreeing to arbitration, because they had agreed to the decision by men in the matter of religion. The Kharijites said: "Now we are leaving them and God be thanked that as compared with others we are on the right path"

Was it justified?

In continuation of what has been stated and before giving an account of the Kharijites, it appears necessary to mention two particular events which took place in the Battle of Siffin. We feel that these two incidents are an abundant proof of the fact that Ali successfully achieved his aim, because real success means winning the hearts and not planting one's standard on the fort of the enemy.

We propose to mention these incidents in detail in particular, because many admirers of Ali think that on these two occasions he did not act expediently and treated Mu`awiya and his army in a manner which they did not deserve.

These persons say that if he had not acted on these occasions as he did he could succeed without actual fighting and even if it had been necessary to fight the battle would not have been so bloody and so lengthy.

The first event was the one we have already mentioned in the foregoing pages viz. when Ali obtained control over the bank of the Euphrates he permitted his enemies to utilize the water of the river like his own army, although earlier, when the bank of the river was controlled by the Syrians, they had declined to allow Ali and his companions access to water, and had said, "We won't give you a drop of water until you die of thirst". But Ali beat them off, and after gaining control over the river, left its bank open for the enemy.

Mu`awiya had treated the control of the bank of the river to be his first success and had vowed that he

would not allow the Iraqis to have even a drop of water, unless they gained control over the bank of the river by force. However, after Ali had beaten off the Syrians and occupied the bank of the river he said to them: “You can drink water just as we were drinking it”.

The second event relates to Amr ibn al-Aas who was at one moment at the mercy of Ali during the battle, but he did not kill him. Briefly the story is as follows:

When Ali saw that a fierce battle was in progress and so many persons were being killed, he ascended a mound and said: “O Mu`awiya!” Mu`awiya said: “Yes”. Thereupon Ali said: “Why should these people kill one another unnecessarily for our sake? Leave them alone and come into the battlefield yourself so that we two should decide the matter by combating each other. Whoever is victorious should be the caliph”. Amr ibn al-Aas said to Mu`awiya: “Right it is! Ali has said a just thing”. Mu`awiya laughed and said: “O Amr! You too have become a victim of greed”. He meant to say that if he went to fight with Ali he would certainly be killed, and his death would pave the way for Amr to become the caliph. Amr said: “I swear by God that you can save your honour only if you fight against Ali”. Mu`awiya replied: “By God you are joking. I shall fight with Ali along with my army”. By this he meant that it was not possible to engage with Ali in a single combat.

The historians say that Amr ibn al-Aas said ridiculing Mu`awiya. “It is a pity that you show cowardice in facing Ali and injure the feelings of your well wisher I swear by God that even if I had to die a thousand times I would not have desisted from fighting against Ali”.

Amr came up to fight with Ali. Within the twinkling of an eye Ali attacked him with his spear and down fell the enemy on the ground. Then the sword of the Commander of the Faithful flashed on Amr's head like lightning and Ali was about to kill him, but he (i.e. Amr) became naked. Ali then turned his face and left the place because his inherent modesty and magnanimity did not permit him to glance at the private parts of any person.

Those who admire Ali, and wish that he had been successful, say that on both these occasions he did not act expediently. They are of the view that when he had gained control of the bank of the river he was entitled to deprive the Syrians of water on two accounts:

Firstly it is permissible in war to resort to a strategy which makes the enemy surrender or weakens him so much that he is not in a position to fight effectively. With these things in view Mu`awiya had gained control over the river and had called it his first success.

Secondly Ali had gained control over the bank of the river after fighting, and now it amounted to war booty. According to military laws, therefore, he would have been justified in refusing its use to Mu`awiya and his army.

Similarly, they say that Ali acted inexpediently when he allowed Amr ibn al-Aas to run away and spared his life .Amr was the Commander-in-chief of Mu`awiya's forces, a shrewd political intriguer and Ali's

sworn enemy. He instigated the people to revolt against Ali and mobilized a large army to fight against him. If he had killed him there and then when his Zulfiqar had reached his head he would have been justified in doing so on three accounts.

Firstly, according to military laws, killing Amr would have meant the killing of one of the dangerous brutes of the Syrians. After his death the enemy forces would have been demoralized and would have run away. Mu`awiya would have lost his right hand man and Ali would have killed his most deceitful, cunning, and influential enemy.

Secondly Amr ibn al-Aas belonged to an army which did not owe allegiance to Ali and was inimical towards him and his friends.

Thirdly it was Amr ibn al-Aas who had come to fight with Ali and had challenged him. If he had been as brave as Ali and had got an opportunity to kill him he would certainly not have spared him. That being so if Ali had killed Amr nobody would have blamed him.

In view of the fact that Ali was the Commander of an army and on these two occasions success was at his feet, it was necessary for him not to lose that opportunity, because it is the law of war. The real attribute of a military commander is that he does not lose even the smallest opportunity of winning the war.

From purely military point of view the objection raised by the critics is correct. But the question is: “Was Ali only the Commander of an army?”

What we have said about Ali so far shows clearly that there was not the least double-dealing or contrariety in his personality. Then how could it be possible that on the one hand he should possess virtues of the highest degree and look at things with broad-mindedness and on the other hand he should be so narrow-minded and selfish that he should forsake all the values and principles only to gain victory? The fact is that he did not desire only victory in a war like other commanders but he also safeguarded rational and human principles and had a great regard for human values.

Ali's virtues and moral principles were the concomitants of his personality and he never abandoned them for even a moment. His conduct was the same in the Battle of Siffin as in the Battle of the Camel. His enemies had blocked his way to the bank of the river and had said that they would not allow him to have even one drop of water till he died. But he advised the people in these words:

- “If your brother is displeased with you try to reconcile him by means of goodness, and ward off his mischief by being kind to him”.

- “Overpower your enemy by means of goodness and kindness. Such a victory is more delicious”

- “What is the use of that goodness which is acquired through evil?”

● “The rank of one, who performs jihad and is martyred in the path of God, is not higher than one who does not permit his enemy to be harmed after overpowering him. Such a man is very near to the angels”.

He is the same Ali who had said about his assassin after the Battle of Siffin: “If you forgive him your act will be nearer to virtue”.

Undoubtedly a great personality is not bound by the limits which the admirers of Ali wish to prescribe for him. Ali's qualities were not those of the commander of an army who wants to achieve victory at any cost. During war high morals and human virtues are usually ignored and no importance is attached to human life. The conscience and reason of great and magnanimous persons, however, have a regard for these things. Of course, Ali was too magnanimous a person to deprive even his enemies of water, although by doing so he could bring them to their knees. He had formulated principles for the dignity and honour of human life which were much superior to the prevalent rules and regulations. His modesty and magnanimity could not permit him to kill Amr ibn al-Aas when he was subdued by him although it would have been quite in order to kill him in accordance with the rules of warfare.

By adopting on these two occasions the unique behaviour, Ali added a golden chapter in the history of mankind. Magnanimity is one thing and bravery is another. Magnanimity combines the concept of bravery with noblemindedness and love for mankind. A person in whom all these qualities are combined is supernatural as compared with others, and respectable in the eyes of all who are wise and learned.

If bravery means attacking the enemy and gaining victory over him, magnanimity and manliness means all this as well as fear of God, forbearance, love, kindness and sacrifice. The so-called brave man does not believe in any limit or condition in the matter of victory and wants to overpower the enemy by all possible means. A manly and magnanimous person, however, follows some rules and principles in this matter. He is not happy with his victory unless it is in keeping with morality and human dignity. He prefers to die himself rather than to violate human dignity and honour. And if these qualities were ever combined in any person it was Ali son of Abu Talib.

Could it be possible for Ali to deny to human beings, even if they were his enemies, that water which was being utilized even by animals and birds? Could he tolerate killing a man who wanted to live like all others?
Could Ali like to kill a man, who wanted to live with others, look at the sun and the moon like other human beings, eat bread, and drink water?

Do the admirers of Ali not realize that these two events which occurred at Siffin resemble many others on account of which his critics object to his general policy of government? These critics say that he committed a number of political mistakes.

Firstly he dismissed Mu`awiya from the governorship of Syria immediately upon his becoming caliph although it was necessary for him to have delayed this action till his government was firmly established.

Secondly, he antagonized Talha and Zubayr. If he had maintained good relations with them the Battle of the Camel would not have taken place and his strength would not have diminished. Thirdly, he was very strict with his governors and officers and did not allow them to accumulate wealth by unlawful means, although he should have been lenient towards them so that they might support him.

These very actions of Ali which are criticized by his critics were in our view his best acts and were the outcome of his tender sentiments and good conscience. We think that his critics raise these objections because they judge his actions according to the standards of the time when honesty and integrity had ceased to exist. His actions may be objectionable in the light of the moral standards of the days of Bani Umayyah and Bani Abbas but they are certainly not objectionable when we keep his own time in view.

In the matter of planning and politics Ali was more prudent and wise than even the greatest Arab politicians. He had a deep insight into political and military matters and knew the inner feelings of the people much better than the hypocrites like Mu`awiya. However, he hated political intrigues and opportunism. He despised everything which made man dishonourable. He did not desire any sucess which was achieved by fraud and deceit. He always liked uprightness.

Even when Mu`awiya was notorious for his intrigues and deceit and it was said that Ali was not shrewd like him he said: “I swear by God that Mu`awiya is not cleverer than me but he is treacherous and wicked. If I had not despised treachery I would have been the cleverest man among the Arabs”.

We have briefly discussed the two events of the Battle of Siffin to show that not only the critics of Ali but also his admirers have not been able to understand Ali's personality properly. Some criticize his administration and others say that he did not avail of the opportunity for victory in the Battle of Siffin. In fact both of them have failed to understand Ali fully because in his eyes the origin of the meaning of politics and the rules of warfare was the same or in other words it was the soul of Ali, whose different manifestations were in perfect harmony with one another, and they are the different rings of the same chain. According to him the criterion for goodness and evil, lawfulness and unlawfulness was good conscience and kind manners.

A friend of mine who is a well-read literary man and takes keen interest in the history of Islam said to me once: “You cannot convince me that Ali was well-versed in politics and competent enough to administer the affairs of the people as claimed by you”.

I replied to him: “Suppose that Ibn Muljam had not planned to assassinate Ali, and even if he did he had not succeeded in achieving his object on account of the presence of Ali's friends around him and he had remained alive. And suppose that he had then fought against Mu`awiya, as he had already intended and had gained victory over him, as was very probable. Or suppose that the arbitration scheme of Mu`awiya had failed and Ali's army had not been divided into two groups and he had continued the battle and captured Mu`awiya and Amr ibn al-Aas. In other words the result of this battle had been similar to the Battle of the Camel, and Ali had defeated Mu`awiya as he had defeated Talha and Zubayr. In all these

cases much would have depended on the circumstances or luck.

Then what would you have said about the administration and war strategy of Ali? Then would you not have said like us that in spite of his oratory, wisdom, nobleness and high morality Ali was a cleverer politician than Mu`awiya and more competent to solve the problems than Amr ibn al-Aas. Hence if he did not gain victory over Mu`awiya why should it be said that he was ignorant of politics and war tactics. Why should it not be said that chances were the real cause of his remaining unsuccessful. And what we have said about the politics of Ali in connection with the events of Siffin is equally applicable to the dismissal of Mu`awiya and other governors. Just as his failure in Siffin was due to circumstances in the same way he did not succeed in the case of the dismissal of Mu`awiya and others. The chances of the time, the politics of Uthman and the changed circumstances, provided such weapons of deceit and injustice to the governors as could not be utilized by Ali owing to his magnanimity, nobleness of mind, wisdom, greatness and dignity'.

All persons including the critics and the historians have become habituated to look upon various events and give verdicts about them according to the popular opinion, and assess the competence of great personalities in the light of their successes and failures. They do not keep in view the means used by them nor do they take into account the high morality and base qualities of the opposing parties. It has often happened that the greatest politicians and very efficient persons failed because of chances and sudden occurrences, and ordinary persons succeeded because of those very reasons. Neither the efficient politicians could prevent those occurrences from taking place, nor could the ordinary persons cause them to happen by means of their own strength and will.

In short the admirers of Ali wish that Ali too should have adopted diplomacy and a policy of fraud and deceit and should have consequently been victorious. Ali was not, however, prepared to deviate from truth and righteousness. These people desire that Ali should have become Mu`awiya son of Abu Sufyan, when he was Ali son of Abu Talib, an embodiment of the attributes of the Prophet of Islam.

The divine will

Now we turn to the events which we had discontinued earlier. The group of persons who were annoyed with Ali (i.e. the Kharijites) left Kufa and settled in a nearby village called Harura. For this reason they are also called `Haruriyah'. And as their slogan was ***"La Hakam illallah"*** (There is no judge except God), they are called ***`Muhakkamah'*** as well. However, their most well-known name is Kharijites.

Ali proceeded towards them along with his army. He, however, desired that no bloodshed should take place and they might be made to renew their allegiance to him and forsake their false belief by means of discussion. He, therefore, sent a message to them saying: "Send to me from amongst you the one,

whom you consider to be most intelligent and judicious, so that he may argue with me. If he is able to convince me I shall do as you want me to. Otherwise you should renew your allegiance to me".

The Kharijites sent their leader Abdullah bin al-Kawa as their representative. Long discussions took place between him and the Commander of the Faithful. Ali gave satisfactory and convincing replies to all the questions asked by him. He went back to his friends, informed them about the matters which had come under discussion and told them that Ali had convinced him fully and he (i.e. Ali) was on the right.

The Kharijites, however, remained adamant and did not accept the advice of their leader. They said that as they had already declared Ali to be an infidel it was not possible for them to renew their allegiance to him. They accused Abdullah bin al-Kawa of having shown incompetence in arguing and proving his faith and asked him not to hold any further discussions with him nor disclose to anyone what he had already discussed with him. Thus they continued to be rebellious and inimical towards him and treated him and his companions as infidels and atheists.

Ali was very much grieved to find that his former friends and supporters had become his enemies and were not prepared to listen to reason. They were worldly minded people and were slaves to their carnal desires. He realized that only sword could settle the matters between them and himself. This had become necessary because those people had taken the law into their own hands. They killed those on whom they could lay their hands, and looted and plundered peaceful citizens.

Even then the Commander of the Faithful did not give up advising those people to come to the right path. He also impressed upon his soldiers not to take the initiative in starting the battle. However, the Kharijites suddenly raised their slogan: "There is no judge except God" and attacked Ali's army with full force. Thereupon the Commander of the Faithful and his soldiers also drew their swords and the dreadful Battle of Nahrawan started. When fighting came to an end almost all the Kharijites were killed. Only four hundred persons survived, who had also sustained serious wounds. Had they not been half-dead owing to their wounds it was possible that they too might have died fighting, or would have gained victory. Ali ordered these persons to be dealt with kindness and handed over to their families and tribes, so that they might make arrangements for their proper treatment.

After having dealt with the Kharijites Ali desired to proceed to Syria to punish Mu`awiya. However, this time also Ash`ath bin Qais frustrated his plans by his deceitful activities. He made a large number of soldiers desert the army and hide themselves in adjoining cities. He argued that the soldiers had got tired of fighting for a long time and needed rest. He added that they would rejoin the army after they had taken rest and become fresh.

The Commander of the Faithful returned to Kufa to make preparation for attacking Syria.

Mu`awiya's own army was faithful to him and the Kharijites also helped him unconsciously by fighting against Ali. As regards Ash`ath bin Qais, the historians say that in his heart of hearts he was a supporter and sympathiser of Mu`awiya .Some historians have stated clearly that he went to Damascus, met

Mu`awiya, obtained enormous wealth from him and began awaiting future developments.

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At this stage fate shot an arrow at Ali to which that great man fell victim and thereby his enemies achieved their object. However, this success of his enemies was not the result of their deceit, cleverness, wisdom, strength or prudence. It was a sheer chance and a sudden accident which paved the way for their success. Some fanatical Kharijites assembled at a place and began talking about their friends and kinsmen who were killed in the Battle of Nahrawan. They expressed the view that the responsibility for the bloodshed lay on the shoulders of three persons who were, according to their belief, the leaders of those who had deviated from the right path viz. Ali, Mu`awiya and Amr ibn al-Aas.

One of the Kharijites named Bark son of Abdullah undertook to kill Mu`awiya; another named Amr bin Bakr promised to do away with Amr ibn al-Aas; and a third named Abdur Rahman ibn Muljam took the responsibility of assassinating Ali.

The above-mentioned three Kharijites decided to kill Ali, Mu`awiya, and Amr ibn al-Aas, during one and the same night.

These three persons were very fanatical, revengeful and daring and were prepared to achieve their object at any cost. However, in the case of Abdur Rahman ibn Muljam a strange thing happened which spurred his resolve and made it so firm that even if the other two Kharijites had hesitated in killing Mu`awiya and Amr ibn al-Aas; there was no likelihood of his wavering in the assassination of Ali. It so happened that he came from Mecca to Kufa and stayed there with a friend of his.

There he suddenly met a woman named Qattam daughter of Al-Akhzar who was a matchless beauty of her time, and whose father and brother were killed in the Battle of Nahrawan. Abdur Rahman fell in love with her and proposed to her at once. She asked him as to what dowry he would give her. He told her that he would give her anything she desired. Thereupon she said: “I want you to give me three thousand dirhams, one slave and one slave-girl and also to assassinate Ali son of Abu Talib”. He replied: “It is easy to provide three thousand dirhams, a slave and a slave- girl, but how can I assassinate Ali?” She replied: “Kill him with some trick. If you kill him you will feel satisfied and will also enjoy my company for a long time”.

Before having met Qattam and conversed with her Abdur Rahman ibn Muljam was somewhat shaken in his resolution to assassinate Ali, because in spite of all his meanness it was not an easy task for him to kill the Imam for an offence with which he had no concern. Similarly it was also not easy for him to take a dreadful step, whose result was likely to be extremely dangerous. However, fate willed it that Abdur Rahman ibn Muljam should become confirmed in his resolve and get ready to commit the most heinous crime. Fate took out a new arrow from its quiver and gave it in the hand of ibn Muljam to aim it at the Imam's bosom.

Fate took Abdur Rahman ibn Muljam to his friend's house and also brought Qattam at that place. Then there took place the strange conversation about dowry, about which a poet says:

“I have neither seen in Arabia nor anywhere else any person so generous that he should have given to any woman dowry equal to that of Qattam i.e. three thousand dirhams, one slave, one slave-girl and the assassination of Ali with a sharp sword. Howsoever large a dowry may be it cannot be greater than Ali, and every murder is easier as compared with that of Ali, which was committed by ibn Muljam”.

The conversation of Qattam and ibn Muljam ended with this remark of the latter: “All right. It will be as you wish. I undertake to assassinate Ali”.

The three Kharijites who had plotted against the lives of Ali, Mu`awiya and Amr ibn al-Aas during an appointed night proceeded to their destinations. And then something strange and possibly unprecedented happened, for which none could be held responsible.

The man who had gone to kill Amr ibn al-Aas did not succeed in achieving his end. Perhaps fate had willed that he should not overpower Amr ibn al-Aas. It so happened that during that night Amr became indisposed and this indisposition saved his life. He did not come out of his house either to offer prayers or to perform any other job. He asked the police-officer of the city named Kharija ibn Huzafa to lead the dawn prayers in his place. When the police-officer came out of the house Amr bin Bakr took him for Amr ibn al-Aas and killed him.

When Amr bin Bakr was captured and taken before Amr ibn al-Aas the latter said to him: “You wanted to kill me but God willed that Kharija should be killed”. Then he ordered Amr bin Bakr to be beheaded.

When Mu`awiya came to the masjid and Bark bin Abdullah saw him he aimed his sword at his head, but the sword actually struck his buttocks and the attack proved to be abortive. Mu`awiya's buttocks served as his shield and his life was saved.

Let them mourn

A stranger is sitting in a corner of the world, away from the people, in a state of extreme anguish. He is sitting alone and his loneliness weighs heavily on him.

He is a stranger although he is living among his people, but he is extremely grieved on account of them. Time did not recognize him, although he had pervaded it.

The earth did not recognize him, although his sweet and wise sayings continued to ring in it and it saw with its own eyes his great feats.

This stranger used to spend everything he possessed on others but did not seek anything from them. He was subjected to great oppressions, but he never thought of taking revenge. He forgave his enemies after gaining victory over them. He never did any injustice to his enemies and never performed any unlawful act for the sake of his friends. He was the helper of the weak, the brother of the indigent, the father of the orphans and a kind friend of those who were fed up with their lives. They always approached him for the solution of their problems and hoped sympathy from him in all difficulties.

He was erudite, and was extremely forbearing. However, his heart was full of grief. His majesty and loftiness were resounding in all the mountains and deserts. He cut off the heads of big giants but was himself overcome by love and kindness. During daytime he administered justice and enforced the divine laws and in the darkness of night he wept bitterly for the sake of the indigent and the helpless.

He was a stranger whose thundering voice made the oppressors tremble as and when any oppressed person approached him with a complaint. Whenever a man complained to him his sword flashed like lightning and consumed the darkness of the deceitful. Whenever a deprived person called him, love and kindness began to flaw from his heart which quenched the thirst of everything dry and famine stricken.

He was a stranger on the face of the earth whose every word was true and correct. He wore coarse dress and walked meekly and whenever the people went downwards he kept his face high. He was a stranger and a lovely person who suffered all sorts of hardships so that the people might remain happy.

Who was this unique and brave stranger who knew everything and kept his eyes towards all sides? Who was he who sought the welfare of the people in this world as well as in the hereafter although they always grieved and harmed him?

Who was this unique and angelic person whose enemies denied his virtues on account of their envy and avarice and whose friends deserted him on account of fear? He fought alone against corruption and destruction. His behaviour towards the people was constantly based on truth and sincerity. He was never enamoured of victory and was never disheartened by defeat. He was an embodiment of truth and never cared for anything other than truth, whether some persons denied his virtues and some others feared him.

Who could this unique person be except Ali, the vexed and distressed Commander of the Faithful with whose blood a wicked and impure man was going to besmear his hands so that it might serve as dowry for an impure and wicked woman?

It was a dark and terrible night. The sky was overcast. At times the lightning flashed and spread light on all sides.

The eagles were sitting in their nests with their heads cast down, because on the following day their feathers were going to fall and they were to go in mourning for the chief of the world.

The Imam was awake and his eyes were sleepless, because the people were groaning on account of oppression; some people indulged in luxuries and were ready to revolt. The powerful people were extremely tyrannical towards the weaker ones. His enemies in collusion with one another were creating mischief and planning to revolt. Among them there were some evil-doers who professed love for one another.

Some of his own followers had also forsaken truth and refrained from helping one another. All this was very painful to Ali. That night he reviewed his entire past life. He recollected that from his very boyhood his sword had made the Quraysh tremble and he did his best to spread Islam. His people considered his activities to be childish, but he remained steadfast and rendered all possible assistance to the Prophet to make his mission a success.

He also remembered the night of migration when he slept in the bed of the Prophet under the shadow of the swords of the Quraysh with the hope that Abu Sufyan and other polytheists would be mistaken and would not be able to do any harm to the Prophet.

He remembered the battles in which he defended the Prophet and Islam against the enemies. He could visualize the infidels scattering like the locusts which are scattered by a dust storm. He visualized the Prophet embracing him with ardent love and saying: “This is my brother”.

He remembered the time when the Prophet came to his house one day while he was asleep. Fatima wanted to awaken him but the Prophet said: “Let him sleep, because after me he will be deprived of sleep for a long time”. And thereupon Fatima wept bitterly.

He recollected the time when the Prophet had said: “O Ali! God has adorned you in the best manner. He has endowed you with the love for the poor and the helpless. They will be happy to make you their Imam and you will be pleased to see them as your followers”.

He also remembered the time when the Prophet cast this last look on his face and then breathed his last. He as well recollected the grief of Fatima which made her pass away forty days after the death of her father.

He also recollected the faces of the companions of the Prophet who used to say: “During the time of the Prophet we could identify the hyprocrites because of their enmity with Ali”.

The Prophet had said not once but many times: “O Ali! Only a hypocrite will be inimical towards you”.

At this moment he recollected his comrades who had performed jihad along with him during the lifetime of the Prophet. They were united, helped one another, and had maintained the ties of brotherhood. But later, during his own time, some of them joined him whereas others opposed him. Some who had wished to become rulers or to acquire worldly gains had died and others were still alive. Those noble-minded companions who were determined to promote truth and justice (May God bless them!) were

strangers in this world. They laid down their lives in the path of justice and fidelity and the oppression of the enemies buried them in the depths of the earth.

One of them was Abu Dharr Ghifari – the distinguished companion of the Prophet who could not tolerate that human life should be insulted and, therefore, stood up to oppose oppression and injustice. He was a great man who had no friend left on account of his truthfulness except Ali and who met a very tragic end. Ali recollected the time when Abu Dharr was in the presence of the Prophet wearing a worn–out cloak and placed himself at the disposal of the Prophet for any service whatsoever. From that time onwards he remained a staunch supporter of truth, so much so that during the time of Uthman he opened a campaign against Bani Umayyah in support of the oppressed and the helpless.

As a consequence of this he was exiled by Marwan and Uthman to a barren place called Rabazah, where his children met death before his very eyes. His wife was herself seeing them dying and was praying that she might die before Abu Dharr so that she might not survive after him, for otherwise it would be her double death. Abu Dharr died of hunger, whereas Bani Umayyah had the entire wealth of the earth at their disposal. He also remembered his pious and faithful brother Ammar Yasir who was martyred during a similar night a few days earlier by a rebellious and oppressive group in the Battle of Siffin.

Yes! Where were those faithful brothers of Ali who were the followers of the right path – those who neither indulged in idle talk, nor slandered anyone nor practised fraud and deceit? All those righteous men had departed from the world one after the other and only Ali was left to fight a fierce and dreadful battle against the oppressive and wicked persons. If God had granted victory to Ali over the rebels he would have put an end to rebellion and dealt with the rebels in an appropriate manner.

It was a battle in which truth was alone on one side although previously it had many supporters.

It was a battle in which he was opposed by the people whose children were misguided, whose young men were murderers and whose old ones were not used to order others to do good and prevent them from doing evil. They feared only that person, whose tongue could do them harm and respected only him from whom they hope to get something. If he had let them go their way they would not have left him, and if he had pursued them they would have attacked him all of a sudden. They were companions in perversion and slandered one another when they separated.

The battle which Ali was forced to fight against his will was like the wave of a sea which does not care whether a person gets drowned or not, or like a flame of fire which burns anything and reduces it to ashes.

It was a battle between Ali, who wished others to enjoy the bounties of the world, and those persons who wanted to eject their subjects from the fertile lands and throw them into barren deserts and scorching wind.

Oh! What a life Ali led! His life was spent either in performing jihad or in suffering hardships.

Oh! How noble and righteous persons there were in the world! They passed away one after the other and left Ali alone. After their departure the world was filled with tyranny and injustice.

This unique stranger visualized the following day, whose darkness would last longer than the darkness of the nights of the indigent, and which would be colder than the conscience of those who are unfaithful to their promises. It would tread heavily on the unfortunate only. The following day on which those persons who would become the rulers by deceitful means would not attach any importance to their subjects. Only the flatterers, slanderers and mischief-mongers would gain the favour of those rulers. That will be the day on which the unjust and cruel persons would be made the chiefs and only those persons, who are base and shameless, would lead a peaceful life.

Ali was visualizing the state of affairs on the next day with his heart and intellect. It was going to be a very sad day. After that night none of the persons in position would prefer truth to falsehood, if falsehood was more profitable to him. After that night there would be no ruler who should be like a father to the people and should love truth in spite of all the hardships which he might suffer leaving all the pleasures emanating from falsehood.

After that night there would exist no such heart and intellect as treats the people justly and follows truth even though the mountains tremble and the earth splits.

Alas! The following is the day when an ignorant person was going to commit the most heinous crime till a boastful tyrant king would come to rule, and the noble man was going to meet death and destruction while fighting against the injustice of the tyrants.

The Commander of the Faithful drew his hand on his beard and kept weeping for a long time.

He looked towards the sky and saw in that dark night the patches of the clouds and the stars which were reflecting light on the palaces of the capitalists and the huts of the poor alike, and were hiding the corruption and mischief of the wicked as well as the afflictions of the righteous. He looked at the world and addressing himself to it said: “O world! Deceive someone else and not me”.

The time passed on and the night grew darker and darker. Ali felt himself alone in the world. What a lonely, dreadful and strange place the world is!

He went to sleep for a short while with all the remembrances fresh in his mind. While sleeping he had a dream in which he saw the Prophet and said to him: “O Prophet of God! I have suffered much at the hands of your followers and have had to face acute opposition from them”. The Prophet said: “Call down curses upon them”. Ali said: “O Lord! Provide me better companions than these people and impose on them, in my place, the worst ruler”.

When it was dawn light air was blowing and the sky was shedding tears. Ali ibn Abi Talib proceeded to

the mosque slowly as if his feet were conversing with the earth and telling it the story of those gloomy moments. The birds were also grieved. He had not yet reached the courtyard of the mosque when the ducks ran towards him and began to cry. Simultaneously with them the cold morning winds also began to moan.

Those who had come to offer their prayers stepped forward and tried to turn away the ducks. However, they neither went away nor stopped crying.

Similarly the wind also continued producing a rustling sound. It would appear that the ducks and the wind had already come to know that the Commander of the Faithful was procceeding towards his last calamity.

The Commander of the Faithful heard the cries of the ducks very attentively and then turning to the people said: “Do not turn them away, for they are mourning”.

With these words the Commander of the Faithful foretold the impending calamity which was to befall him.

Why should these ducks not have mourned? Why were the people endeavouring to prevent them from crying? And why should the Commander of the Faithful not have looked upon them with love and affection? He had already seen thousands of mornings but this morning carried in its bosom a secret, which other mornings did not. On that day he was feeling something which he had never felt before. Was this great man not entitled to hear his elegy in the form of the cries of the ducks and the moaning of the winds? Did he not possess the right to say good bye to the sun and the shadow which he was not likely to see again?

Was he not entitled to cast his last look on the places, where he lived a life of indigence to make others well-to-do? These places had seen many sights of his bravery and courage, manifestations of his awe-inspiring personality, and many a hard suffering and tribulation which he had to bear. They had also seen the long long nights which he passed weeping in submission to God.

If the inhabitants of the world had stuck to truth and justice he would not have felt sad on leaving its days and nights. What pained him was that the world had become overfilled with wicked and treacherous people.

The world was groaning under the pressure of those people and its inhabitants had fallen prey to despair. The deprived persons in Iraq, Hijaz and Syria were leading very burdensome lives. The hypocrites were making immense profits.

Of course, the world had lost nothing if it had allowed Ali to take one or two more steps to bring about a change in the state of affairs then prevailing. Unfortunately the world does not like that a change should he brought about in the prevailing conditions.

This great person possessing a celestial soul felt that his feet were making him proceed on a long journey. He stopped at the gate of the mosque for a short while and looked at the mourning ducks. Then he turned to the men who were standing at a distance from him and uttered this sentence a number of times: “Do not turn them away, for they are mourning”.

Ali arrived in the mosque and prostrated himself before the Almighty God. Abdur Rahman ibn Muljam also entered the mosque carrying with him a sword with a poisoned blade. He dealt such a blow on the head of the Imam that, as said by him (ibn Muljam) if it had been dealt on the heads of all the residents of the city, none of them would have survived. May the malicious criminal be subjected to divine vengeance and may the curse of God and of all His creatures befall him! May he suffer the severest torture in Hell!

Violent winds began to blow and everything turned topsy– turvy. Dust storms rose from all sides and caused a havoc. The bright day became dark like a moonless night. It was a terrible sight. The birds wept and the trees trembled. The followers and admirers of Ali were shocked and burst into tears. The lovers of truth and justice will continue to weep over this tragedy till the Day of Judgment.

Everything in the world became broken–hearted and sad except the face of Ali which was perfectly cheerful. He did not express any desire for revenge nor did he express any anger. The people were gathered at the gate of his house with extremely sad faces and were praying to God for his speedy recovery. They attacked Abdur Rahman ihn Muljam and captured him. When he was brought before the Commander of the Faithful he said: “Give him good food and a soft bed”.

However, the cheerfulness of his face was more saddening than all the calamities of the world. At that time his face resembled the face of Socrates when the ignorant and stupid people made him drink a cup of poison. It resembled the face of Jesus Christ when the Jews scourged him. It resembled the face of the Prophet of Islam Muhammad when the ignorant persons of Taif showered stones at him and did not know that they were stoning the greatest human being ever born.

The best physicians of Kufa were called for the treatment of the Imam. Athir bin Amr bin Hani who was the most proficient among them examined very carefully the wound on Ali's forehead and said with extreme grief and despair: “O Commander of the Faithful! You had better make a will whatever you wish to, because the blow dealt by ibn Muljam has penetrated into your brain.

The Imam was not offended by the physician's remark nor did he utter any word of complaint. He resigned himself to the will of God.

Ali called his sons Hasan and Husayn and made some recommendations to them. He also insisted upon them that they should not cause any disturbance nor resort to bloodshed on account of his assassination. As regards the assassin he said: “If you forgive him it will be nearer to piety”.

Some of the recommendations made by Ali to his sons Hasan and Husayn were as follows:

● I put you on an oath in the name of God that you shall have regard for your neighbours.

● I administer to you an oath in the name of God that you shall take care of the needy and the indigent and make them share your sustenance and income. And as ordered by God you shall talk mildly with everyone and say something good whenever you speak and shall not abandon ordering others to do good and restraining them from doing evil.

● It is your duty to have good and kind relations among yourselves. You should behave informally and observe simplicity. You should neither sever relations with one another nor live separately.

After a short time he turned to the people and said: “Till yesterday I was your ruler, today I am the means of your taking a lesson from me, and tomorrow I shall leave you. May God forgive all of us!”

Ali received a wound on his head on Friday morning. After that he spent two days in great agony, but he did not complain of pain or inconvenience. He continued to seek God's assistance and to recommend to the people to do good to the needy and the helpless. He breathed his last during the night of the 21st of Ramazan 40 A.H.

That great and unique man, who suffered at the hands of his enemies as well as his friends, passed away. It was that magnanimous person who was a martyr during his life-time and the father of the martyrs at the time of his death.

The martyr of the path of steadfastness, uprightness and sympathy, was dead. The martyr of purity and magnanimity, who never showed the least laxity in the matter of truth and sincerity, departed from the world.

That great man passed away. It is very unfortunate that he did not get an opportunity to establish a government which might have served as a model for the future governments, and the common people might have led peaceful lives with the blessing of his name, and subjected the mischief-mongers to humiliation and disgrace.

He left the world and left behind a family every member of which met martyrdom in the path of truth. He left behind his grief-stricken daughter Zainab to bear hardships and the people of the world behaved towards her with unprecedented cruelty and meanness. He left behind Hasan and Husayn to the tender mercies of his sworn enemies like the son of Abu Sufyan and others.

The first period of conspiracies against Ali and his children came to an end. It was followed by many other periods which were replete with more dreadful and severe hardships for them.

Consequent upon the martyrdom of the Commander of the Faithful the lofty palaces shone like mirages in barren deserts. The water springs became dry. The fields became waste lands. The government of the rebellious and the deceitful got strengthened. Those persons, who considered treachery and deceit to be permissible for a ruler, became active immediately after Ali's martyrdom. How sinister are the

governments whose foundations are laid on the assassination of those who are entitled to reverence!

What a great disappointment the admirers of Ali must have felt owing to the calamity which befell them as a result of his tragic assassination. How grieved the righteous persons must have been for a long time on account of this dreadful event. What a great calamity, for it was due to it that the whole of Arabia remained a theatre of disturbances and corruption for centuries. How great was the grief which continued to increase and became firmly-rooted with the lapse of time and eventually destroyed the power of the tyrant rulers and their supporters. Of what use was the government which was founded on the tears which the oppressed and helpless were shedding to mourn the assassination of Ali son of Abu Talib?

Ali used to console the people. He was kind to the needy and the helpless like a father. The entire wealth of the world and all its treasures could not equal the lace of his shoe. All the oppressive caliphs and their wealth are simply farcical in the face of a sentence of Nahj al-Balaghah and the views that he has expressed in it. They are worthless even before a drop of his tear.

That great and magnanimous person passed away and those who considered themselves to be great without any justification remained behind. One man died and was honoured, and a nation remained alive and proved to be mean and despicable.

The Imam left his enemies alive in the world, but their life was as good as destruction.

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