

Published on Al-Islam.org (https://www.al-islam.org)

Home > A Victim Lost In Saqifah - Revised Edition with Comprehensive Additions > A Victim Lost in Saqifah Vol. 4: Allegiance (Bay'at) of Amirul Momineen Ali ('a) to Caliphs - contamination of Shia belief in Imamate > Discourse 1: Absence Of Ali's Approval To Abu Bakr's Caliphate > Conditions Of Achieving Bay'at

Discourse 1: Absence Of Ali's Approval To Abu Bakr's Caliphate

There is no doubt that if Abu Bakr' Caliphate had been legitimate in the view of His Eminence, Ali in any of these aspects – legitimacy, popularity, entity – he would have never refrained from paying allegiance and would have never tried to overthrow it through armed uprising. So the fact is that there was no approval at all from the side of Ali ('a).1

Historical Documents

Moosa bin Uqbah (d. 141) narrates from Ibn Shuhab Zuhri:

"Some Muhajireen were enraged about the allegiance of Abu Bakr, among them were Ali and Zubair...and they had weapons with them." 2

Ibn Mitham Bahrani (d. 679) narrates from the book, Waqatus Siffeen by Nasr bin Muzahim Minqari (d. 212) that Ali said:

"Had I found forty men of determination I would have fought."3

Ibn Abil Hadeed Motazalli (d. 656) also has narrated the same words of Ali:

"Had I found forty men of determination!"4

After quoting these words in Wagatus Siffeen he writes:

"A large number of biographers have quoted this statement."5

In the same way in his book he has quoted the text of letter Muawiyah had written to Ali in which he has

quoted this statement of His Eminence, Ali ('a):

"Had I forty men of determination I would have fought them."

The firm determination of Amirul Momineen ('a) to have an armed uprising was that when – due to some exigencies6 – he became hopeless and confined himself to his house he remarked as follows:

"If I had not feared discord among Muslims and their going back to infidelity and not worried about the destruction of the religion of Islam, I would have behaved with them in a different manner."7

"And by Allah! If there had been no risk of discord among Muslims as a result of which they would have reverted to infidelity, we would have in every possible way tried to bring down the regime."8

According to Shia sources the dissatisfaction of Amirul Momineen ('a) was to such an extent that he did not accept it for even a moment; so how can it be possible that he gave allegiance to Abu Bakr?

Thus he said:

"By God, if I had the number of supporters that Talut had or supporters the Prophet had in battle of Badr, and they were inimical to you – I would have fought you with sword till you returned to truth. The separation among you would have suited you best and most befitting to you.

O God judge between us with truth and You are the best of judges.

The narrator says: Then he left the mosque and passed through Baseer where around thirty sheep were there. He pointed to the sheep and said: By God, if I had men of this number of sheep, sincere and true to God and His Prophet, I would have overthrown him from power.

By nightfall, three hundred and sixty persons gathered around him and pledged their support to him until death.

Ali asked them to come the next day to Ahjaaris Zait<u>10</u> with their heads shaved. Ali shaved his head. Among those three hundred and sixty came none except Abu Dharr, Miqdad, Huzaifa bin Yamani, Ammar bin Yasir and Salman.

Then Ali raised his hands towards the sky and said:

If a covenant had not been taken from me by the Prophet I would have drowned the opponents in the gulf of their ambitions and brought down upon their heads fatal destructive lightning of death. Of course they will come to know soon."11

Conclusion

Says Ibn Maytham Bahrani (d. 679):

"The event of Saqifah, occurrence of differences between companions and Ali's refusal to pay allegiance is an evident fact which can neither be denied nor concealed. It is from here that eternal differences and rivalry among them followed. The truth is that rivalry remained fixed and alive between Ali and he that seized the Caliphate in his time. The tyranny that resulted is open and clear. It remains at constancy and morally it declares what happened." 12

Therefore, it can be said:

Sayings and behavior of Ali towards Abu Bakr's Caliphate indicate his harsh and serious opposition. This open opposition they claim to be his acceptance and approval of Abu Bakr's Caliphate.

Ali's strong resistance and refusal to pay allegiance to Abu Bakr finally resulted in those atrocities. The armed attack on house of Divine Revelation, then their entrance into the House, the insults on Zahra, the only daughter of the

Prophet, then beatings and physical hurt committed against her, then the miscarriage of her unborn child, Mohsin – what all this represents...?

Even when Amirul Momineen ('a) was disappointed of the possibility of armed uprising and possibility of overthrowing the tyrant rule of Abu Bakr, he still did not accept the validity of Abu Bakr's regime.

It is natural that such denial can never be construed as his approval to Abu Bakr's Caliphate in any of the aspects we have stated above.

On the basis of this it can be said:

Amirul Momineen ('a) neither approved Abu Bakr's Caliphate nor he accepted it.

As a result:

Abu Bakr's Caliphate, in his view, was illegal and usurped because it did not belong to him. Caliphate was his right according to Prophet's declaration in Ghadeer. It was usurpation. It was not only illegitimate but even short of popularity and identity.

What Is The Meaning Of Silence?

As mentioned in first chapter of second volume of this book, Amirul Momineen ('a) due some exigencies, some of which we listed, changed his stance from planning an armed uprising into sitting quiet at home.

In other words, he became obliged to undergo those sore and bitter conditions prevalent at that time, such as:

A) To forego the armed uprising against Abu Bakr's Caliphate and to ignore any preparations in that

regard.

- B) To avoid campaigning seriously and abstain from disclosing any confidential matters.
- C) To let go without opposition anything having a bearing on Abu Bakr's Caliphate, or anything in relation to it.

While enduring these things was so hard that in his own words it was: "...a thorn in my eyes and a bone in my throat..." 13

It was bitter and painful.

On the basis of this requirement of the above matter, absence of confronting the rulers which is described as silence can in no way be interpreted to be approval of Abu Bakr's Caliphate in any of its aspects: legitimacy, popularity or factuality.

In the same way 'acceptance of silence and giving up of armed uprising' has no relation and necessity of his taking steps to his paying allegiance to Abu Bakr, though his silence is wrongly interpreted and it is claimed:

"Ali saw himself more deserving to Caliphate, but for the sake of the interests of Muslims he did Bay'at with Abu Bakr." 14

Now it should be asked:

At what time, at which ground and under what conditions it took place.

Can such acceptance fulfill the necessary requirement of granting legitimacy to the ruler?

Or because of difference between the meaning of silence and paying allegiance does there exist any bearing between the two? The sense and the application of the word "acknowledgment" or "paying allegiance" in such expressions is wrong.

What is the Meaning of Allegiance?

In order to understand the meaning of Bay'at (that is the matter they claim to have occurred between Ali and Abu Bakr) and to know why the regime was so much concerned about getting the Bay'at of Amirul Momineen ('a) let us study the following to get a compendious sense and a concise description of this word:

Ibn Khaldun (d. 808) writes in his book Mugaddima:

"To pay allegiance (Bay'at in Arabic) means a covenant, a fact that commits one to be obedient to the other. One who enters into Bay'at with the other (or an Amir, a master) surrenders to his view in relation

to himself and Muslims. He has no say in affairs concerning him or others. In short, one resigns to other. This is the sense of Bay'at. After accomplishment of Bay'at, he must be resigned irrespective of his willingness or otherwise.

It was customary at the time of Bay'at that one laid his hand into the hand of Amir or Lord as a token of his submission to him.

This is the general sense and common meaning in religion and common parlance." 15

In the light of this and other several similar descriptions it can be said:

A) Individuals indicate obedience to one another by means of their actions and conduct. They show their resignation to his orders and authority which is called Bay'at.

Bay'at with Caliph means acknowledgement to his being a Caliph and obedience to his orders. This indicates acceptance of his Caliphate and rule.

- B) Through Bay'at people leave their possibilities, properties and their social interests at the disposal of their leader or Imam or Caliph. By this means and method the leadership or Caliphate is established in society and attains a ground for its legitimacy. Those who enter into Bay'at are committed to honor the choice and opinion of the Bay'at taker.
- C) Through their Bay'at people are committed to be loyal and devoted to the Bay'at-taker. They also are committed to provide possibilities to strengthen the stand of government and make its foundation stronger. All these activities are reflected in theirBay'at to the Caliph.

Conclusion

Bay'at is an act by which one's support, consent to obedience, commitment of loyalty and sincerity and acceptance of his (the Bay'at-taker) power or office is expressed.

It is a means through which people display their approval and acknowledgement to the aforesaid items. It is a formal declaration.

Reminder

- A) Those who believe in Ali's Bay'at to Abu Bakr either do not speak with knowledge or use the word in its dictionary meaning to convey the above connotation.
- B) There is a great difference in the meaning of silence and abandoning armed uprising. It is absolutely wrong as it is not possible at all to use the word Bay'at even for the sake of reference.

In other words, the term Bay'at carries a particular sense it cannot be used in places which do not fit its sense or do not fall within its range. The word silence is interpreted in a sense of Bay'at and then the

very word of Bay'at is attributed to Ali that he performed Bay'at with Abu Bakr because he had maintained a long silence.

Comparison Of Silence To Bay'at

Three aspects of the topics:

- A) Imam Ali's ('a) untiring efforts to overthrow Abu Bakr's Caliphate; his belief in overthrowing the regime even after his getting disappointed that it would be fruitful and beneficial. Though he gave up hope of armed uprising he continued his efforts.
- B) Imam Ali's ('a) adamancy in his denial to give Bay'at to Abu Bakr until (according to Sunnis) firewood was gathered and Zahra's house was set afire.
- C) The accurate interpretation of Ali's social and political stand that is regarded as silence:

What was forced upon Ali ('a) can be sketched as follows:

- 1 Absence of effective efforts to have armed uprising against Abu Bakr's Caliphate and his ignoring it. Since no necessary ground was available to him he had to accept this situation.
- 2 He had to forsake stiff opposition and tough steps because of their evil results and unsuitable conditions.
- 3 Absence of opposition from all sides to orders of the Caliph and all acts of the regime as a result of bad consequences and unfavorable conditions because of no general support or lack of consent of the society.

So it is clear how difficult it was to undergo such conditions in spite of one's unwillingness. This is termed as silence with regard to Imam Ali's ('a) political and social stands. He (Ali) adopted this policy; and this policy had no bearing on his Bay'at or no relation to it that it be construed as Bay'at to Abu Bakr. This silence did not bind Ali to give Bay'at to Abu Bakr.

Far before these developments, 16 His Eminence ('a) had occupied himself in collecting verses and chapters of Quran in his house. He had been disappointed of any possibility of bringing the downfall of illegitimate rule. The main setback was state of society, which was not yet ripe to foresee the dangers in store if the people betrayed him.

It is obvious that to yield to such conditions and arrange thereon the political and social stands of his own should not create any obligation to give his acceptance and approval to Abu Bakr's Caliphate. Or that it could be used to prove that the Bay'at really took place.

Mere occurrence of something cannot be a proof of its legitimacy. To prove the establishment of Abu

Bakr's regime cannot be a proof that he had the allegiance of Amirul Momineen ('a). Neither can his silence be construed as approval.

To accept a factual happening does not denote one is in agreement to it. So, Ali's silence does not call for Bay'at.

Conditions Of Achieving Bay'at

"Placing ones hand into that of other in Arab parlance is completion of a transaction."

But in Islam it is a sign of a covenant which means acknowledgement to one's authority or superiority. It represents obedience of Bay'at giver to Bay'at taker and his submission to him.

The analysis of the word Bay'at in the days of the Prophet shows that it was based on three points:

- 1 The Bay'at giver
- 2 The Bay'at taker
- 3 Commitment of obedience to rules of Bay'at

According to this order, the object of Bay'at must be clearly known and conceived because its performance is committed.

So according to traditions of Prophet, as a token of acceptance one puts his hand into the hand of Bay'at taker. Thus Bay'at is concluded.

So Bay'at takes to it a religious feature 17 and becomes a religious term.

But these days most Muslims do not know the conditions of getting Bay'at on religious basis in Islam. Therefore it is incumbent to explain that:

In Islam Bay'at is sought when the following three conditions exist:

- 1 The Bay'at giver should have fitness and eligibility of Bay'at. He must be free and independent.
- 2 The Bay'at taker should have fitness and eligibility to take Bay'at from him.
- 3 Bay'at must be for a legitimate object and aim.

On the basis of this:

Bay'at must be concluded on the basis of willingness and inclination. Bay'at loses its authenticity and characteristic if it is obtained by force.

As such, if it is performed under coercion or tyranny it is illegitimate and invalid.

Bay'at is wrong and invalid if concluded with one who is a known sinner or if Bay'at will lead to disobedience to God or to commit a sinful act. In all these cases it has no validity.

So Bay'at is an Islamic term and Islam has framed its rules and regulations.

The above can be summed up as follows:

Bay'at in Arabic means giving hand into the hand of another as a token of completion of a transaction. In Islam it means that the Bay'at giver shall endeavor to perform obligations to the interest of Bay'at obtainer. If relative conditions do not exist, Islamic Bay'at cannot be accomplished.

Conditions of Bay'at are:

- 1 Bay'at of a mad or an immature is not valid.
- 2 Bay'at obtained by force and from an acknowledged sinner is not correct.
- 3 Bay'at to perform things, which go against religion, is of no value.

Bay'at in the light of above is like a business deal. It takes place with mutual consent and agreement. It loses its strength if obtained by force or fraud.

Likewise, Bay'at could not be performed for sin or disobedience to God. Bay'at cannot be done with an open sinner." 18

Imam Ali ('a) on this basis has said:

"My Bay'at to them did not constitute any right for them as they had no right to take Bay'at and it does not represent my willingness or consent to them." 19

So according to the words of Ali, his Bay'at to Abu Bakr had no validity.

To understand still more accurately the above words we shall scrutinize historical documents related to their demand from Ali to give Bay'at. Then we shall see the result against the conditions of obtaining Bay'at.

- 1. With this aim His Eminence Ali ('a) accompanied by Hazrat Zahra (s.a.) went door to door of Ansaar.

 Refer: Ibn Qutaibah: Al-Imamah was-Siyasah, Vol. 1, Pg. 29; Ibn Abil Hadeed: Sharh Nahjul Balagha, Vol. 6, Pg. 13 & Vol. 2, Pg. 47.
- 2. Ibn Mitham Bahrani: Sharh Nahjul Balagha, Vol. 2, Pgs. 26-27.
- 3. Ibn Abil Hadeed: Sharh Nahjul Balagha, Vol. 2, Pg. 22.
- 4. The text mentioned by Ibn Abil Hadeed is as follows: Ali said: I have no supporter except my own family members. I feared their death. Ali always used to say particularly after the death of the Prophet: Alas, if I had forty men of determination! This is mentioned by Nasr bin Muzahim in his book Waqatus Siffeen. Most biographers too have mentioned

this. It is clear in the text of Ibn Abil Hadeed that the last part of His book, Maghazi has not reached us; but some narrators have quoted from it like: Kalai Andalusi (died 634): Al-Iktifa, Vol. 2, Pg. 446; Mohib Tabari (died 694): Riyadh an-Nazarah, Vol. 1, Pg. 241; Dayar Bakri: (died 982): Tarikh Khamees, Vol. 2, Pg. 169 the sentence is missing. So it is not known what Ali would have done had he got forty men of determination. This text reads in the writing of Abdul Salam Muhammad Haroon: Alas, if I had forty men '... then Ali said some other matter. So, here to the sentence is incomplete. (Mingari: Wagatus Siffeen, Pg. 163)

- 5. Ibn Abil Hadeed: Sharh Nahjul Balagha, Vol. 2, Pg. 47 This letter was written by Muawiyah to His Eminence, Ali ('a).
- <u>6.</u> Imam Muhammad Baqir ('a) explained this matters in a way that there was nothing restraining Amirul Momineen ('a) from mobilizing people against Abu Bakr except that he feared they would revert to their ignorance and apostize from Islam. (Thiqatul Islam Kulaini: Kafi, Vol. 8, Pg. 295; Shaykh Tusi: Amali, Pg. 230).
- 7. Ibn Abil Hadeed: Sharh Nahjul Balagha, Vol. 1, Pg. 307.
- 8. Shaykh Mufeed: Al-Jamal, Pg. 437.
- 9. A shed for keeping cattle and sheep.
- 10. A locality in Medina.
- 11. Thiqatul Islam Kulaini: Kafi, Vol. 8, Pgs. 32-33.
- 12. Ibn Mitham Bahrani: Sharh Nahjul Balagha, Vol. 1, Pg. 252.
- 13. "So I adopted patience although there was pricking in the eye and suffocation (of mortification) in the throat." (Sayyid Razi: Nahjul Balagha, Shigshiqya Sermon).
- 14. Muhammad Hadi Marefat: Zahidan Daily, Issue No. 12, Mehr 1382.
- 15. Abdur Rahman Khaldun: Muqaddimah (Translated by Muhammad Parvin Gunabadi), Vol. 1, Pg. 400.
- 16. Refer: Shaykh Abduz Zahra Mahdi: Al-Hujoom Alaa Bait-e-Fatima, Pgs. 482-488.
- <u>17.</u> Religious terminology (Allamah Al-Askari: Outlooks of two schools about sources of Islamic legislation, Vol. 1, Pg. 125.).
- 18. Allamah Al-Askari: Outlooks of two schools about sources of Islamic legislation, Vol. 1, Pgs. 254–255; Pgs. 261–263; Pg. 310.
- 19. Dailami: Irshad al-Quloob, Pg. 396.

Source URL:

https://www.al-islam.org/victim-lost-saqifah-revised-edition-comprehensive-additions-ali-labbaf/discourse-1-absence-alis