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<u>Home</u> > <u>A Victim Lost In Saqifah – Revised Edition with Comprehensive Additions</u> > <u>A Victim Lost in Saqifah Vol. 1</u> > <u>Discourse 6: Deviation In The Meaning Of Divinely–Granted Caliphate Of Ali</u> > <u>Introduction</u> > Relation Of Imamate And Caliphate From Shia Viewpoint

Discourse 6: Deviation In The Meaning Of Divinely-Granted Caliphate Of Ali

Introduction

It is a sad and painful incident of deviation in Shia belief. The purpose was Islamic unity. Political and social movement of Sayyid Jamaluddin Asadabadi was the impetus and it was his idea that gave beginning to utterances like:

"The difference of the names of Ali and Umar should be set aside and attention must be directed to Caliphate." 1

Vast endeavors and extensive efforts of pupils and followers of School of Sayyid Jamal for putting into practice his aspirations have been silenced. It was a desire for an extensive Islamic Caliphate. Today there is no word of it except that:

"...The system of Caliphate with Sunni sect can be a ground for oneness of Muslims and all Muslim countries..."2

From one side followers of this thought and belief for attaining Islamic unity under a title of only way for pacifying and appearing Shia–Sunni differences met with a hot welcome. This has been continuing since the time of Mashrota until today.

With attention to Sunni School in subject of Imamate and Caliphate in its prime stage, elements present in this school had to undergo a total purge. The very same thoughts of Sunni School in this ground among Shias were not common and were under a heavy criticism.

The purging elements related to this system of thought provide room for pro-Sunni elements to creep in the folds of Shia beliefs. The sensitiveness of Shias with regard to argument of Imamate and Caliphate gave a hand too.

However this erroneous thought with a productive faculty of errors had one fruit. And that was an influence of deviation in belief of Imamate.

This deviation gradually progressed to the extent of overturning the meaning and sense of Imamate during the presence of infallible Imams. Its black, dark shadow was cast on the Sun of Ghadeer and Caliphate of Ali. It took to itself various tendencies to an extent that even today we witness its deviation and wrong thinking in new molds and new models.

Criticism And Analysis

A walk into the park of thought of this group of continuing 'Imamate and Caliphate' and then a comparison of it with institute of Sunni thought3 in this subject takes us to elements common in the outlooks of unity-seekers and Sunni beliefs4 which are as follows:

First Conjecture: Imamate And Guardianship In Islam Are Only For The Sake Of Rulership!

In this respect, they say:

"In the pure and noble faith of Islam the subject of Imamate is not regarded as a part of the business to impart duties of administration, government, political and social affairs in the administration."!5

"Imamate is the same authority and the run of political affairs of Islamic Ummah."!6

"In Islam Imam means head of the government. His duties are repeatedly mentioned."!7

"The dispute between Shia and Sunni which has been continuing since centuries is on the issue of rulership."!8

"The holder of order (or the head) and the Islamic ruler means the executors of these two verses of Quran which is the duty on the part of Islamic governor...

If the Islamic Governor executes an Islamic order, the title 'the head of affairs' (Wali-e-Amr) can be applied to him."!9

"The executor of Islamic rules is called 'head of affairs (Wali-e-Amr)."! 10

Second Conjecture: Rulership In Islam Is An Elected Post!

They say:

"The choice of appointing the ruler after passing away of Prophet is in the hands of people. It is not even in the hand of the Prophet."!11

"The choice of the ruler is an acknowledged right of the Ummah."! 12

"To select an Imam is a special right of the people."! 13

"The chief executive of Muslims is electoral. The qualities of this post are specified in Quran. Muslim in each term should select one according to these specifications."! 14

"To select 'the head of affairs' (Wali-e-Amr) is a fixed right of the people. According to specifications, his duties are subsidiary. It remains as long as Quran exists."!15

"To maintain a Quranic government is a responsibility on all Muslims. The ruler of Muslims is selected among them with opinion of masses."! 16

"The issue of Caliphate is a national issue. To fix a ruler is in the hands of the people."! 17

"The public opinion in an Islamic government is a basic element for appointing the ruler."! 18

"People have a right to appoint a person who possesses conditions befitting a ruler to the post of a guardian and vest him with rulership."! 19

How To Utilize These Conjectures To Create Deviation In The Meaning Of Divinely-Given Caliphate Of Ali

So far we came to know how unity-seekers borrowed the thought from Sunni school and how they exerted efforts toward dissipating Sunni outlook about Imamate, Guardianship and Caliphate. We also came to know their basic idea, which runs as follows:

"To bring down the high station of Imamate to the level of social status of rulership and to believe it to be electoral."!

It is obvious that this outlook is useful for creating Islamic unity and to create a sort of coherence between the two. This idea avoids the contrast as it overruns the right of Ali to Caliphate.

From one side we witness deviation in the sense of Caliphate, which by the Quranic text is attributed to Ali; a deviation, which has found a place among Shias besides giving a covering to wrong and impure idea.

This deviation has started from two conjectures, which are:

Conjecture A: Deviation In The Sense Of Guardianship By Separating Imamate And Rulership

They say:

"We in very foundation consider infallible Imams as authority of God. We believe them as a guide to the people. We believe them as true narrators of God's commandments and orders. We have faith in them as protectors of religion from any deviation or perversion. Besides, we trust them as true and correct interpreters of divine decrees and Quranic text and traditions of Prophet. As such, this position is far higher than Imamate in the sense of rulership. Of course in their presence it becomes obligatory on the Ummah to regard them as Caliphs and rulers and to obey them. If they did not attain place or position of Imamate the high office (of Imamate) is reserved and saved for them."!20

"The position of leadership and guidance with the position of rulership and Guardianship are two."!21

"This matter has no relation to issue of rulership."!22

"Prophethood and Guardianship differ from each other in their sense and sum. Between Guardianship and Prophethood, difference is from earth to the sky. Prophethood is in the climes of the angelic domain while Guardianship is a social and democratic matter."!23

Conjecture B: Deviation In The Sense Of Text Following Deviation In The Meaning Of Imamate

They say:

"The manifest religion of Islam has specified certain conditions for Imam. These conditions are necessary for guidance of people and executing divine rules by the ruler who in the religious terms is called Imam. The Islamic ruler should possess these conditions.

Knowledge, piety, decorum, courage, bravery and generosity are main conditions. The Prophet, from the very start, wanted that his religion should be established on a foundation, which could last as long the world exists. Ali whom friends and foes acknowledged as a perfect and most befitting person in the Ummah was introduced by the Prophet as Imam, ruler and a model. The Prophet asked Muslims to obey him. There are many tributes. A few can be referred here. The last of them is Ghadeer Khumm. The Prophet declared him (Ali) as his successor and Caliph after his death."!24

"The biggest issue related to passing away of Prophet is his succession as a leader of Muslims like the Prophet. This matter is very much important particularly for people of thought and contemplation. Also it comes much in discussion. But more than people the Prophet himself, the great leader of Muslims, attaches much importance to it. To him it is a matter of life and death. In the matter of Caliphate, there are two very important things. One: Whose personality could be suitable and befitting to occupy the place of the Prophet?

The leader of Islam (the Prophet) has witnessed in the spirit of his cousin greatness and seraphic decorum. This quality he did not see in any of his companions whether related to him or otherwise. The genius and extraordinary capability and the holy wars fought sincerely became the ground for the

Prophet to express his admiration for Ali in most brilliant words and appreciating language on many occasions. He praised Ali and showed his position to the people more magnified."!25

"Although after passing away of Prophet, Muslims had a right to form a consulting council. However it was also a demanding matter to give consideration to his will in principle. If the purpose of forming a consulting council was to fulfill God's decree who could be other than the Prophet himself who founded the school and brought the Message. He had named the candidate nominated by God.

The consulting body is to execute the will. When an issue is recommended by Prophet the task of consulting body becomes easy. The way too is shown to the body."!26

Result Of This Manipulation

The divine Caliphate and the right of Ali according to the text of Quran and rightful belief of Shia in this respect is so interpreted, on the basis of opinion, that the right is overridden by wrong. The truth vanished in elected Caliphate. It is reduced to a rulership fabricated by wrong conclusions.

They say:

"There are several kinds of peoples' governments. The leader loved by people is the tongue of the people. Whatever he says is the word of the heart of people and deserves to be appointed for succession. In such a case, the will of the people is acted upon. The pleasure and satisfaction of the people is gained. Such a selection secures peoples' desire. The appointment of Ali in Ghadeer was such."!27

Deviated Repercussion Of These Conjectures

Deviated Repercussion of these Conjectures28

First Wrong Result: Caliphate Is Not A Monopoly Of Amirul Momineen ('a)!

Caliphate is not a Monopoly of Amirul Momineen ('a)!29

So they have said:

"Conditions laid down in Islam for head of affairs (Wali-e-Amr) are briefed in this sentence. The most suitable and befitting person for the post of a ruler must be selected."!30

"The infallible Imams have two positions. Most important of all is they are guides, leaders and authorities from God. They are chosen ones to interpret and explain God's rulings, decrees and what descended on the Prophet.

The other one is rulership and Guardianship. It is compulsory upon the Ummah to pay allegiance to and obey them. Since they are superior in knowledge than all others, people must choose and obey

them."!31

"In this fact there is no doubt that Ali was the most deserving person to succeed the Prophet. Neither Shia nor Sunni have any doubt in this regard."!32

"The person of Amirul Momineen Ali ('a) was more deserving than others for rulership. It is not in the sense that Caliphate is his belonging nor in the sense that Caliphate is prohibited for others. But the sense here is eligibility and the qualities – in which he stands first and above all."!33

Second Wrong Result: Caliph Cannot Be Exclusively Ali After The Prophet

They say:

"Rulership and Caliphate in the sense of administration, as it is said, is his (Ali's) right. Inspite of his acceptance it is prohibited to others. However it is not such an important post.

Rather Caliphate and rulership is among his (Ali's) positions. When he is not present or he did not become Caliph another one can be made a candidate or can be appointed."!34

"In such a case the second obligation becomes mandatory. The formation of Caliphate at consensus of Muhajireen and Ansaar becomes final and legitimate."!35

Third Wrong Result: Usurpation Of Ali's Caliphate Is No More In Question!

It is said:

"Although he (Ali) rightfully considered himself more suitable and deserving, he did not consider others' Caliphate infidelity or usurpation."!36

Fourth Wrong Result: Caliphate Of Caliphs Is Not Illegitimate!

Such is said:

"In selecting the Caliph through consultation, companions of Prophet maintained rules of God and carried out Islamic regulations."!37

"After passing away of Prophet immediately, companions of Prophet thought about Caliphate and formed a government of religion. Thus Caliphate of Caliphs came into being." !38

Warning: Propagation Of These Conjectures In The Name Of Open-Mindedness

The attraction of the name of election of the people and its resemblance to Western democracy – the foregone conjectures have found a place in attention of open–minded persons of the society.

Such is said:

"In accordance with sense and contents of Quranic verses and traditions and according to words of Ali himself (which are in plenty) the owner of rulership and the executors are people themselves. Islamic government is a democratic or public government."!39

"The appointment or dismissal of an Imam or head of government must take place with choice and consultation of people...!"

According to clear texts, repeated statements and practice of Prophet and other four personages of the cloak, government of Muslims is government of people themselves. It is formed by their consultation. So the Sunni brothers will have no objection."!40

Relation Of Imamate And Caliphate From Shia Viewpoint

Ustad Murtadha Mutahhari writes in this respect:

"...an issue in the chapter of Imamate is government. In other words, what is the status of government after the Prophet?

Is it on shoulders of people; and is it for people themselves to appoint a government for themselves or is it on the Prophet? Whether he appointed a ruler when he is no more?

Since recently, they design the issue in a way that it strikes to mind the idea of Sunni sect to the effect that it appears normal and naturally common.

The wrong framing of the issue:

They frame the subject in a way as if we have a problem by name of government. We want to see in the name of government as to what is the government in the view of Islam?..41

If we pose Imamate in a plain way at the level of a government and say, it means government, we shall see the attraction exceeds what Sunni say and goes beyond what Shias say...42

We should not commit such a mistake to imagine a government at the very name of Imamate. As a result the issue, let it be however plain, this branch that has come into being should not lace it. This might occur to us as to who should take over the charge of government. He who wants to be a governor should he be superior to all others? Probably he who becomes a governor could be relatively superior and not absolutely. This is because we have treated this issue as of little importance. This is a mistake.

Today this mistake is often repeated.

As Imamate is mentioned, our mind goes to the meaning of government. Government is a branch - a very little side of Imamate.43

We say there is some other issue among Shias. If we fix that issue, the question of government too is

settled. We believe in a position or office, which is immediately after prophethood or its subordination. In the presence or existence of that office, the issue of government comes into its fold. In other words issue of government is encompassed in existence of Prophet. Similarly in the presence of Imam – in the sense, which Shia says – the issue of government is itself in existence.44

The subject of Imamate itself entails prophethood. But it does not mean that its position is far below something close to prophethood – in its similarity. The great prophets in addition to their prophethood they had this office of Imamate too.45

Imamate is a phenomenon of prophethood exactly to the level of prophethood at its highest grades. It is such among Shias.46

Prophethood itself is an entity wherein exist thousands of things. The Prophet's existence makes Muslims needless of a ruler because he is the ruler. Government was one of the affairs of prophethood...47

But it was not bestowed upon him by the people. This was a right given him by God, because he was a superior human being.

Since he was the interpreter of God's commandments and a moral link with the unseen world he had rulership too over the people...48

When we accept such a fact there arises no question of a ruler as long as the Prophet exists. He has a dimension beyond a human being. Likewise, as long as exists the Imam there arises no question as to who is to rule...49

From Shia viewpoint, question of government is same as it was in lifetime of Prophet. He has an exceptional government.

As the question of government does not rise in lifetime of Prophet, so it is in lifetime of Imam. The meaning of Imam as it is in belief of Shia, rescinds the issue of government. The issue of government is a branch issue and a dependent one...50

Therefore we must not regard issue of Imamate simple. We should not treat it as a worldly position.

Among Shias, Imamate is a living issue. In presence of Imam, there is no room for other as in the case of lifetime of Prophet.

And the Prophet had appointed Ali for Imamate. He who is Imam necessarily governs too. The Prophet has mentioned 'rulership' in addition to 'he is the Imam after me."51

He writes under the heading: 'In presence of infallible there is no room for selection' thus:

"The subject of Imamate with regard to leadership and government is: Now like the days of Prophet

there exists an infallible. The Prophet had appointed his successor who was not to the level of other persons because his level was too high. And with regard to his capabilities and standards he was exceptional like the Prophet himself. Therefore there arises no question of consultation and selection.

In the days of the Prophet, no one said that the Prophet was a Messenger and a recipient of divine revelation. So the government must be framed by consultation. People should come and cast their opinion whether to select someone else or the Prophet himself for the post of ruler. But people thought that the Prophet is above ordinary persons and that he has links with the world of revelation. Now after the Prophet there is no place for these sayings. But one thing is undeniable. Having had an infallible person purged from mistakes and perfect in earthly and heavenly knowledge, should we go to another one instead?

Besides, Ali was an Imam. So the worldly post of leadership too will be his lot all by itself. The Prophet has explained this aspect too. The Prophet referred this position to Ali because Ali had the other position also."52

- 1. Nazim-ul-Islam Kermani: Tarikh-e-Bedaari-e-Iraniaan (History of Iranian Awakening), Vol. 1, Pgs. 114-115.
- 2. Sayyid Ahmad Mawassaqi: Istiratazi-e-Wahdat (Strategy of Unity), Vol. 2, Pg. 106.
- <u>3.</u> In order to learn about Sunni outlook especially regarding Imamate and Caliphate, refer to the books Peshwai az Nazar-e-Islam and Rahbari-e-Ummat by Ustad Ja'far Subhani.
- 4. Refer: Ali Labbaf, A Victim Lost in Sagifah, Vol. 4, Section 2.
- 5. Haider Ali Qalamdaran: Hukoomat Dar Islam (Government in Islam), Vol. 1, Pg. 52.
- 6. Ibid. Hukoomat Dar Islam (Government in Islam), Vol. 1, Pg. 51.
- 7. Mustafa Husayni Tabatabai: Hukumat-e-Deeni O Hukumat-e-Mardumi (Government of religion and Government of people), Pg. 2.
- 8. Ibid. Hukumat-eDeeni O Hukumat-e-Mardumi (Government of religion and Government of people), Pg. 2.
- 9. Sayyid Asadullah Meer Islami Kharqani: Raah-e-Tajdeed-e-Azmat O Qudrat-e-Islami (Way to renovate the glory and power of Islam) (Preface by Sayyid Mahmood Taliqani), Pg. 101.
- 10. Ibid. Raah-e-Tajdeed-e-Azmat O Qudrat-e-Islami (Way to renovate the glory and power of Islam) (Preface by Sayyid Mahmood Taliqani), Pg. 38.
- 11. Haider Ali Qalamdaran: Hukoomat Dar Islam (Government in Islam), Vol. 1, Pg. 129.
- 12. Ibid. Hukoomat Dar Islam (Government in Islam), Vol. 1, Pg. 77.
- 13. Ibid. Hukoomat Dar Islam (Government in Islam), Vol. 1, Pg. 128.
- 14. Sayyid Asadullah Meer Islami Kharqani: Raah-e-Tajdeed-e-Azmat O Qudrat-e-Islami (Way to renovate the glory and power of Islam) (Preface by Sayyid Mahmood Taliqani), Pg. 38.
- 15. Ibid. Raah-e-Tajdeed-e-Azmat O Qudrat-e-Islami (Way to renovate the glory and power of Islam) (Preface by Sayyid Mahmood Taliqani), Pg. 290.
- 16. Mustafa Husayni Tabatabai: Article quoted in the book Deen-O-Hukumat (Religion and Rulership), Pg. 547.
- <u>17.</u> Husayn Ali Montazeri: Mubaani-e-Fiqhi Hukumat-e-Islami (Translated by Mahmood Salawati) (Sources of Islamic jurisprudence in Islamic Government), Vol. 2, Section 4. Proof of occurrence of Caliphate by selection by people, Pg. 299.
- 18. Nimatullah Salihi Najafabadi: Hukumat-e-Salihaan (Government of the Righteous), Pg. 77.
- 19. Ibid. Hukumat-e-Salihaan (Government of the Righteous), Pg. 201.
- 20. Haider Ali Qalamdaran: Hukoomat Dar Islam (Government in Islam), Vol. 1, Pg. 92.
- 21. Ibid. Hukoomat Dar Islam (Government in Islam), Vol. 1, Pg. 156.
- 22. Ibid. Hukoomat Dar Islam (Government in Islam), Vol. 1, Pg. 159.
- 23. Nimatullah Salihi Najafabadi: Hukumat-e-Salihaan (Government of the Righteous), Pg. 141.

- 24. Haider Ali Qalamdaran: Hukoomat Dar Islam (Government in Islam), Vol. 1, Pg. 123.
- 25. Nimatullah Salihi Najafabadi: Majmua Maqaalaat (Collected Essays), Pgs. 106-110.
- 26. Abdul Ali Bazargan: Shura-O-Bayat (Consultation and Allegiance), Pg. 82-83.
- 27. Nimatullah Salihi Najafabadi: Hukumat-e-Salihaan (Government of the Righteous), Pg. 137.
- 28. Attention in this regard shows why unity-seekers place their real idea in the argument of Imamate and Caliphate (elected government).
- 29. Roots of this perverted outlook can be found in the conjecture of 'Obtained Imamate' in writings of people like Dr. Ali Shariati.
- 30. Nimatullah Salihi Najafabadi: Hukumat-e-Salihaan (Government of the Righteous), Pg. 97.
- 31. Haider Ali Qalamdaran: Hukoomat Dar Islam (Government in Islam), Vol. 1, Pg. 124.
- 32. Muhammad Jawad Hujjati Kermani: Aftaab-e-Yazd Daily, Issue No. 8, Khordad 1381.
- 33. Haider Ali Qalamdaran: Hukoomat Dar Islam (Government in Islam), Vol. 1, Pg. 146.
- 34. Ibid. Hukoomat Dar Islam (Government in Islam), Vol. 1, Pg. 125.
- 35. Muhammad Waizzaada Khorasani: Nahjul Balagha Magazine, Issues 4-5, Pg. 176.
- 36. Sayyid Abul Fazl Barqayi: Preface to the book Sharaha-e-Ittehaad (Roads to Unity), Pg.
- 37. Haider Ali Qalamdaran: Hukoomat Dar Islam (Government in Islam), Vol. 1, Pg. 112.
- 38. Mustafa Husayni Tabatabai: Article quoted in the book Deen–O–Hukumat (Religion and Rulership), Pg. 545.
- 39. Engineer Mahdi Bazargan: Besat-O-Idiolozy (Proclamation and Ideology), Pg. 115.
- 40. Ibid. Besat-O-Idiolozy (Proclamation and Ideology), Pg. 148.
- 41. Ustad Murtadha Mutahhari: Imamat-o-Rahbari (Imamate and Leadership), Pg. 67.
- 42. Ibid. Pg. 69.
- 43. Ibid. Pgs. 70-71.
- 44. Ibid. Pg. 113.
- 45. Ibid. Pg. 186.
- 46. Ibid. Pg. 163.
- 47. Ibid. Pg. 162.
- 48. Ibid. Pg. 112.
- 49. Ibid. Pg. 163.
- 50. Ibid. Pg. 147.
- 51. Ibid. Pg. 81.
- 52. Ibid. Pg. 80.

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