

Imam Ali bin Abi-Talib (A.S.) The Great Martyr in the Cause of Defending Justice

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On Friday, the 13th of the blessed month of Rajab, 12 years before the mission of Holy Prophet Hadrat Muhammad (s.a.w.) as Allah's Messenger, Fatima, daughter of Asad, felt that she was about to give birth to her child. Abu-Talib brought her to the Sacred Ka'ba and let her enter and

told her to sit down, then he went out.

She raised her hands in prayer to beseeching Allah, the Most High, saying: "O Allah! I believe in You and in the messengers and the scriptures You have sent. I believe in what has been said by my grandfather, Abraham (a.s.) who built the Ancient House (the Ka'ba). So, for the sake of the builder of this House, and for the sake of the child in my womb, I implore You to make my labor easy."

Fatima stayed not more than an hour inside the Ka'ba when she announced that she gave birth to a male child. This child is the first child born in the Sacred Ka'ba.

No one before or after him has ever been born in the House of Allah, the Most High. It is a mark of him being honoured by Allah, the Most High, may his name be exalted, and of his position being dignified in its progress. Glad tidings were brought to Abu-Talib and his household. They hurried there while happiness spread over their faces.

Hadrat Muhammad Mustapha (the chosen) proceeded among them and took the child in his anxious arms. He carried the baby, Ali(a.s.), to the house of Abu-Talib. because the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) was living at that time with his wife, Khadija, in their own house since their marriage. It came to Abu-Talib's mind to name his new born child Ali(a.s.) and thus it was.

Abu-Talib prepared a great banquet, and slaughtered many animals, to honor the blessed new-born child.

Indeed, the party was attended by a crowd of people. They offered their congratulations and expressing their high feelings towards the new blessed child. His cousin Hadrat Muhammad (s.a.w.), who used to frequent his uncle's house, where he had formerly spent the warmth of affection, and drank from the fountains of sincerity and loyalty during the year of his childhood and youth.

Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) continued to frequent his uncle's house, although he was now a married man, living with his wife, Khadija, in their own house. He cherished Ali(a.s.) and surrounded him with affection and care, speaking to him tenderly, rocking his cradle or carrying

him in his arms.

Days passed quickly as the new blessed child grew up in the arms of his parents: Abu-Talib and Fatima bint Asad and his cousin, Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.).

Under the Patronage of the Messenger of Allah:

Six years passed after Ali's birth. The Quraish suffered from an acute economic crises which had a heavy effect on Abu-Talib, who had to support a large family, as well as a host of poor people who used to come to him as a prominent figure in the community at Mecca.

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) went to his uncle, Abbas bin Abdul-Muttalib, and proposed to him that each of them should sustain one of the family of Abu-Talib. Therefore, his uncle, al-Abbas, gladly accepted the proposal. They both hurried to Abu-Talib and talked him into accepting the suggestion.

Al-Abbas took Ja'far, and Hadrat Muhammad (s.a.w.) took Ali (a.s.), then six years old. Thus, Ali (a.s.), from his early childhood, lived under the patronage of Hadrat Muhammad (s.a.w.), grew up under his care and drank from the fountains of his affection and tenderness. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) brought him up as his Lord had taught him. He never separated from him until he (s.a.w.) joined the Almighty.

Imam Ali (a.s.) referred to the vast dimensions of the education he received at the hands of his guide, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) in one of his speeches:

"...every year he used to stay in a grotto of the Hara' for some time, and nobody used to be with him but I. None could then see or hear him but I. During those days Islam was the religion of only the Prophet and his wife, Khadija. I was the third of the trio. Nobody else in this world had accepted Islam. Even then I used to see the divine light of revelation and prophethood and smell the heavenly fragrance of prophethood."

It is particularly poignant, that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) never invited Imam Ali (a.s.) to

Islam as he did others later on, because he was already a Muslim by God-granted nature. He was never polluted with the permissiveness of the pre-Islamic period of ignorance and never involved in any of its debased practices. As it is related: The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) informed Imam Ali (a.s.) of his Message and Call and he immediately believed in the truthfulness of the Final Message and offered to receive and carry out the Messenger's orders. That was why he was given the attribute of "Karramallahu wajha" (i.e. may Allah grant him honor).

Imam Ali (a.s.) was the most sincere among people towards the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and his Message. No sooner had the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) told him about the Divine call then he responded to it with all his heart and body and without being surprised.

When Allah, the Almighty, told His Messenger to warn his nearest kin, he (s.a.w.) gathered his kinsmen and preached them his message and then asked them to respond to his call and support him. At this time, Ali bin Abi-Talib(a.s.), stood up and said: "O Messenger of Allah I will back you up in this matter."

The Messenger of Allah repeated his words but no body responded, except Imam Ali (a.s.). Then he (s.a.w.) turned to him and said: "Sit down, you are my brother, vicegerent, minister, inheritor, and successor after me."

When the Divine Mission entered a delicate stage of confrontation, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) announced his public call in the Sacred House (Ka'ba) in Makkah and loudly proclaimed to the people that he was Allah's Messenger sent to them. The success of extending the invitation was to increase the number of believers. The growth in numbers had a great impact on the attitude of the disbelievers, who resorted to terrorist tactics.

Thus, the Quraish commenced their attack and campaign to outcast believers from among their members, torturing them and trying to suppress their faith. The physical torture to which the believers were subject became such that the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) ordered them to immigrate to Habashah (Ethiopia).

But Imam Ali (a.s.) persisted in staying on at the Messenger's side and in defending him, notwithstanding what great sacrifices might lie ahead of himself.

The polytheists besieged the Muslims in one of the districts of Makkah called "Shi'b Abu-Talib" (a mountain pass) and agreed to boycott the Muslims, to isolate them through an economic and social blockade, and not to deal with the Bani Hashim and their followers in matters of buying and selling and in marriage.

The crisis was intensified on the Muslims who began to suffer poverty and deprivation and even ate plants because only a little food was secretly reaching them from some sympathizers.

They endured this unjust siege for nearly three years, during which time the Holy Prophet

Muhammad (s.a.w.), Hadrat Khadija(a.s.) and Hadrat Abu-Talib(a.s.) spent their properties. After the elapse of these three heavy and painful years, and with the Muslims' patience, prosperity and easiness came. Allah, the Almighty sent a worm to eat up the document of the pact which was hanged, by the Quraish, on the door of the Ka'ba with the exception of the name of Allah. Thus, the boycott was stopped and the siege was ended.

At the end of the siege, Khadija, the faithful wife of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and affectionate care-taker of Imam Ali (a.s.) died. Therefore, sufferings and sadness continued.

Only three days after the death of Hadrat Khadija(a.s.), Hadrat Abu-Talib(a.s.), the Holy Prophet's uncle, died.

Thus, he (s.a.w.) lost his uncle, his supporter and his sponser, while Imam Ali (a.s.) lost his father. It was for this reason, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) called this year "The Year of Sadness".

To Dar al-Salam:

While Islamic call (Da'wa) was entering a new stage in its steady advance, the leaders of the Quraish held an urgent meeting in a place called "Dar al-Nadwa" to consult about the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.).

They decided to collectively assassinate him. Each tribe should send one of its men to carry out the assassination at night, thus laying the blame of the proposed murder on one tribe. But Angel Gabriel (a.s.) told the Holy Messenger (s.a.w.) that Allah enjoined that he should also emigrate from Makkah to Yathrib (Madinah). When darkness spread, the conspirators hurried to besiege the house of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) so as to prevent his escape.

Here came another role for Imam Ali (a.s.).

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) told Imam Ali (a.s.) about all that was transpiring. He asked him to sleep in his bed and cover himself with the Prophet's (s.a.w.) garment. Therefore, Imam Ali (a.s.) did just that. Then, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) left the house, without being seen by the polytheists.

At daybreak, the conspirators broke into the house of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) to commit their crime. When they entered the Holy Prophet's chamber, Imam Ali(a.s.) jumped out of the bed, shouting at them: "What do you want?"

"Where is Muhammad(s.a.w.)?" they asked.

He (a.s.) replied to them, saying: "Did you appoint me to watch him? Didn't you say that you would expel him from your town? Now he has left you."

Their plot was foiled and they left the house in failure. It occurred to them to search for the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), and track him through the mountains and valleys. Indeed, Imam Ali (a.s.) carried out the Messenger's order and slept in his bed, sacrificing himself. He (a.s.) was a symbol of bravery, courage, and devotion.

The following verse was revealed concerning him: "And among people there is one who sells his self (soul) seeking the pleasure of Allah; and verily, Allah is affectionate unto His (faithful) servants." Holy Qur'an (Baqara: 2:207)

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) discussed with Imam Ali (a.s.) what he should do during his emigration to Madinah. He told Imam Ali (a.s.) to stay behind in Makkah to hand the deposits of the people back to them, and then to join him in Madinah, bringing with him Fatima Zahra (a.s.) and the rest of the women of his household.

Within a few days the convoy arrived in Quba. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) received them.

He embraced Imam Ali (a.s.) and wept for the pains and the hardships they had suffered. Then, the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), Imam Ali(a.s.) and the rest of the Immigrants (Muhajirin) continued on their way to Yathrib in order to start a new phase of implementing and establishing the state in the Islamic history.

Important Event of Madinah:

The first deed done by the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) when he reached the city of Yathrib (Madinah) was the building of the first mosque in order to be a landmark for Muslims who now had a centre of their own for open, uninhibited gatherings, a school for learning the Qur'an and a headquarters for receiving necessary instructions merited in Makkah.

The second important step taken by the Holy Prophet(s.a.w.) in Madinah was the fraternizing of Makkan Immigrants (Muhajirin) with the Madinite Helpers (Ansar) in the bond of Islamic brotherhood.

He fraternized each Immigrant with a Helper joining them together as brothers in faith. And he (s.a.w.), himself, clasped the hand of his beloved cousin, Ali bin Abi-Talib (a.s.), as the supreme symbol of brotherhood, fraternity and solidarity in the Islamic society.

Tasks After Immigration:

Going over the history of those crucial early years of the Final Message, we realize that the role of Imam Ali bin Abi-Talib (a.s.) was unsurpassed.

In all the wars Islam fought against enemies, Imam Ali (a.s.) was always the victor, not merely through taking part in the excursions in person, but by his sacrifices and bravery which surpassed all others. His combat skills and feats of daring were so well-known that many of the enemy would not face him, knowingly, on the battlefield.

Imam Ali (a.s.) took part in all wars faced by the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) except the Battle of Tabuk, where he did not participate in obedience to the Holy Messenger's (s.a.w.) order. In all these wars he played the largest role, not counting those which he had led himself.

With regard to the expedition to Tabuk and the Commander of the Faithful's Deputising for the Prophet at Madinah, Shaykh Mufid said in his book 'Irshad' said: when the Prophet, may Allah bless him and his family, was ready to go out, he appointed the Commander of the Faithful,

(a.s.) as his deputy over his family, his children and his place of emigration. He told him: "Ali, Madinah will only be properly looked after by myself or by you." He said that because he (s.a.w.) knew the wicked intention of the Bedouin and many of the Makkans, and those around them. He was concerned they would seek (to control) Madinah when he was away from it and occupied Byzantine territory.

Since there was no one to take his place there, there would be no safety from their treachery,

from the corruption they would cause in (Madinah) the place of emigration, and from their overreaching themselves to actions which would hurt his family and his successors. He (s.a.w.) knew that no one could take his place in terrifying the enemy, guarding the place of emigration and protecting those who were there except the Commander of the Faithful Ali(a.s.).

Thus he (s.a.w.) clearly appointed him (a.s.) as his deputy, and gave an explicit nomination of him to the Imamate after him. This is indicated by the account that has made clear that when the hypocrites learnt that the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) had appointed Ali (a.s.), as his deputy over Madinah, they were envious of him because of that.

After (the Prophet's) departure, (Ali's) position there began to distress them, for they know that (the city) would be protected and that there would no opportunity for a man with hostile or covetous intent.

That grieved them and they have preferred (Ali) to leave with (the Prophet) because of the occurrence of corruption and confusion which they hoped for during the absence of the Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) from Madinah and while it would be free of a man to guard it who would cause terror and fear.

Therefore they accused him of (seeking) luxury and ease by remaining with the people while those of them who had departed were undergoing hardships, through journeying and (risking) danger. They spread rumours about him and said: "The Apostle of Allah (s.a.w.) did not appoint him as deputy as an act of honour, privilege and love. He only left him behind because his finding him hardensome."

With this rumor they slandered him like Quraish had slandered the Holy Prophet by (attributing to him) madness sometimes, and poetry at other times, by (accusing him of) magic at times and of being a pagan soothsayer at others. They knew that (the facts) were opposite and contrary to that, just as the hypocrites knew that (the facts) were opposite and contrary to the slanders they were spreading against the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.).

When the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) learned of the rumors spread by the hypocrites against him, he wanted to show them to be liars and to reveal their shameful action. So he followed the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and told him: "Apostle of Allah, the hypocrites are alleging that you left me behind because of finding (me) burdensome and because of hatred."

"Go back to your position, brother," the Holy Prophet(s.a.w.) said to him. "Madinah will only be properly looked after by myself and by you. You are my deputy among my family (Ahlul-Bait) and in the place of my emigration and my people. Are you not content, 'Ali, that you have the same rank with regard to me as Aaron had with regard to Moses, except that there is no

prophet after me?"

History records nothing on his account but resistance and triumph in all circumstances regardless of whether others remained to help him or deserted him at any stage of the battle. This is a fact which can be explained only through the merits which Imam Ali (a.s.) had been endowed with: true faith, seeking Allah's help and depending on Him, serving Him alone, and being indifferent to anything except Him, big or small. Further, Imam Ali bin Abi-Talib (a.s.) enjoyed superior valor and resolution and was fearless and sublime.

Islamic Perspective of Imam Ali (a.s.):

No one in Islam has ever received such praise and esteem as Imam Ali bin Abi-Talib (a.s.) received in the Islamic message, which asks its followers not only to evaluate and endear him, but also to adhere to his example and follow in his footsteps.

Of the "medals" which Imam Ali (a.s.) received from Allah, the Exalted, and the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), we can mention the following: The Verse of Purification:

Allah, the Almighty says:

"...verily Allah intends but to keep off from you (every kind of) uncleanness, O people of the house, and purify you (with) a thorough purification." Holy Qur'an (Ahzab 33:33)

Commentators on this verse say it refers specifically to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), Imam Ali(a.s.), Hadrat Fatima(a.s.), Imam Hasan(a.s.) and Imam Husayn(a.s.), when the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) demanded a cloak and covered them all with it. When this verse was revealed,

Umm Salama, the Messenger's wife asked: "Am I among your household?"

"No" the Messenger replied, "but you are all right."

Indeed, the commentators, commenting on the verse: "And enjoin prayer on your followers and steadfastly adhere to it..." Holy Qur'an (Taha 20: 132) It is recorded that after its revelation the Holy Prophet(s.a.w.) used to go to Imam Ali(a.s.) and Hadrat Fatima(a.s.) every morning and call them to prayer: "To prayer, O Ahlul-Bait, to prayer; verily Allah intends but to keep off from you (every kind of) uncleanness, O people of the house, and purify you (with) a thorough purification."

This is how the Holy Qur'an refers to the Ahlul-Bait (a.s.), and makes clear their infallible personalities, which are far from uncleanness, disobedience, error, sin and personal whim.

2. The Verse of Malediction:

"But whosoever disputes with you (O Muhammad) in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: 'Come let us call our sons and your sons and our women and your women and our selves and your selves, then let us beseech Allah and invoke His curse upon the liars.'" Holy Qur'an (Ale Imran 3: 61)

Islamic commentators of all sects confirm that this verse was revealed when the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), accompanied Imam Ali(a.s.), Hadrat Fatima(a.s.), Imam Hasan(a.s.) and Imam Husain(a.s.), went to meet the Christians of Najran for malediction. Thus, the verse mentioned above expresses about Imam Hasan(a.s.) and Imam Husayn(a.s.) as the Messenger's sons, about Hadrat Fatima(a.s.) as his women and about Imam Ali(a.s.) as his self. Thereby, no one else has reached such a lofty position.

Malediction (mubahala) means to call Allah to reveal wrath on the liars. When the pontiff of the Christians of Najran saw the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) coming with his household, they were afraid of the consequences and excused themselves for not going through with the malediction, saying: "O Christians, I am beholding such faces that if Allah wishes (for their sake), He would move mountains from their places. Do not accept their challenge for mubahala for if you do you would all perish and there would remain no Christian on the face of the earth till the Day of Resurrection."

3. The Almighty, Allah in Chapter of Dahr of the Holy Qur'an said: "And they give food out of love for Him to the poor, and the orphans and the captives: We only feed you for Allah's sake: we desire from you neither reward nor thanks: surely we fear from our Lord a stern, distressed day. Therefore, Allah will guard them from the evil of that day and cause them to meet with ease and happiness." Holy Qur'an (Dahr 76: 8-11)

Once Imam Hasan(a.s.) and Imam Husayn(a.s.) fell sick and the Holy Prophet Muhammad(s.a.w.) together with some of his companions visited his sick grandsons. He (s.a.w.) suggested that Imam Ali(a.s.) should make a vow to Allah for his son's health. Heeding the Holy Prophet's suggestion Ali(a.s.), and Fatima(a.s.) along with their maid, Fizza, took a vow that if the boys recovered, they would fast for three consecutive days. Eventually Hasan(a.s.) and Husayn(a.s.) recovered and to fulfill the vow they also fasted along with their parents and maid. Since there was nothing in the house to eat, Ali(a.s.) borrowed from Sham'un, a Khaibarian Jew, three measures of barely. Fatima(a.s.) ground one measure into flour and baked it into five loaves (of bread) equal to their number, and placed before them for breaking the fast. Just then a beggar stopped at their door and said:

"Peace be upon you (assalamu alaikum), O Ahlul-Bayt of Muhammad (s.a.w.), (I am) one of the poorest of Muslims (so), feed me, may Allah feed you of the food of Paradise. So they gladly gave him all the food and slept that night, tasting nothing but water. They fasted again the next day and at sunset as they placed the bread before them to break the fast, an orphan knocked on the door asking for food and they cheerfully fed him,

themselves going without food for yet another day.

On the third day of the fast, as the breaking time approached, and the food was spread, a prisoner (of war) suddenly appeared at their door and the same scenario was repeated, with the Holy Prophet's Ahlul-Bayt(a.s.) passing the third successive night without tasting a morsel of food.

When dawn broke, Ali(a.s.) holding the hands of Hasan(a.s.) and Husayn(a.s.) came to the Prophet's house, The Prophet seeing their pale countenances and noting that they were trembling from hunger, expressed dismay and at once accompanied them to their house. On entering the house he was shocked to see the sight of his daughter Fatima(a.s.), sitting hollow-eyed on her prayer mat, her back stuck to her stomach.

It was then that the angel Gabriel came down with this chapter, saying: "Take it, O Muhammad, Allah congratulated you for (the sacrifice of) your household.' Then he recited the (chapter)". Hence, the revelation of these generous verses regarding Imam Ali(a.s.), Hadrat Fatima(a.s.), Imam Hasan(a.s.) and Imam Husayn(a.s.), glorifies them, extols their deed, and singles them out as examplers for others to follow.

4. The Verse of Guardianship:

The Almighty, Allah says:

"Verily, your guardian is (none else but) Allah and His Apostle (Muhammad) and those who believe, those who keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate while they be (even) bowing down (in prayer)." Holy Qur'an (Ma'ida: 5: 55)

Interpreters of the Holy Qur'an say that this verse was revealed especially about Imam Ali bin Abi-Talib (a.s.), confirming the compulsion of adhering to him as an Imam, an ideological authority and a social and political leader of the nation. It was revealed when Imam Ali (a.s.) took off his ring from his finger, while kneeling in his prayer, and gave it to the poor, in charity. The verse was revealed on this very occasion, and it confirmed the leadership of Imam Ali (a.s.) and his guardianship over the faithful.

These are a few of many revealed verses concerning the Holy Prophet's holy family (Ahlul-Bait) (peace be upon them all) in general and about Imam Ali (a.s.) in particular. Therefore, whoever wants to have further knowledge, let him refer to the detailed books.

If the Holy Qur'an praises such beautiful glory about Imam Ali (a.s.), the Prophetic Traditions also contained more of the like. In this regard, we recount some traditions stating the same fact:

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said:

"I am the city of Knowledge and Ali is its gate. Who-ever wants to enter the city, let him enter

through its gate."

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said:

You are to me as Aaron was to Moses, only there is no prophet after me."

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said:

"Only the faithful (believers) will love you and only hypocrites will hate you."

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said:

"You are my brother and I am your brother. If anybody asks you, tell him: I am the servant of Allah and the brother of His Messenger. No one would claim this after you but a liar."

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) in the Ghadir ceremony said:

Whosoever I have authority over, Ali(a.s.) has also authority over him. O Allah! befriend whoever befriends him and be hostile to whosoever is hostile to him."

6. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said:

"Ali(a.s.) is with the truth, and the truth is with Ali(a.s.). They will never separate until they join me at the Pool of Kawthar(Abundance) in the Hereafter."

7. The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) said:

Every prophet has a vicegerent and inheritor and Ali(a.s.) is my vicegerent and inheritor."

These are a few of the many confirmed authentic Islamic texts attested to by all Muslims.

Imam Ali (a.s.) and the Caliphs' Period:

The Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) passed away with his head on the lap of Imam Ali (a.s.). He departed to his Lord, the Most High, while still worried about the future of the Mission and nation.

In the last hour of his life he asked for an inkpot and a sheet of paper to write on to the nation about that which would protect them from going astray after him. He continuously used to stress the necessity of adherence to his holy family.

No sooner had the soul of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) separated from his pure body, and had Imam Ali (a.s.) and the housefolk of the Messenger started for the funeral, then the Helpers (Ansars) held a meeting in "Saqifa bani Sa'idah" to appoint a successor to lead the Muslims after the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.).

Some of the Immigrants (Muhajirin) hurried to attend the meeting, and after sharp and long arguments, under a climate of tension, anxiety, violence and dispute, Umar bin Khattab hastened to give pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr as the caliph after the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). He (Umar) demanded from those present to do as he did. Therefore, some of them gave pledge of allegiance, while others refused to do so.

Imam Ali (a.s.) and the Prophet's household were still busy in funeral arrangements for the

Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), whose pure body remained three days, so that the Muslims could pay their last respects to him before his burial.

As Imam Ali (a.s.) was not convinced by what had happened, and was firmly believing in his own right to the caliphate, he withdrew from the society and kept away from the people and their affairs for six months, during which time his voice could not be heard in the so-called "Apostasy Wars" nor elsewhere.

Then certain grave incidents happened endangering Islam and threatening its very existence, such as the appearance of fake prophets after the passing away of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and their danger became severe in the Arabian Peninsula. Their appearance was a real threat to the Islamic state.

At the same time, the hypocrites became stronger and their power grew in Madinah. The Romans and the Persians were also laying ambush for the Muslims. Furthermore, diverse political groups began to appear in the Islamic society as a result of the Saqifa allegiance. Imam Ali (a.s.), in dealing with the caliphate, was in accordance with the interests of Islam, to protect it and its unity against being torn to pieces and lost, and to realize the high Islamic objectives for which he had fought.

In a letter, Imam Ali (a.s.) recalls these times in this respect: "...I therefore withheld my hand till I saw many people were reverting from Islam and trying to destroy the religion of Muhammad (may Allah bless him and his descendants). I then feared that if I did not protect Islam and its people and there occurred in it a breach or destruction, it would mean a greater blow to me than the loss of power over you which was, in any case, to last for a few days of which everything would pass away as the mirage passes away, or as the cloud dispersed. Therefore, in these happenings I rose till wrong was destroyed and disappeared, and religion attained peace and safety".

But Imam Ali's (a.s.) voice was heard when he was consulted and his opinion was sought. He tried, in this respect, to direct Islamic life in accordance with the teachings of the Message of Allah, the Most High, in the fields of legislation, executive and judiciary.

Through this period of the departure of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) till his succession of the caliphate, Imam Ali (a.s.) undertook great responsibilities during the caliph's periods. He was ready to do this because of his loyalty to the Holy Prophet's mission, to keep Islamic unity and to protect the advancement of Islam against deviation.

Therefore, an historical researcher of that period would find that there were so many situations, events and issues which could find no one other than Imam Ali (a.s.) who acted as a savior, a curer or a judge regarding the order of legislations, explaining Allah's laws and safeguarding

the Prophet's tradition.

Imam Ali(a.s.) and the Caliph:

After the death of Uthman bin Affan, the nation unanimously turned to Imam Ali (a.s.) and gave him the pledge of allegiance as caliph. They were overwhelmed with a wave of affection towards him. However, Imam Ali (a.s.) rejected them saying: "Let me be alone, and go in search of someone else."

Furthermore, Imam Ali (a.s.) was not of those who could be induced by post and position and thus, be responsive to the people as soon as they rushed to him. The whole caliphate did not have the worth of the wing a mosquito to him.

Actually the entire earthly world, in his sight, equalled not more than "a goat's sneeze", as he put it. Leadership is worthless if it does enable one to establish right and abolish wrong.

At last, finding the people still persisting in pledging their allegiance to him, he accepted the caliphate on certain conditions, which had to be wholeheartedly agreed to. Verily, he (a.s.) announced his declaration which contains his conditions:

"You should know that if I respond to you I would lead you as I know and would not care about whatever one may say or abuse."

Indeed Imam Ali (a.s.) means, in the above mentioned saying that he would lead them according to what he understood of Islam, not according to others' low desires and interests.

In this respect, he (a.s.) said:

"...When the caliphate came to me, I kept the Book of Allah in my view and all that Allah had put therein of us, and all that according to which He has commanded us to take decisions; and I followed it, and also acted on whatever the Prophet - may Allah bless him and his descendants - had laid down as his Sunnah..."

The whole nation responded by hurrying to announce their submission to his conditions, extending their hands, and pledging their allegiance and obedience to him. So, the Imam (a.s.) agreed to face, fully, his responsibilities of leading the Islamic nation, thought, and practice.

Indeed, the Imam (a.s.) clarified the reasons of his acceptance for people, saying: "...O my Allah! You know what we did was not to seek power nor to acquire anything from the vanities of the world. We, rather, wanted to restore signs of Your religion and to usher prosperity into Your cities so that the oppressed among Your creatures might be safe and Your forsaken commands might be reestablished..."

The first task was to remove all forms of deviation which had grown into Islamic life, and to bring the nation back to the original Divine course. To attain this he had to act according to a strict and comprehensive programme, and to have others act correctly when implementing it. It

was a task where his government had many problems to confront, especially in the following fields:

1. Political Field:

Imam Ali (a.s.) defined the attributes of governors and government officials whom Islam recommends to manage the affairs of the Islamic nation. These definitions were clearly set out in his communique which he issued: "...You certainly know that he who is in charge of honor, life, booty, (enforcement of) legal commandments and the leadership of the Muslims should not be a miser as his greed would aim at their wealth, nor be ignorant as he would then mislead them with his ignorance, nor be of rude behavior which would estrange them with his rudeness, nor should he deal unjustly with wealth thus preferring one group over another, nor should he accept a bribe while taking decisions, as he would forfeit (others) rights and hold them up without finality, nor should he ignore sunnah as he would ruin the people."

2. Economic Field:

Imam Ali (a.s.) cancelled all forms of discrimination in dividing the money among the people and stressed that fearing Allah, priority in embracing Islam, fighting for the sake of Islam, or companionship with the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), were not matters which gave their owners any sort of distinction in this world. Reward from Allah will be theirs in the Hereafter. Whoever had priority in these matters, would receive his reward from Allah. But, here in this world, all people are equal in their financial rights in respect to the Islamic law and in their duties.

Policy of Reaction:

Imam Ali (a.s.) knew that the Islamic justice which he wished to apply in his government would be difficult and heavy to the beneficiaries, self-seekers and opportunists who exploited circumstances prevalent during the time of the caliph, Uthman. Therefore, they spoiled wealth and properties, enjoyed some distinctions, accumulated gold and silver, either because of their relationship and kinsfolk or being considered as supporters of this group or of that. It was true what he (a.s.) expected that the implementation of Islamic justice would stimulate the feelings of the Quraish men who used to live in luxury or what they stole from the mouths of the hungry and the oppressed. Owing to the distinguished men of the Quraish being used to enjoying a whole array of privileges and advantages, it was hard for them to accept Imam Ali's (a.s.) policy of equality of rights as Allah enjoined.

Zubair bin Awam and Talha bin Ubaidulla disapproved of this policy of Imam Ali (a.s.), as it

deviated from what so far had been customary. Imam Ali (a.s.) asked them: "What is it that you so disapprove of in me that you seek other than me?"

They said: "You made our share of allowance the same as the others; you made us equal to those who are not like us."

The Imam (a.s.) replied to them:

"As to what you say about equal distribution of wealth, I should say it is not my opinion which I follow, nor is it a desire of mine to control. It is what I and you found the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) doing. There, too, I needed no help from you, since Allah had already ordained its dividends.

Therefore, neither you nor anyone else are justified in blaming me for this. May Allah guide our hearts and yours to the truth and grant us patience. May Allah have mercy upon him who, when he sees the truth, helps it to spread, who, when he sees inequity, rejects it, and who rightly backs his companions."

Thus, concepts and starting points differ. Imam Ali (a.s.) started from what Allah, the Exalted, and His Messenger (s.a.w.) enjoined, whereas his opponents started from what their own interests said to them.

The Battle of Basra:

It was natural that Talha and Zubair were unhappy with the reformative movement led by Imam Ali (a.s.) in Islamic life. They started preparations for rebellion against the Imam (a.s.) and stirred the Muslims against him. The result was a calamity that caused the nation grave losses.

They (Talha and Zubair) persuaded A'isha, the daughter of Abu Bakr – and one of the Holy Prophet's wife – to go out with them to Basra to lead the opposition front against Imam Ali (a.s.).

Imam Ali (a.s.) exerted great efforts to avoid the conflict. In Basra, Imam Ali (a.s.) continued to give his advice to prevent bloodshed. He even sent envoys to the Nakithun (those who broke their allegiance) inviting them to peace and reconciliation.

He (a.s.) met Zubair and reminded him of certain incidents which happened to them during the life of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.). Among them, the Holy Prophet's speech to Zubair:

"Verily, you will one day unfairly rise against him (i.e. Imam Ali)."

"O! Yes," replied Zubair, "but I forgot it. Now that you have reminded me, I would give it up."

Consequently, Zubair decided to retire from public life. But his son, Abdullah, accused him of cowardice for doing so.

Thus, the situation exploded and war was waged between the two camps. The fight ended with a crushing victory achieved by the Imam's army. Imam Ali (a.s.) proclaimed a general amnesty to all those who fought against him. He (a.s.) even returned A'isha to Madinah.

Because A'isha went to Basra riding on a camel, this war was called the War of the Camel (Jamal).

The Battle of Siffin:

The most difficult problem faced by Imam Ali (a.s.) during his caliphate was the problem of the rulers who were appointed before and were ruling the Muslims lands. Such rulers were not on a high level of piety, asceticism and loyalty in order to be as models and guides for people whom they lead toward guidance and reform, while most of the rulers were appointed before and who lacked such qualifications and even worse than that. Most of them were characterized by corruption, oppression and transgressing against the wealth of people and themselves.

Some rulers and commanders were among those who were severely in enmity and annoyance to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). Among them were:

- * Hakam bin Aas who was the most severe enemy to the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) to the extent that he (s.a.w.) expelled him and his son from Madinah.

- * Walid bin Aqaba bin Abi Mo'it, the ruler of Kufa during the reign of Uthman. This man (Walid) was a drunkard and had a Christian drinking companion. Once, this man offered four Rak'a (units of prayer) instead of two when he led people at dawn prayer because he was drunk.

- * Abdullah bin Sa'id bin Aadi was the Holy Prophet Muhammad's clerk and betrayed the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) in his writings and therefore, he (s.a.w.) dismissed him, therefore, he turned away from Islam, but later one of the caliph, Uthman, appointed him as a ruler for Egypt.

- * Mu'awiya bin Abi Sufyan, the ruler of Sham (Syria). He used to govern the whole land of Sham and was appointed as a ruler before and led a luxurious life which was not limited by Islamic law nor controlled by a religion. Ahmad bin Hanbal, in his authentic book, on the authority of Abdullah bin Boraida, said:

I and my father visited Mu'awiya. He made us sit and then brought food for us. After having finished eating, they brought a drink (wine); first Mu'awiya began to drink, then he passed it to my father and then he (Abu Boraida) said: I did not drink it since the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) forbade it.

It seems that Mu'awiya was never embarrassed about drinking alcoholic beverages. It was

brought to him on camels after passing through roads and markets. It happened that a group of camels, carrying, bottles of alcoholic beverages to Mu'awiya passed near Abada bin Samit, a companion who was in Sham at that time. He asked them: "What are these? Are they oil?" They said: "No, it is a wine which should be sold to Mu'awiya." This man took a plowshare from a market and with which he tore the bottles.

Mu'awiya had a severe hatred for Imam Ali (a.s.) because he (a.s.) killed his (Mu'awiya) brother Handhala who was a polytheist in the battle of Badr. He (a.s.) also killed his (maternal) uncle, Walid bin Utbah and a group of his (Mu'awiya) relatives who were fighting in the army of the unbelievers of the Quraish. This was one of the essential elements behind Mu'awiya's enmity towards Imam Ali (a.s.).

He (Mu'awiya) even ordered to curse the Imam (a.s.) on the pulpits of the mosques at every Friday Sermon.

Therefore, Imam Ali (a.s.), being the bearer of the standard of Islam, had no way other than changing such rulers and the like and replacing them with the righteous faithful from the companions of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) and the former in faith. This movement motivated such damaged people who found no shelter other than Mu'awiya who, in turn, gathered them under his flag. Mu'awiya declared his revolt against the Imam's decision for deposing him and refused obeying the true Caliph, thus, began to prepare himself to confront the Imam (leader) of his time.

After the victory in the battle of Basra, the Imam (a.s.) returned with his army to Kufa to reinforce his troops, and then to go on to Sham to liquidate the opposition, led by Mu'awiya bin Abi Sufyan.

Therefore, Imam Ali (a.s.) started his march with his army heading for Sham. But the enemy received news about his move, and decided to meet the Islamic advance on the way. The two armies confronted one another near the Euphrates River. Imam Ali (a.s.) resumed his efforts to set things right through peaceful ways and preserve the unity of the Muslims ranks and join the unanimity of the nation. But Mu'awiya's insisting on fighting caused more than ten thousand victims and because of complicated circumstances, the battle which lasted two weeks ended without any victory for both sides.

Developments of Judgment:

The confusion and disorder caused in the ranks of Imam Ali's (a.s.) army as a result of the raising the copies of the Holy Qur'an by the Umawi soldiers had an effective impact on his camp, and the appearance of the forces hidden under righteousness in his army and their pressure to impose the acceptance of the accomplished fact. Consequently, the Imam (a.s.)

was forced to respond to the order of judgment between the two sides. Thus, the people of Syria (Sham) chose Amru bin Aas who was famous for his cunning, tricks, and love of the present world, while the other side chose Abu Musa Ash'ari to represent the camp of the Imam Ali (a.s.), under the influence of the stupid ones and the owners of interests who existed inside the army of Imam Ali (a.s.). This man (Abu Musa Ash'ari) was weak minded, in addition to his being among those who isolated himself from the Imam Ali (a.s.) in his war against his enemies.

Some narrations refer that laceration caused in Imam Ali's (a.s.) troops reached its climax that even some chiefs of his soldiers threatened the Imam (a.s.) to act with him like they acted with Uthman or deliver him to Mu'awiya.

When the two arbitrators met each other, Amru bin Aas took advantage of Abu Musa Ash'ari when the latter presented him the idea of deposing both Imam Ali (a.s.) and Mu'awiya. When Abu Musa was pleased with that idea, Amru bin Aas began deposing his companion, whereas he himself did not recommend to precede the Messenger of Allah's (s.a.w.) companion in that. Therefore, Abu Musa advanced and deposed Imam Ali (a.s.) from the leadership of Muslim affairs and deposed Mu'awiya too, whereas Amru bin Aas announced his consent of deposing Imam Ali (a.s.) and appointing his own companion, Mu'awiya.

Thus, Amru bin Aas betrayed Abu Musa Ash'ari and took advantage of his weaknesses inspite of Abdulla bin Abbas's warnings against Amru's betrayal.

After the two delegations returned, Amru bin Aas submitted the caliphate to Mu'awiya in 37 A.H. and never submitted him the like before.

But, the Commander of Faithful Ali (a.s.) considered that the betrayal of Amru bin Aas and the negligence of Abu Musa Ash'ari, caused the arbitration to end through incorrect and unsafe ways. This betrayal and unseriousness were clearly seen in Amru's speeches and behavior. Therefore, Imam Ali (a.s.) called to resume war and declared his statement to the umma, which says:

"O people, I had given you my orders about this arbitration, but you rejected it (my orders) and disobeyed me. By my life, disobedience brings about regret. Consequently, mine and your positions became as the poet of Hawazin says: 'I gave you my orders at Mun'arijil-liwa but you did not see the good of my counsel till the noon of the next day (when it was too late).

' But these two arbitrators neglected the Book of Allah, they caused the death of what the Qur'an revived and revived what caused death. Each of them followed their own low desires without Allah's guidance. They judged without any proof nor with any previous tradition, and both of them were not guided...therefore, get ready for jihad, prepare (yourselves) for the (right)

path and be awakened in your positions."

Mu'awiya's Plans:

After the battle of Siffin and the order of judgment, Mu'awiya began to behave as if he was the absolute ruler. He began to collect the properties gained by poor-rates (zakat) and taxes and sent armies to different regions in order to terrify people and dominate these areas.

Therefore, he chose some criminals as leaders of his armies. These people had no previous convictions to Islam, but, were among those who bore hatred and enmity for Islam. He provided them with some terrorist instructions which were completely opposite to what the

Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) used to recommend to his army.

In the year 40 A.H., Mu'awiya sent an army, led by Bosr bin Abi Art'a, which consisted of three thousand fighters, and ordered him to take the route of Hejaz, Madinah and Makkah until he reached Yeman. He (Mu'awiya) told him the following:

"Do not camp at an area where the people are obeying Ali(a.s.), but that you control them with your tongues by threats, until they see that they have no rescue and you are surrounding them. Then, have full control over them, and call them to give their pledge of allegiance. Whoever refuses, then, kill him and kill the followers of Ali(a.s.) where they are."

Consequently, Bosr carried out the orders of his master, Mu'awiya. He began to pursue the close companions of Imam Ali(a.s.) and whoever delayed giving the pledge of allegiance (to Mu'awiya), he burnt their houses, destroyed them and robbed them of their properties.

He killed about thirty thousand on his way going and coming back and burnt a community to such an extent that a poet, regarding him, said: "Wherever Bosr goes with his army, he kills whatever he can and burns it".

When he (Bosr) moved to the city of Hadrhamaut, he said: "I want to kill one fourth of Hadrhamaut."

Mu'awiya ordered Sufyan bin Awf Ghamidi to enter Iraq and advised him to attack, rob, burn, and kill, saying:

"Destroy whatever you pass of villages, kill whoever you meet who does not agree with your opinion, and take the properties because they are similar to killing and it is the most painful one for the hearts."

Sufyan not only executed Mu'awiya's orders, but, also, did more. He attacked freely non-Muslims enjoying Muslims' protection (the people of the Book), killing and robbing them. These are the people in regard to whom the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) advised concerning them and said that he is an enemy of those who harm them.

These are some examples regarding Mu'awiya and his followers. Mu'awiya underlined his aims

and the goals of his battles, in his address to the people of Kufa, after the peace-treaty with

Imam Hasan (a.s.). He said:

"By Allah, I did not fight you in order to make you pray, nor to fast, nor to make pilgrimage, nor to pay poor-rates (zakat). Indeed, you do that (already). I fought you in order to dominate you."

This was the way of Mu'awiya, and which, Imam Ali (a.s.) in contrast was advising his commanders whom he (a.s.) sent to prevent the attacks of Mu'awiya, saying:

"Fear Allah towards Whom you will return. Do not despise a Muslim, nor a covenanter. Do not seize unlawfully, wealth, nor children nor offspring.. Even if you are barefooted and dismounted, keep up your prayers at their due times."

Thus, he recommends for the sanctity of people; whether Muslims or non-Muslims. Therefore, the conflict of Imam Ali (a.s.) with Mu'awiya represented the conflict between two opposite ways: The way of truth, principles, values and character and, on the other side, the way of falsehood, misguidance, oppression and betrayal. These two ways never meet each other.

In the Kingdom of Allah:

The Imam (a.s.) turned to resuming the fight against the Qaisitin in Sham - Mu'awiya and his followers once again.

He (a.s.) proclaimed mobilization for his army, and declared war against the opposition led by Mu'awiya. Then, he (a.s.) started distributing banners to his leaders, Imam Husayn(a.s.), Abu Ayyub Ansari and Qais bin Sa'id.

Yet, as he was engaged in mobilizing his forces in order to put an end to the opposition movement led by Mu'awiya, there was another mean conspiracy being covertly planned, this time to assassinate him. A group of his enemies held a meeting in Makkah to deliberate evil intentions, which were to end with the most horrific consequences.

The gravest decision was to murder the Commander of the Faithful Ali (Amir Mu'minin), and the task was assigned to the wilful criminal Abdul-Rahman bin Muljam Muradi. It was a most critical period in the history of Islam and the Muslims.

While the nation was looking forward to a decisive victory over the destructive elements of disunity led by Mu'awiya bin Abi Sufyan, the sinful hand of Ibn Muljam Muradi was extended to Imam Ali bin Abi-Talib (a.s.). He swept down with a sword on his head while the Imam was prostrating dawn prayers at the honorable Mosque of Kufa on the 19th of the month of Ramadan in the year 40 A.H.

They assassinated Imam Ali (a.s.) at his finest time -the hour of standing before Allah, the Exalted, during the prayer of submission, while fasting during the month of Ramadan; during

the most glorious Islamic duties, while preparing to wage holy striving (Jihad), and in the highest and most pure divine places, the Mosque of Kufa. The crime of assassinating Imam Ali (a.s.) remains one of the most cruel, brutal and hideous, because it was not committed against one man, but against the whole rational Islamic leadership. By assassinating Imam Ali (a.s.), they actually aimed at assassinating the message, the history, the culture and the nation of Muslims embodied in the person of Imam Ali bin Abi-Talib (a.s.), the successor of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), the bearer of his banner and the follower of his path and deed.

Thus, the Islamic nation lost its guide of progress after the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). Imam Ali (a.s.) suffered from his wound for three days, during which he entrusted his son, Imam Hasan (a.s.) with the Imamate of guiding the nation ideologically and socially. During those three days, as during all his life, he never ceased remembering Allah, praising Him, and accepting Him and His ordinance.

Likewise, he continued giving pieces of advice and directions leading to good, pointing to the right, defining the way to guidance, explaining the course for deliverance, calling for the observance of Allah's ordinances, and warning against following one's ill desires and set-backs from not carrying out the divine message.

The following is one piece of advice offered to his sons, Imams Hasan and Husayn (a.s.), as well as to his people, the nation and coming generation: "I advise you (both) to fear Allah and that you should not hanker after the (pleasure of this) world even though it may run after you. Do not be sorry for anything of this world that you have been denied. Speak the truth and act (in expectation) for (Allah's) reward. Be an enemy of the oppressor and a helper of the oppressed."

"I advise you (both) and all my children and members of my family and everyone whom my writing reaches, to fear Allah, to keep your affairs in order, and to maintain good relations among yourselves for I have heard your grandfather (the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.)) saying:

'Improvement of mutual differences is better than general prayers and fasting.'

"(Fear) Allah (and) keep Allah in view in the matter of orphans. So do not allow them to starve, nor allow them to be lost in your presence."

"(Fear) Allah (and) keep Allah in view in the matter of your neighbors, because they were the subject of the Prophet's advice. He went on advising in their favor till we thought he would allow them a share in inheritance."

"(Fear) Allah (and) keep Allah in view in the matter of the Qur'an. No one should excel you in acting upon it."

"(Fear) Allah (and) keep Allah in view in the matter of prayer, because it is the pillar of your religion."

"(Fear) Allah (and) keep Allah in view in the matter of your Lord's House (the Ka'ba). Do not forsake it so long as you live, because if it is abandoned you will not be spared."

"(Fear) Allah (and) keep Allah in view in the matter of Jihad with the help of your property, lives and tongues in the way of Allah."

"You should keep to a respect for kinship and spending for others. Avoid turning away from one another and severing mutual relations. Do not give up bidding for good and forbidding from evil least the mischievous gain positions over you, and then in such a case, your invocations will not be responded to (by Allah)."

Such was the heroic end of this great man! His loss was the gravest one to the Mission and the nation after the loss of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.).

By the martyrdom of Imam Ali (a.s.), the nation lost:

A heroism that had become the song of the time;

A courageous history that has never dreamt of its like;

A wisdom no one can fathom, save Allah;

A purity, the like of which was only in the prophets.

An abstinence from the pleasures of life that could be attained only by the nearest to Allah;

An eloquence such as to be the echo of the Book;

and a thorough knowledge of the laws of religion.

It is he about whom the Messenger of Allah(s.a.w.) said: "Ali(a.s.) is with the truth and the truth is with Ali(a.s.)" and "I am the city of knowledge, and Ali(a.s.) is its gateway, so whoever wants to enter the city, let him enter it through its gateway.

Peace be upon him the day he was born, the day he was martyred, and the day he shall be .raised alive