



Chapter 1

THE STRANGER

In the Name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful

Tired and exhausted with the water-skin on her back, she was gasping and going towards her house where innocent children, their eyes fixed at the door, were eagerly waiting for the arrival of their mother. On her way, an unknown man approached her. He took the water-skin from her and placed it on his back. The door opened and the children saw their mother entering the house with a stranger. He placed the water-skin on the ground and said:

"Well, it seems you don't have anyone to fetch water for you; how come you are so forlorn?"

"My husband was a soldier; Ali sent him to the frontier where he was killed. Now I am alone with these small children."

The stranger said no more. Bowing down his head he went away. But the thought of the helpless widow and orphans remained in his mind. He could hardly sleep in the night. Early in the morning he picked up a basket; put some meat, flour and dates in it; went straight to her house and knocked at the door.

"Who are you?"

"I am the man who brought your water yesterday. Now I have brought some food for the children."

"May God bless you and judge between us and Ali."

She opened the door. Entering the house he said:

"I wish to do some good acts. Either let me knead the flour and bake the bread or allow me to look after the children."

"Very well, but I can do the job of kneading and cooking better than you. You take care of the children till I finish cooking."

She went to knead the flour. Immediately he grilled some meat which he had brought and fed the children saying to each child while putting morsel in his mouth:

"My son, forgive Ali if he has failed in his duty towards you."

The flour got ready; she called : "Gentlemen! put fire in the oven." He went and put fire in the oven. When flames rose up, he brought his face near the fire and said, "Taste the heat of fire. It is the punishment for those who fail in their duty towards orphans and widows."

By chance, a woman from the neighbouring house came in. Recognizing the stranger, she cried: "Woe, don't you recognize the man who is helping you? He is Amirul-Muumineen (commander of the faithfuls) Ali bin Abi-Talib."

The widow came forward and shamefacedly cried: "Curse and shame to me. I beg your pardon."

"No, I beg your pardon for I failed in my duty towards you."

JOWAIBIR AND ZALFA

"How beautiful it were if you could marry and establish a family, ending this forlorn and isolated life? You could fulfil your natural urges and also she could help you in your temporal and spiritual needs and goals."

"O Messenger of Allah, I have neither wealth nor beauty; nor I have a noble descent or lineage. Who will marry me? And which woman likes to be wife of a poor, short, black and ugly man like me?"

"O Jowaibir! God has changed the individual's worth through Islam. Many people were high-placed in the pre-Islamic society and Islam brought them down. Many were despised non-entities and Islam bestowed them with honour and high rank and brought them up. Islam abolished the un-Islamic discrimination and pride of lineage. Now all people irrespective of their colour and origin are equal. Nobody has superiority over others but through piety and obedience to Allah. Among the Muslims, only that person would be higher than you whose virtues and deeds are better than you. Now do as I tell you."

These words were exchanged one day between the Prophet and Jowaibir when the Prophet came to see the people of "Suffa."

Jowaibir was a native of "Yamamah" where he came to know about the Prophet and the advent of Islam. He was poor, black and short, but at the same time intelligent truth seeking and a man of determination. He came to Medina to look at Islam from near; in a short time he embraced Islam. Since he had neither money, house nor any friends, he temporarily was accommodated along with other poor Muslims in the Mosque by permission of the Prophet. When it was revealed unto the Prophet that the Mosque was not a place of habitation, it became necessary to shift them elsewhere. The Prophet selected a site outside the Mosque and erected a shed for them. The place was named as "Suffa" and the residents were known as "Ashab-eSuffa" - all of them poor from places far away from Medina.

The Prophet came to visit them one day. Noticing Jowaibir among them he decided to bring him out of this forlorn life. It was beyond the fancy of Jowaibir to own a house and have a wife in his condition. And that was why he replied to the Prophet as to how it was possible for anyone to accept him in matrimony when the Prophet advised him to marry. But the Prophet removing his doubts, explained to him the changes brought about in the social outlook of the people by Islam.

After bringing Jowaibir out of his inferiority complex, he directed him to the house of Ziad ibne Lubaid to request him for his daughter's hand in marriage.

Ziad was one of the wealthiest persons of Medina and commanded high respect among his tribes. When Jowaibir entered his house, he was surrounded by his relatives and some of his tribesmen. Jowaibir took a seat, paused for a moment and then raising his head said, "I have brought a message from the Prophet. Do you like to hear it confidentially or openly?" Ziad: "A message from the Prophet is an honour to me, better you tell it openly."

"The Prophet has sent me to request you for your daughter for myself."

"Did he himself make this suggestion to you?"

"I don't speak on my own accord. Everybody knows me, I am not a liar."

"Strange! We don't give our daughters to persons of unequal status nor outside our tribe. You go back I shall go to the Prophet and have a talk with him myself."

Jowaibir left the house murmuring, "By God, whatever the Qur'an teaches and whatever is the purpose of the prophet-hood of Muhammad is totally against what Ziad says."

Those nearby heard the murmurings of Jowaibir.

Zalfa, the lovely daughter of Ziad, and the beauty-queen of Medina, heard these words of Jowaibir. She came to her father and asked:

"Father, what was that man who just went out saying? And what did he mean?"

"He had come to ask for your hand in marriage and was claiming that the Prophet had sent him for this purpose."

"Isn't it possible that he had really sent him, and thus your rejection may amount to disobedience of the Prophet's order?"

"What do you feel about it?"

"I feel you should bring him back before he reaches to the Prophet, and then go yourself to find out the truth."

He brought Jowaibir back to his house with due respect, and then himself hurried up to the Prophet. When he saw him he said:

"O Messenger of God, Jowaibir came to my house and brought such and such a message from you. I would like to inform you that our custom is to give our daughters to persons of equal status and belonging to our tribe, who are all your helpers and companions."

"O Ziad, Jowaibir is a Faithful man. That dignity and honour which you are talking about has now been abrogated. Every Believer man is equal (for marriage purpose) to every Believer woman."

Ziad returned to his house and explained the matter to his daughter. She said, "Please do not reject the proposal put by the Prophet. This matter concerns me. I accept Jowaibir whatever his condition may be. If the Prophet is pleased with it, I am also pleased."

The wedding was duly solemnized. Ziad paid "Mahr" (Marriage) from his own wealth and offered good articles to the pair. They asked the bridegroom, "Have you got a house where to take the bride?" He said, "No, I had never thought that I would get a wife and settle in domestic life. It was the Prophet who came suddenly and had a talk with me and sent me to Ziad's house."

Ziad arranged for him a house equipped with complete house-hold effects, and transferred the bride superbly adorned with ornaments and perfumes.

Night came. Jowaibir did not know where was the house meant for him. He was guided to the house and led to the bridal-chamber. When he saw the house and its equipments and looked at the dazzling bride, his past came to his mind and he said to himself, "How poor I was when I entered this city. I had nothing - neither money nor beauty, neither any lineage nor family - now God made these affluences available to me through Islam. Indeed it is Islam that has brought such changes in the social outlook of the people beyond any imagination. How grateful I am to God for bestowing upon me all these Blessings!"

In spiritual ecstasy he went to a corner of the room; spent the night in recitation of the Qur'an and prayer. It was dawn when he came to himself and then decided to fast in gratitude to God. When women came to see Zalfa in the morning they found her untouched. They kept the matter secret from Ziad. Two nights and days passed in the same manner. He was fasting during days and praying during nights. The women of the family of the bride were worried. They thought perhaps Jowaibir was impotent and had no need for a woman. At last, they put the matter

before Ziad. He informed the Prophet; the Prophet; called Jowaibir and asked, "Don't you have any desire for woman?"

"Incidentally, I have very intense desire of that kind."

"Then why didn't you go near your bride?"

"O Prophet of God, when I entered the house I found myself amidst that affluence. A state of gratitude and devotion took me over. I thought it necessary to offer thanks and prayers to Allah before doing anything. Tonight I shall go near my wife."

Jowaibir and Zalfa lived a most happy life. When the call for a Jihad (Holy war) came, he participated in it with the enthusiasm typical of a brave Muslim, and achieved martyrdom under the banner of Islam.

After his martyrdom, Zalfa was the most sought after woman for a wife and people were eager to pay the greatest Mahr for her.

Chapter 3

THE NEW CONVERT

Two neighbours, a Muslim and a Christian, were on friendly terms. Having concern for one another they used to enquire after each others health, and exchanged views from time to time. The Muslim being a devout and religious man spoke high of his religion and the result was that the Christian friend embraced Islam.

The night passed and it was nearing dawn. The Christian, a new convert, heard somebody ramming his door. Surprised and restless he shouted:

"Who is it?"

From the back came a loud voice, "I am so and so," introducing himself. He was the Muslim neighbour who had the honour of converting him to Islam.

"What do you want at this late hour?"

"Be quick, put on your clothes and perform ablution, so that we should go to the Mosque together."

The new Muslim performed ablution (Wuzu) for the first time in his life and set out to Mosque behind his Muslim friend. They had arrived before time. It was the time for the Recommended (not obligatory) prayer after mid-night. They prayed till dawn - the time came for the morning prayer. They prayed the morning prayer and were engaged in benedictions and invocations till it became perfectly clear. When the new Muslim made a move towards the door, his friend interrupted:

"Where are you going?"

"I am going home, Since I have finished my morning prayer, there is nothing else to do now."

"Wait a while and recite the benedictions till the sun rises."

"Very well."

He sat and recited the same till the sun rose. When he rose up to go, his friend placed the Qur'an in his hand saying, "Read it till the sun rises a little high. And I advise you to fast today. Don't you know how much

virtues and rewards there are in fasting?" The new Muslim did as he was told, and sat reciting the Our'an till it was nearing noon. The Muslim neighbour said: "Now it is almost noon; better we perform the noon-prayer in the Mosque." So, the Zohr (noon) prayer was prayed. Then he said again: "After just a short time, the Asr (after-noon) prayer will be prayed. We should perform that also at the proper time." That prayer was also performed. Then he said, "It is almost evening now" and detained the new convert till it was time for Maghrib (evening) prayer. When he rose up to break his fast, the neighbour said, "there is one more prayer remaining. It is named "Esha" or the sleeping-time prayer." So they waited nearly one hour for the proper time of this prayer. After that the new Muslim got up and went away.

Next day at the same hour of night he again heard knockings at the door.

"Who is there?"

"I am so and so... .. your neighbour. Be quick, put on your clothes and perform ablution to go to the Mosque together."

"As soon as I returned from the Mosque last night, I resigned from your religion. Please go away and find some other idle man who has nothing to do in this world, so that he may be able to spend his whole time in the mosque. I am a poor man having wife and children to feed. I should better go after my work to earn my livelihood."

Imam Jafer Sadiq relating the story to his friends and companions, said: "In this manner a devout man after converting a new Muslim, had himself kicked him out of Islam. You must bear this fact in mind and should not trouble the people unnecessarily. You should judge their strength and capacity and act accordingly, so that they develop affinity for the religion and do not run away from it. Don't you know that the policy of Umayyads is based on violence, oppression and intimidation whereas our ways and methods are based on leniency, brotherhood and persuasion."

Chapter 4

NASIBA

The deep scar on the shoulder of Nasiba, daughter of Kaab, spoke of a major wound in the past. Whenever the women, specially of the younger generation who had not seen the time of the Prophet or were too small at that time, noticed the cavity in her shoulder, they enquired with extreme curiosity about the frightening incident which had resulted in the injury to her shoulder. They loved to hear her adventures in the battle of Uhud from her own mouth.

She had never imagined that she would fight shoulder to shoulder with her husband and two sons defending the Prophet in the battle of Uhud. She had only taken the water-skin on her back so that she could provide water to the injured and also had taken some home-made bandages to dress their wounds. She had not thought of herself as worthy of any other work on that day.

Although the Muslims were small in number and had only a limited supply of equipments, they gave a grand defeat to the enemy who took to their heels vacating the battle field. But soon after, due to the negligence of some men guarding the "Ainain Hills," the enemy made a surprise attack from the rear, turning the victory of the Muslims into defeat. The Muslims surrounding the Prophet fled away, leaving him almost alone in the battlefield.

When Nasiba saw this precarious situation, she put the water-skin on the ground, and took a sword in her hand. She fought with the sword and also made good use of bows and arrows; and took a shield left over by a fleeing soldier. Once she noticed a man shouting: "Where is Mohammad himself?" She approached him immediately and inflicted a few blows on him; but he was double-armoured and her attacks had not much effect on him. He then inflicted such a heavy blow on the shoulder of the armourless woman that it required treatment for one year. Noticing a stream of blood gushing from her shoulder, the Prophet called to

one of her sons to immediately dress her wound. He put a bandage over her shoulder and she again got busy in the battle.

Meanwhile one of her sons got injured. She took out a bandage and dressed his wound. The Prophet watching the scene smiled at the heroism of this woman. After dressing her son's wound she instructed him to get going for the battle. These words were still in her mouth when the Prophet pointed out a man to her and told her that he was the same man who had injured her son. She attacked the man like a lioness and inflicted her sword on his leg. He fell on the ground. The Prophet said, "Well, thou hast taken thy revenge. Thanks for God who gave the victory on him and made thy eyes cool."

Many Muslims were martyred and wounded. She herself was severely wounded and there was no hope of her life. After the battle of Uhud, the Prophet ordered the wounded Muslims to pursue the enemy upto Hamra-ul-Asad, to be sure of their intention and condition. Nasiba also wanted to accompany them but the deep injuries did not allow her to do so. On returning from Hamra-ul-Asad, the Prophet before reaching his house, sent someone to enquire about her health and was pleased to learn that she was alive.

COMPLAINT AGAINST HUSBAND

Ali during the days of his Khilafat used to personally listen to the grievances and complaints of the people. Once, the days were hot and people did not venture out of their houses after mid-day. Ali sat everyday outside his house under the shade of a wall so that if someone had any complaints, could lodge the same to him directly. Sometimes he walked in lanes and streets observing the general condition of the people.

One day he returned to his residence tired and sweating, and found a woman waiting. Seeing him, she came near and said:

"I am in trouble. My husband oppresses me. He has turned me out from the house and has threatened to beat me. If I go to him he will beat me. I request you to do justice between us."

"O Servant of Allah, it is too hot now. Wait till it cools down in the afternoon. Then I shall come with you and redress your grievances."

"If I stay out too long, I am afraid it may increase his anger."

For a moment he bowed his head and then raised it up saying to himself, "No, By God, justice to the oppressed should not be delayed. The right of the oppressed should certainly be taken from the oppressor; and every fear should be taken out from her heart so that she may stand boldly before the oppressor and demand her right."

"Tell me where is your house?"

"It is in such and such place."

"Let us go."

He accompanied her to her house, stood at the door and called loudly, "O Master of the house! Peace be upon thee."

A young man came out. He was her husband. He did not recognize Ali. He found that an old man of about sixty years had accompanied her and assumed that she had brought him for support and mediation; but he kept silent.

"This lady has a complaint against you. She says that you have oppressed her and have ousted her from the house. Besides you have

threatened to beat her. I have come here to tell you to fear Allah and be kind to your wife."

"In what way does it concern you if I have not treated my wife well. Yes, I had threatened to beat her, but now, since she has brought you to plead for her, I shall throw her into fire and burn her alive."

Ali was disturbed by the impudence of the man. Drawing out his sword he said, "I am only advising you to do good and admonishing you from bad deeds; but you are replying me in such manner clearly saying to burn this woman in fire. Do you think there is no authority in this world?"

His loud voice drew the attention of the passers by, and a huge crowd gathered. Whoever came bowed down with reverence before the old man and saluted him by saying "Peace be on you O Commander of the Faithfuls."

When the rude young man realised as to whom he was talking with, he trembled and supplicated, "O Ameerul Moumineen! forgive me. I confess my faults and promise that henceforth I shall obey my wife."

Ali turned to the woman and told her to go in the house and cautioned her not to behave in such a manner that her husband had to be angry again.

Chapter 6

THE SON OF HATIM

Before the advent of Islam, there were in Arabia autonomous tribal chiefs. The people were used to the rule of their chiefs and obeyed them; and often paid them tributes and taxes. The well-known generous Hatim, of the tribe of Tai, was one of the tribal chiefs of Arabia. His son, Adi, succeeded him after his death and the Tribe submitted to his rule. He was taxing them to the extent of one-fourth of their income every year. His lordship coincided with the advent of the Prophet.

The Tai tribes were idol-worshippers, but himself was a Christian, but kept his beliefs secret from his people. The people, after being acquainted with the liberal teachings of Islam, felt themselves relieved from the burden of their lords who had hitherto imposed their rule upon the people. Owing to this fact, Adi, like other lords used to look upon Islam as the greatest danger for himself; and was harbouring enmity against the Prophet. But the die was cast. People were embracing Islam in increasingly large numbers; and the religion of Allah was advancing day by day. He knew that the day was near when the Muslims would come looking for him also, and that would be the end of his lordship. He therefore, instructed his special steward, a slave, to always keep strong and light-footed camels ready near his camp and to remain watchful.

One day the slave came to him and said, "Make whatever arrangements you want to make as the Muslims are very close." Adi mounted his family on the camels and took whatever valuables and luggage he could take, and escaped to Damascus where the people were of his religion. But in the confusion, he forgot to take his sister, Saffana with him; and she was left behind.

The Muslims defeated the tribe in the battle; and some were made captives. Muslims brought Saffana to Medina along with other captives and related the story of Adi's escapade to the Prophet. The prisoners were sheltered in a low-walled compound near the Mosque. One day, the

Prophet, while going to the Mosque passed beside the enclosure. Saffana, intelligent and talkative as she was, moved from her place and said:

"My father is dead; my guardian is hiding; be generous to me, God will be generous to you."

Prophet: "Who is your guardian?"

"Adi, son of Hatim"

"The one who has run away from God and His Prophet?"

Saying these words the Prophet went away. Next day again she repeated the same words, heard the same reply. Her plea produced no result. The third day, having lost her hopes, she decided to keep silent. But a young man walking behind the Prophet made signs to her to repeat her demand. She repeated the same words. The Prophet said, "Very well, I am waiting for some reliable man from your tribe. As soon as such a man is found I shall send you with him to your tribe. Inform me if you find such a person who has come to Medina."

She asked the people who was the young man walking behind the Prophet who had encouraged her to repeat her demand. They said he was Ali.

After some time, Saffana informed the Prophet that some men of her tribe had come to Medina. The Prophet gave her a new dress, some cash for meeting the expense of the journey and a camel to ride on. She went along with them to her brother in Syria.

When she saw her brother, she reproached him and said, "You brought out your wife and children forgot me the memory of your father!" Adi apologized to her. Then, as she was an intelligent woman, Adi consulted her about his plan. He asked:

"What do you advise me to do, since you have seen Mohammed from near? Should I join him or keep aloof from him?"

I believe you should join him. If he is a Prophet of God it will be a credit to your honour and nobleness. And if he is not a prophet, and only wants to be a worldly ruler, then in a place (Medina) which is not far from Yemen (your place), nobody will dare to dishonour you, because of the honour and respect you have among the people of Yemen. Either way, your honour is guaranteed."

The idea appealed to Adi. He decided to go to Medina and to observe the Prophet's manners minutely. If he was a prophet he would follow him like other Muslims. But in case he was only a man with worldly ambitions of power and pelf, then he would cooperate with him to the extent of the common benefits of both.

He entered the Mosque of Medina and saluted to the Prophet. The Prophet accorded him due respect and took him to his house.

On their way a haggard woman caught hold of the garment of the Prophet and entered into a discussion with him. A long time passed; and the Prophet answered all her questions with kindness and patience.

Adi said to himself, "This is the one sign from the character of this man that he is a prophet. People having worldly ambitions do not have such a disposition and temperament of replying to a poor old woman with so much patience and kindness."

When they entered the house Adi found his life most simple and unpretentious. There was only a quilt which the Prophet used to sit upon, but now he spread it for Adi to sit. Adi insisted that the Prophet should sit upon the quilt; but he flatly refused. Ultimately, Adi sat upon the quilt and the Prophet sat on the ground. Adi said to himself, "This is the second sign of the character of this man, This is the character of the Prophets, not of the kings."

The Prophet turned to him and said, "But was not your religion Christianity?" Adi said "Yes, why?" The Prophet said, "then why, and on what grounds, were you taking one-fourth of the income of your people? Is it not inadmissible in your religion?"

Adi, who had kept his religion secret even from his closest relatives, was surprised to hear it from the Prophet. He said to himself, "this is the third sign that this man is a prophet."

Then the Prophet said: "You are looking at the present poverty and helplessness of the Muslims. You find that the Muslims today are living in distress. They are surrounded by crowds of enemies and have no security of their lives and properties. They have no power in their hands. By God, the time is not far when such a vast wealth will come to them that there will be no poor among them. By God their enemies will be vanguard and there will exist such a perfect peace and order that a woman shall be able to travel from Iraq to Hijaz alone and nobody will trouble her. By God, the time is near when the white palaces of Babylonia will come under the hands of the Muslims."

Adi embraced Islam with perfect Faith and Sincerity and remained faithful to the end of his life. He lived upon the years after the Holy Prophet. He always remembered the talks of the Holy Prophet in his first meeting with him, and the forecasts at that time, about the future of Muslims. He used to say, "By God, in my life-time I saw Muslim conquering the white palaces of Babylonia, and there is such a peace and order that a woman can travel from Iraq to Hijaz without anybody

troubling her. By God, I am sure a day will come when there will be no poor among the Muslims."

Chapter 7

IBNE SAYYABA

Ibne Sayyaba, a resident of Kufa, was a young man whose father had died. The tragedy of the death of his father, coupled with poverty and unemployment, was destroying the soul of the sensitive man. One day while sitting in his house, he heard a knock at the door. He was a friend of his father. After offering his condolences, he said:

"Did your father leave anything for you?"

"No."

Then take this thousand Dirham; try to turn it into a capital, and meet your expenses from its profit."

Saying these words he went away. Ibne Sayyaba, happy as he was, went to his mother and showing the money told her the story. The same day, he used the money in purchasing some merchandise and opening a shop; and set his heart to it. He made a rapid progress. Soon after he realised that not only he had met his household expenses from the profit, but even the capital had increased to a great extent. Now he thought of performing pilgrimage, and approached his mother for her advice. She said, "First you should repay the thousand Dirham which has brought such prosperity to us, and then you may go to Mecca."

He went to see the friend of his father, and placing a purse of one thousand Dirham before him, said, "Please accept your money back." The man thought that Ibne Sayyaba was returning the same money because it was not sufficient for any trade. So he said:

"If the amount is insufficient I can increase it."

"Good God, it was not insufficient. It has brought great prosperity to us and since I am now quite well off financially, I have come to repay your money, and to express my thanks to you, particularly when I have decided to go on pilgrimage."

He came to his home and packed his luggage for Mecca.

After performance of the holy Hajj, he came to Medina and went to see Imam Sadiq (a.s.) along with other pilgrims. There was a huge crowd in

the house of the Imam (a.s.). Being young he chose to sit at the far end of the gathering, and from there watched the people coming and going; and heard their questions and the answers given by the Imam. When the house became nearly empty, the Imam (a.s.) pointed to him and said:

"What can I do for you?"

"I am Abdur Rehman, son of Sayyaba, of Kufa (from the tribe of Bijilly)"

"How is your father?"

"He died"

"Ah! Ah! May God have His mercy upon him. Did he leave anything for you?"

"No, he didn't."

"Then how could you perform pilgrimage?"

"After the death of my father we were in distress. On one side his death and on the other side poverty and unemployment, were crushing us extremely. Then one day a friend of my father gave me one thousand Dirham and advised me to invest the amount in business. I followed his advice and from its profit I came to perform pilgrimage."

Before he could finish his story, the Imam (a.s.) said, "Tell me what did you do about the money of your father's friend?"

I refunded the amount on the advice of my mother before coming out for Hajj."

"Very good. Do you like me to give you an advice?"

"May I be your ransom; of course."

"Be truthful and righteous. A truthful and righteous man is a partner in the wealth of others."

AQUEEL AS A GUEST OF ALI

Aqueel arrived as a guest at the Government House in the days of the Caliphate of his brother, Ali. Ali made a sign to his elder son Hassan to offer a garment to his uncle. Hassan presented to him a robe and a cloak. The night came; the weather was warm. They were sitting on roof-top having amiable talks. It was time for dinner. Aqueel considered himself to be the guest of the Absolute ruler of the Muslim world and expected an extraordinarily colourful and rich dinner. But to his surprise it was the most ordinary and simple one. He said: "Is this all the food?"

Ali: "Isn't it a God's gift? I heartily thank Almighty God that he has bestowed me with this gift."

Aqueel: "Then I should better tell you my needs at once, and be on my way soon. I am in debt. Please order to pay off my debt as soon as possible; and also help your poor brother as much as you can, so that I return to my place relieved of my burdens."

"How much is your debt?"

"One hundred thousand Dirham."

"Oh! One hundred thousand Dirham! So large? I am sorry, brother. I don't have so much money to give you; but wait till the time comes for the disbursement of stipends. I shall withdraw my personal share and give from it to you, thus fulfilling my duty of cooperation and brotherhood towards you. If my family and children were not in need of their own expenses, I would have given you my entire share."

"What?!! Should I wait till the payment of stipends? You have the state-treasury in your hand and still you are asking me to wait till the time of disbursement and then only you will give me from your personal share! You can withdraw any amount you want from the State Treasury. So, why are you making me wait till then? Besides, what is your total share from it? Even if you give me the your entire share, how far will it relieve me of my trouble?"

"I am surprised to hear your proposal. What concern it does it, is of me or you whether there is money in the Treasury or not? We are just like any other Muslims. True, you are my brother and I must help you as much as possible, but from my personal money, not from the public treasury."

The argument continued and Aqueel pleaded with Ali in various ways. He continued to insist that Ali should give him from state treasury. The place where they were sitting overlooked the market of Kufa, and they could see the cash-boxes of the shop-keepers. Ali said, "If you still insist and are not ready to listen to me, then I have got another proposal for you. If you follow it you can repay all your loan and still have plenty of money left."

"What is that?"

"Down over there are cash-boxes. As soon as the market is closed and nobody is there, go down and break open the boxes. And take whatever you want."

"Whose boxes are they?"

"They belong to the people of this market. They keep their cash in them."

"Strange! You are telling me to steal the money of poor people who have earned it with their hard labour and have gone home leaving it there trusting in God?"

"Then why are you urging me to open the boxes of the state-treasury for you? Whom does it belong to? This also belongs to the same people who are asleep in their houses carefree and in comforts. All right, I have another suggestion. Follow it if you like."

"What's that?"

"If you are ready then pick up your sword and so will do I. The old city of Hirah is not far from here. There are leading merchants and wealthy people there. We make a surprise attack on one of them during night and bring out enormous wealth with us."

"Brother, I haven't come here for theft and robbery that you are suggesting these things to me. I am only asking you to instruct the officials of the treasury to give me the money which is in your power, so that I may repay my debt."

"Suppose that we steal the property of an individual, isn't it better that stealing from the property of millions of Muslims? How is it that taking the property of an individual with sword is robbery, and usurping the property of the general public is not? You are under the impression that robbery only means attacking some individual and taking his property

by force. The worst type of robbery is the same thing which you are proposing to me to do now."

Chapter 9

THE FIRST SLOGAN

News leaking now and then from Mecca to the tribe of Bani Ghefar had attracted the mind of Abu Zar, a man of an inquisitive nature. He wanted reach to the depth of those developments in Mecca, but the distorted news occasionally obtained from the individuals, were not making any sense to him. The only definite thing known to him was that a new voice has arise in Mecca, and the Meccans were striving hard to silence it. But what was that new voice and why the Meccans were opposing it? These were the questions which remained unanswered. His brother was going to Mecca. He told him, "People tell me that a man has appeared in Mecca and has brought some new talks, and claim they have been revealed unto him from God. Since you are going to Mecca, investigate into the same and bring me the correct information."

Days passed; he eagerly waited for his brother; when he came back, Abu Zar asked him:

"What is the news, and how the things stand there?"

"So far as I could gather he is a man who invites people towards good morals. He has also brought some talk which is not poetry."

"I had wanted you to make a more thorough investigation. This much information is not enough for my purpose. Better I should go there personally to find out the truth."

He put up some provision on his back and straight away came to Mecca. He was determined to meet the man who had brought the new talks and to hear the words from his own mouth. But he neither knew him nor thought it prudent to enquire about him from someone else. The atmosphere in Mecca was tense with oppression and Intimidation. Without making his intention known to anyone, he was looking in all directions, listening to the gossip of the people around him hoping that it might provide him a 'clue.' The Masjidul Haram was the centre of news and events. Hence he came there with his baggage on the back. The day turned into night, but he could find no clue. Night passed a little; he

stretched himself there. Soon after a young-man passed nearby. He looked at Abu Zar with searching eyes, and went away. His glance seemed to him very meaningful. It occurred to him that perhaps that young-man was the right person to divulge his secret to. He followed him but came back not daring to speak to him.

Next day also he sat whole day in Masjidul Haram alert looking to every possible clue; but in vain. The night befell and he again stretched on the same spot. The same youth appeared again and respectfully said, "Has the time not come for you to come to your house and spend the night there?" Saying this he took him to his house. Abu Zar did not divulge his secret that night, nor did the youth ask him. Early morning Abu Zar said good-bye to him and came to the mosque after his pursuit. That day also turned into night and he could not make out anything from the talks of the people. The young-man again appeared and took him to his house; but this time he broke the silence:

"Can you tell me why you have come to this city?"

"I shall tell you if you promise to help me."

"I promise I shall do my best to help you."

"The fact is that we have been hearing among our tribes that a man has appeared in Mecca and has brought some talks claiming the same to be revealed unto him from God. I have come so that I may see him and may investigate about him. Firstly, tell me what do you believe about him? Secondly, can you guide me to him?"

"Rest assured he is on right and what he says is from God. I shall take you to him in the morning. But as you are aware if these people came to know about it your life as well as mine will be in danger. Tomorrow morning I shall walk ahead and you follow me at a distance. If I will see any danger I shall stand and bow towards the earth like a man emptying a pot; then you must be off. If there is no danger you will follow me where-ever I go."

Next morning the youth who was none else than Ali appeared from his house, Abu Zar following him. Fortunately the way was clear and they reached the house of the prophet safely.

He made a thorough study of the manners of the Prophet and also listened to the verses of the Qur'an. Not much time has passed that he embraced Islam very enthusiastically. He made a covenant with the Prophet that he would not listen to any reproach in the way of Allah during his whole life and would speak truth even though it might be bitter for some tastes.

The Prophet said: "Now go back to your tribes and invite them towards Islam till you receive my next order." He said, "Very well; but before leaving this city I shall go before these people and will announce before them the slogan of Islam, come what may."

He went straight to the heart of the City, i.e. the Mosque and cried before the congregation of Quraish:

"(I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and Mohammad is His Servant and Messenger)."

Hearing this slogan from the stranger, Meccans rushed at him immediately and had Abbas son of Abdul Muttlaib not come to his rescue they would have torn him to pieces. Abbas said, "This man is from the tribe of Ghefar, and the trade caravan of Quraish plying between Mecca and Syria passes through their lands. Don't you think if you kill one of their men, you will never again be allowed to pass through their land safely?"

Abu Zar was rescued from their hands. However, he was not satisfied. He said, "Once again I shall repeat this slogan. Let these people hear what they don't like to hear at all. If they hear it again and again they will become used to it."

So, next day he repeated the same slogan. Again the people attacked him and Abbas who was present there saved him from their atrocities.

After that, according to the order of the Prophet, he returned home and started preaching Islam among his tribe. When the Prophet migrated to Medina, Abu Zar too went to him and remained in Medina almost to the end of his life. He was extremely frank and owing to this virtuous attributes he was exiled during the Caliphate of Othman, first to Syria and later at a place named Rabza near Medina. There he died a lonely death. The Prophet had said about him:

"May God bless Abu Zar! He will live alone, Will die alone and shall be brought up alone on the Day of Resurrection."

Chapter 10

THE PROHIBITION OF WATER

Moawiya was ruling over Syria as its governor for nearly sixteen years; and was secretly planning to grab the Caliphate taking advantage of every possible opportunity. The best excuse for him to revolt against the Central authority and declare his own caliphate was the Othman's murder. He had not done any thing concerning the appeals of Othman for help, during his life time. In fact, he was waiting for him to be murdered, so that he could make it an excuse for his scheme. Othman got murdered and Moawiya immediately sought to exploit the situation for his own purpose.

On the other hand, people after the murder of Othman rallied behind Ali (who because of various reasons, was reluctant to take the responsibility of Caliphate) and declared their allegiance to him. Observing that the responsibility was now formally turned to him, he accepted it and his Caliphate was proclaimed in Medina, the capital and centre of Muslim world in those days. All provinces of Islamic government submitted to his obedience - with the exception of Syria which was under Moawiya. He refused allegiance to Ali, accusing him of sheltering the murders of Othman. He recruited a large number of Syrian soldiers and made preparation for the declaration of independence of his provinces.

After settling the issue of the battle of Camel (**JAMAL**), Ali turned his attention to Moawiya. He wrote several letters to him, but in vain. Both sides moved their armies towards each another. Abul Aawar Salmi was leading Moawiya's advanced battalion and Malik Ashtar was in command of the advanced battalion of Ali. They met at the bank of the Euphrates. Ali's directive to Malik was not to be the first to attack. But Abul Aawar made a severe attack to intimidate the soldiers of Ali. Malik then pushed the Syrians far behind. Salmi now thought of another tactics. He reached the Ghat, i.e. the slope on bank of the Euphrates which was the only spot convenient to fetch water. He deployed his spearmen and archers to guard the spot and prevent Malik and his company from coming

near it. Soon after, Moawiya himself arrived with a large army. Happy at the strategy of his commander he further increased the number of the soldiers guarding the approach to river. Soldiers of Ali were put in distress owing to the shortage of water. Moawiya with pleasure said: "This is Our first Victory." Only one man, Amr bin Al-Aas, the shrewd minister of Moawiya did not think it a good policy. On the other side, Ali himself had arrived and was informed of the situation. He sent a letter with Saasa'a to Moawiya notifying:

"We have come here, but, as far as possible we do not like to wage a war of fratricide between the Muslims. We earnestly hope to settle our differences through negotiations and discussions. But we observe that you and your followers have started using weapons of destruction before trying anything else. Besides, you have denied water on my companions. Instruct them to desist from this act, so that we can start negotiations. Of course, if you do not like anything but war, we are not afraid of it."

Moawiya consulted his advisor. The general opinion was to take advantage of the golden opportunity and ignore the letter. Only Amr bin Al-Aas against this view. He said, "You are mistaken. The fact is that Ali and his men do not want to start the war themselves, and it is because of this that they are silent at present and have tried to dissuade you from your scheme through this letter. Do not think they will retreat if you ignore their letter and continue denying them the water. Because then they will take out arms and will not stop till they have driven you away from Euphrates with disgrace." But the majority of advisors was of the opinion that the denial of water would weaken the enemy compelling them to retreat. Moawiya personally was in favour of this idea. Discussion came to end; Saasa'a asked for the reply; Moawiya, using the delaying tactics, said that he would send the reply afterwards. Meanwhile, he ordered his soldiers guarding water to be extra alert and to prevent coming and going of the soldiers of Ali.

Ali was distressed at this development, because it brought to an end every hope of any amicable settlement through talks and negotiations, and showed that the opposite side was devoid of every goodwill. Now, the only way out was to use force. He stood before his soldiers and delivered a short but forceful address, the contents of which were as follows:

"These people have started oppression, and opened the door of conflict and welcomed you with hostility. They are hungry for war and are demanding war and blood-shed from you. They have denied you water.

Now you have to choose between the two paths. There is no third course.

Either accept the humiliation and oppression and remain thirsty as you are, or satisfy your thirsty swords with their dirty bloods so that you may quench your thirst with the sweet water. Death is to live a defeated and disgraceful life; and life is to be victorious even at the cost of death. Verily, Moawiya has gathered around him some ignorant and misguided mob; and is taking advantage of their ignorance, so that they are making their necks targets of the arrows of death."

This address moved the soldiers of Ali and stirred their blood. They made a severe attack and pushed the enemy far back and took the possession of (Shariah) Ghat.

Amir bin Al-Aas (whose forecast was now a fact) said to Moawiya: "Now, if Ali and his army pay you with your own coin what will you do? Can you take possession of the "Shariah" (Ghat) from them for the second time?" Moawiya said, "In your opinion, how will Ali deal with us now?"

"I believe, Ali will not behave as you had done. He will not deny us water. He has not come here for such deeds."

The soldiers of Ali after removing the soldiers of Moawiya from Ghat, asked his permission to prevent the enemy from taking water. Ali said, "Don't deny them water. These are the methods of ignorant. I do not set my hands to such acts. I am going to start negotiation with them on the basis of the Holy Book of God. If they accept my proposals, well and good; and if they refuse, I shall fight with them, but gentlemanly not by denying them water. I will never do such thing and will not oppress them by shortage of water."

Not long afterwards soldiers of Moawiya used to come to the Ghat side by side with the soldiers of Ali, and nobody prevented them.

Chapter 1

THE SILLY SHOP-KEEPER

A heavy-built tall man was passing through the market of Kufa, his step firm and assured. He had fine figure and sun-burnt face; encounters of the battle-field had left their marks on him and the corner of one of his eyes was slit. A shop-keeper, to amuse his friends, threw a handful of sweepings onto the man. The man continued his walk in the same assured and firm manner, without raising an eye-brow or looking towards the shop-keeper. When he went away, a friend of the shop-keeper said:

"Do you know who the man is whom you have insulted just now?"

"No, I do not recognise him. He was a passer-by like thousands of people passing this way everyday. But tell me who was this man."

"Strange! Didn't you recognise him?! He was Malik Ashtar, the renowned Commander-in-Chief of Ali."

"Strange! He was Malik Ashtar?! The same Malik whose bravery turns the heart of lion into water and mention of whose name makes his enemies tremble with fear?"

"Yes, that was Malik himself."

"Woe to me! What did I do? Now he will give order to punish me severely. I must run to him immediately to apologize and pray him to forgive my misbehaviour."

He ran after Malik. He saw him turning towards a mosque. He followed him to the Mosque and saw that he had started praying. He waited till he finished his prayer. Humbly introducing himself he told him:

"I am the man who had committed the silly prank and behaved disrespectfully to you."

Malik: "But, by Allah, I did not come in the mosque but for your sake; because I knew that you were a very ignorant and misguided man and that you give trouble to the people without any cause. I felt pity on you and came here to pray for you and ask Allah to lead you onto the right path. No, I did not have any such intentions as you were afraid of."

Chapter 12

WHAT DID HAPPEN TO THY SONS?

After the martyrdom of Ali and absolute domination of Moawiya over the Caliphate, willy-nilly contacts were taking place between him and the sincere followers of Ali. He tried hard to make them confess that they did not gain anything by their friendship with Ali. Obviously they had lost everything on the altar of that friendship. He longed to hear from their mouth at least some expression of regret and remorse, but this wish never materialised. The followers of Ali, after his martyrdom, had become more and more aware of his virtues and greatness. Whatever their sacrifices during his lifetime, now they were doing more for his love, for his principles and for keeping his mission alive. They were having all kinds of hardship very courageously. And, as a result, the endeavours of Moawiya sometimes produced opposite results.

Adi son of Hatim, the paramount chief of the Tai Tribe, was one of the devoted, sincere and knowledgeable followers of Ali. He had many sons. He, his sons and his tribe were always ready to sacrifice their all for Ali. His three sons named Tarfa, Turaif and Tarif were martyred in the war of Seffin under the banner of Ali. The time went on; Ali was martyred; Moawiya usurped the Caliphate; and once Adi came face to face with Moawiya.

To revive his sad memories and to make him confess how much harm had come to him in the friendship of Ali, Moawiya said:

"What happened to your three sons, Tarfa, Turaif and Tarif?"

"They were martyred in the battle of Seffin under the banner of Ali."

"Ali did not do justice to you."

"Why?"

"Because he threw your sons in the mouth of death and preserved his own sons in safety."

"I did not do justice to Ali."

"Why?"

"Because he was killed and I am still alive. I ought to have sacrificed myself for him in his lifetime."

Moawiya saw that he was not getting what he had aimed at. On the other side, he also wanted to hear about the character and life of Ali from those who had been nearer to Ali and had lived with him day in and day out. Therefore, he asked Adi to narrate to him the character of Ali as he had seen it. Adi asked to be excused; but Moawiya insisted and then Adi said:

"By God, Ali was the most far-sighted and strong man. He talked with righteousness and decided the cases with clarity. He was an ocean of knowledge and wisdom. He hated the worldly pomp and show, and liked the solitude of night. He wept more (in love of Allah) and thought more (about Allah). In solitude, he scrutinized his own self and pitied about the past. He preferred short clothes and simple life. Amongst us he was like one of us. If we requested him for anything he granted our request. When we visited him he made us sit near him without keeping any distance.

In spite of all this humbleness, his presence was so awe-inspiring that we did not dare utter any words before him. He was so majestic that we could not look at him. When he smiled his teeth appeared like a string of pearls. He respected honest and pious people and was kind to indigent. Neither a strong man had any fear of injustice from him, nor a weak person ever lost hope of his justice. By God, one night I saw him standing in his place of worship when the dark night had engulfed everything; tears were rolling down on his face and beard; he was restless like a snake-bitten person and was weeping like a bereaved man."

"It seems as if even now I am hearing his voice as he was addressing the world: 'O World, thou art coming towards me and wantest to lure me? Go deceive someone else. Thy time is not come. I have divorced thee thrice after when there is no return. Thy pleasure is valueless and thy importance insignificant. Alas! the provision is too little, the journey too long and there is no companion.'"

Hearing these words of Adi, Moawiya started crying, then wiping off the tears, he said:

"May God bless Abul Hassan (Ali). He was as you have said. Now tell me how do you feel without him?"

"I feel like a mother whose dear one is beheaded in her lap."

"Wouldn't you ever forget him?"

"Would the world allow me to forget him?"

Chapter 13

THE RETIREMENT

The old man, a Christian by religion, had worked all his life; but had not been able to save anything for his old age. Lately he had become also blind. Old age, poverty and blindness had joined hands and he had no other way except begging. He Used to stand at the corner of a lane for begging. People had compassion for him and gave him some alms from which he ate every day, and so he continued his sad life.

One day Ali, the Leader of the Faithfuls passed through the lane and saw the beggar in that condition. Ali, out of his concern for others, enquired about the old man. He wanted to know the factors which led him to that condition. "Had he no son to support him? Or, is there no other way for him to live a respectable life in his old age?"

The people who knew the old man came forward and informed Ali that he was a Christian and, had worked hard so long as he had his eyes, and was young and strong. Now that he had lost his youth as well as his eyes he was unable to do any work; also he had no savings, so it was natural that he was begging. Ali said, "Strange! Till he had strength you extracted work from him and now you have left him on his own?" His story shows that he had worked when he had the strength. Therefore, it is the duty of the Government and the society to support him till he is alive. Go, and give him a life-pension from the State-treasury."

Chapter 14

IN THE LAND OF MINA

The pilgrims had assembled in Mina. Imam Sadiq and his companions sitting in a place were eating some grapes placed before them.

A beggar appeared and asked for alms. The Imam took some grapes to give him, but he refused to accept it and asked for money. Imam told him to excuse him as he did not have money. The beggar went away disappointed.

After going a few steps he had second thoughts came back and asked for the same grapes. The Imam now refused to give him those grapes too.

Soon after, another beggar appeared. The Imam again took some grapes and gave to him. He accepted it and said, "Thanks to the Lord of universe who gave me my sustenance." On hearing these words, the Imam told him to wait and gave him two handfuls of grapes.

The beggar thanked God for the second time.

The Imam again told him to wait and then turning to one of his friends asked, "How much money is with you?" The man searched his pockets and produced nearly twenty Dirhams which he gave to the beggar at the order of the Imam.

The beggar thanking God for the third time said, "Thanks are exclusively to God. O God! Thou art the Bestower of the good, and thou hast no companion." On hearing these words, the Imam took off his garment and gave it to the beggar. Now, the beggar changed his tone and spoke a few words of thanks to the Imam himself. Then the Imam did not give him anything and he went away.

His friends and companions who were present there said, "We thought that had the beggar continued thanking God in the same manner as before, the Imam would have continued giving him more and more. But when he changed his talk and praised and thanked the Imam himself, the Imam did not continue his help.

THE PROTECTION THAT WAS REVOKED

Muslims had migrated to Abyssinia because of the torture and persecution by Quraish, but always anxiously waited for some news from their homeland. Those stand-bearers of Unity and justice of God (though an insignificant minority in comparison to the swarms of idolators who were bent upon maintaining statuesque in religion and social system) were confident that everyday their supporters were increasing and the rank of their adversaries was decreasing. They even hoped that soon the curtain of ignorance would be removed from the eyes of the non-believers and the whole tribe of Quraish would embrace Islam, casting away their idols.

By chance a rumour took wings in their locality in Abyssinia that the whole Quraish had been converted to Islam. Though the news was not confirmed, but the refugees deep faith in their religion, and their strong expectation and hope in the ultimate victory of Islam led a group of them to return to Mecca without waiting for the confirmation of the news from reliable sources. One of them was Othman bin Madh'un, the well-known companion of the Prophet who was extra-ordinarily attached to the Holy Prophet, and was greatly respected by all Muslims. When he reached near Mecca, he realised that the news was not correct; on the contrary, Quraish had intensified the torture and oppression of the Muslims. He was in a bad fix: He could not return to Abyssinia as it was far off; and if he entered Mecca, he would immediately become a target of the Quraish's torture. At last, an idea came into his mind. He thought of taking advantage of an Arabian custom by placing himself under the protection of one of the influential men of Quraish.

According to the Arab custom if a person would request an Arab for protection, he usually would grant his request and would protect him even at the cost of his own life. For an Arab, it was a shame if someone asked him for protection and he did not grant that request even though he might be his enemy. So Othman entered Mecca at mid-night and went

straight to the house of Waleed son of Mughira Makhzumi, a distinguished wealthy and influential Quraishite. He asked for his protection which was readily granted.

Next day, Waleed brought him to the Mosque and made a formal announcement before the elders of the tribe that from that moment Othman was under his protection, anyone doing anything against him would be considered going against Waleed personally. As Waleed was highly respected by Quraish, nobody dared to trouble Othman any more. He was now a protected person. He moved freely as one of the Quraish attending their sittings.

But at the same time, the persecution of other Muslims continued unabated. It was hard on Othman, who was not happy at being Safe while his fellow Muslims continued to suffer. One day he thought to himself that it was not just on his part to be safe under the protection of a pagan whereas his brethren were being persecuted. He came to Waleed and said:

"I am sincerely thankful to you. You gave me protection and saved me; but from today I want to go out from your protection, and join my friends. Let, whatever happens to them, happen to me."

"Nephew, perhaps you are not happy with me, or perhaps, my protection could not keep you safe."

"Why, I am not unhappy at all. But I don't want to live any longer under protection of anyone except God."

"Since you have so decided, I would like you to come to the Mosque announce your going out from my protection, as I took you the first day there and announced your protection."

"Very well, no objection to it."

They came to the Mosque. When the elders had gathered, Waleed said: "Everybody should know that Othman has come here to announce his exit from my protection."

Othman said: "He is right. I have come here with that very intention, and also to inform you that so long as I was under his protection, he protected me very well and I had no reason to complain. The reason for my going out from his protection is only that I don't like to live under the protection of anyone except God."

This is how the protective period came to end, and he lost his immunity from persecution. But he was still moving freely among Quraish as before.

One day, Labeeb bin Rabi'a, the well-known poet of Arabia came to Mecca to recite his Qasida (poem) which he had recently composed, and

which is now considered as a masterpiece and classics of the pre-Islamic period of Arabic literature.

The Qasida begins with the following line:

Know (*that Every thing is null and void except God; nothing except Allah is Truth*). The Prophet had said about this line, "It is the truest poem has ever composed."

Anyhow, Labeed came, Quraish gathered to hear such a great poet. There was a pin-drop silence to hear a reputedly best work of Labeed. He started recitation with manifest pride:

(*Know that every thing is null and void except God*).

Before he could recite the second line, Othman sitting in a corner said loudly: "Excellent, you have spoken the truth. It is the fact; everything except God is false."

Labeed recited the second line:

(*And without doubt all riches come to an end*).

Othman cried, "But this is wrong. Not all riches are to come to an end. This is true only for the material riches of this world. The riches of the life hereafter are immortal and eternal."

The people were surprised. No body had expected that a man who only a short while ago was under the protection of another person and who now had neither security of his life nor power of any wealth would dare criticising a poet of Labeed's stature in the gathering of chiefs and elders of the Quraish.

They requested Labeed to repeat the lines; the poet repeated the first line and again Othman said: "True, correct." But when Labeed repeated the second line, Othman again said: "Wrong. It is not true; the riches of that world are not perishable"

This time Labeed himself felt most annoyed. He cried: "O people of Quraish! By God, your gatherings were not like this before. There were not such rude and discourteous persons among you. How is it that now among you I find such persons?"

A man from the audience with the intention of pacifying him and making him to continue his recitation, said affably. "Please, don't be angry to the talk of this man. He is crazy. And he is not alone. There is a group of some more crazy persons in this city. And they have the same belief as this fool. They have gone out from our religion and have chosen a new religion of their own."

Othman replied to that man forcefully. The man lost his temper; moved from his seat and slapped at the face of Othman, putting his full strength behind that slap. Othman got a black-eye.

Somebody said to Othman:

"Othman! You did not appreciate the value of the protection of Waleed. Had you still been under his protection, your eye would not have become black."

"The protection of God is safer and more dignified than the protection of any other person. So far as my eye is concerned, the other eye also longs to attain the same honour in the way of Allah."

Waleed came forward and said:

"Othman, I am ready to take you again under my protection."

"But I have decided not to accept anyone's protection except that of God."

Chapter 16

THE PRAYER THAT WAS GRANTED

"O God, Do not let me return to my family." These were the words that Hind, the wife of Amr bin Jamuh, heard, from her husband when he left the house fully armed for participating in the battle of Uhud. It was his first time to fight alongwith the Muslims. He had not fought before as he was very lame, and according to the clear rule of the Qur'an Jihad (holy war against non-believers) is not incumbent upon those who are blind, lame or sick. Though he himself had not participated in Jihad but his four lion-hearted sons were always with the holy Prophet. Nobody had ever thought that Amr, inspite of his genuine excuse, and after sending four sons to Jihad, would want himself to be included among the soldiers of Islam.

When his relatives heard of his decision they came to persuade him to change his mind. They said: "First of all, you are exempted from Jihad, by rule of "Sheriat" (divine law). Secondly, you have four brave sons who are going with the Prophet. So, there is no need for you to go yourself."

He replied: "As my sons want to get eternal bliss and paradise, I too have the same desire. Will it not be strange if they go and achieve martyrdom while I sit in the house with you. No, it is not possible."

His relatives did not accept his views; and one after another came to him to persuade him. At last, he appealed to the Prophet:

"O Prophet of God! My relatives want to confine me in the house. They are not allowing me to participate in Jihad. By God it is my wish to go to paradise with this lame leg."

"O Amir! After all, you have a genuine excuse. God has exempted you. Jihad is not incumbent on you."

"O Prophet of God! I am aware of that. I know it is not incumbent upon me; even then... .."

The Prophet said: "Do not forbid him from Jihad. Let him go. Since he has a desire for attaining martyrdom, God may bless him with it."

One of the most spectacular scenes of the battle-field of Uhud was the fighting of Amr bin Jamuh, who with his limping leg was attacking the centre of the enemy's army and was shouting, "I have the desire of paradise."

One of his sons was moving behind him. They fought gallantly till both were killed.

After the war ended, many Muslim women came out of Medina for getting correct news of the whole affair. They were anxious specially in view of the frightening news which had reached the city. Aysha, wife of the Prophet was one of them. When she came out of the city she saw Hind pulling the rein of a camel with three dead bodies on its back. Aysha asked:

"What is the news?"

"Thank God, the Prophet is safe. As he is safe, I have no worries. The other news is that God has made the non-believers suffer a reverse with sorrow."

"Whose corpses are these?"

"They are my brother, my son and my husband."

"Where are you taking them?"

"I am taking them to Medina for burial."

Saying this, Hind pulled the rein of the camel towards Medina. But the animal seemed unwilling to proceed and finally sat down. Aysha said:

"The load seems heavy; he can't carry it."

"No. This camel of ours is very strong and usually carries the load of two camels. There must be some other reason."

Saying this she pulled the rein towards Medina; again the camel sat down. When she turned the camel towards Uhud, to her surprise the animal started walking quickly.

The situation was strange. She thought, "perhaps there is some mystery in it." She then turned the animal towards Uhud and went straight to the Prophet:

"O Prophet of God! There is a strange story here. I placed these corpses to take them to Medina to bury them. When I pull the rein towards Medina, the animal refuses to obey me. But when I direct him to Uhud, he walks quickly."

"Did your husband say anything while coming to Uhud?"

"O Prophet of God! When he left the house, I heard him saying: 'O God, Do not let me return to my family.'"

"Then this is the reason. The sincere prayer of this martyr has been granted. God does not want this corpse to return. There are men among

you, Helpers of the Prophet, who if they ask anything from God, the Almighty God grants their wishes. Your husband was one of them."

On the advice of the Prophet, these men were buried in Uhud. Then, the Prophet turned to Hind and said:

"These men shall be together in that world."

"O Prophet of God! Pray to Almighty to keep me also with them."

Chapter 17

THE RIGHT OF COMPANIONSHIP

In those days, Kufa was the Capital and Centre of the Islamic Government. All eyes of the vast and wide Muslim nation (with the exception of Syria) were fixed at this city waiting as to what orders were being issued and what decisions taken.

Outside the City two gentlemen, a Muslim and the other from People of the Book (Jew, Christian or Zoroastrian) met on the road one day. The Muslim was going to Kufa and the other gentlemen to another place nearby. Since a part of their journey was common, they decided to travel together.

On the way, they talked and talked on various topics of mutual interest and ultimately arrived at the point where their paths separated. The non-Muslim was surprised to see that his Muslim companion did not take the path leading to Kufa but accompanied him on the other path, where he was going. He asked:

"Well, didn't you say you were going to Kufa?"

"Yes."

"Then why are you coming this way? The other one is the path to Kufa."

I know. I want to walk a few steps with you to see you off. Because our Prophet has said, 'Whenever two persons travel together on the same path, they establish reciprocal rights upon each other'. Now you have got a right upon me and for the sake of that right of yours I wish to walk a few steps with you, and then, of course, I shall return unto my own path."

"Oh! Such an authority and power which is wielded among people in such a perfect way by your Prophet, and the amazing speed with which his religion has spread in the world, must be, I am sure, because of his such noble character."

The surprise and admiration of this gentlemen reached its peak when he learnt afterwards that his Muslim friend was Ali bin Abi-Talib, the

Caliph of that time. Soon after he embraced Islam and was counted among the most devout and self-sacrificing companions of Ali.

Chapter 18

THE BLACK MARKET

The dependants of Imam Ja'afar Sadiq (a.s.) had increased in number; so had his expenses. The Imam decided to invest some money in trade to meet the increased expenses of the house. He arranged for an amount of thousand Dinars which he gave to his slave named 'Musadif' directing him to proceed to Egypt and to invest the amount in business on behalf of Imam.

Musadif purchased some goods usually exported to Egypt, and joined a Caravan of traders, who were taking the same type of merchandise to Egypt.

When they reached near Egypt, they met another Caravan coming out of the City. They enquired about each other's affairs. During the course of conversation, they learnt that the goods which Musadif and his friends were carrying were not available in Egypt and were in great demand there. They became very happy at their good fortune. Indeed that was an article of common use and people had to buy it at all costs.

The traders on hearing the good news decided to exploit the situation. They agreed together not to sell the goods at less than hundred percent profit.

They entered the city. The situation was same as they had been told. As previously agreed, they created a black market, and did not sell the goods at less than double the cost.

Musadif returned to Medina with a net profit of one thousand Dinars. Happy as he was he went to Imam Sadiq, and placed before him two bags, each containing one thousand Dinars. The Imam asked:

"What is this?"

"One of the two bags represents the capital you gave me, and the other one (which is equal to the capital) is the profit I have made."

"Certainly the profit is unexpectedly high. Tell me how could you make so much profit?"

"The fact is when we learnt near Egypt that the merchandise we were carrying had become scarce there, we agreed not to sell the goods at less than double the cost; and we did accordingly."

"Glory be to God! You did such a work! You took oath to create a black market among the Muslims! You swore not to sell the goods at less than double the actual cost! No. I don't want such business and such profit."

Then picking up one of the bags, he said, "This is my capital." He did not even touch the other one, and said that he did not want to have any connection with that.

Then he said:

"O Musadif! It is easier to fight with a sword than to earn the livelihood lawfully."

Chapter 19

THE BLESSED MONEY

At the request of the Prophet (SA) of Islam, Hadrat 'Ali (AS) went to buy a shirt for him. Hadrat 'Ali (AS) went to the market and bought a shirt for twelve Dirhams. Hadrat Muhammad (SA) asked:

"For how many Dirhams did you buy it?"

"For twelve Dirhams."

"I didn't like it, I want a cheaper one. Would the shopkeeper take it back?"

"I don't know, O Messenger (SA) of Allah."

"Please go and see if he agrees to take it back."

'Ali (AS) took the shirt to the shopkeeper and said to him:

"The Messenger (SA) of Allah wants a cheaper shirt; would you agree to take it back and give back the money?"

The shopkeeper agreed to do so and he gave the money back to 'Ali (AS). Hadrat 'Ali (AS) took the money to the Prophet (SA). After this, Hadrat Muhammad (SA) and Hadrat 'Ali (AS) went to the market together. While on the way, the Prophet (SA) saw a slave-girl, who was crying. He went to her and asked:

"Why are you crying?"

"My master gave me four Dirhams to buy things from the market. I don't know where that money got lost. Now, I don't have the courage to go home."

Out of twelve Dirhams, Hadrat Muhammad (SA) gave four Dirhams to the girl and said: "Buy whatever you had to buy and go back home." The Prophet (SA), himself, went to the market and after buying a shirt for four Dirhams, he put it on.

While coming back from the market, he saw an undressed man. He quickly took off his shirt and gave it to him. He again went to the shop and bought another shirt for four Dirhams. He put it on. On his way, he again saw the same slave-girl, who was sitting scared and troubled. He asked:

"Why didn't you go home?"

"O Messenger (SA) of Allah, it's too late for me and I am scared that they might beat me and ask as to why I took so long."

"Tell me the address of your house and come with me, so that I might request that no one should say anything to you". Hadrat Muhammad (SA) took the slave-girl with him. As soon as they reached near the house, the girl said: "This is the house." With a loud voice, the Messenger (SA) of Allah said:

"My *salam* to you, the inhabitants of this house".

He didn't get any reply; so he again said *salam*. But still he got no reply. He said *salam* for the third time and then everyone replied saying: "*Assalamu Alayk*, O Messenger (SA) of Allah."

"Why didn't you people respond me for the first time? Did you not hear my voice?"

"Yes! after hearing your voice for the first time itself, we came to know that it was you."

"Then what was the reason for the delay in response?"

"O Messenger (SA) of Allah, we loved to hear Your voice (*salam*) again and again. Your *salam* is virtuous, peace and blessing for us."

"Your slave-girl has taken long in coming back. Hence, I have come to request that you don't punish her."

"O the Messenger (SA) of Allah! by the blessings of your gracious coming over to our place, we have set this girl free." The Prophet (SA) said: "Thanks a million to Allah. How blessed these twelve Dirhams were; with which two undressed persons got dressed as well as a slave-girl got free."

Chapter 20

MOTHER'S RIGHTS

It was for some time that Zakariyya, son of Ibrahim, felt attracted towards Islam although his father, mother and all the family-members were Christians and he too was the believer of Christianity. Both his conscience and heart were inviting him towards Islam. At last, against the liking of his father, mother and family-members, he accepted Islam and surrendered himself to the commandments of Islam.

The Hajj season commenced. Young Zakariyya left Kufah with the objective of performing Hajj and had the honour of meeting Al-Imam As-Sadiq (AS) in Madinah. He narrated to Imam (AS) the incident of his acceptance of Islam. Imam (AS) enquired: "What virtue of Islam attracted your attention?" He replied: "I can only say that it was Allah's words in Qur'an which impressed me and holds true in my case. Allah says to his Prophet (SA) in Qur'an: 'O Prophet! earlier you didn't know what the Book is and didn't know what the faith is, but We revealed to you this Qur'an and made it a light by which We guide whomsoever We wish.'"

Imam (AS) said: "I confirm Allah has guided you."

Then Imam (AS) said thrice: "O Allah! You Yourself be a guide to him." Afterwards Imam (AS) said: "My son, now whatever questions you have, ask me". The young-man said: "My father, mother and family-members, are all Christians. My mother is blind. I am associated to them and I am compelled to eat with them. What am I supposed to do in such circumstances?"

Imam (AS): "Do they eat pork?"

Zakariyya: "No, O son of Prophet (SA)! They don't even touch pork".

Imam (AS): "Then, there is nothing wrong in your association with them."

Then Imam (AS) said: "Be careful about your mother's health. Be kind to her till she is alive. When she dies, don't give Her body to anyone else. You personally take charge of her corpse. Here, don't tell anyone that

you have met me. I will also come to Makkah. *In sha' Allah* (Allah willing), we will meet in Mina.

In Mina, the young-man went in search of Imam (AS). There was a huge crowd around Imam (AS). The people, like the children surrounding their teacher and asking questions one after the other without giving any time, were asking questions one after the other from Imam (AS) and were listening to his replies.

The Hajj season came to an end and the young-man returned to Kufah. He had kept in mind Imam's (AS) advice. With firm determination, he started serving his mother and never failed to be kind and loving to his blind mother. He served food to her with his own hands. He even used to check her clothes and head to see that no lice might be present. This change in the behaviour of the son, mainly after his return from Makkah, was surprising for his mother. One day she asked her son:

"Dear Son! Earlier, when you followed our religion, you were not so kind to me. Now what has happened to you that though I and you are not the same in respect of religion, you are more kind to me than before?"

Zakariyya: "Dear mother'. A person from the descendants of our Prophet (SA) has told me to do so."

Mother: "Is he himself a Prophet?"

Son: "No, he is not a Prophet. He is the son of the Prophet (SA)."

Mother. "My son! I think he himself is a Prophet as this type of advises and preachings are not given by anyone except the Prophets."

Zakariyya: "No mother! Be sure that he is not a Prophet. He is the son of the Prophet (SA). Basically, no Prophet is supposed to come to earth after our Prophet [Muhammad (SA)]."

Mother: "My son! Your religion is very good. It is better than all the other religions. Teach me your religion."

The youngman told his mother the '*shahadatayn*' [meaning: "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad (SA) is his Messenger."].

Thus, the mother became a Muslim. Then the youngman taught his blind mother the process of reciting *salat* (prayer). The mother grasped it and recited the *Zuhr* (noon) and the '*Asr* (afternoon) *Salats*. It became night. She succeeded in reciting both the *Maghrib* (evening) and the '*Isha*' (night) *Salats*. Suddenly, late in the night, the mother's condition (of health) changed; she fell sick and got bed-laid. She called her son and said:

"My son, once more teach all the things you had taught me."

Once again, the son taught his mother the *shahadatayn* and all the principles of Islam, that is, belief in Allah, Prophet (SA), angels, the Divine Books and the *Ma'ad* (Day of Resurrection). The mother repeated all these as a symbol of her belief and acceptance and offered her life to the Creator.

In the morning, the Muslims gathered for giving her *ghuslul-mayyit* (obligatory bath to the dead) and her burial. The person who recited *salatul-mayyit* (prayer for the dead) and buried her, was none but her young son, Zakariyya.

Chapter 21

ARE YOU ASLEEP OR AWAKE?

Habbah 'Arni and Nawf Bakali were lying in the courtyard of Darul-Amarah (fort) of Kufah. After the midnight, they saw that the Leader of the Faithful, 'Ali (AS), was coming from the fort towards the courtyard. But his condition was bad; he was having extraordinary fear and was unable to keep the equilibrium of his body. Keeping his hands on the wall and having his body in bent position, he was walking slowly with the support of the wall. And he was reciting the last *Ayahs* (verses) of *Surah* (chapter) Ale 'Imran as follows:

"Indeed in the creation of the heaven and the earth and alteration of the night and the day, there are signs for men of acumen. Those who extol Allah, standing, sitting and (lying) on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth, (saying): 'Our Lord! You have not created this in vain! Glory is Yours; protect us against the torment of the Fire. Our Lord! indeed whomsoever You enter the Fire, You have surely disgraced him, and there shall be no helpers for the wrongdoers. Our Lord! surely we have heard a caller calling to faith (saying): 'Believe in your Lord', so we did believe; Our Lord! forgive us, therefore, our sins and cover our evil deeds and receive us with the righteous Our Lord! grant us what You have promised us through Your messengers and do not disgrace us on the Resurrection Day; surely You do not break the promise (3:190-194)."

As soon as he finished these *Ayahs*, his condition became bad; he then repeated these *Ayahs* again and again and his condition became bad to worse and he became almost unconscious.

Both Habbah and Nawf were witnessing this amazing scene, while lying on their beds. Habbah, while quite startled, was looking this astonishing scene.

But Nawf was unable to control his tears and he was continuously weeping.

By this time, 'Ali (AS) reached the bed of Habbah and said: "Are you awake or asleep?"

(Habbah replied:) "I am awake O Leader of the Pious! If a person like you has such a condition with awe and fear of Allah, then what would happen to we poor people."

The Leader of the Pious looked down and wept. He then said: "O Habbah! all of us will be presented before Allah one day. And no deed of ours is hidden from Him. He is very near to you and me. Nothing can act as an obstruction between us and Allah.

Then he said to Nawf: "Are you asleep?" (Nawf replied:) "No, O Leader of the Pious! I am awake. It is for some time that I am shedding my tears."

'Ali (AS) said: "O Nawf! If today you shed your tears in fear of Allah, tomorrow your eyes will glitter.

"O Nawf! No one has more respect than that person who cries in the fear of Allah and that he likes to do it only for His sake.

"O Nawf! The one who loves Allah and that whatever he loves, he does it just for the sake of Allah, does not prefer anything over love for Allah. And the one who dislikes anything, and does it for the sake of Allah, he would receive nothing except virtue for his disliking. Whenever you reach such a stage, you have attained the truths of faith to their perfection."

After this, he preached and gave a piece of advice to Habbah and Nawf. His last sentence was: "I have told you that you should fear from Allah."

Then he passed by both of them and got busy with his own work. He started his prayers and while doing so, he said: "O Allah! I wish I knew that when I am neglectful towards You, do You ignore me or do You still care for me? I wish I knew that in these long neglectful dreams of mine and in my shortcomings in thanking you, what is my position before You?"

Habbah and Nawf said: "By Allah! he ['Ali (AS)] kept on walking and he had the same condition continuously till dawn."

Chapter 22

THE GREETINGS OF A JEW

While the wife of Messenger (SA) of Allah, 'A'ishah, was sitting with him, a Jew came and instead of saying: "*Assalamu 'Alaykum*" (peace be on you), he said: "*Assamu 'Alaykum*" which meant that 'may death come over you'. Not much time had passed that another Jew came to Allah's Messenger (SA) and he also instead of saying: "*Assalamu 'Alaykum*", said: "*Assamu 'Alaykum*." Hence it was clear that these people wanted to hurt the feelings of Allah's Messenger (SA), under an organized plan. 'A'ishah got very angry on this act of Jews and she shouted and said: "May death come on you all."

Allah's Messenger (SA) said: "Don't use such indecent words. If these words had taken their physical shapes, they would have been very unpleasant and ugly. Instead, softness, politeness and patience make things look beautiful, charming and attractive. Affection and softness doubly increase the human beauty. And if there is a deficiency in softness, politeness and patience in any thing, then the beauty and charm of that thing gets reduced. "After all, why did you get so angry and furious?"

'A'ishah: "O Allah's messenger (SA)! don't you see what these people are saying instead of '*Salamun 'Alaykum*' irrespectfully and shamelessly?"

"So what?" [asked the Messenger (SA) of Allah] "I think you didn't notice that in reply to them, I had also said: '*Alaykum*', which means 'same to you'. And it was enough for their reply."

Chapter 23

AN AGED STUDENT

Sikaki was a skilled artist and artisan. With great expertise and interest, he made such a nice and beautiful inkpot that it could be presented to the king. He expected that, appreciating his artistic skill, the king would encourage him as far as possible. So, with countless hopes and thousands of desires, he presented that inkpot to the king. In the beginning the king was very impressed by his artistic skill. But afterwards such an unpleasant event occurred that it caused an extraordinary change in Sikaki's life and artistic capabilities.

When the king was observing the skilled artistry of the beautiful inkpot and Sikaki was lost in the world of thoughts, the people informed that a learned or literary person or jurisconsult is about to come to the court. After a while this learned man entered the court. The king got so much absorbed in welcoming and talking with him that he could not keep in mind anything about Sikaki and his skilled artistry. This incident was enough to adversely affect the heart and brain of an artist like Sikaki. So, this carelessness of the king had a deep effect on his heart.

He realized that now he would not receive the encouragement he had expected. And now to have a hope or to keep any desire is of no use. But Sikaki's high thinking and his artistic capability did not allow him to remain in peace and he started thinking as to what he should do? He decided that he should also do the same as the others have done upto now. (He thought:) "I will also have to follow the same path as the others have been following upto now." Hence he finally decided to search for his lost hopes in the world of knowledge, literature and books. But for such a wise man who had spent the days of his youth in other works, it was not easy to get engaged in studies and start teaching small children. Still, he remained firm with his decision. Moreover, there was no other alternative before him. After all when the fish is taken out from water, it is fresh.

But the most difficult thing was this that in the beginning, he did not find any interest in reading and writing. Perhaps, his spending a long

time in artistic and handicraft works was the reason for stagnancy in his scientific and literary talent. But his advanced age and less capability could not stand in the way of his decision. And with great interest, enthusiasm and zeal for attaining knowledge, he got busy with his studies. Meanwhile, another incident occurred.

The teacher, who was teaching *Fiqh-i-Shafi'i* (Shafi'i jurisprudence), taught him this lesson: "It is the teacher's belief that the skin of the dog becomes '*tahir*' (pure) after tanning." Sikaki repeated this sentence for at least ten times, so that at the time of examination he might succeed in securing good marks. But when he was questioned on this lesson, giving the answer, he said: "Dog's belief is this that the teacher's skin becomes *tahir* after tanning."

On hearing his reply like this, all the audience started laughing. And everyone thought that the old man is absolutely incapable of reading and writing. After this incident, Sikaki not only left that school, but he also left that town and went towards the jungle. By chance, he reached the foot of a mountain, where he saw that the water is falling drop by drop from the top. And because of the falling of water, drop by drop, a hole has been formed even in that hard stone. For some time, he kept on thinking over this matter. It had a deep effect on his heart and mind. And he said, "May be my heart is not at all inclined towards reading and writing, but it is not as hard as this stone. Therefore, it is absolutely impossible that I go on studying continuously with diligence but do not attain knowledge." Thinking like this, he came back and got busy with the attainment of knowledge. The result of this was that after some time, he was reckoned among the popular scholars of his time.

Chapter 24

THE DISTRESSED YOUNGMAN

Prophet Muhammad (SA) recited his morning *salat* (prayer) in the mosque along with other people. By this time, it was becoming bright and the people could be clearly seen. At this moment, the Prophet (SA) saw a youngman whose condition seemed to be extraordinary. His head could not rest properly on his body and was continuously moving this way and that way. The Prophet (SA) looked at his face and saw that it was pale; his eyes had gone deep into his head. His limbs had become thin and lean. He asked him:

"In what condition are you?" "I am in the condition of certainty, O Messenger (SA) of Allah". (Replied the youngman.)

"Every certainty has got some symptoms which indicate its truth; what is the symptom of your certainty?"

"My certainty is the one which is associated with my distress. In the nights, it has taken away my sleep; and I pass the days with thirst. And I have turned my back towards the comforts of the world. I have turned my face towards the other side. It is like this that I am seeing the Empyrean of Allah on the Day of Judgment and similarly I also see the resurrection condition of the whole of the creation of Allah. It is as if I am seeing the people in Heaven in pleasure and the people in Hell in severe torment. It is as if the dreadful noise due to the flames of the Hell-fire is just now ringing in my ears." Prophet (SA) turned his face towards the people and said: "He is a worshipper of Allah whose heart has been illuminated by the light of faith."

Then he turned towards the youngman and said: "keep up this good state of yours for yourself." The youngman said: "O Messenger (SA) of Allah! Pray that Allah gives me an opportunity for *Jihad* (holy war) and *shahadah* (martyrdom) for the sake of the right path.

The Prophet (SA) prayed. It did not take long when an opportunity arose for *Jihad* and that youngman participated in that *Jihad*. The tenth person who got martyred in that war was no one but this youngman.

Chapter 25

THE NEEDY AND THE RICH

Prophet Muhammad (SA), the Messenger of Allah, was sitting in his house as usual. His companions and friends were sitting around him in such a way that it seemed there was a bezel (precious stone) in the centre of the ring. At this moment, a poor Muslim, dressed in rags entered the audience of the Prophet (SA) keeping in view, the Islamic traditions - in the light of which everyone is considered equal - and as per the etiquette of the session, the newcomer should sit in the vacant place he finds; and he should not think that such and such a place was not suitable according to his status and prestige. Therefore, that poor man started searching for a vacant place. He looked in all the four directions and then found a vacant place in a corner. So, with perfect silence, he sat at that place. Incidentally, a rich man was already sitting next to him. Seeing this poor Muslim sitting next to him, the rich man pulled his costly clothes and shifted aside. The Messenger (SA) of Allah was keenly observing all this. Seeing this behaviour of the rich man, the Prophet (SA) of Islam said to him: "Were you afraid that his poverty and pauperism would cast its shadow on you?"

"No, O Messenger of Allah! No!"

"Then what was the reason that on seeing this poor man, you shifted aside?" [asked Muhammad (SA)].

"O Messenger (SA) of Allah! I committed a mistake and I accept my mistake. I am ready to pay a *kaffarah* (fine or expiation) for this sin of mine. And in the form of *kaffarah*, I want to give one-half of my wealth to this poor and needy brother of mine."

Hearing the remarks of the rich man, the poor man said: "But I am not at all ready to accept this wealth."

All the people sitting in the audience of the Messenger (SA) of Allah, enquired: "Why after all?!"

(The poor man replied:) "I am afraid that the abundance of the wealth might not make me also so proud that I too start behaving with my poor Muslim brothers in the similar manner as this fellow did with me."

Chapter 26

THE LAST WORDS

Umami Hamidah, mother of Al-Imam Musa Al-Kazim (AS), was sitting very sadly after the death of her husband, Al-Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (AS). Suddenly she saw Abu Basir, who had come to offer condolences on the death of the Imam (AS). Seeing Abu Basir, tears started rolling down Umami Hamidah's eyes. Abu Basir also wept for sometime in the grief of the Imam (AS). After a while, having control over her tears, Umami Hamidah said to Abu Basir: "You were not present when the Imam was breathing his last. A strange event took place."

Looking Umami Hamidah with amazed eyes, Abu Basir asked: "What was the event?" She replied: "Those were the last moments of Imam's (AS) life and with closed eyes he was breathing his last." Suddenly, Imam (AS) opened his eyes and started saying: "Call all my family-members, relatives and friends near me." This was a strange thing. Imam (AS) told his last wishes in such a way as if he was issuing some instructions. Anyway all the persons were gathered and to the extent possible efforts were made that no one from among the Imam's (AS) family-members, relatives and friends be left out. Everyone stood near Imam (AS) awaiting what Imam (AS) had to say in his last moments.

Seeing everyone gathered beside him, addressing all of them, Imam (AS) said: "Those people will not avail my intercession who take *Salat* (prayer) lightly."

THE TEACHER'S STRIKE

Sayyid Jawad 'Amuli was a renowned '*alim* (jurisprudent), who had written the book 'Miftahul-Karamah' (a very famous book). One day he was busy eating his food, when he heard a knock at the door. As soon as he found that it was the servant of his teacher - Sayyid Mahdi Bahrul-'Ulum - he quickly ran towards the door. The servant said: "Sir, the teacher has called you immediately. The food has been already served before him but he would not touch the food until you reach there."

There was no time to delay; so without even finishing his food, Sayyid Jawad hurriedly went to Sayyid Bahrul-'Ulum's house. As soon as the teacher saw Sayyid Jawad, with an anger and great sorrow, he said: "O Sayyid Jawad! aren't you afraid of Allah? And don't you feel ashamed before Allah?" Sayyid Jawad got drowned in an ocean of surprise. He thought that after all what has happened and what an event has taken place? Uptil now such a thing had not happened that the teacher would scold him in such a way. He exerted his mind to find out the reason. Helplessly he asked: "Sir, if possible please let me know my mistake."

"Your such and such a neighbour has not been able to get rice and wheat for the last seven days and in this period, he passed his days by taking dates from the shopkeeper on loan, who is at the end of the street. Today when he went to take the loan, before he could ask for anything, the shopkeeper disappointed him by saying that: "You are now under heavy debt." Hearing this he felt so ashamed that he could not raise his head, and he went home empty-handed. Today he and his family are hungry." Sayyid Jawad 'Amuli said: "By God, I did not know about this. Had I known, I would have definitely helped them." (The teacher said:) "My sadness and anger both are due to your lack of knowledge; after all why are you unaware of the condition of your neighbour? And why did they spend seven days and nights like that and you didn't even know? And if you knew about this but had not taken any action, you could not

have been treated as a Muslim, but as a Jew. (Sayyid Jawad said:) "You tell me what I should do?"

(The teacher replied:) "My servant will hold the tray full of food. You go with him to that man's house. The servant will come back from the door. After this you knock the door and request him to have their dinner with you. Take this money and put it under their carpet or mat. And request him to excuse you that being a neighbour, you could not care for them. Keep the tray there and come back. I am sitting here and would not eat my food until you return and tell me about that pious man." The servant picked up the tray, full of different types of good food and walked along with Sayyid.

As they reached near the door, the servant went back. After seeking permission Sayyid Jawad went inside the house. The owner of the house listened to Sayyid Jawad's apology and at his request, he took the food from his hands. After the first bite itself, he realized that it was not the food of Sayyid Jawad's house. At once he stopped eating and said: "This food is not prepared by any Arab. Therefore, it is not from your house. Till you don't tell me where this food has come from, we won't touch this food. That man's guess was absolutely right. The food had been prepared in Bahrul-'Ulum's house and he was an Iranian by origin and was from Brujurd. Sayyid Jawad insisted upon him and said:

"Why do you bother about where this food has been prepared; you just have your food." But the man did not agree to this and said: "I won't even touch this food until you tell the truth." Sayyid Jawad felt that nothing would be possible without telling the truth. So, he told the whole story from beginning to the end. After listening to Sayyid Jawad, the man ate his food, but he was very surprised. He said: "We didn't disclose this secret to anyone. Rather, we didn't even let our closest neighbour know about this. I don't know how Sayyid came to know of it."

Chapter 28

THE ASTRONOMER

The Leader of the Pious, 'Ali (AS), son of Abu Talib (AS) and his soldiers on the horsebacks were about to go towards Nahrwan. Suddenly, one of his ['Ali's (AS)] renowned companion came to him along with a person and said:

"O the Leader of the Pious people! This man is a fortune-teller and he wants to tell you something." The fortune-teller said: "O the Leader of the Pious people! It is not advisable for you to travel at this time. Please wait till two or three hours of the day have passed and then, you proceed."

"Why"?

"Because the stars tell that anyone who travels at this time would be defeated by his enemy. He and his followers will have to suffer a lot. But in case you travel at the time I have suggested to you, you would turn out victorious and would succeed in achieving your objectives."

"My horse is pregnant and can you tell me whether the new-born would be a male-horse or a female-horse?" "If I calculate, I can tell." "You are telling a lie, it is impossible for you; because, it is stated in the Holy Qur'an: 'No body except Allah knows about the hidden things and it is only Allah, who knows what it is (male or female), being cared for in the womb of the mother'. Not even the Messenger of Allah [Muhammad (SA)], has ever claimed a thing that you are claiming for. Do you claim that you possess all kinds of knowledge about this world? And do you know when one has something good or bad in one's fate? And if any one has faith in you and believes you, then he does not need God any more."

After this 'Ali (AS) said to the rest of the people: "Be aware! Never go after such things. It makes one believe in the unseen things and he is like a fortune-teller and a magician. And a magician is a *kafir* (disbeliever); and for *kafir* is the hell." After this, he looked towards the sky and uttered a few sentences which were concerning his belief and trust in Allah.

Then he looked towards the fortune-teller and said: "I will purposely act against your advice and would set out immediately, without any delay." Immediately after this, he gave orders to make a move. They moved towards the enemy. As compared to other *Jihads* (holy wars), in this *Jihad*, the Imam (AS) achieved wonderful success and victory.

Chapter 29

AL-IMAM MUHAMMAD AL-BAQIR (AS) AND A CHRISTIAN

Muhammad bin 'Ali bin Husayn (AS) had the title of "*Baqir*". *Baqir* means "the analyzer". He was called '*Baqirul-u'lum*,' which means "the analyzer of knowledge."

A Christian in a mocking way, changed the word '*Baqir*' with '*Baqar*', meaning "cow". He said to him "*Anta Baqar*", that is, "You are a cow."

Without showing any annoyance and anger, Imam (AS) with mere simplicity said: "No, I am not *Baqar*, I am *Baqir*."

The Christian said: "You are the son of a lady who was cook."

Imam (AS) replied: "Yes, her job was this, which cannot be considered as insulting or disgraceful."

The Christian: "Your mother was black, shameless and was having bad tongue."

Imam (AS): "If whatever you say about my mother is true, I pray to Allah for her remission and to forgive her sins. And if it is false, I pray to Allah to forgive you for telling lies and committing slander."

The observance of so much forbearance of this sort, by a person capable of punishing a man who was not the believer of Islam, was enough to revolutionize the Christian and attract him towards Islam.

Later on, the Christian became a Muslim!

AN OLD MAN AND THE CHILDREN

An old man was busy in performing *wudu'* (ablution). But he did not know the correct method of performing *wudu'*. Al-Imam Al-Hasan (AS) and Al-Imam Al-Husayn (AS), who were young children at that time, saw the man performing his *wudu'*. Since teaching the commandments and Islamic guidance are *wajib* (obligatory), there was no need of any hesitation for them to correct him. It was necessary to teach the right process of performing *wudu'* to the old man. However, if it was directly indicated to him that his *wudu'* was incorrect, not only he would have felt hurt, but also he would have had an unpleasant memory about the *wudu'*. Moreover, it was not known that he would not have taken it as an insult and that suddenly he would have not got stubborn and would have never accepted it willingly.

These two children thought to point out his mistake in an indirect way. At first they started arguing with each other and the old man was listening to them. One of them said: "My process of *wudu'* is more perfect as compared to yours." The other one said: "No! my *wudu'* is more perfect as compared to yours." Then, they reached an agreement that both would perform *wudu'* before the old man, who would judge. They did so, as per the agreement and both of them had the correct and perfect *wudu'* before the old man. Now, the old man realized what was the correct process of *wudu'*. He guessed the real objective of the two children. He was deeply impressed with the sincerity and intelligence of the children. He said:

"Your *wudu'* is correct and perfect. Uptil now, I, an ignorant old man, did not know the right way of performing *wudu'*. It is because of the love and affection you have for the *Ummah* of your grandfather [Prophet Muhammad (SA)], that you have cautioned me. Thank you so much."

Chapter 31

THE UNFIXED WAGES

That day Sulayman bin Ja'far Ja'fari and Al-Imam 'Ali Ar-Rida (AS) had gone out together for some work. It was sunset when Sulayman wanted to return home. 'Ali bin Musa Ar-Rida (AS) said to him: "Come to my house and be with us tonight." Sulayman agreed and with Imam (AS) he went to his house.

Imam (AS) saw his servants busy in gardening. By the way, he saw a stranger, who was also busy in gardening with them. Imam (AS) asked: "Who is he?"

The servants replied: "We have hired him today so that he may help us."

Imam (AS): "It's all right. How much wages have you fixed for him?"

Servants: "We will give him something and would make him satisfied."

The signs of displeasure and anger appeared on Al-Imam Ar-Rida's (AS) face and he wanted to punish them. Sulayman Ja'fari came forward and said: "Why do you make yourself uncomfortable?"

Imam (AS) said: "I have repeatedly given orders that till the work and wages are not fixed, never get the work done by anyone. First fix the wages of the person and then get the work done. Even if you have fixed the wages, you could give something extra to him after the work is over. Certainly, when he finds that you have given him more than the fixed wages, he would be thankful to you and would like you. And the affection between you and him would increase. And even if you would give him the wages you have fixed, the person would not be unhappy with you. But if you do not fix the wages and employ someone to work, whatever you would give him after the work, he would not think that you have done a favour to him. Rather, he will think that you have given him less than his actual wages."

A BUSINESSMAN AND A PASSER-BY

A man with broad bones and tall, looked experienced and had a sun-burnt face. His face had the marks as a remembrance of the battle-field and his eyes were brave. He was walking with confident and firm steps through the market of Kufah, where a businessman was sitting in his shop. In order to make his friends laugh, the businessman threw a handful of garbage on the passer-by. Without getting angry and taking any notice, he continued walking with firm and confident steps. Once he got far, one of the friends of the businessman said to him: "Did you recognize who was the man whom you had insulted?"

Businessman: "No, I didn't recognize! He was a passer-by like thousands of others, who everyday pass before us; but who was this man?"

"It's strange! You did not recognize him?! This passer-by was the famous commander-in-chief, Malikul- Ashtar Nakha'i."

Businessman: "That's strange! This man was Malikul-Ashtar?! The same Malikul- Ashtar from whom even the lion gets frightened and whose name terrifies the enemy?"

"Yes, he was the same Malik."

"Oh! What was this that I had done?! Now, he will issue orders to punish me severely. Just now, I will run to him and beg him a pardon and to overlook my fault."

He ran after Malikul-Ashtar. He saw him turning towards the mosque. He followed him to the mosque. He saw him reciting the *salat* (prayer). He waited till he finished his *salat*. He went forward and introducing himself said with regret and lamentation: "I am the same person who did a stupid thing and took this liberty."

Malik: "By Allah! I did not come to the mosque, but for you, because I came to know that you are a very ignorant, illiterate and misled person. You trouble the people without any reason. Seeing your condition, I became very sad. I came here to pray for you and beg Allah to show you

the right path. No, I did not have the intention you thought about me to be having."

Chapter 33

Dear readers

The book you have in your hands contains select short stories chosen from the book "*Dastane Rastan*" written in Persian by Martyr Ayatullah Murtada Mutahhari. I being a young girl was highly fascinated by reading this book. It struck to my mind that some of its stories should be translated and published for the benefit of those children who do not know Persian but are familiar with English or are studying through English medium.

Since this is my first humble effort, I have selected only fourteen most interesting stories of the pious men including Prophet Muhammad (SA) and some of our infallible Imams (AS). The number fourteen is indicative of the Fourteen Infallibles [Twelve Imams (AS), Prophet Muhammad (SA) and Fatimah Az-Zahra' (AS)].

I hope this book proves useful and enjoyable for all the readers and makes them more familiar with the virtues of our infallibles and pious men. These stories also show the greatness of our religion *viz*, "Islam".

I also hope that all my young friends who read this book would try their best to follow the path of these pious men.

I am very grateful to my dear and respected parents, who encouraged and guided me to complete this work. I pray to the Almighty Allah to shower his blessings on them. I also pray to Allah to grant his mercy and favours to all the readers in getting inspiration for reading more and more regarding the Islamic teachings.

Lastly, I would request all the readers to kindly send their suggestions to the publishers for further improvement of this work, so that these could be incorporated in the subsequent editions of this book.

- Saba Zehra Naqavi Tehran, 1992

FIGHT IN THE WAY OF ALLAH AS YOU OUGHT TO
FIGHT. AND THE REVILING OF A REVILER SHOULD

NOT DETER YOU IN MATTERS OF ALLAH. JUMP IN THE DANGERS FOR THE SAKE OF RIGHT WHEREVER IT BE. ACQUIRE INSIGHT INTO RELIGIOUS LAW. HABITUATE YOURSELF TO UNDURE HARDSHIPS SINCE THE BEST TRAIT OF CHARACTER IS ENDURANCE IN MATTERS OF RIGHT. IN ALL YOUR AFFAIRS RESIGN YOURSELF TO ALLAH. BECAUSE YOU WILL THUS BE RESIGNING YOURSELF TO A SECURE SHELTER AND A STRONG PROTECTOR. YOU SHOULD ASK ONLY FROM ALLAH BECAUSE IN HIS HAND IS ALL THE GIVING AND DEPRIVING.

(al-Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib - *Nahj al-balaghah*)

"DO GOOD AND DO NOT REGARD ANY PART OF IT SMALL, BECAUSE ITS SMALL IS BIG AND ITS LITTLE IS MUCH. NO ONE OF YOU SHOULD SAY THAT ANOTHER PERSON IS BETTER THAN I IN DOING GOOD, OTHERWISE IT WOULD REALLY BE SO. THERE ARE PEOPLE OF GOOD AND EVIL. WHEN YOU WOULD LEAVE EITHER OF THE TWO, OTHERS WILL PERFORM THEM".

(*Nahj al-balaghah* - Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib)

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IN THE AGE OF INFORMATION

IGNORANCE IS A CHOICE

*"Wisdom is the lost property of the Believer,
let him claim it wherever he finds it"*

Imam Ali (as)