



# IMĀMATE

(THE VICEGERENCY OF  
THE HOLY PROPHET)



Allamah Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ①  
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ② الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ③  
مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ④ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ⑤  
إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ⑥ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ  
عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ⑦

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى  
سَيِّدِ رُسُلِكَ وَخَاتَمِ أَنْبِيَائِكَ  
مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ الطَّيِّبِينَ الطَّاهِرِينَ  
وَصَلِّ عَلَى جَمِيعِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ



*In the Name of Allāh,  
The All-compassionate, The All-merciful*

*Praise belongs to Allāh, the Lord of all being,  
the All-compassionate; the All-merciful;  
the Master of the Day of Judgement;  
Thee only, we serve, and to Thee alone we pray for succour;  
Guide us in the straight path;  
the path of those whom Thou hast blessed,  
not of those against whom Thou art wrathful,  
nor of those who are astray.*

*\* \* \* \* \**

*O Allāh! send your blessings to the head of  
your messengers and the last of your prophets,  
Muḥammad and his pure and cleansed progeny.  
Also send your blessings to all your  
prophets and envoys.*

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## TRANSLITERATION

Symbol	Transliteration	Symbol	Transliteration
ء	’	م	m
ب	b	ن	n
ت	t	ه	h
ث	th	و	w
ج	j	ي	y
ح	ḥ	ة	ah
خ	kh		
د	d		Short Vowels
ذ	dh	اَ	a
ر	r	اُ	u
ز	z	اِ	i
س	s		
ش	sh		Long Vowels
ص	ṣ	اَ	ā
ض	ḍ	اُ	ū
ط	ṭ	اِ	ī
ظ	ẓ		
ع	‘		
غ	gh		
ف	f		
ق	q		
ك	k		
ل	l		

# **PART ONE**

## **GENERAL MEANING**

# 1. MEANING OF IMĀMAH AND KHILĀFAH

*Al-Imāmah* (الإِمَامَةُ) literally means ‘to lead’; *al-Imām* (الإِمَام) means ‘the leader’. In Islamic terminology *al-Imāmah* (Imāmate) means ‘universal authority in all religious and secular affairs, in succession to the Prophet’.<sup>1</sup> *al-Imām* means ‘the man who, in succession to the Prophet, has the right to the absolute command of the Muslims in all religious and secular affairs.’

The word ‘man’ signifies that a female cannot be an Imām. ‘Absolute command’ excludes those who lead in the prayers: they are also called ‘Imām of the prayers’, but they do not have absolute authority. ‘In succession to the Prophet’ denotes the difference between a prophet and an Imām. The Imām enjoys this authority not directly, but as the successor of the Prophet.

The word *al-khilāfah* (الْخِلَافَةُ) means ‘to succeed’ and *al-khalīfah* (الْخَلِيفَةُ) means ‘the successor’. In Islamic terminology *al-khilāfah* and *al-khalīfah* practically signify the same meanings as *al-imāmah* and *al-imām* respectively.

*al-Wiṣāyah* (الْوَصَايَةُ) means ‘the executorship of the will’, and *al-waṣiyy* (الْوَصِي) means ‘the executor of the will’. Their significance in Muslims’ writings is the same as that of *al-khilāfah* (caliphate) and *al-khalīfah* (caliph).

It is interesting to note that many previous prophets were also the caliphs of their predecessor prophets, thus they were *nabiyy* and *khalīfah* both; while other prophets (who brought new *sharī‘ah*) were not caliphs of any previous prophets. Also there were those who were caliphs of the prophets but not prophets themselves.

The question of Imāmate and caliphate has torn the Muslim community apart and has affected the thinking and philosophy of the different groups

1 al-‘Allāmah al-Ḥillī: *al-Bābu ‘l-ḥādī ‘ashar*, Eng. tr. W. M. Miller, p. 62; Mughniyyah: *Falsafāt Islāmiyyah*, p. 392.

so tremendously that even the belief in Allāh (*at-tawhīd*) and the prophets (*an-nubuwwah*) could not escape from this divergence of views.

This is the most debated subject of Islamic theology. Muslims have written thousands upon thousands of books on caliphate. The problem before me is not what to write; it is what not to write. In a small work such as this, one cannot touch on all the various aspects of this subject, let alone go into detail on even those topics which are described therein. This provides only a brief outline of the differences regarding the caliphate.

It may be of help to mention here that regarding this question the Muslims are divided into two sects: the Sunnis, who believe that Abū Bakr was the first caliph of the Holy Prophet of Islam; and the Shī‘ahs, who believe that ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib, peace be upon him, was the first Imām and caliph.

This fundamental difference has led to other differences which shall be described in the following chapters.

## 2. SUMMARY OF DIFFERENCES

The Holy Prophet has said in a *ḥadīth* which has been accepted by all sects of Islam:

My *ummah* (followers) will shortly break up into seventy-three sects, all of which shall be condemned except one.<sup>2</sup>

The seekers of salvation have always made untiring efforts to inquire into the matter to discover the right course - the path to salvation. And indeed it is necessary for every man to take reason as his guide, try his best in this matter and never despair of attaining the truth. But this can only be possible when he has a clear view of the radical differences before him, and discarding all bias and prejudices, examines the points at issue with thoughtful mind, always praying to Allāh to lead him in the right path.

For this reason I propose to briefly mention here the important differences

<sup>2</sup> al-Khaṭīb at-Tabrīzī: *Mishkātu 'l-maṣābīh*, Eng. tr. James Robson, vol. 1, p. 45; al-Majlisi has collected, in a complete chapter, traditions to this effect in *Biḥāru 'l-anwār*, vol. 28, pp. 2-36; al-Qummī, Sh. ‘Abbās: *Safīnatu 'l-biḥār*, vol. 2, pp. 359-60.

and conflicts together with the arguments and reasonings of each sect, in order to facilitate the path of inquiry. The main questions are:

1. Does it lie with Allāh to appoint a prophet's successor or is it the duty of the *ummah* (the followers) to appoint whomsoever they please as successor to the Prophet?
2. In the latter case, did Allāh or the Prophet place in the hands of the *ummah* any systematic code containing the rules and procedures for the appointment of a caliph, or did the *ummah*, by their unanimous consent before appointing a caliph, prepare a set of rules to which they adhered (subsequently), or did the *ummah* act according to what they thought expedient at the time and according to the opportunity at their disposal? Had they the right to act as they did?
3. Does reason and Divine Law demand the existence of any qualifications and conditions in an Imām and caliph? If so, what are they?
4. Did the Prophet of Islam appoint anyone as his caliph and successor or not? If he did so, who was it? If not, why?
5. After the Prophet's death, who was recognized to be his caliph and did he possess the qualifications necessary for a caliph?<sup>3</sup>

### 3. BASIC DIFFERENCE

It will save time if we explain at the outset the basic cause of the differences concerning the nature and character of the Imāmate and caliphate. What is the primary characteristic of the Imāmate? Is an Imām, first and foremost, the ruler of a kingdom? Or is he, first and foremost, the representative of Allāh and vicegerent of the Prophet?

As the Imāmate and caliphate is generally accepted as the successorship of the Prophet, the above questions cannot be answered until a decision is made on the basic characteristics of a prophet. We must decide whether a prophet is, first and foremost, the ruler of a kingdom or the representative of Allāh.

We find in the history of Islam a group which viewed the mission of the

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<sup>3</sup> Najmu 'l-Ḥasan: *an-Nubuwwah wa 'l-khilāfah*, tr. Liqā' 'Alī Ḥaydarī, pp. 2-3.

Holy Prophet as an attempt to establish a kingdom. Their outlook was material; their ideals were wealth, beauty and power. They, naturally, ascribed the same motives to the Holy Prophet.

‘Utbah ibn Rabī‘ah, the father-in-law of Abū Sufyān, was sent to the Holy Prophet to convey the message of the Quraysh: “Muḥammad! If you desire power and prestige, we will make you the overlord of Mecca. Do you desire marriage into a noble family? You may have the hand of the fairest maiden in the land. Do you desire hoards of silver and gold? We can provide you with all these and even more. But you must forsake these nefarious preachings which imply that our forefathers who worshipped these dieties of ours were fools.”

The Quraysh were almost certain that Muḥammad (s.a.w.a) would respond favourably to this offer. But the Holy Prophet recited *sūrah* 41 in reply which, *inter alia*, contained the following warning:

فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَقُلْ أَنْذَرْتُكُمْ صَاعِقَةً مِثْلَ صَاعِقَةِ عَادٍ وَثَمُودَ ﴿فصلت، ١٣﴾

*But if they turn away, then say: “I have warned you of a thunderbolt (of punishment) like the thunderbolt of the ‘Ad and the Thamud” (41:13)*

‘Utbah was overwhelmed by this clear warning. He did not accept Islam, but advised the Quraysh to leave Muḥammad (s.a.w.a) alone to see how he could fare with other tribes. The Quraysh claimed that he was also bewitched by Muḥammad (s.a.w.a).<sup>4</sup>

Thus he wanted to leave Muḥammad (s.a.w.a) to other tribes. On the other hand when the Prophet emigrated to Medina and the Quraysh waged war upon war, the other tribes thought it advisable to leave Muḥammad (s.a.w.a) to his own tribe. ‘Amr ibn Salamah, a companion of the Prophet, states: “The Arabs were waiting for the Quraysh to accept Islam. They used to say that Muḥammad (s.a.w.a) should be left to his own people. If he would emerge victorious over them, he was undoubtedly a true prophet. When Mecca was conquered, all the tribes hastened to accept Islam.”<sup>5</sup>

4 Ibn Hishām: *as-Sīrah an-Nabawīyyah*, vol. 1, pp. 313-4.

5 al-Bukhārī: *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 5, p. 191; Ibn Kathīr: *al-Bidāyah wa ’n-nihāyah*, vol. 5, p. 40.



Thus according to them, victory was the criterion of truth! If Muḥammad (s.a.w.a) would have been defeated, he would have been considered a liar!!

The view that his sacred mission was nothing but a worldly affair was repeatedly announced by Abū Sufyān and his clan. At the time of the fall of Mecca, Abū Sufyān left Mecca to discern the strength of the Muslim army. He was seen by the uncle of the Prophet, ‘Abbās, who took him to the Holy Prophet and advised the Prophet that he be given protection and shown respect, in order that he may accept Islam.

To summarize the event, ‘Abbās took Abū Sufyān for a review of the Islamic army. He pointed out to Abū Sufyān eminent personalities from every clan who were present in the army. In the meantime, the Holy Prophet passed with his group which was in green uniform. Abū Sufyān cried out: “O ‘Abbās ! Verily your nephew has acquired quite a kingdom!” ‘Abbās said: “Woe unto thee! This is not kingship; this is Prophethood.”<sup>6</sup>

Here we see two opposing views in clear contrast. Abū Sufyān never changed his views. When ‘Uthmān became caliph, Abū Sufyān came to him and advised: “O Children of Umayyah! Now that this kingdom has come to you, play with it as the children play with a ball, and pass it from one to another in your clan. This kingdom is a reality; we do not know whether there is a paradise or hell or not.”<sup>7</sup>

Then he went to Uḥud and kicked at the grave of Ḥamzah (the uncle of the Prophet) and said: “O Abū Ya‘lā! See that the kingdom which you fought against has at last come to us.”<sup>8</sup>

The same views were inherited by his grandson, Yazid, who said:

لعبت هاشم بالملك فلا \*\*\* خیر جاء ولا وحي نزل

*Banu Hashim staged a play to obtain the kingdom;*

6 Abū'l-Fidā': *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 1, pp. 143-4; al-Ya'qūbī: *at-Tārikh*, vol. 2, p. 59.

7 Ibn 'Abdi 'l-Barr: *al-Istī'ab*, vol. 4, p. 1679; Ibn Abi 'l-Ḥadid quotes the last sentence as follows: “By him in whose name Abū Sufyān swears, there is neither punishment nor reckoning, neither Garden nor Fire, neither Resurrection nor Day of Judgment.” (Vide his *Sharh Nahji 'l-balāghah*, vol. 9, p. 53.)

8 Ibn Abi 'l-Ḥadid: *op. cit.*, vol. 16, p. 136.

*Actually, there was neither any news (from Allāh) nor any revelation.*<sup>9</sup>

If that is the view held by any Muslim, then he is bound to equate the Imāmate with rulership. According to such thinking, the primary function of the Prophet was kingship, and, therefore, anyone holding the reins of power was the rightful successor of the Holy Prophet.

But the problem arises in that more than ninety per cent of the prophets did not have political power; and most of them were persecuted and apparently helpless victims of the political powers of their times. Their glory was not of crown and throne; it was of martyrdom and suffering. If the primary characteristic of prophethood is political power and rulership, then perhaps not even 50 (out of 124,000) prophets would retain their divine title of *nabiyy*.

Thus it is crystal-clear that the main characteristic of the Holy Prophet was not that he had any political power, but that he was the Representative of Allāh. And that representation was not bestowed on him by his people; it was given to him by Allāh Himself.

Likewise, his successor's chief characteristic cannot be political power; but the fact that he was the Representative of Allāh. And that representation can never be bestowed upon anyone by his people; it must come from Allāh Himself. In short, if an Imām is to represent Allāh, he must be appointed by Allāh.

#### **4. SYSTEM OF ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP**

There was a time when monarchy was the only system of government known to the people. At that time the Muslim scholars used to glorify monarchs and monarchy by saying, *أَلْسُلْطَانٌ ظِلُّ اللَّهِ* (The king is the shadow of Allāh), as though Allāh has a shadow! Now in modern times democracy is in vogue and the Sunni scholars are never tired of asserting in hundreds and thousands of articles, books and treatises that the Islamic system of

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<sup>9</sup> Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī: *Tadhkirah*, ed. S. M. S. Bahru 'l-'Ulūm, p. 261; aṭ-Ṭabarī, *at-Tārikh*, vol. 13, p. 2174.

government is based upon democracy. They even go so far as to claim that democracy was established by Islam, forgetting the city-republics of Greece. In the second half of this century, socialism and communism are gaining hold of the undeveloped and developing countries; and I am not surprised to hear from many well-meaning Muslim scholars tirelessly asserting that Islam teaches and creates socialism. Some people in Pakistan and elsewhere have invented the slogan of ‘Islamic socialism’. What this ‘Islamic socialism’ means, I do not know. But I would not be surprised if within ten or twenty years these very people start claiming that Islam teaches communism!

All this ‘changing with the wind’ is making a mockery of the Islamic system of leadership. Some time ago in a gathering of Muslims in an African country, in which the president of the country was the guest of honour, a Muslim leader stated that Islam taught to ‘Obey Allāh, obey the Apostle and your rulers’. In his reply, the president (who incidentally, was a staunch Roman Catholic) said that he appreciated very much the wisdom of the commandment to obey Allāh and the Apostle of Allāh; but he could not understand the logic behind the order to obey ‘your rulers’. What if a ruler is unjust and a tyrant?! Does Islam enjoin Muslims to obey him passively without resistance?

This intelligent question demands an intelligent reply. It cannot be regarded lightly. The fact is that the person who invited that criticism, did so because of his misinterpretation of the Holy Qur’ān.

Let us examine the system of Islamic leadership. Is it democratic? The best definition of democracy was given by Abraham Lincoln when he said that democracy was “the government of the people, by the people and for the people.”

But in Islam it is not the government ‘of the people’; it is the ‘government of Allāh’. How do people govern themselves? They govern themselves by making their own laws; in Islam laws are made not by the people, but by Allāh; these laws are promulgated not by the consent and decree of the people, but by the Prophet, by the command of Allāh. The people have no

say in legislation; they are required to follow, not to make any comment or suggestion about those laws and legislations:

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا لِمُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ.  
.. ﴿الأحزاب، ٣٦﴾

*And it is not for a believer man or believer woman to have any choice in their affair when Allāh and His Apostle have decided a matter. . . (33:36).*

Coming to the phrase ‘by the people’, let us now consider how people govern themselves. They do so by electing their own rulers. The Holy Prophet, who was the supreme executive, judicial and overall authority of the Islamic government, was not elected by the people. In fact, had the people of Mecca been allowed to exercise their choice they would have elected either ‘Urwah ibn Mas‘ūd (of at-Ta’if) or al-Wālid ibn al-Mughīrah (of Mecca) as the prophet of Allāh! According to the Qur’ān:

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِّنَ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ عَظِيمٍ ﴿الزخرف، ٣١﴾  
*And they say: “Why was not this Qur’ān revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?” (43:31)<sup>10</sup>*

So not only was the Supreme Head of the Islamic State appointed without the consultation of the people, but in fact it was done against their expressed wishes. The Holy Prophet is the highest authority of Islam: he combines in his person all the functions of legislative, executive and judicial branches of the government; and he was not elected by the people.

So Islam is neither the government of the people nor by the people. There is no legislation by the people; and the executive and judiciary is not responsible to the people.

Nor is it, for that matter, a government ‘for the people’. The Islamic system, from the beginning to the end, is ‘for Allāh’. Everything must be done ‘for Allāh’; if it is done ‘for the people’, it is termed ‘hidden

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<sup>10</sup> For the explanation of “a man of importance”, see, as-Suyūfī: *Lubābu ’n-nuqūl fi asbābī ’n-nuzūl*, printed with *Tafsīru ’l-jalālayn*, pp. 289, 649.

polytheism'. Whatever you do - whether it is prayer or charity, social service or family function, obedience to parents or love of neighbour, leading in prayer or deciding a case, entering into war or concluding a peace - must be done with “*qurbatan ila 'llāh*”, to become nearer to Allāh, to gain the pleasure of Allāh. In Islam, everything is for Allāh.

In short, the Islamic form of government is the government of Allāh, by the representative of Allāh, to gain the pleasure of Allāh.

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ﴾ (الذاريات، ٥٦)

*And I did not create the jinn and the human beings except that they should worship me (51:56).*

It is theocracy, and it is the nature and characteristic of Islamic leadership. And how it affects the meaning of the above verse concerning ‘obedience’ shall be seen in later chapters.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **PART TWO**

# **THE SHĪ'ITE POINT OF VIEW**



## 5. THE NECESSITY OF IMĀMATE AND THE QUALIFICATIONS OF AN IMĀM

### A. NECESSITY OF IMĀMATE:

FROM THE Shī'ite point of view, the institution of Imāmate is necessary, according to reason. It is *lutf* (grace) of Allāh which brings the creature towards obedience and keeps him away from disobedience, without compelling the creature in any way. It has been proved in the Shī'ite theology that *lutf* is incumbent on Allāh. When Allāh orders that man to do something yet is aware that man cannot do it or that it is very difficult without His assistance, then if Allāh does not provide this assistance, He would be contradicting His own aim. Obviously, such negligence is evil according to reason. Therefore *lutf* is incumbent on Allāh.

Imāmate is a *lutf*, because as we know when men have a chief (*ra'īs*) and guide (*murshid*) whom they obey, who avenges the oppressed of their oppressor and restrains the oppressor, then they draw nearer to righteousness and depart from corruption.

And because it is a *lutf*, it is incumbent on Allāh to appoint an Imām to guide and lead the ummah after the Prophet.<sup>1</sup>

### B. SUPERIORITY (*AFDALIYYAH*):

The Shī'ahs believe that, like the Prophet, an Imām should excel the *ummah* in all virtues, such as knowledge, bravery, piety and charity, and should possess complete knowledge of the Divine Law. If he does not, and this high post is entrusted to a less perfect person when a more perfect one is available, the inferior will have been given preference over the superior, which is wrong in reason and against Divine Justice. Therefore, no inferior person may receive Imāmate from Allāh when there exists a person superior to him.<sup>2</sup>

### C. INFALLIBILITY:

The second qualification is '*iṣmah* (infallibility). If the Imām is not

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1 al-'Allāmah al-Ḥillī: *al-Bābu 'l-hādi 'ashar*, Eng. tr. W. M. Miller, pp. 50, 62-4.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

infallible (*ma 'ṣūm*) he would be liable to err and also deceive others.<sup>3</sup>

Firstly, in such a case, no implicit confidence may be placed in what he says and dictates to us.

Secondly, an Imām is the ruler and head of the *ummah* and the *ummah* should follow him unreservedly in every matter. Now, if he commits a sin the people would be bound to follow him in that sin as well. The untenability of such a position is self-evident; for obedience in sin is evil, unlawful and forbidden. Moreover, it would mean that he should be obeyed and disobeyed at one and the same time; that is, obedience to him would be obligatory yet forbidden, which is manifestly absurd.

Thirdly, if it would be possible for an Imām to commit sin it would be the duty of other people to prevent him from doing so (because it is obligatory on every Muslim to forbid other people from unlawful acts). In such a case, the Imām will be held in contempt; his prestige will come to an end and instead of being the leader of the *ummah* he will become their follower, and his Imāmate will be of no use.

Fourthly, the Imām is the defender of the Divine Law and this work cannot be entrusted to fallible hands nor can any such person maintain it properly. For this very reason, infallibility has been admitted to be an indispensable condition to prophethood; and the considerations which make it essential in the case of a prophet make it so in the case of an Imām and caliph as well.

More will be said on this subject in Chapter 13 (*Ulu 'l-Amr Must Be Ma 'ṣūm*).

#### **D. APPOINTMENT BY ALLĀH:**

But, as in the case of the prophets, the above-mentioned qualifications alone are not enough to automatically make one an Imām. Imāmate is not an acquired job; it is a 'designation' bestowed by Allāh.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64-8.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

It is for this reason that the Shī‘ah Ithnā ‘Asharis (The Twelvers) believe that only Allāh can appoint a successor to the Prophet; that the *ummah* has no choice in this matter - its only duty is to follow such a divinely-appointed Imām or caliph.

The Sunnis, on the other hand, believe that it is the duty of the *ummah* to appoint a caliph.

## I. VERSES OF THE QUR’ĀN:

The following verses of the Qur’ān confirm the views held by the Shī‘ahs:

وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيَخْتَارُ ۗ مَا كَانَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ ۗ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ  
﴿الفصص، ٦٨﴾

*And thy Lord creates what He wills and chooses; they have no right to choose; glory be to Allāh, and exalted be He above what they associate! (28:68).*

This clearly shows that man has no right to make any selection; it lies entirely in the hands of Allāh.

Before creating Adam (a.s.), Allāh informed the angels:

...إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً... ﴿البقرة، ٣٠﴾

“... *Verily I am going to make a caliph in the earth. . .*” (2:30).

And when the angels demurred politely at the scheme, their protest was brushed aside by a curt reply: *إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ* “*Surely I know what you know not*” (*ibid.*). If the *ma‘šūm* (infallible) angels were given no say in the appointment of a caliph, how can fallible humans expect to take the whole authority of such an appointment in their own hands?

Allāh Himself appointed Prophet Dāwūd (a.s.) as caliph on the earth:

يَا دَاوُودُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ... ﴿ص، ٢٦﴾

“*O Dāwūd! Verily; We have made thee (Our) caliph on the earth. . .*” (38:26).

In every case Allāh attributes the appointment of the caliph or the Imām exclusively to Himself.

Likewise, the call went to Prophet Ibrahīm (a.s.):

... قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا ۗ قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۗ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ.

﴿البقرة، ١٢٤﴾

(Allāh) said: “Surely I am going to make you an Imām for men.” (Ibrahīm) said: “And of my offspring?” He said: “My covenant will not include the unjust.” (2:124)

This verse leads us to the correct answers of many important questions concerning Imāmate:

- a. Allāh said: “Surely I am going to make you an Imām for men.” This shows that Imāmate is a divinely-appointed status; it is beyond the jurisdiction of the *ummah*.
- b. “My covenant will not include the unjust.” This clearly says that a *non-ma’sūm* cannot be an Imām. Logically, we may divide mankind into four groups:
  1. Those who remain unjust throughout their lives;
  2. Those who are never unjust;
  3. Those who are unjust early in their lives but later become just; and
  4. Those who are just early in their lives but later become unjust.

Ibrahīm (a.s.) had too high a position to request Imāmate for the first or the fourth group. This leaves two groups (the second and the third) which could be included in the prayer. However, Allāh rejects one of them; i. e., those who are unjust early in their lives but later become just. Now there remains only one group which can qualify for Imāmate - those who are never unjust throughout their lives, i.e., *ma’sūm*.

- c. The literal translation of the last sentence is as follows: My covenant will not reach the unjust. Note that Allāh did not say, the unjust will not reach My covenant, because it would have implied that it was within the power of man - albeit a just one - to attain the status of Imāmate. The present sentence does not leave room for any such misunderstanding; it clearly shows that receiving Imāmate is not

within human jurisdiction; it is exclusively in the hands of Allāh and He gives it to whom He pleases.

Then as a general rule, it is stated:

﴿وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا...﴾ (الأنبياء، ٧٣)

*And We made them Imāms who were to guide by Our command ... (21:73)*

When Prophet Mūsā (a.s.) wanted a vizier to help him with his responsibilities, he did not appoint someone by his own authority. He prayed to Allāh:

﴿وَاجْعَلْ لِي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي﴾ ﴿هَارُونَ أَخِي﴾ ﴿طه، ٢٩-٣٠﴾

*“And make for me a vizier from my family, Hārūn (Aaron) my brother” (20:29-30). And Allāh said:*

﴿قَالَ قَدْ أُوتِيتَ سُؤْلَكَ يَا مُوسَى﴾ ﴿طه، ٣٦﴾

*“You are indeed granted your petition, O Mūsā!” (ibid., 36).*

That Divine selection is made known to the *ummah* through the prophet or the preceding Imām. This declaration is called *naṣṣ* (النَّصُّ = specification; determination; designation of the succeeding Imām by the prophet or preceding Imām). An Imām according to Shī‘ite belief, must be *manṣūṣ min Allāh* (الْمَنْصُوصُ مِنَ اللَّهِ), i.e., designated by Allāh for that status.

## E. MIRACLES:

If one has not heard *naṣṣ* about a claimant of Imāmate, then the only way of ascertaining the truth is through a miracle (*mu‘jizah*).<sup>5</sup>

Generally speaking any man may claim that he is an Imām or a prophet’s caliph and infallible, but a miracle is the only unfailing test of truth in such cases. If the claimant proves a miracle also in support of his claim, it would be admissible without hesitation. If he fails to do so, it is evident that he does not possess the qualifications required for Imāmate

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

and caliphate, and his claim would therefore be false.

## II. PRECEDENT:

The universal practice of prophets had been to nominate their successors (on the command of Allāh) without any interference from the *ummah*.

The history of these prophets does not offer a single instance of a prophet's successor being elected by a voting of his followers. There is no reason why in the case of the successor of the last Prophet this established Divine Law should be changed. Allāh says:

﴿... وَلَنْ نَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا﴾ (الأحزاب، ٦٢)

..... *And you shall never find a change in divine practice (33:62).*

## III. LOGICAL REASONS:

1. The same reasons which prove that the appointment of a prophet is a divine prerogative, prove with equal force that the successor of that prophet should also be appointed by Allāh. An Imām or Caliph, like the prophet, is appointed to carry on the work of Allāh; he must be responsible to Allāh. If he is appointed by the people, his first loyalty will be not for Allāh, but for the people who would be 'the basis of his authority'. He will always try to please people, because if they were to withdraw their confidence in him he would lose his position. So he will not discharge the duties of religion without fear or favour; his eyes will always be on political considerations. Thus the work of Allāh will suffer.

And the history of Islam provides ample evidence of glaring disregard for the tenets of religion shown by man-appointed caliphs right from the beginning. So this argument is not just academic; there is solid historical evidence behind it.

2. Also, only Allāh knows the inner feelings and thoughts of man; no one else can ever know the true nature of another person. Perhaps someone may pose as a pious and god-fearing man merely to impress his colleagues and gain some worldly benefit. Such examples are not



rare in history. Take, for example, the case of ‘Abdu ’l-Malik ibn Marwān who used to spend all his time in the mosque in prayer and recitation of the Qur’ān. He was reciting the Qur’ān when news reached him of the death of his father and that people were waiting to pledge their allegiance to him. He closed the Qur’ān and said: “This is the parting between me and thee.”<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, as the existence of qualifications which are necessary for an Imām or Caliph can only truly be known to Allāh, it is only Allāh Who can appoint an Imām or Caliph.

## 6. INFALLIBLLTY OF THE IMĀMS

Now, let us note what the Qur’ān says about the *Ahlu ’l-bayt* (family members) of the Holy Prophet.

According to the Qur’ān, the following persons were sinless and infallible at the time of the death of the Holy Prophet: ‘Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. The verse of purity (*tathīr*) reads as follows:

﴿... إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا﴾ (الأحزاب، ٣٣)  
*... Allāh only desires to keep away abomination from you, O People of the House! and to purify you a (thorough) purifying.*  
 (33:33)

It is universally agreed that the above-named four persons are ‘People of the House’ and are sinless and free from all kinds of abomination.

The sentences before and after this verse are addressed to the wives the Holy Prophet and the pronouns therein are of feminine gender; but the pronouns in this verse are of masculine gender. The reason why this verse has been placed in its present position is not difficult to guess. The late renowned scholar ‘Allāmah Pūyā writes in footnote no. 1857 of the translation of the Holy Qur’ān by S. V. Mir Ahmed Ali:

“The portion of this verse relating to the divinely effected purity of the

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6 as-Suyūfī: *Tārīkhu ’l-khulafā’*, p. 217.

Holy *Ahlu 'l-bayt* needs a proper explanation commenting with reference to its correct context. This portion of this verse is a separate *āyah* or verse by itself revealed separately on particular occasions but placed here as it deals with the wives of the Holy Prophet. The location of this verse here if studied properly makes it obvious that it has its own significant and important purpose behind it. While the address in the beginning of the verse is in the feminine gender - there is the transition here in the address from the feminine to the masculine gender. While referring to the consorts of the Holy Prophet, the pronouns also are consistently feminine. For a mixed assembly of men and women, generally the masculine gender is used. This transition in the grammatical use of the language, makes it quite obvious that this clause is quite a different matter used for a different group other than the previous one, and has been suitably placed here to show a comparative position of the *Ahlu 'l-bayt* in contrast to the wives of the Holy Prophet. ‘Amr ibn Abī Salamah who was brought up by the Holy Prophet relates:

““When this verse was revealed the Holy Prophet was in the house of Umm Salamah. At the revelation of (the verse): *Verily willeth God to keep away impurity from you O People of the House! and He purifieth you with the perfect purification*, the Holy Prophet assembled his daughter Fāṭimah, her sons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn and her husband, his cousin, ‘Alī, and covered the group, including himself, with his own mantle and addressing God said: “O God! These constitute my progeny! Keep them away from every kind of impurity, purified with perfect purification”. Umm Salamah, the righteous wife of the Holy Prophet, witnessing this marvellous occasion, humbly submitted to the Holy Prophet, “O Apostle of God! May I also join the group?” to which the Holy Prophet replied, “No, remain thou in thine own place, thou art in goodness””.<sup>7</sup>

This is not the place to name the countless references concerning this verse; still, I would like to quote Mawlānā Waḥīdu ’z-Zamān, the famous Sunni scholar, whose translation and commentary of the Qur’ān as well as his book *Anwāru ’l-lughah* (a dictionary of the Qur’ān and *aḥādīth*) are among the recognized references. He writes in his commentary of the Qur’ān about this verse: “Some people think that it is especially for

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<sup>7</sup> *Holy Qur’ān*, Eng. tr. S. V. Mir Ahmed Ali, fn. 1857, p. 1261.

those family members who had blood relation with the Prophet, i.e., ‘Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. The present translator says that the traditions which are correct (*ṣaḥīḥ*) and well-connected up to the Prophet, support the same view, because when the Prophet himself has declared that his family members are only these, then to accept it and believe in it becomes obligatory. And one more sign of correctness of this view is that the pronouns used before and after this verse are those for females, while in this verse are those for males . . .”<sup>8</sup>

Again he says in his *Anwāru ’l-lughah*: “The correct view is that in this verse of purity only these five persons are included (i.e., the Prophet, ‘Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn), although in Arabic usage, the word *ahlu ’l-bayt* is used for wives also. Some people prove by this verse that these five persons were sinless and *ma ’ṣūm* (infallible). But if not *ma ’ṣūm*, then of course they were surely *mahfūz* (protected from committing any sin or error).”<sup>9</sup>

I have quoted these two references to show that not only the Ithnā ‘Asharis but the learned Sunni scholars also confirm that, according to the rules of Arabic grammar and according to the correct unbroken traditions of the Prophet, only ‘Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn are included in this verse, besides the Prophet himself. Also, it is clear that the view that these persons were sinless is shared by Sunni scholars too. It is apparent that in the least they say that if they were not infallible (theoretically) they were surely protected from sin and error (practically).

There are many other verses and traditions testifying to the purity (*‘iṣmah*) of the *Ahlu ’l-bayt*, but the limitation of space does not allow me to enumerate them even briefly.

## 7. SUPERIORITY OF ‘ALĪ (A.S.)

*Afdaliyyah* (superiority) in Islam means “to deserve more reward (*thawāb*) before Allāh because of good deeds.”

8 Waḥīdu ’z-Zaman: *Tafsīr Waḥidī* (on the margin of the Qur’ān’s translation by the same author), para. 22 fn. 7, p. 549.

9 Waḥīdu ’z-Zaman: *Anwāru ’l-lughah*, para. 22, p. 51.

All Muslims agree that this ‘superiority’ cannot be decided by our own views or outlook and that there is no way to know it except through the Qur’ān or *ḥadīth*. al-Ghazzālī, the famous Sunni scholar, has written: “The reality of superiority is what is before Allāh; and that is something which cannot be known except to the Holy Prophet.”<sup>10</sup>

Most of our Sunni brethren believe that superiority was according to the sequence of the caliphate; i.e., Abū Bakr was more superior, then ‘Umar, then ‘Uthmān, then ‘Alī.

But this belief is not based on any proof, nor was it the belief of all the Sunnis of early days. During the time of the Holy Prophet, we find that such respected companions as Salmān al-Fārisī, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, Miqdād al-Kindī, ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir, Khabbāb ibn al-Aratt, Jābir ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Anṣārī, Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān, Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī, Zayd ibn Arqam and many others believed that ‘Alī (a.s.) was the most superior amongst all the *Ahlu ’l-bayt* and the companions.<sup>11</sup>

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was once asked by his son about his views on the subject of superiority. He said: “Abū Bakr and ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān.” His son asked: “And what about ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib?” He replied: “He is from the *Ahlu ’l-bayt*. Others cannot be compared with him.”<sup>12</sup>

‘Ubaydullāh Amritsarī writes in his famous book *Arjaḥu ’l-maṭālib*: “As superiority means ‘having more *thawāb*’, its proof can only be known from the *aḥādīth* (traditions) of the Holy Prophet... and if there are conflicting traditions, then the authentic traditions should be accepted and strong traditions should be differentiated from the weak ones.

“al-‘Allāmah Ibn ‘Abdi ’l-Barr writes in his book *al-Istī‘āb*<sup>13</sup> concerning the *aḥādīth* which have been narrated about the superiority of Amiru ’l-mu’minin, ‘Alī that: ‘Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, al-Qāḍī Ismā‘il ibn Ishāq, Imām Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Shu‘ayb an-Nasā‘ī and al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū ‘Alī

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10 al-Ghazzālī: *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūmi ’d-din*, vol. 1, pt. 2, p. 10.

11 Ibn Abdi ’l-Barr: *al-Istī‘āb*, vol. 2, p. 470.

12 al-Qundūzī: *Yanābi‘u ’l-mawaddah*, p. 253.

13 Ibn Abdi ’l-Barr: *al-Istī‘āb*, vol. 3, p. 1115.

an-Naysābūrī<sup>14</sup> have said: “There have not come as many *aḥādīth* with good chains of narrators (*asnād*) about virtues of any of the companions as have been narrated on the virtues of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.).”

“Furthermore, if we look at the exclusive virtues of Amīru ’l-mu’minīn, ‘Alī (a.s.) and think about those things which caused him to reap great rewards before Allāh, we will have to admit that only he was the most superior after the Holy Prophet.”<sup>15</sup>

The author himself was a Sunni, and he has discussed this matter in detail in Chapter 3, pages 103-516, of the above-mentioned book.

Obviously, I cannot provide here even a short list of the verses and traditions concerning the *afdāliyyah* of ‘Alī (a.s.). It will suffice to say that there are at least 86 verses in the Qur’ān extolling the virtues of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.) and the traditions on this subject cannot be counted.

Thus, it should be obvious even to the casual observer that ‘Alī (a.s.) was the most superior of the Muslims after the Holy Prophet.

## 8. APPOINTMENT OF ‘ALĪ (A.S.)

After giving a short account of *iṣmah* and *afdāliyyah* of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.), now comes the most important question of his appointment by Allāh.

On several occasions the Holy Prophet had declared that ‘Alī (a.s.) was to be his successor and caliph.

It is a fact that the first open declaration of the prophethood was the very occasion when the first open declaration of ‘Alī’s caliphate was made. It was at the time of the “Feast of the Clan.”

When the verse: وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ (“And warn thy nearest relations”)

14 Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī: *Sawā’iqu ’l-muḥriqah*, p. 72; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī: *Fathu ’l-bāri*, vol. 8, p. 71.

15 Amritsari, *Arjaḥu ’l-maṭālib*, p. 112.

(26:214), was revealed, the Prophet ordered ‘Alī to prepare food and invite the sons of ‘Abdu ’l-Muṭṭalib so that he could convey to them the words of Allāh. After the feast, the Prophet intended to talk to them, but Abū Lahab interfered by saying: “Verily, your comrade has entranced you.” Upon hearing this statement all of them dispersed.

The next day, the Messenger of Allāh again called them for a feast. After they had finished with their food, the Prophet addressed them: “O sons of ‘Abdu ’l-Muṭṭalib, I have brought for you the good of this world and the next, and I have been appointed by the Lord to call you unto Him. Therefore, who amongst you will administer this cause for me and be my brother, my successor and my caliph?” No one responded to the Prophet’s call except ‘Alī who was the youngest of the congregation. The Prophet then patted ‘Alī’s neck and said: “O my people! This ‘Alī is my brother, my successor and my caliph amongst you. Listen to him and obey him.”<sup>16</sup>

It is interesting to note here that the Leiden edition (1879 A.D., p. 1173) of *at-Tārikh* of aṭ-Ṭabarī records the words of the Holy Prophet as “*waṣiyyī wa khalīfatī*” (my successor and my caliph); but in the Cairo edition of 1963 A.D., (which claims to be checked with the Leiden edition) these important words have been changed to “*kadhā wa kadhā*” (so-and-so)! How sad it is to see the academic world sacrificing its honesty and integrity on the altar of political expediency!

## 9. VERSE OF MASTERSHIP (*WILĀYAH*)

After that, on many occasions, many verses and traditions reminded the Muslims that ‘Alī was their master after the Holy Prophet. One of the most important verse is as follows:

16 Ibnu ’l-Athīr: *al-Kāmil*, vol. 5, pp. 62-3; al-Baghawī: *at-Taḥfīr*, vol. 4, p. 127; al-Khāzin: *at-Taḥfīr*, vol. 4, p. 127; al-Bayhaqī: *Dalā’ilu ’n-nubuwwah*, vol. 1, pp. 428-30; as-Suyūṭī: *ad-Durru ’l-manthūr*, vol. 5, p. 97; al-Muttaqī al-Hindī: *Kanzu ’l-’ummāl*, vol. 15, pp. 100, 113, 115-7; Abū ’l-Fidā’: *al-Mukhtaṣar*, vol. 1, pp. 116-7; aṭ-Ṭabarī: *at-Tārikh*, vol. 1 pp. 171-3; Carlyle, T.: *On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History*, p. 54; Gibbon, E.: *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 3, p. 94; Davenport, J.: *An Apology for Muhammed and the Koran*, p. 21; Irving, W.: *Mahomet and His Successors*, p. 45. (For further details, see al-Amīnī: *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 2, pp. 278- 89.)

إِنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ  
رَاكِعُونَ ﴿المائدة، ٥٥﴾

“Verily, your Master is only Allāh and His Apostle and those who believe, those who establish prayers, and pay the zakat while bowed (in worship)” (5:55).

The Muslim scholars, Sunni and Shī‘ah alike, agree that this verse was revealed in honour of Imām ‘Alī (a.s.). It clearly shows that there are only three masters of the believers. Firstly, Allāh secondly, His Prophet and thirdly, ‘Alī (with the eleven succeeding Imāms).

Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī says that one day he was praying with the Prophet when a beggar came to the Prophet’s mosque. No one responded to his pleas. The beggar raised his hands towards heavens and said, “Allāh! be a witness that I came to Thy Prophet’s mosque and no one gave me anything.” ‘Alī (a.s.) was bowing in *ruku‘* at that time. He pointed his little finger, on which was a ring, towards the beggar who came forward and took away the ring. This incident occurred in the Prophet’s presence who raised his face towards heaven and prayed: “O Lord! my brother Mūsā had begged of Thee to open his breast and to make his work easy for him, to loose the knot of his tongue so that people might understand him, and to appoint from among his relations his brother, as his vizier, and to strengthen his back with Hārūn and to make Hārūn his partner in his work. O Allāh! Thou said to Mūsā, ‘We will strengthen thy arm with thy brother. No one will now have an access to either of you!’ O Allāh! I am Muḥammad and Thou hast given me distinction. Open my breast for me, make my work easy for me, and from my family appoint my brother ‘Alī as my vizier. Strengthen my back with him.” The Prophet had not yet finished his prayers when Jibrīl brought the above quoted verse.<sup>17</sup>

Here is not the place to give all the references of this *ḥadīth*. (They run in the hundreds.) This verse and the prayer of the Prophet jointly and

17 at-Ṭabarī: *at-Taḥfīr*, vol. 6, p. 186; as-Suyūfī: *ad-Durru ‘l-manthūr*, vol. 2, pp. 293-4; ar-Rāzī: *at-Taḥfīr ‘l-kabīr*, vol. 12, p. 26; az-Zamakhsharī: *at-Taḥfīr (al-Kashshāf)*, vol. 1, p. 649; al-Jaṣṣāṣ: *Aḥkām ‘l-Qur‘ān*, vol. 2, pp. 542-3; al-Khāzin: *at-Taḥfīr*, vol. 2, p. 68.

separately show that ‘Alī (a.s.) was designated to be the Master of the Muslims after the Holy Prophet.

## 10. THE FORMAL DECLARATION OF GHADĪR KHUMM

All the previous declarations may be classified as a prelude to the formal declaration of Ghadīr Khumm.

This event has been unanimously described by the learned historians and scholars of both sects. Here we give a brief account to show what great arrangements were made to declare ‘Alī as the successor to the Holy Prophet.

Ghadīr Khumm lies in Juḥfā between Mecca and Medina. When the Prophet was on his way home, after performing his last pilgrimage, Jibrīl brought him this urgent command of Allāh:

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۗ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ... ﴿المائدة، ٦٧﴾

*O Apostle! deliver what has been sent down to you from your Lord; and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message (at all); and Allāh will protect you from the people . . . (5:67)*

The Prophet stopped at once and ordered that all people who had gone ahead should be called back, and he waited for those who were following. When all the caravan had gathered, a pulpit was set up by piling up camel saddles; the acacia thorns were swept away. The Prophet ascended the pulpit and delivered a long sermon. The day was very hot; people had to stretch their cloaks under their feet and over their heads. The Prophet addressed them as follows:

“O you people! Know it well that Jibrīl came down to me several times bringing me orders from the Lord, the Merciful, that I should halt at this place and inform every man, white and black, that ‘Alī,



the son of Abū Ṭālib, is my brother and my *waṣiyy* (successor) and my caliph, and the Imām after me. His position to me is like that of Hārūn to Mūsā, except that there is to be no prophet after me, and he is your master next to Allāh and His Prophet.

“O you people! Verily, Allāh has appointed him to be your Imām and ruler. Obedience to him is obligatory alike on all the *muhājirūn* (Emigrants) and *anṣār* (Helpers) and on those who follow them in virtue, and on the dwellers in cities and the nomads, the Arabs and the non-Arabs, the freeman and the slave, the young and the old, the great and the small, the white and the black. His command is to be obeyed, his word is binding and his orders obligatory on everyone believing in the One God. Cursed is the man who disobeys him and blessed is he who follows him, and he who believes in him is a true believer.

“O you people! This is the last time I shall stand in this assembly. Therefore, listen and obey and surrender to the command of your Lord. Verily, Allāh, He is your Lord and God; then after Him, His Prophet, Muḥammad, who is addressing you, is your Master, then after me ‘Alī is your Master and your Imām, according to Allāh’s command. Then after him the Imāmate will continue through my descendants begotten by him till the day you meet Allāh and His Prophet.

“O you people! Meditate on the Qur’ān and understand its verses; reflect over its clear verses and do not go to the ambiguous ones. For, by Allāh, none will properly explain to you its warnings and expound to you its meanings except this man (i.e., ‘Alī) whose hand I am lifting up in front of myself. And I say unto you that whoever whose Master I am, ‘Alī is his Master; and he is ‘Alī, the son of Abū Ṭālib, my brother and *waṣiyy* (successor); and *wilāyah* (obedience to him and love for him) has been made obligatory by Allāh, the Powerful, the Exalted.”

The other Imāms have also been briefly referred to in this address; and they are mentioned in precise detail in many other traditions. For example, on one occasion addressing Imām Ḥusayn the Prophet said:

“You are an Imām, the son of an Imām, the brother of an Imām, nine of your lineal descendants will be pious Imāms; the ninth of them being their Qā’im (he who will rise).”<sup>18</sup>

Even a casual observer would not fail to realize that, it was a matter of vital importance to Islam and that is why the Prophet, under the Divine Command, made all the possible preparations to accomplish it. Exposed to the scorching rays of the midday sun, he mounted the pulpit to make the important pronouncement.

First of all, he informed the audience of his approaching end and then called them to witness that he had faithfully discharged his duties. Then he asked them: “Do I not have more authority upon you than you yourselves have?” All of them cried out that he certainly had more right on them than they themselves had. The Prophet then said: “Whoever whose Master I am, ‘Alī is his Master.” In the end he invoked blessings on ‘Alī, saying: “O Allāh! Love him who loves ‘Alī, and be the enemy of the enemy of ‘Alī; help him who helps ‘Alī, and forsake him who forsakes ‘Alī.”

When the ceremony was over, the following verse of the Qur’ān was revealed:

...الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا

... ﴿المائدة، ٣﴾

“... This day I have perfected your religion for you and I have completed My bounty upon you and I have approved Islam as your religion. . .” (5:3).

This Divine Communication clearly shows that because of ‘Alī’s appointment to the Imāmate the religion was perfected, the bounty and favour of Allāh completed, and Islam approved by Allāh. On the arrival of this glad tidings from heaven the believers congratulated ‘Alī in the Prophet’s presence and many poets composed poems on this event. All these facts stand recorded in books of tradition as will be seen in the following pages.

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18 al-Qundūzī: *Yanābi‘u ‘l-mawaddah*, p. 168; Amritsari: *Arjaḥu ‘l-maṭālib*, p. 448.

## I. *HADĪTH OF GHADĪR: MUTAWĀTIR*

The following extracts (taken from authentic Sunni books) from the said lecture (*khuṭbah*) of the Holy Prophet are very important:

I am leaving behind, among you, two most precious things... (1) the Book of Allāh ... and (2) my descendants who are my family members. They will not separate from each other until they come to me near Kawthar (a pool in Paradise). Verily Allāh is my Master and I am the Master of every believer.

Then he took the hand of ‘Alī and said:

Whoever whose Master I am, ‘Alī is his Master.

These two traditions are referred to as the traditions of ‘Two Precious Things’ (*Thaqalayn*) and Mastership’ (*Wilāyah*). They are singly and Jointly narrated by hundreds of traditionalists.

Nawwāb Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān of Bhopal, says: “al-Ḥākim Abū Sa‘īd says that the tradition of ‘Two Precious Things’ and of ‘Whoever whose Master I am, ‘Alī is his Master’ are *mutawātir* (i.e., narrated unbrokenly by so many people that no doubt can be entertained about their authenticity), because a great number of the companions of the Prophet have narrated them. So much so that Muḥammad ibn Jarīr has written these two traditions through seventy-five different chains (*asnād*); and he has written a separate book which he named *Kitābū ’l-wilāyah*; and al-Ḥāfiẓ adh-Dhahabī also has written a complete book on its *asnād* and has passed the verdict that it is *mutawātir*; and Abū ’l-‘Abbās ibn ‘Uqdah has narrated the *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr Khumm through one hundred and fifty chains and has written a complete book on it.”<sup>19</sup>

Some writers have tried to cast doubt on the authenticity of the events of Ghadīr Khumm. It is necessary to mention that this *ḥadīth* is *mutawātir*, and the late renowned scholar al-‘Allāmah al-Amīnī in the first volume of his celebrated book *al-Ghadīr* has given (with full references) the names of 110 famous companions of the Holy Prophet who have narrated this *ḥadīth*. As an example, I am enumerating the names given under letter

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19 Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān: *Manhajū ’l-wuṣūl*, p. 13.

*alif*. (The years of death indicated in parentheses are in A.H.):

1. Abū Laylā al-Anṣārī (37);
2. Abū Zaynab ibn ‘Awf al-Anṣārī;
3. Abū Faḍālah al-Anṣārī (38);
4. Abū Qudāmah al-Anṣārī;
5. Abū ‘Amrah ibn ‘Amr ibn Muḥaṣṣin al-Anṣārī;
6. Abū ‘l-Haytham ibn at-Tayyihān (37);
7. Abū Rāfi‘ al-Qibtī, slave of the Holy Prophet;
8. Abū Dhuwayb Khuwaylid (or Khālīd) ibn Khālīd al-Hudhalī;
9. Usāmah ibn Zayd ibn Ḥārithah (54);
10. Ubayy ibn Ka‘b al-Anṣārī (30 or 32);
11. As‘ad ibn Zurārah al-Anṣārī;
12. Asmā’ bint ‘Umays;
13. Umm Salamah, wife of the Holy Prophet;
14. Umm Hānī bint Abī Ṭālib;
15. Abū Ḥamzah Anas ibn Mālik al-Anṣārī;
16. Abū Bakr ibn Abī Quḥāfah; and
17. Abū Hurayrah.<sup>20</sup>

And there are not less than 84 *tābi‘īn* (disciples of the companions) who narrated this *ḥadīth* from the above-mentioned companions. Again, the list under letter *alif* is given here as an example:

1. Abū Rāshid al-Ḥubrānī ash-Shāmī;
2. Abū Salamah ibn ‘Abdi ‘r-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf;
3. Abū Sulaymān al-Mu‘adhdhin;
4. Abū Ṣāliḥ as-Sammān, Dhakwān al-Madanī;
5. Abū ‘Unfuwanāh al-Māzinī;
6. Abū ‘Abdi ‘r-Raḥīm al-Kindī;
7. Abū ‘l-Qāsim, Aṣḥabgh ibn Nubātah at-Tamīmī;
8. Abū Laylā al-Kindī; and
9. Iyās ibn Nudhayr.<sup>21</sup>

Traditionists have recorded this *ḥadīth* in their books in every century and every era. For example, the names of those writers and scholars who have narrated this *ḥadīth* in the second century of hijrah are:

20 al-Amīnī: *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 1, pp. 14-18 .

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

1. Abū Muḥammad, ‘Amr ibn Dīnār al-Jumahī al-Makkī (115 or 116);
2. Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Muslim ibn ‘Ubaydillāh al-Qurashī az-Zuhrī (124);
3. ‘Abdu ’r-Raḥmān ibn Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr at-Taymī al-Madanī (126);
4. Bakr ibn Sawādah ibn Thumāmah, Abū Thumāmah al-Baṣrī (128);
5. ‘Abdullāh ibn Abī Najīḥ, Yasār ath-Thaqafī, Abū Yasar al-Makkī (131);
6. al-Ḥāfiẓ Mughīrah ibn Muqassim, Abū Hishām aḍ-Ḍabbī al-Kūfī (133);
7. Abū ‘Abdi ’r-Raḥīm Khālīd ibn Zayd al-Jumahī al-Miṣrī (139);
8. Ḥasan ibn al-Ḥakam an-Nakha’ī al-Kūfī (ca.140);
9. Idrīs ibn Yazīd, Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Awdī al-Kūfī;
10. Yaḥyā ibn Sa’īd ibn Ḥayyān at-Taymī al-Kūfī;
11. al-Ḥāfiẓ ‘Abdu ’l-Mālīk ibn Abī Sulaymān al-‘Arẓamī al-Kūfī (145);
12. ‘Awf ibn Abī Jamīlah al-‘Abdi al-Hajarī al-Baṣrī (146);
13. ‘Ubaydullāh ibn ‘Umar ibn Ḥafṣ ibn ‘Āṣim ibn ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb al-‘Adawī al-Madanī (147);
14. Nu‘aym ibn al-Ḥakīm al-Madāyinī (148);
15. Ṭalḥah ibn Yaḥyā ibn Ṭalḥah ibn ‘Ubaydillāh at-Taymī al-Kūfī (148);
16. Abū Muḥammad Kathīr ibn Zayd al-Aslamī (ca.150);
17. al-Ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad ibn Ishāq al-Madanī (151 or 152);
18. al-Ḥāfiẓ Mu‘ammar ibn Rāshid, Abū ‘Urwah al-Azdī al-Baṣrī (153 or 154);
19. al-Ḥāfiẓ Mis‘ar ibn Kidām ibn Ḍahīr al-Hilālī ar-Rawāsī al-Kūfī (153 or 154);
20. Abū ‘Īsā Ḥakam ibn Abān al-‘Adanī (154 or 155);
21. ‘Abdullāh ibn Shawdhab al-Balkhī al-Baṣrī (157);
22. al-Ḥāfiẓ Shu‘bah ibn al-Ḥajjāj, Abū Bisṭām al-Wāsītī (160);
23. al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū ’l-‘Alā’, Kāmil ibn al-‘Alā’ at-Tamīmī al-Kūfī (ca. 160);
24. al-Ḥāfiẓ Sufyān ibn Sa’īd ath-Thawrī, Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Kūfī (161);

25. al-Ḥāfiẓ Isrā'īl ibn Yūnus ibn Abī Ishāq as-Sabī'ī Abū Yūsuf al-Kūfī (162);
26. Ja'far ibn Ziyād al-Kūfī al-Aḥmar (165 or 167);
27. Muslim ibn Sālim an-Nahdī, Abū Farwah al-Kūfī;
28. al-Ḥāfiẓ Qays ibn ar-Rabī', Abū Muḥammad al-Asadī al-Kūfī (165);
29. al-Ḥāfiẓ Ḥāmmad ibn Salamah, Abū Salamah al-Başrī (167);
30. al-Ḥāfiẓ 'Abdullāh ibn Lahī'ah, Abū 'Abdi 'r-Raḥmān al-Miṣrī (174);
31. al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū 'Uwānah al-Waḍḍāḥ ibn 'Abdillāh al-Yashkurī al-Wāsiṭī al-Bazzāz (175 or 176);
32. Al-Qāḍī Sharīk ibn 'Abdillāh, Abū 'Abdillāh an-Nakha'ī al-Kūfī (177);
33. al-Ḥāfiẓ 'Abdullāh (or 'Ubaydullāh) ibn 'Ubaydu 'r-Raḥmān (or 'Abdu 'r-Raḥmān) al-Kūfī, Abū 'Abdi 'r-Raḥmān al-Ashja'ī (182);
34. Nūḥ ibn Qays, Abū Rawḥ al-Ḥuddānī al-Başrī (183);
35. al-Muṭṭalib ibn Ziyād ibn Abī Zuhayr al-Kūfī, Abū Ṭālib (185);
36. al-Qāḍī Ḥassān ibn Ibraḥīm al-'Anazī, Abū Hāshim (186);
37. al-Ḥāfiẓ Jarīr ibn 'Abdi 'l-Ḥamīd, Abū 'Abdillāh aḍ-Ḍabbi al-Kūfī ar-Rāzī (188);
38. al-Faḍl ibn Mūsā, Abū 'Abdillāh al-Marwazi as-Sīnānī (192);
39. al-Ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad ibn Ja'far al-Madanī al-Başrī (193);
40. al-Ḥāfiẓ Ismā'īl ibn 'Uliyyah, Abū Bishr ibn Ibraḥīm al-Asadī (193);
41. al-Ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad ibn Ibraḥīm, Abū 'Amr ibn Abī 'Adiyy as-Sulamī al-Başrī (194);
42. al-Ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad ibn Khāzim, Abū Mu'āwiyah at-Tamīmī aḍ-Ḍarīr (195);
43. al-Ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad ibn Fuḍayl, Abū 'Abdi 'r-Raḥmān al-Kūfī (195);
44. al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Wakī' ibn al-Jarrāḥ ar-Ru'āsī al-Kūfī (196);
45. al-Ḥāfiẓ Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah, Abū Muḥammad al-Hilālī al-Kūfī (198);
46. al-Ḥāfiẓ 'Abdullāh ibn Numayr, Abū Hishām al-Hamdānī al-Khārifī (199);
47. al-Ḥāfiẓ Ḥanash ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Laqīṭ an-Nakha'ī al-Kūfī;

48. Abū Muḥammad Mūsā ibn Ya‘qūb az-Zama‘ī al-Madanī;
49. al-‘Alā’ ibn Sālim al-‘Aṭṭār al-Kūfī;
50. al-Azraq ibn ‘Alī ibn Muslim al-Ḥanafī, Abū ‘l-Jahm al-Kūfī;
51. Hānī ibn Ayyūb al-Ḥanafī al-Kūfī;
52. Fuḍayl ibn Marzūq al-Agharr ar-Ru’āsī al-Kūfī (ca.160);
53. Abū Ḥamzah Sa‘d ibn ‘Ubaydah as-Sulamī al-Kūfī;
54. Mūsā ibn Muslim al-Ḥizāmī ash-Shaybānī, Abū ‘Īsā al-Kūfī aṭ-Ṭahhān (Mūsā aṣ-Ṣaghīr);
55. Ya‘qūb ibn Ja‘far ibn Abī Kathīr al-Anṣārī al-Madanī;
56. ‘Uthmān ibn Sa‘d ibn Murrah al-Qurashī, Abū ‘Abdillāh (Abū ‘Alī) al-Kūfī.<sup>22</sup>

Thus this *ḥadīth* continues to be narrated by so many narrators (*ruwāt*) in every era as to make it *mutawātir*. Coming to the scholars and writers who have narrated this *ḥadīth* in their books of traditions, it is enough to mention that al-‘Allamāh al-Amīnī has listed the names of 360 scholars according to fourteenth century.<sup>23</sup>

Some people have tried to cast doubts about the *asnād* of this *ḥadīth*. As every student of Islamic tradition knows, if a *ḥadīth* is *mutawātir* there is no need to look at individual’s *asnād* at all. Still to show the hollowness of this charge, I would like to give here the opinions of some of the famous traditionalists (*muḥaddithūn*).

## II. ASNĀD OF ḤADĪTH OF GHADĪR:

- a. al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū ‘Īsā at-Ṭirmidhī (d. 279 A.H.) has said in his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (one of the *aṣ-Ṣiḥāḥ as-Sittah*) that هذا حديث حسن صحيح — “This is a good (*hasan*) and correct (*ṣaḥīḥ*) *ḥadīth*.”<sup>24</sup>
- b. al-Ḥāfiẓ Abū Ja‘far aṭ-Ṭahāwī (d. 321 A.H.) has said in his *Mushkilu ‘l-āthār* that فهذا الحديث صحيح الإسناد ولا طعن لاحد في رواته — “This *ḥadīth* is *ṣaḥīḥ* according to the chains of narrators (*asnād*) and no one has said anything contrary to its narrators.”<sup>25</sup>

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 73-81.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 73-151.

24 at-Ṭirmidhī: *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 2, p. 298.

25 aṭ-Ṭahāwī: *Mushkilu ‘l-āthār*, vol. 2, p. 308.

- c. Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Ḥākim an-Naysābūri (d. 405 A.H.) has narrated this *ḥadīth* from several chains in his *al-Mustadrak* and has said that this *ḥadīth* is *ṣaḥīḥ*.<sup>26</sup>
- d. Abū Muḥammad Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-‘Asīmī has said: وهذا حديث تلقته الامة بالقبول وهو موافق بالاصول — “This *ḥadīth* is accepted by *ummah*, and it is in conformity with the principles.”<sup>27</sup>

Likewise, the following traditionalists (among hundreds of others) have quoted that this *ḥadīth* is *ṣaḥīḥ*:

1. Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Maḥāmīlī al-Baghdādī in his *Āmālī*;
2. Ibn ‘Abdi ’l-Barr al-Qurṭubī in *al-Istī‘āb*;
3. Ibnu ’l-Maghāzili ash-shāfi‘ī in *al-Manāqib*;
4. Abū Ḥāmid Ghazzālī in *Sirru ’l-‘ālamayn*;
5. Abū ’l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī in *al-Manāqib*;
6. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī in *Tadhkirat khawāṣṣi ’l-ummah*;
7. Ibn Abi ’l-Ḥadīd al-Mu‘tazilī in his *Sharḥ Nahji ’l-balāghah*;
8. Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Ganjī ash-Shāfi‘ī in *Kifāyatu ’ṭ-ṭālib*;
9. Abū ’l-Makārim ‘Alā’u ’d-Dīn as-Simnānī in *al-‘Urwatū ’l-wuthqā*;
10. Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī in *Tahdhību ’t-tahdhīb*;
11. Ibn Kathīr ad-Dimashqī in his *Tārīkh*;
12. Jalālu ’d-Dīn as-Suyūṭī;
13. al-Qaṣṭalānī in *al-Mawāhibu ’l-ladunniyyah*;
14. Ibn Ḥajar al-Makkī in *aṣ-Ṣawā’iqu ’l-muḥriqah*;
15. ‘Abdu ’l-Ḥaqq ad-Dihlawī in *Sharḥu ’l-mishkāṭ*; and many others.<sup>28</sup>

It should be noted that all the names mentioned above are of Sunni scholars; and in Sunni usage, a *ḥadīth* is called “*ṣaḥīḥ*” when it is uninterruptedly narrated by persons of approved probity (*‘ādil*) who have perfect memory, does not have any defect, and is not unusual (*shādhdh*).<sup>29</sup>

26 al-Ḥākim: *al-Mustadrak*, vol. 3, pp. 109-10.

27 al-Amīnī: *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 1, p. 295.

28 *Ibid.*, pp. 294-313.

29 Ṣubḥī aṣ-Ṣāliḥ: *‘Ulūmu ’l-ḥadīth wa muṣṭalāḥātuh*, p. 145.



If the above virtues are found in the *asnād* of a *ḥadīth* but the memory of one or more of its narrators is a degree less than that required for *ṣaḥīḥ*, then it is called “*ḥasan*.”<sup>30</sup>

So when the Sunni scholars say that the *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr is *ṣaḥīḥ*, they mean that its narrators are of approved probity (i.e., they do not have any defect in belief and deeds) and have perfect memory, and that this *ḥadīth* has no defect and is not unusual.

### III. GENERAL MEANINGS OF MAWLĀ:

As the Sunnis cannot deny the authenticity of the *ḥadīth* of Ghadīr, they try to downplay its significance by saying that the word “*mawlā*” in this *ḥadīth* means ‘friend’, and that the Holy Prophet wanted to announce that: “Whoever whose friend I am, ‘Alī is his friend!”

The trouble is that not a single person who was present in *Ghadīr* grasped this alleged meaning. Ḥassān ibn Thābit, the famous poet of the Holy Prophet, composed a poem and recited it before the audience, in which he said:

فقال له: قم يا علي فإنني \*\*\* رضيتك من بعدي إماما وهاديا

*The Prophet then said to him: “Stand up, O ‘Alī,  
As I am pleased to make you Imām and Guide after me.”*

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb congratulated ‘Alī in these words:

هنيئاً لك يا ابن أبي طالب أصبحت وأمسيت مولى كل مؤمن ومؤمنة

*“Congratulations, O son of Abū Ṭālib, this morning you became mawlā of every believing man and woman.”*<sup>31</sup>

If *mawlā* means ‘friend’ then why the congratulations? And was ‘Alī

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>31</sup> al-Khaṭṭāb at-Tabrīzī: *Mishkātu ’l-maṣābiḥ*, p. 557; Mīr Khwānd: *Ḥabību ’s-siyar*, vol. 1, pt. 3, p. 144; aṭ-Ṭabarī: *al-Wilāyah*; ar-Rāzī: *at-Taḥfīrū ’l-kabīr*, vol. 12, pp. 49-50; Aḥmad: *al-Musnad*, vol. 4, p. 281; Ibn Abī Shaybah: *al-Muṣannaf*; Abū Ya’lā: *al-Musnad*; Aḥmad ibn ‘Uqdah: *al-Wilāyah*; and many others. See also al-Amīnī: *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 1, pp. 270- 83 - for further references.

‘enemy’ of all believing men and women before that time, so that ‘Umar said that ‘this morning’ you became friend of them all?

al-Imām ‘Alī (a.s.) himself wrote to Mu‘āwiyah: “And the Messenger of Allāh granted to me his authority over you on the day of Ghadīr Khumm.”<sup>32</sup>

And there are many other companions of the Holy Prophet who used in their poems the word “*mawlā*” in connection with Ghadīr Khumm in the sense of “master.”

Countless scholars of the Qur’ān, Arabic grammar and literature have interpreted the word “*mawlā*” (مَوْلَى) as “*awlā*” (أَوْلَى) which means “having more authority.” The names of the following scholars may be quoted here as examples:

1. Ibn ‘Abbās (in his *Tafsīr*, on the margin of *ad-Durru ’l-manthūr*, vol. 5, p. 355);
2. al-Kalbī (as quoted in *at-Tafsīru ’l-kabīr* of ar-Rāzī, vol. 29, p. 227; al-Alūsī, *Rūhu ’l-ma‘ānī*, vol. 27, p. 178);
3. al-Farrā’, (ar-Rāzī, *ibid.*; al-Alūsī, *ibid.*);
4. Abū ‘Ubaydah Mu‘ammar ibn Muthannā al-Baṣrī (ar-Rāzī, *ibid.*; and ash-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, *Sharḥu ’l-mawāqif*, vol. 3, p. 271);
5. al-Akhfash al-Awsaṭ (in *Nihāyatu ’l-’uqūl*);
6. al-Bukhārī (in *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 7, p. 240);
7. Ibn Qutaybah (in *al-Qurṭayn*, vol. 2, p. 164);
8. Abū ’l-‘Abbas Tha‘lab (in *Sharḥu ’s-sab‘ah al-mu‘allaqah* of az-Zūzanī);
9. aṭ-Ṭabarī (in his *Tafsīr*, vol. 9, p. 117);
10. al-Wāḥidī (in *al-Waṣīṭ*);
11. ath-Tha‘labī (in *al-Kashf wa ’l-bayān*);
12. az-Zamakhsharī (in *al-Kashshāf*, vol. 2, p. 435);
13. al-Bayḍāwī (in his *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 497);
14. an-Nasafī (in his *Tafsīr*, vol. 4, p. 229);
15. al-Khāzin al-Baghdādī (in his *Tafsīr*, vol. 4, p. 229); and
16. Muhibbu ’d-Dīn Afandī (in his *Tanzīlu ’l-āyāt*).<sup>33</sup>

32 al-Amīnī: *al-Ghadīr*, vol. 1, p. 340.

33 See al-Amīnī: *al-Ghadīr*, pp. 344-50, for detail references.

#### IV. MEANING OF “MAWLĀ” IN THE CONTEXT:

Now let us examine what meaning can be inferred from the context of this *ḥadīth*. If a word has more than one meaning, the best way to ascertain its true connotation is to look at the association (قَرِينَةٌ - *qarīnah*) and the context. There are scores of “associations” in this *ḥadīth* which clearly show that the only meaning fitting the occasion can be “master.” Some of them are as follows:

**FIRST:** The question which the Holy Prophet asked just before this declaration: He asked them: أَلَسْتُ أَوْلَىٰ بِكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ؟ - “Do I Not have more authority upon you than you have yourselves?” When they said: “Yes, surely,” then the Prophet proceeded to declare that: مَنْ كُنْتَ مَوْلَاهُ فَعَلِيٌّ مَوْلَاهُ - “Whoever whose *mawlā* I am. ‘Alī is his *mawlā*.”

Without doubt, the word “*mawlā*” in this declaration has the same meaning as: أَوْلَىٰ بِكُمْ (having more authority upon you) has in the preceding question. At least 64 Sunni traditionalists have quoted that preceding question; among them are Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Mājah, an-Nasā‘ī and at-Ṭirmidhī.<sup>34</sup>

**SECOND:** The following prayer which the Holy Prophet uttered just after this declaration:

اللهم وال من والاه، وعاد من عاداه، وانصر من نصره، واخذل من خذله

“O Allāh! Love him who loves ‘Alī, and be the enemy of the enemy of ‘Alī; help him who helps ‘Alī, and forsake him who forsakes ‘Alī.”

This prayer shows that ‘Alī, on that day, was entrusted with a responsibility which, by its very nature, would make some people his enemy (and that responsibility could not be that except of a ruler); and in carrying out that responsibility he would need helpers and supporters. Are helpers ever needed to carry on a ‘friendship’?

**THIRD:** The declaration of the Holy Prophet that: “It seems imminent that I will be called away (by Allāh) and I will answer that call.” This clearly

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 370-371.

shows that he was making arrangements for the leadership of the Muslims after his death.

**FOURTH:** The congratulations of the companions and their expressions of joy do not leave room for doubt concerning the meaning of this declaration.

**FIFTH:** The occasion, place and time: Imagine the Holy Prophet breaking his journey in midday, and detaining nearly one-hundred-thousand travellers under the burning sun of the Arabian desert, making them sit in a thorny place on the burning sand, and making a pulpit of camel-saddles; then imagine him delivering a long lecture and at the end of all those preparations coming out with an announcement that: “Whosoever loves me should love ‘Alī,” or “Whoever whose friend I am, ‘Alī is his friend!”

Is such a thing excusable before common sense? No, but some people are ready to accuse the Holy Prophet of such childish behaviour!

## 11. ‘ALĪ - “SELF” OF THE PROPHET

There are many verses which point to the caliphate of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.). It is not possible to enumerate them all here. But the event of *Mubāhalah* (malediction, imprecation) which took place in the ninth year of the hijrah should be noted.

In this year a delegation consisting of fourteen Christians came from Najrān to meet the Prophet. When they met the Prophet they asked him: “What is your opinion about Jesus?” The Apostle said: “You may take rest today and you will receive the reply afterwards.” The next day three verses of the third chapter of the Qur’ān (3:59-61) about Jesus were revealed. When the Christians did not accept the words of Allāh and insisted on their own beliefs, the Apostle recited the following verse:

فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ

وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ وَأَنْفُسَنَا وَأَنْفُسَكُمْ ثُمَّ نَبِّئْهُمْ فَتَجْعَل لَّعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَاذِبِينَ.

﴿آل عمران، ٦١﴾

*But whoever disputes with you in this matter after what has come to you of knowledge, then say: “Come let us call our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and our selves and your selves, then let us be earnest in prayer and invoke the curse of Allāh upon the liars” (3:61).*

The next day the Christians came out on one side; and on the other side, the Apostle came out of his house carrying Ḥusayn in his arms with Ḥasan walking by his side holding his hand. Behind him was Fāṭimah, and behind her, ‘Alī. When the Christians saw the five pure souls they abstained from the proposed malediction and submitted to a treaty with the Prophet.

In this verse, according to Jābir ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Anṣārī, the word “sons” refers to Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, the word “women” refers to Fāṭimah, and the words “our selves” refer to the Prophet and ‘Alī. Thus ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.), has been referred to in the verse of *Mubāhalah* as “the self” of the Prophet.<sup>35</sup>

It also follows that just as it is unlawful to seek to be superior to the Prophet, similarly it is unlawful to supercede ‘Alī - he being the “self” of the Prophet according to the words of Allāh. Anyone who presumed to supercede him was in essence presuming to supercede the Prophet.

## 12. TRADITIONS

After the declaration of Ghadīr, there is really no need to provide more proofs of the caliphate of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a.s.). Yet, it may be pertinent to quote some *aḥādīth* in this regard.

In the *Ḥādīthu ’h-thaqalayn* the Prophet said:

I am leaving two weighty things among you - the Book of Allāh and my *Ahlu ’l-bayt*. If you adhere to them and continue to and obey

35 al-Wāḥidī: *Asbābu ’n-nuzūl*, p. 40; as-Suyūṭī: *ad-Durru ’l-manthūr*, vol. 2, p. 38.

both of them and forsake neither, you will never be misled. They will not separate from each other till they reach me at Kawthar (the pool in Paradise).

Now, it is admitted on all hands that ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib is not only one of the *Ahlu ’l-bayt* but is the head of the *Ahlu ’l-bayt*. Therefore, the obligation of his obedience is proved from this universal accepted tradition.<sup>36</sup>

Then there is the *ḥadīth* known as *Ḥadīthu ’l-manzilah*. In the expedition of Tabūk (in the month of Rajab of the ninth year A.H.) the Prophet left ‘Alī as his deputy in Medina. ‘Alī exclaimed with dismay: “Are You leaving me behind?” The Prophet asked him: “O ‘Alī, are you not satisfied that you have the same position in relation to me as Hārūn had to Mūsā except that there is no prophet after me?”

The Prophet thereby meant that as Mūsā had left behind Hārūn to look after his people when he went to receive the Commandments, in the same way he was leaving ‘Alī behind as his deputy to look after the affairs of Islam during his absence.<sup>37</sup>

Then there is the occasion of communicating the verses of *sūrah al-Barā’ah* (ch. 9) to the people of Mecca. First Abū Bakr was sent to proclaim it before the pagans. Later the Prophet sent ‘Alī to take the *sūrah* from Abū Bakr and announce it at Mecca. Abū Bakr returned to Medina from his journey midway en route to Mecca and asked the Prophet whether any verse or order was received from Allāh against him announcing the *sūrah*. The Prophet said: “Jibrīl came to me and said that no one shall deliver the message except myself or the person who is from me.”<sup>38</sup>

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36 This *ḥadīth* can be seen in most books of traditions. See for instance, at-Ṭirmidhī: *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 2, p. 308; Ibnu ’l-Athīr: *Usdu ’l-ghābah*, vol. 2, p. 12; as-Suyūṭī: *ad-Durru ’l-manthūr*, vol. 6, p. 7; al-Muttaqī al-Hindī: *Kanzu ’l-’ummāl*, (Hyderabad, 1312 A.H.), p. 48.

37 Ibn Mājah: *as-Sunan*, p. 12; Aḥmad: *al-Musnad*, vol. 1, p. 174; an-Nasā’i: *al-Khaṣā’iṣ*, pp. 15-16; aṭ-Ṭaḥāwī: *Mushkilu ’l-āthār*, vol. 2, p. 309; al-Muḥibb aṭ-Ṭabarī: *Dhakhā’iru ’l-’uqbā*, p. 63.

38 as-Suyūṭī: *ad-Durru ’l-manthūr*, vol. 6, p. 209, aṭ-Ṭabarī: *at-Tafsīr*, vol. 10, p. 47; an-Nasā’i: *al-Khaṣā’iṣ*, p. 20.

The moral principle evident in these declarations of the Prophet is also expressed in the following tradition which has been accepted by all sects. The Prophet said: “‘Alī is with the truth and the truth is with ‘Alī; whithersoever ‘Alī turns, the truth (also) turns with him.”<sup>39</sup> The rightful caliphate is thus rightly entrusted to ‘Alī and to none else.

Another is the *ḥadīth* of “Divine Light” (*Hādīthu ’n-nūr*). Sayyid ‘Alī Hamadānī writes in *Mawaddatu ’l-qurbā*, on the authority of Salmān al-Fārīsī, that the Prophet said: “I and ‘Alī were both created from one and the same *nūr* (Divine Light) four thousand years before Adam was created, and when Adam was created that *nūr* was given a place in his backbone. So we continued to occupy the same place till we were separated in the back of ‘Abdu ’l-Muṭṭalib. Therefore in me is the prophethood and in ‘Alī is the caliphate.” In *Riyāḍu ’l-faḍā’il*, the last words of the above *ḥadīth* are written as follows: “Then He made me a prophet and made ‘Alī a *waṣīyy* (vicegerent).”<sup>40</sup>

### 13. ULU ’L-AMR MUST BE MA’ŠŪM

Allāh says in the Qur’ān:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ۖ فَإِن تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِن كُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۚ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا. ﴿النساء، ٥٩﴾

*O ye who believe! Obey Allāh and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority from among you; then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allāh and the Apostle, if you believe in Allāh and the last day; this is better and very good in the end (4:59).*

This verse obliges the Muslims to two obediences: First, the obedience of Allāh; second, the obedience of the Apostle and ‘those vested with authority from among you’ (*uli ’l-amri minkum*). The arrangement of the

39 al-Khaṭīb al-Khwārazmī: *al-Manāqib*, p. 56; al-Ḥammūyī: *Farā’idu ’s-simṭayn*, vol. 1, p. 176; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī: *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 14, p. 321.

40 As quoted in *Mafāṭihu ’l-maṭalib*, p. 396; al-Ganjī: *Kifāyatu ’t-tālib*, p. 176.

words shows that the obedience of *ulu 'l-amr* is as much obligatory as is the obedience of the Apostle. Naturally, it means that *ulu 'l-amr* should be of the same caliber as the Apostle; otherwise Allāh would not have joined them together in this verse.

Before deciding who the *ulu 'l-amr* are, it will be of help to have a look at the commandment of obeying the Apostle, to see how all-encapsulating and all-pervading this commandment is and how great the authority of the Apostle of Allāh is.

Allāh says in the Qur'ān: *And We did not send any Apostle, but that he should be obeyed by Allāh's permission* (4:64). The prophets and the apostles were to be obeyed and followed; the followers were not expected to check every action of the prophet to decide what was to be obeyed and what not. Clearly, it shows that the prophets and apostles were free from error and sin; otherwise Allāh would not have ordered the people to obey the apostles unconditionally.

There are many verses in which Allāh commands us to obey the Prophet: *O ye who believe! Obey Allāh, and obey the Apostle.*<sup>41</sup> Again, He says: *And whoever obeys Allāh and His Apostle. . .*<sup>42</sup> In the same surah it is asserted: *Whoever obeys the Apostle, he indeed obeys Allāh* (4:80). In these as well as numerous other verses of the Qur'ān, obedience of Allāh is synonymous with the obedience of the prophets. Such assertion would have been impossible if the prophets were not *ma 'ṣūm* (infallible).

Now, note the following verse: . . . *and obey not from among them a sinner or an ungrateful one* (76:24). The picture is complete. The prophets are to be obeyed; the sinners are not to be obeyed. The only conclusion is that the prophets were not sinners or wrong-doers. In other words, they were *ma 'ṣūm* - infallible, sinless.

Just imagine what impossible situation would have been created if any prophet began exhorting his followers to commit a mistake or sin. The wretched followers would have been condemned to the displeasure of

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41 Qur'ān, 47:33; see also: 3:32, 132; 5:92; 8:1, 20, 46; 24:54; 58:13; 64:12.

42 Qur'ān, 4:13; see also: 4:69; 24:52; 33:71; 48:17.



Allāh in any case. If they obeyed the Prophet and committed that sin they disobeyed the command given by Allāh and thus were disgraced. If, on the other hand, they disobeyed the Prophet, they again disobeyed the command of Allāh about obeying the Prophet. So, it appears that a non-*ma‘šūm* prophet could bring nothing but disgrace and condemnation to his people.

Looking especially at the Holy Prophet of Islam, Allāh tells us . . . *and whatever the Apostle gives you, take it; and from whatever he forbids you, keep back* (59:7). This means that the permission or prohibition of the Holy Prophet was always in accordance with the will of Allāh and always favoured by Him. It proves that the Holy Prophet was *ma‘šūm*. No one can be so sure about the commands of a man who is not infallible.

There is another verse: *Say: "If you love Allāh, then follow me, Allāh will love you and forgive you your sins"* (3:31). Here the love of Allāh is made contingent on following the Prophet of Islam. Both sides of love are included in it. If you love Allāh follow the Prophet; if you love the Prophet, Allāh will love you. Does it not show that the Prophet was absolutely free from any type of blemish?

Not only his actions, even his words were the Commands of Allāh. Allāh says in the Qur’ān: *Nor does he speak out of (his own) desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed* (53:3-4). Here we find the highest degree of infallibility which can be imagined.

Also, there are several verses in which the following words have been used for the Holy Prophet: . . . *an Apostle from among themselves, who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom.*<sup>43</sup> How could a prophet purify others of sins and blemishes if he himself were not pure? How could a man teach others wisdom if he had no wisdom to distinguish right from wrong; or worst still, if he had no will-power to resist from doing wrong? The Prophet was to teach people the Book of Allāh; this means that he knew the Commandments of Allāh. He was to purify them and teach them wisdom. So this means he had wisdom and purity himself.

43 Qur’ān, 62:2; see also 2:129; 3:164.

Witness to the perfection of his character is found in the Qur'ān where it says: *And most surely you are on sublime morality* (68:4). A man committing mistakes does not deserve such compliments.

All these verses clearly show two things:

**FIRST:** The authority of the Holy Prophet upon the believers was unlimited and all-comprehensive. Any order given by him, under any condition, in any place, at any time, was to be obeyed unconditionally.

**SECOND:** That supreme authority was given to him because he was *ma'sūm* (sinless) and free from all types of error and sin. Otherwise, Allāh would not have ordered us to obey him unconditionally.

In this verse, *ulu 'l-amr*, have been given exactly the same authority over the Muslims, because both the 'Apostle' and the *ulu 'l-amr* have been jointly mentioned under one word أَطِيعُوا - "obey"; which shows that the obedience of *ulu 'l-amr* has the same standing as the obedience of the Apostle.

It naturally follows that *ulu 'l-amr* must also be *ma'sūm* (sinless) and free from any type of error and sin. Otherwise, their obedience would not have been joined with the obedience of the Prophet. Amiru 'l-Mu'minin 'Alī (a.s.), said: "The one who disobeys Allāh is not to be obeyed; and verily obedience is of Allāh and of His Apostle and those vested with authority. Verily, Allāh ordered (the people) to obey the Apostle because he was sinless and clean (pure), who would not tell the people to disobey Allāh; and verily He ordered (the people) to obey those vested with authority because they are sinless and clean (pure), and would not tell the people to disobey Allāh."<sup>44</sup>

#### **14. ULU 'L-AMR: DOES IT MEAN MUSLIM RULERS?**

Many of our Sunni brethren tend to interpret "ulu 'l-amr" as 'the rulers from among yourselves', i.e., Muslims rulers. This interpretation is not based on any logical reasoning; it is solely based on twists of history. The

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44 as-Ṣadūq: *'Ilalu 'sh-shara'ī'*, vol. 1, p. 123.

majority of the Muslims have remained as a vassal of the monarchs and rulers, interpreting and reinterpreting Islam and the Qur'ān to please the powers to be.

The history of the Muslims (like any other nation) is replete with the names of rulers whose injustice, debauchery and tyranny have tarnished the name of Islam, as will be mentioned briefly in the latter part of this text. Such rulers have always been and will always be. And we are told that they are the *ulu 'l-amr* mentioned in this verse.

If Allāh were to order us to obey such kings and rulers, an impossible situation would be created for the Muslims. The wretched followers would be condemned to the displeasure of Allāh, no matter what they did. If they obeyed these rulers, they disobeyed the Command of Allāh: “Do not obey a sinner.” And if they disobeyed such rulers, they again disobeyed the Command of Allāh to “obey the Muslim rulers.” So, if we accept this interpretation, the Muslims are condemned to eternal disgrace whether they obey or disobey their non-*ma 'şūm* Muslim rulers.

Also, there are Muslim rulers of different beliefs and persuasions. There are Shāfi'īs, Wahhābīs, Mālikīs, Ḥanafīs, as well as Shī'ahs and Ibādīs. Now, according to this interpretation the Sunnis residing under an Ibādī Sultan (like in Oman) should follow Ibādī tenets; and those residing under a Shī'ah ruler (like in Iran) should follow Shī'ah beliefs. Do these people have the conviction of courage to follow their professed interpretation to its logical end?

The famous Sunni commentator, Fakhru 'd-Dīn ar-Rāzī, concluded in his *Tafsīru 'l kabīr*<sup>45</sup> that this verse proves that *ulu 'l-amr* must be *ma 'şūm*. He argues that Allāh has commanded the people to obey *ulu 'l-amr* unconditionally; therefore, it is essential for the *ulu 'l-amr* to be *ma 'şūm*. Because if there is any possibility of their committing sin (and sin is forbidden), it will mean that one has to obey them and also disobey them in that very action. And this is impossible! Then to dissuade his readers from the *Ahlu 'l-bayt*, he invented the theory that the Muslim ummah as a whole is *ma 'şūm*.

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45 ar-Rāzī: *at-Tafsīru 'l kabīr*, vol. 10, p. 144.

This interpretation is unique, as no Muslim scholar ever subscribed to this theory and it is not based on any tradition. It is quite surprising that ar-Rāzī accepts that each individual of the Muslim nation is non-*ma‘šūm*, yet still claims that their sum-total is *ma‘šūm*. Even a primary school student knows that 200 cows plus 200 cows makes 400 cows and not one horse.

But ar-Rāzī says that 70 million non-*ma‘šūm* plus 70 million non-*ma‘šūm* will make one *ma‘šūm*! Does he want us to believe that if all the patients of a mental hospital joined together they would be equal to one sane person?<sup>46</sup>

The poet of the Orient, Iqbal, has said:

که از مغز دو صد خر فکر يك انسان نمی آید

The minds of two hundred donkeys cannot produce the thoughts of one man.

Obviously, with his great knowledge he was able to conclude that *ulu ‘l-amr* must be *ma‘šūm*; but it was his prejudice which compelled him to say that the Islamic ummah as a whole is *ma‘šūm*.

Also, he did not pause to see that the verse contains the word “*minkum*” (“from among you”) which shows that the said *ulu ‘l-amr* shall be part of the Muslim *ummah*, not the whole Muslim nation. And if the whole Muslim nation is to be obeyed, then who is there left to obey?

## 15. REAL MEANING OF ULU ‘L-AMR

Now we return to the correct interpretation of the above verse.

al-Imām Ja‘far as-Şādiq (a.s.) said that this verse was revealed about ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn (a.s.). Upon hearing this, someone

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<sup>46</sup> Though we hold special respect for others’ opinions, and particularly for the beliefs of our Sunni brothers, at the same time, the author had no other alternative but to criticize the opinion of ar-Rāzī with these examples. Of course, we do not regard this opinion of ar-Rāzī to be the manifesto of all Sunni brothers. (pub.)

asked the Imām: “People say, ‘Why did Allāh not mention the names of ‘Alī and his family in His Book?’”

The Imām answered: “Tell them that there came the command of *ṣalāt* (prayer), but Allāh did not mention whether three or four *raka‘āt* (units) (to be performed); it was the Apostle of Allāh who explained all the details. And (the command of) *zakāt* was revealed, but Allāh did not say that it is one in every forty dirham; it was the Apostle of Allāh who explained it; and *ḥajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) was ordered but Allāh did not say to perform *ṭawāf* (circumambulation of the Ka‘bah) seven times - the Apostle of Allāh explained it. Likewise, the verse was revealed: *Obey Allāh, and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority from among you*, and it was revealed about ‘Alī and Ḥasan and Ḥusayn (a.s.).”<sup>47</sup>

In *Kifāyatu ‘l-athar*, there is a tradition from Jābir ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Anṣārī, in explanation of this verse. When it was revealed, Jābir said to the Prophet: “We know Allāh and the Prophet, but who are those vested with authority whose obedience has been conjoined to that of Allāh and yourself?” The Prophet said: “They are my caliphs and the Imāms of the Muslims after me. The first of them is ‘Alī, then Ḥasan, then Ḥusayn, then ‘Alī, son of Ḥusayn; then Muḥammad, son of ‘Alī, who has been mentioned as al-Bāqir in the Torah. O Jābir! You will meet him. When you see him, convey my *salām* (greetings) to him. He will be succeeded by his son Ja‘far aṣ-Ṣādiq (the Truthful); then Mūsā, son of Ja‘far; then ‘Alī, son of Mūsā; then Muḥammad, son of ‘Alī; then ‘Alī, son of Muḥammad; then Ḥasan, son of ‘Alī.

“He will be followed by his son whose name and patronym (*kunyah*) will be the same as mine. He will be *Hujjatu-llāh* (Proof of Allāh) on the earth, and *Baqiyyatu-llāh* (the one spared by Allāh to maintain the cause of faith) among mankind. He will conquer the whole world from east to west. So long will he remain hidden from the eyes of his followers and friends that the belief in his *Imāmah* will remain only in those hearts which have been tested by Allāh for faith.”

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47 al-‘Ayyāshī: *at-Tafsīr*, vol. 1, pp. 249-50; Fayḍ al-Kāshānī: *at-Tafsīr (aṣ-Ṣāfi)*, vol. 1, p. 364.

Jābir said: “O Messenger of Allāh! Will his followers benefit from his seclusion?”

The Prophet said “Yes! by Him Who sent me with prophethood! They will be guided by his light, and benefit from his *wilāyah* (love; authority) during his seclusions just as people benefit from the sun even when it is hidden in a cloud. O Jābir! This is from the hidden secrets of Allāh and the treasured knowledge of Allāh. So guard it except from the people (who deserve to know).”<sup>48</sup>

This *ḥadīth* has been quoted from Shī‘ah sources. Sunni traditions do not provide as much detail; still there are many Sunni traditions which refer to the Twelve Imāms, as explained in the next chapter.

Now that we know who “those vested with Authority” are, it is evident that the question of obeying tyrant and unjust rulers does not arise at all. Muslims are not required by this verse to obey rulers who may be unjust, tyrannical, ignorant, selfish and sunk in debauchery. They are in fact ordered to obey the specified Twelve Imāms, all of whom were sinless and free from evil thoughts and deeds. Obeying them has no risks whatsoever. Nay, it protects from all risks; because they will never give an order against the Will of Allāh and will treat all human beings with love, justice and equity.

## 16. TWELVE CALIPHS OR IMĀMS

Now it is advisable to refer to several parts of the 77<sup>th</sup> chapter of *Yanābī‘u ‘l-mawaddah* of al-Ḥāfiẓ Sulaymān ibn Ibrahīm al-Qundūzī al-Ḥanafī.

A well known *ḥadīth* has been quoted that: “There will be twelve caliphs, all from the Quraysh”, in many books including those of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd and at-Ṭirmidhī.

The author quotes many traditions to the effect that the Holy Prophet

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48 al-Khazzāz: *Kifāyatu ‘l-athar*, p. 53.

said: “I, ‘Alī, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn and nine of the descendants of Ḥusayn are pure and sinless.”

He also quotes that the Holy Prophet told al-Imām Ḥusayn: “You are a chief, brother of a chief; you are an Imām, son of an Imām, brother of an Imām; you are Proof (of Allāh), son of a Proof (of Allāh), brother of a Proof (of Allāh), and father of nine Proofs (of Allāh), the ninth of whom will be al-Mahdi.”

After quoting many such traditions, he writes: “Some scholars have said that the traditions (which show that the caliphs after the Holy Prophet would be twelve) are well known, from many *asnād*. Now, with the passage of time and through historical events, we know that in this *ḥadīth* the Holy Prophet has referred to the Twelve Imāms from his *Ahlu ‘l-bayt* and descendants, because:

“This *ḥadīth* cannot apply to the four *al-khulafā’u ‘r-rāshidūn* from among his companions, as they were less than twelve.

“And it cannot apply to the caliphs from the tribe of Umayyad, because (a) they were more than twelve; (b) all of them were tyrants and unjust (except ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdi ‘l-‘Azīz); and (c) they were not from the Banu Hāshim and the Holy Prophet had said in a *ḥadīth* that: ‘all of them will be from the Banu Hashim. . .’

“And it cannot apply to the caliphs from the Banu ‘Abbās, because: (a) they were more than twelve; and (b) they did not comply with (the demands of) the verse: *Say: ‘I do not ask of you any recompense for it except the love for (my) near relatives’* (42:23), nor with the Tradition of the Mantle (*Ḥādīthu ‘l-kisā’*); (i.e., they persecuted the descendants of the Prophet).

“Therefore, the only way to interpret this *ḥadīth* is to accept that it refers to the Twelve Imāms from the Holy Prophet’s *Ahlu ‘l-bayt* and descendants, because they were, in their times, the most knowledgeable, the most illustrious, the most god-fearing, the most pious, the highest in their family lineage, the best in personal virtues, and the most honoured

before Allāh; and their knowledge was derived from their ancestor (the Prophet) through their fathers, and by inheritance and by direct teachings from Allāh.”<sup>49</sup>

## 17. FEW FACTS ABOUT THE TWELVE IMĀMS (A.S.)

**FIRST IMĀM:** Amīru ’l-Mu’minīn Abū ’l-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Murtaḍā, son of Abū Ṭālib, was born on 13<sup>th</sup> Rajab, 10 years before the declaration of the Prophethood (600 A.D.), inside the Ka’bah; became Imām, on the death of the Prophet on 28<sup>th</sup> Ṣafar, 11/632; was fatally wounded by the poisoned sword of Ibn Muljam while engaged in prayers at the Mosque of Kūfah (Iraq), and expired two days later on 21<sup>st</sup> Ramaḍān, 40/661 and was buried at an-Najaf al-Ashraf (Iraq).

**SECOND IMĀM:** Abū Muḥammad Al-Ḥasan al-Mujtabā, son of ‘Alī (a.s.), was born on 15<sup>th</sup> Ramaḍān, 3/625 at Medina; died of poison on 7<sup>th</sup> or 28<sup>th</sup> Ṣafar, 50/670 at Medina.

**THIRD IMĀM:** Sayyidu ’sh-Shuhadā’ Abū ‘Abdillāh Al-Ḥusayn, son of ‘Alī (a.s.), was born on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sha’bān, 4/626 at Medina, was martyred with his sons, relatives and companions, on 10<sup>th</sup> Muḥarram, 61/680, at Karbalā’ (Iraq). He and his elder brother, al-Ḥasan, were sons of Fāṭimah az-Zahrā’ (a.s.), daughter of the Holy Prophet.

**FOURTH IMĀM:** Abū Muḥammad ‘Alī Zaynu ’l-‘Abidīn, son of al-Ḥusayn (a.s.), was born on 5<sup>th</sup> Sha’bān, 38/659; died of poison on 25<sup>th</sup> Muḥarram, 94/712 or 95/713 at Medina.

**FIFTH IMĀM:** Abū Ja’far Muḥammad al-Bāqir, son of ‘Alī Zaynu ’l-‘Abidīn (a.s.), was born on 1<sup>st</sup> Rajab, 57/677 at Medina; died of poison on 7<sup>th</sup> Dhu ’l-ḥijjah, 114/733 at Medina.

**SIXTH IMĀM:** Abū ‘Abdillāh Ja’far aṣ-Ṣādiq, son of Muḥammad al-Bāqir (a.s.), was born on 17<sup>th</sup> Rabi’u ’l-awwal, 83/702 at Medina; died there of poison on 25<sup>th</sup> Shawwāl, 148/765.

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49 al-Qundūzī: *Yanābī’u ’l-mawaddah*, pp. 444-7.



**SEVENTH IMĀM:** Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Awwal, Mūsā al-Kāẓim, son of Ja'far aṣ-Ṣādiq (a.s.), was born at al-Abwā' (7 miles from Medina) on 7<sup>th</sup> Ṣafar, 129/746; died of poison on 25<sup>th</sup> Rajab, 183/799 in the prison of Hārūn ar-Rashīd at Baghdad and was buried at al-Kāẓimiyyah, near Baghdad (Iraq).

**EIGHTH IMĀM:** Abū 'l-Ḥasan ath-Thānī, 'Alī ar-Riḍā, son of Mūsā al-Kāẓim (a.s.), was born at Medina on 11<sup>th</sup> Dhu 'l-qi'dah, 148/765; died of poison on 17<sup>th</sup> Ṣafar, 203/818 at Mashhad (Khurāsān, Iran).

**NINTH IMĀM:** Abū Ja'far ath-Thani, Muḥammad at-Taḳī al-Jawād, son of 'Alī ar-Riḍā (a.s.), was born on 10<sup>th</sup> Rajab, 195/811 at Medina; died of poison at Baghdad on 30<sup>th</sup> Dhu 'l-qi'dah, 220/835; was buried near his grandfather at al-Kāẓimiyyah.

**TENTH IMĀM:** Abū 'l-Ḥasan ath-Thālith, 'Alī an-Naqī al-Hādī, son of Muḥammad at-Taḳī (a.s.), was born on 5<sup>th</sup> Rajab, 212/827 at Medina; died of poison at Sāmarrā' (Iraq) on 3<sup>rd</sup> Rajab, 254/868.

**ELEVENTH IMĀM:** Abū Muḥammad, Al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī, son of 'Alī an-Naqī (a.s.), was born on 8<sup>th</sup> Rabi'u 'th-thānī, 232/846 at Medina; died of poison at Sāmarrā' (Iraq) on 8<sup>th</sup> Rabi'u 'l-awwal, 260/874.

**TWELFTH IMĀM:** Abū 'l-Qāsim, Muḥammad Al-Mahdī, son of al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī (a.s.), was born on 15<sup>th</sup> Sha'bān, 255/869 at Sāmarrā' (Iraq). He is our present Imām; he went into Lesser Occultation in 260/874 which continued until 329/844; then the Greater Occultation began, which still continues. He will reappear when Allāh allows him, to establish the Kingdom of Allāh on earth, to fill the world with justice and equity, as it would be full of injustice and tyranny. He is al-Qā'im (the one who shall stand to establish the rule of Allāh); al-Ḥujjah (the Proof of Allāh over His creatures); Ṣāhibu 'z-Zamān (the Lord of Our Time), and Ṣāhibu 'l-Amr (the one vested with Divine authority).

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## **PART THREE**

# **THE SUNNI POINT OF VIEW**

## 18. SUNNI VIEWS ON THE CALIPHATE

The Majority of Sunnis today are the Ash‘arites. They, as well as the Mu‘tazilites, believe that the institution of Imāmate/Caliphate is necessary, and it is incumbent (*wājib*) on men to appoint a caliph. The Mu‘tazilites hold that it is incumbent according to reason; the Ash‘arites believe it is incumbent according to tradition.

an-Nasafī writes in his *al-‘Aqā‘id*, “The Muslims cannot do without an Imām who shall occupy himself with the enforcing of their decisions, and in implementing their *ḥudūd* (penal code) and guarding their frontiers, and equipping their armies, and receiving their alms, and putting down robberies and thieving and highwayman, and maintaining the Friday and ‘id prayers, and removing quarrels that fall between people, and receiving evidence bearing on legal claims, and marrying minors who have no guardians and dividing booty.”<sup>1</sup>

“The Sunnites want an earthly ruler... while the Shī‘ites look for one who can establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth and bring an end to all the evils of the world.”<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, the Sunnis recognize four principles for appointing a caliph:

- a. *Ijmā‘*; that is, consensus of men of power and position on a certain point. The agreement of all the followers of the Prophet is not necessary, nor is it essential to secure the consent of all the persons of power and position in the *ummah*.
- b. Nomination by the previous caliph.
- c. *Shūrā*; that is, selection by a committee.
- d. Military power; that is, if anyone acquires power by military force he will become a caliph.

The author of *Sharḥu ‘l-maqāṣid* has explained that when an Imām dies and a person possessing the requisite qualifications claims that office (without the oath of allegiance - *bay‘ah* - having been taken for him and without his having been nominated to succeed), his claim to caliphate

1 at-Taftāzānī: *Sharḥ ‘Aqā‘idi ‘n-Nasafī*, p. 185.

2 Miller, W. M.: tr. of *al-Bābu ‘l-ḥādī ‘ashar*, notes, p. 98.

will be recognized provided his power subdues the people; and apparently the same will be the case when the new caliph happens to be ignorant or immoral. And similarly when a caliph has thus established himself by superior force but is afterwards subdued by another person, he will be deposed and the conqueror will be recognized as Imām or caliph.<sup>3</sup>

## 19. QUALIFICATIONS OF A CALIPH

The Sunnis consider ten conditions necessary for a caliph:

1. that he be Muslim;
2. that he be of age, (i.e., of puberty);
3. that he be male;
4. that he be of sound mind;
5. that he be courageous;
6. that he be free, not a slave;
7. that he be accessible and not be concealed or hidden;
8. that he be able to conduct battles and beware of warlike tactics;
9. that he be just — ‘*ādil*;
10. that he be able to judge and pass verdicts on points of laws and religion, that is, he be a *mujtahid*.<sup>4</sup>

But the last two conditions are in theory only. As quoted in the previous chapter, even an ignorant and immoral person can become a caliph. Therefore, the conditions for ‘justice’ and ‘religious knowledge’ are without base.

They hold that infallibility (‘*iṣmah*’) is not necessary for caliphate. The words of Abū Bakr which he spoke from the pulpit before the companions of the Prophet, are cited in support of that view: “O people!” he said, “I have been made ruler over you although I am no better than you; so, if I perform my duties well, help me; and if I go wrong, you should set me right. You should know that Satan comes to me now and then. So if I am angry, keep aloof from me.”<sup>5</sup>

3 at-Ṭaftāzānī: *Sharḥu ‘l-maqāṣidi ‘t-ṭālibīn*, vol. 2, p. 272. See also al-Ḥāfiẓ ‘Alī Muḥammad and Amīru ‘d-Dīn: *Fulku ‘n-najāt fi ‘l-Imāmah wa ‘ṣ-salāt*, vol. 1, p. 203.

4 at-Ṭaftāzānī, *op. cit.*

5 as-Suyūfī, *Tārikhu ‘l-Khulafā’*, p. 71.

at-Ṭaftāzānī says in *Sharḥ ‘Aqā’idi ‘n-Nasafī*: “An Imām is not to be deposed from Imāmate on account of immorality or tyranny.”<sup>6</sup>

## 20. ABŪ BAKR’S RISE TO POWER

All the above-mentioned principles are derived, not from an *āyah* or *ḥadīth*, but from the events and happenings after the death of the Holy Prophet.

According to the Sunnis, the first four Caliphs are called *al-khulafā’u ‘r-rāshidūn* (the rightly-guided Caliphs). Now let us examine how *al-khilafatu ‘r-rāshidah* came into being.

Immediately after the death of the Prophet the Muslims of Medina known as *anṣār* (Helpers) gathered in the *saqīfah* (covered porch) of Banū Sā’idah. According to the author of *Ghiyāthu ‘l-lughāt*, it was a secret location where the Arabs used to gather for their evil activities.<sup>7</sup> Here Sa’d ibn ‘Ubādah, who was then ailing, was led to a stately chair and made to sit upon it, wrapped in a blanket, so that he might be elected as the Caliph. Sa’d then delivered a speech in which he recounted the virtues of the *anṣār* and told them to take over the caliphate before anyone else could do so. The *anṣār* agreed and said that they wanted him to be the Caliph. But then among themselves, they began to ask: “What reply should we give to the *muhājirūn* (emigrants from Mecca) of the Quraysh if they oppose this move and put forth their own claim?”

A group said: “We shall tell them, let us have one leader from among you and one from us.” Sa’d said: “This is the first weakness you have shown.”

Someone informed ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb of this gathering saying: “If at all you desire to acquire the dignity of rulership you should reach the *saqīfah* before it is too late and difficult for you to change what is being decided there.” On receiving this news, ‘Umar, along with Abū Bakr, rushed to the *saqīfah*. Abū ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrāḥ also accompanied them.

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<sup>6</sup> at-Ṭaftāzānī, *op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Ghiyāthu ‘d-Dīn: *Ghiyāthu ‘l-lughāt*, p. 228.

aṭ-Ṭabarī, Ibnu 'l-Athīr, Ibn Qutaybah<sup>8</sup> and others proceed with their narrations stating that having reached the *saqīfah*, Abū Bakr, 'Umar and Abū 'Ubaydah had hardly taken their seats when Thābit ibn Qays stood up and began enumerating the virtues of the *anṣār* and suggested that the office of the caliphate should be offered to someone from the *anṣār*. 'Umar is reported to have said later on: "When the speaker of the *anṣār* finished his speech, I made an attempt to speak as already I had thought over some important points, but Abū Bakr beckoned me to keep quiet. Therefore, I remained silent. Abū Bakr had more competence and knowledge than myself. He then said the same things I had thought of and expressed them even better."

According to *Rawḍatu 'ṣ-ṣafā'*, Abū Bakr addressed the assembly at the *saqīfah* thus: "Assembly of the *anṣār*! We acknowledge your good qualities and virtues. We have also not forgotten your struggles and endeavours for promoting the cause of Islam. But the honour and respect the Quraysh have among the Arabs is not enjoyed by any other tribe, and the Arabs will not submit to anyone other than the Quraysh."<sup>9</sup>

In *as-Sīrah al-Ḥalabiyyah*, it is added: "However, it is a fact that we the *muhājirūn* were the first to accept the Islamic creed. The Prophet of Islam was from our tribe. We are the relatives of the Apostle ... and therefore we are the people who are entitled to the caliphate... It will be advisable to have the leadership among us and for you to take the ministry. We will not act unless we consult with you."<sup>10</sup>

Heated arguments started, during which 'Umar cried: "By Allāh, I will kill him who opposes us now." al-Ḥubāb ibn al-Mundhir ibn Zayd, an *anṣārī* from the Khazraj tribe, challenged him saying: "By Allāh, we will not allow anyone to rule over us as a caliph. One leader must come from you and one from us." Abū Bakr said: "No, this cannot be; it is our right to be the rulers and yours to be our ministers." al-Ḥubāb said: "O *anṣār*!

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8 aṭ-Ṭabarī: *at-Tārikh*, vol. 4, p. 1820; Ibnu 'l-Athīr: *al-Kāmil*, ed. C. J. Tornberg, Leiden, 1897, vol. 2, pp. 325ff; Ibn Qutaybah: *al-Imāmah wa 's-siyāsah*, Cairo, 1387/1967, vol. 1, pp. 18ff.

9 Mīr Khwānd: *Rawḍatu 'ṣ-ṣafā'*, vol. 2, p. 221.

10 al-Ḥalabi: *as-Sīrah*, vol. 3, p. 357.

Do not submit yourselves to what these people say. Be firm... By Allāh, if anyone dares to oppose me now, I will cut his nose with my sword.” ‘Umar remarked: “By Allāh, duality is not advisable in the caliphate. There cannot be two kings in one regime, and the Arabs will not agree to your leadership, because the Apostle was not from your tribe.”

aṭ-Ṭabarī and Ibnu ‘l-Athīr both state that there was a fairly prolonged exchange of words between al-Ḥubāb and ‘Umar on this matter. ‘Umar cursed al-Ḥubāb: “May Allāh kill you.” al-Ḥubāb retorted: “May Allāh kill you.”

‘Umar then crossed over and stood at the head of Sa‘d ibn ‘Ubādah and said to him: “We want to break every limb of yours.” Infuriated by this threat, Sa‘d got up and caught ‘Umar’s beard. ‘Umar said: “If you pull out even one hair, you will see that all will not be well with you.” Then Abū Bakr pleaded with ‘Umar to be calm and civil. ‘Umar turned his face from Sa‘d who was saying: “By Allāh, had I strength enough just to stand, you would have heard the lions roar in every corner of Medina and hidden yourselves in holes. By Allāh, we would have made you join again with those people among whom you were only a follower and not a leader.”

Ibn Qutaybah says that when Bashīr ibn Sa‘d, the chief of the tribe of Aws, saw that the *anṣār* were uniting behind Sa‘d ibn ‘Ubādah, the chief of the Khazraj, he was overcome with envy and stood up supporting the claim of the Qurayshite *muhājirūn*.

In the midst of this melee, ‘Umar said to Abū Bakr: “Hold out your hand so that I may give my *bay‘ah* (i.e., pledge of loyalty).” Abū Bakr said: “No, you give me your hand so that I may give my *bay‘ah*, because you are stronger than me and more suitable to the caliphate.” ‘Umar took the hand of Abū Bakr and pledged allegiance to him saying: “My strength is not of any value when compared to your merits and seniority. And if it is of any value then my strength added to yours will successfully manage the caliphate.”

Bashīr ibn Sa‘d followed suit. Khazrajites cried to him that he was doing

it out of envy for Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah. Then the tribe of Aws talked amongst themselves that if Sa'd ibn 'Ubādah was made caliph that day, the tribe of Khazraj would always feel themselves superior to the Aws, and no one from the Aws would ever achieve that dignity. Therefore, they all pledged their allegiance to Abū Bakr.

Someone from the Khazraj tribe took out his sword but was overcome by the others.

Amidst all this unseemly wrangling, 'Alī and his friends attended to the washing of the body of the Holy Prophet and the proper observances regarding burial. By the time these were over, Abū Bakr had achieved a *fait accompli*.

Ibn Qutaybah writes: "When Abū Bakr had taken the caliphate, 'Alī was dragged to Abū Bakr as he repeatedly declared, 'I am the slave of Allāh and the brother of the Messenger of Allāh.' Then 'Alī was commanded to take the oath of allegiance to Abū Bakr. 'Alī said: 'I have more rights to the caliphate than anyone of you. I will not pledge obedience to you. As a matter of fact, you should give the pledge of obedience to me. You called the *anṣār* to give their *bay'ah* on the ground that you had blood relations with the Messenger of Allāh. You are usurping the caliphate from us, the members of his house. Did you not reason with the *anṣār* that you have better rights to the caliphate than they because the Apostle was of your kinship, and they handed over the government to you and accepted your leadership? Therefore, the very reason put forth by you before the *anṣār* is now forwarded by me. Our relations with the Apostle in life as well as in death are much closer than those of anyone of you. If you are faithful to your argument, you should do justice; otherwise you know that you have knowingly moved towards tyranny.'

"Umar said, 'Unless you give *bay'ah*, you will not be released.' 'Alī cried, 'Milk out as much as you can for the udders are in your hand. Make it as strong as possible today, for he is going to hand it over to you tomorrow. 'Umar, I will not yield to your commands; I shall not pledge loyalty to him.' Ultimately Abū Bakr said, 'O 'Alī! If you do not desire to give your *bay'ah*, I am not going to force you for the same'."



## 21. SHORT REVIEW

Several aspects of the above-mentioned events deserve more attention:

1. It was the tradition of the Arabs that once a person was declared, even by a small group, to be the chief of the tribe, others did not like to oppose him, and willy-nilly followed suit. This tradition was in the mind of ‘Abbas, the Prophet’s uncle, when he told ‘Alī: “Give me your hand so that I may pledge allegiance to you... because once this thing is taken over no one will ask him to relinquish it.” And it was this tradition which prompted Sa‘d to exhort the *ansār* to ‘take over the caliphate before anyone else could do so.’ And it was because of this tradition that ‘Umar was told to reach *saqīfah* ‘before it was too late and difficult for him to change what was being decided there.’ And it was because of this custom that once some people accepted Abū Bakr as Caliph, the majority of the Muslims in Medina followed suit.
2. ‘Alī was well-aware of this custom. Then why did he refuse to extend his hand to accept the *bay‘ah* of ‘Abbās, telling him, “Who else, other than I, can call for such pledge of allegiance?”<sup>11</sup>

It was because ‘Alī knew that the *khilāfah* (caliphate) of the Holy Prophet was not the chieftainship of the tribe. It was not based on the declaration of allegiance by the public. It was a responsibility given by Allāh, not by the people. And as he had already been publicly appointed by Allāh through the Prophet to the Imāmate, there was no need for him to rush to the public to seek their allegiance. He did not want the people to think that his Imāmate was based on the *bay‘ah* of men; if the people came to him on the basis of the declaration of Ghadīr Khumm, well and good; if they did not, it was their loss, not his.

3. Now we turn to the events of *saqīfah*:

During the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, the Mosque of the Prophet was the centre of all Islamic activities. It was here that decisions of war and

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<sup>11</sup> Ibn Qutaybah: *al-Imāmah wa ‘s-siyāsah*, vol.1, p. 4; al-Māwardi: *al-Aḥkāmu ‘s-sultāniyyah*, p. 7.

peace were made, deputations were received, sermons were delivered and cases were decided. And when the news spread of the death of the Holy Prophet, the Muslims assembled in that very mosque.

Then why did the partisans of Sa‘d ibn ‘Ubādah decide to go three miles outside Medina to meet in *saqīfah* which was not a place of good repute? Was it not because they wanted to usurp the Caliphate without the knowledge of other people and then present Sa‘d as the accepted Caliph? Keeping in view the declaration of Ghadīr Khumm and the tribal custom of Arabia there can be no other explanation.

4. When ‘Umar and Abū Bakr came to know of that gathering, they were in the mosque. A majority of the Muslim were at the mosque. Why did they not inform any other person about that gathering? Why did they, together with Abū ‘Ubaydah, slip out secretly? Was it because ‘Alī and Banu Hāshim were present in the mosque and in the house of the Prophet, and ‘Umar and Abū Bakr did not want them to know of the plot? Was it because they were afraid that if ‘Alī came to know of that meeting of *saqīfah*, and if by a remote chance he decided to go there himself, no one else would have had a chance to succeed?
5. When Abū Bakr was extolling the virtues of *muhājirūn* as being from the tribe of the Holy Prophet, did he not know that there were other people with much more stronger right to that claim because they were members of the very family of the Holy Prophet and his own flesh and blood?

It was this aspect of the pretence that prompted ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (a.s.) to comment: احتجوا بالشجرة وأضاعوا الثمرة - “They argued by the strength of the tree (tribe) and then destroyed the fruit (i.e., the family of the Prophet).”<sup>12</sup>

Looking dispassionately at this event, we are unable to call it an ‘election’, because the voters (all the Muslims scattered throughout Arabia, or, at least, all the Muslims of Medina) did not even know that there was to be an election, let alone when or where it was to be held.

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12 ar-Raḍī (ed.): *Nahju 'l-balāghah*, (Ṣubḥī aṣ-Ṣāliḥ’s edition), Beirut, p. 98.

Aside from the voters, even prospective candidates were unaware of what was happening at saqifah. Again we are reminded of the words of al-Imām ‘Alī in connection with the two points mentioned above:

فإن كنت بالشورى ملكت أمورهم فكيف بهذا والمشيرون غيب  
وإن كنت بالقرْبى حججت خصيمهم فغيرك أولى بالتي وأقرب

*If you claim to have secured authority over the Muslims’  
affairs by consultation,  
How did it happen when those to be consulted were absent!  
And if you have scored over your opponents by (the Prophet’s)  
kinship,  
Then someone else has greater right on the Prophet and is  
nearer to him.*<sup>13</sup>

And we cannot call it even a ‘selection’ because a majority of the prominent companions of the Holy Prophet had no knowledge of these events. ‘Alī, ‘Abbās, ‘Uthmān, Ṭalḥah, az-Zubayr, Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, Salmān al-Fārisī, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, ‘Ammār ibn Yāsir, Miqdād, ‘Abdu ’r-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf - none of them were consulted or even informed.

The only argument which can be offered for this caliphate is this: “Whatever the legal position of the events of *saqifah*, as Abū Bakr succeeded (because of tribal custom) in taking the reins of power in his hands, he was a ‘constitutional’ Caliph.”

In simple language, Abū Bakr became a constitutional Caliph because he succeeded in his bid for power. Thus, the Muslims who have been

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Saying no. 190, [pp. 502-3] . The words of ‘Alī have been quoted by ash-Sharīf ar-Raḍī under Saying no. 190 which runs as follows: “How strange? Could the caliphate be through the (Prophet’s) companionship but not through (his) companionship plus (his) kinship?”

It is surprising to note that Ṣubḥī aṣ-Ṣāliḥ’s edition and Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s edition (Beirut, 1973) have omitted the wordings “but not through (his) companionship!” For a complete version of this saying, see Ibn Abi ’l-Ḥadīd’s *Sharḥ* (Cairo, 1959), vol. 18, p. 416.

taught to glorify this event, are inadvertently taught that the only thing which counts is the ‘power’. Once you are secure in the seat of power, everything is all right. You will become the ‘constitutional’ head of state.

In the end, I should quote a comment of ‘Umar himself, who was the author of this caliphate. He said in a lecture during his caliphate:

I have been informed that someone said: “When ‘Umar dies, I will pledge allegiance to so-and-so.” Well no one should be misled like this, thinking that although the allegiance of Abū Bakr was by surprise, it became all right. Of course, it was by surprise, but Allāh saved us from its evils. Now if anyone wishes to copy it I will cut his throat.<sup>14</sup>

## 22. NOMINATION OF ‘UMAR

The majority of Sunnis believe that what happened at *saqīfah* was a manifestation of the “democratic” spirit of Islam. In view of that belief it was reasonable to expect the ‘democratic election’ (whatever its meaning in the context of *saqīfah*) to continue as the basis of Islamic caliphate. But this was not to be.

Abū Bakr was indebted to ‘Umar for establishing his caliphate and he knew that if the masses were given freedom of choice, ‘Umar had no chance. (He was known as *فَطَّ غَلِيظُ الْقَلْبِ* - “rude and of harsh nature.”) Therefore, he decided to nominate his own successor - ‘Umar.

aṭ-Ṭabarī writes: “Abū Bakr called ‘Uthmān - when the former was dying - and told him to write an appointment order, and dictated to him: ‘In the Name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful. This is the order of ‘Abdullāh ibn Abī Quḥāfah (i.e., Abū Bakr) to the Muslims. Whereas...’ Then he fell unconscious. ‘Uthmān added the words: ‘I appoint ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb as my successor among you.’

“Then Abū Bakr regained his consciousness and told ‘Uthmān to read the order to him. ‘Uthmān read it; Abū Bakr said, ‘*Allāhu Akbar*’, and

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<sup>14</sup> al-Bukhārī: *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, (“*Kitābu ’l-Muḥākikibin*”), Cairo, (n.d.), vol. 8, p. 210; aṭ-Ṭabarī: *at-Tārikh*, vol. 4, p. 1821.

was pleased and commented, ‘I think you were afraid that people would disagree amongst themselves if I died in that state.’ ‘Uthmān replied, ‘Yes.’ Abū Bakr said: ‘May Allāh reward you on behalf of Islam and the Muslims.’”<sup>15</sup>

Thus, the appointment letter was completed and Abū Bakr ordered it to be read before the Muslims.

Ibn Abi ‘l-Ḥadīd al-Mu‘tazili writes that when Abū Bakr regained his consciousness and the scribe read what he had written and Abū Bakr heard the name of ‘Umar, he asked him, “How did you write this?” The scribe said, “You could not pass him over.” Abū Bakr replied, “You are right.”<sup>16</sup>

Shortly afterwards Abū Bakr died.

‘Umar gained the caliphate by this appointment. Here one is reminded of a tragedy which occurred three or five days before the death of the Holy Prophet.

In the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim there is a tradition narrated by Ibn ‘Abbās that: “Three days before the Prophet’s death ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and other companions were present at his side. The Apostle said, ‘Now let me write something for you by way of a will so that you are not mislead after me.’ ‘Umar said, ‘The Apostle is talking in delirium; the Book of Allāh is sufficient for us.’ ‘Umar’s statement caused a furor among those present there. Some were saying that the Apostle’s command should be obeyed so that he might write whatever he desired for their betterment. Others sided with ‘Umar. When the tension and uproar increased the Apostle said, ‘Go away from me’.”<sup>17</sup>

15 aṭ-Ṭabarī: *at-Tārikh*, pp. 2138-9.

16 Ibn Abi ‘l-Ḥadīd: *Sharḥ*, vol. 1, pp.163-5.

17 Muslim: *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, (“Kitābu ‘l-Waṣiyyah”, *Bābu ‘t-tarki ‘l-waṣiyyah*), vol. 5, pp. 75-6; al-Bukhāri: *aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, (Cairo, 1958), vol. 1, (“Kitābu ‘l-‘Ilm”) pp. 38-9; vol. 4, p. 85; vol. 6, pp. 11-2; vol. 7, (“Kitābu ‘t-Ṭib”), pp. 155-6; vol. 9, (“Kitābu ‘l-I‘tiṣām bi ‘l-Kitāb wa ‘s-Sunnah”), p. 137. It is interesting to note that where Bukhāri gives remark of the Prophet speaking in delirium, he omits the name of the speaker; and where he paraphrases that remark in more polite language, he mentions the name of the speaker - ‘Umar - clearly. Ibn Sa‘d: *aṭ-Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 2, pp. 242, 324f, 336, 368; Aḥmad: *al-Musnad*, vol. 1, pp. 232, 239, 324f, 336, 355.

A few Qur'ānic injunctions should be mentioned here:

*O ye who believe! Raise not your voices above the voice of the Prophet. . . lest your deeds become null while you perceive not (49:2).*

The Holy Prophet's words were "revelation" from Allāh: *Nor does he speak out of (his) desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed (53:3-4).*

And Muslims were expected to follow his command without any 'ifs' and 'buts': *Whatever the Apostle gives you, take it; and from whatever he forbids you, keep back. (59:7)*

And when such an Apostle, five days before his death wished to write a directive to save Muslims from going astray, he was accused of 'talking in delirium'.

When Abū Bakr who had no such Divine protection from error, began dictation of the appointment letter in such critical condition that he fell unconscious before naming his successor, 'Umar did not say that he was talking in delirium!

No one can be sure of what it was the Holy Prophet wanted to write. But the phrase he used gives us an idea. On several occasions the Holy Prophet had declared:

*O People! Verily, I am leaving behind among you Two Precious Things, the Book of Allāh and My Descendants who are my family members. So long as you keep hold of them sincerely, you will never go astray after me.*

When he used the same phrase five days before his death (".. Let me write something for you by way of a will so that you are not misled after me"), it was easy enough to understand that the Holy Prophet was going to write what he had been telling them all along about the Qur'ān and his *Ahlu 'l-bayt* (a.s.).

Perhaps ‘Umar guessed as much; as is apparent from his claim: “The Book of Allāh is sufficient for us.” He wanted to make it known to the Prophet that he would not follow ‘the Two Precious Things’. One was enough for him.

And he himself admitted it in a talk with ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās, in which he, *inter alia* said: “And surely he (the Prophet) intended during his illness to declare his (‘Alī’s) name, so I prevented it.”<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps the word “delirium” would have served his purpose even if the Prophet had written the directive. ‘Umar and his partisans would have claimed that as it was written “in delirium” it had no validity.

### **23. ASH-SHŪRĀ: THE COMMITTEE**

After ruling for about ten years, ‘Umar was fatally wounded by a Zoroastrian slave, Fīrūz.

‘Umar was very much indebted to ‘Uthmān (because of the appointment letter) but did not wish to openly nominate him as his successor; nor did he allow the muslims to exercise their free will after him. He ingeniously invented a third system.

He said, “Verily the Apostle of Allāh died and he was pleased with these six people from the Quraysh: ‘Alī, ‘Uthmān, Ṭalḥah, az-Zubayr, Sa’d ibn Abi Waqāṣ and ‘Abdu ’r-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf. And I have decided to make it (the selection of caliph) a matter of consultation among them, so that they may select one from among themselves.”

They were called when he was nearing death. When he looked at them, he asked, “So, every one of you wants to become caliph after me?” No one answered. He repeated the question. Then az-Zubayr said, “And what is there to disqualify us? You got it (the caliphate) and managed it; and we are not inferior to you in the Quraysh either in precedence or in relation (to the Holy Prophet).”

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18 Ibn Abi ’l-Ḥadid: *Sharḥ*, vol. 12, p. 21, (quoting from *Tārīkh Baghdād* of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī).

‘Umar asked, “Should not I tell you about yourselves?”

az-Zubayr said, “Tell us, because even if we ask you not to tell, you will not listen.” Then ‘Umar began enumerating the bad character points of az-Zubayr, Ṭalḥah, Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqāṣ and ‘Abdu ’r-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf. Then he faced ‘Alī and said, “By Allāh you deserved it had it not been that you are of humorous nature. However, by Allāh, if you people made him your ruler, he would surely lead you towards clear truth and on the enlightened path.”

Then he looked towards ‘Uthmān and said, “Take it from me. It is as though I am seeing that the Quraysh have put this necklace (caliphate) around your neck because of your love; then you have put the Banū Umayyah and Banū Abi Mu‘ayṭ (‘Uthmān’s tribe) on the shoulders of the people (as rulers) and have given them exclusively the booty (of the Muslims); thereupon a group from the wolves of Arab have come to you and have slaughtered you in your bed.

“By Allāh if the Quraysh give the caliphate to you, you will surely give exclusive rights to the Banū Umayyah; and if you do so, the Muslims will surely kill you.” Then he caught the forehead of ‘Uthmān and said: “So if it happens, remember my words; because it is bound to happen.”

Then ‘Umar called Abū Ṭalḥah al-Anṣārī and told him that after his (‘Umar’s) burial, he was to collect fifty people from the anṣār, armed with swords, and gather the six above-mentioned candidate-voters in a house to select one from among themselves as the caliph. If five agree and one disagrees, he should be beheaded; if four agree and two disagree, those two should be beheaded; if there is a division of three and three, the choice of the group of ‘Abdu ’r Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf should prevail and if the other three do not agree to it they should be beheaded. And if three days pass and they are unable to reach a decision, all of them should be beheaded and the Muslims should be left free to select their caliph.<sup>19</sup>

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19 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 185-8; see also Ibn Qutaybah: *al-Imāmah wa ’s-siyāsah*, vol. 1, pp. 23-7; and at-Ṭabarī: *at-Tārikh*, (Egypt, n.d.), vol. 5, pp. 33-41.



The Shī‘ite author Qutbu ‘d-Dīn ar-Rāwandī narrates that when ‘Umar decreed that the group of ‘Abdu ‘r Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf would prevail, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās told ‘Alī, “Again this is lost to us. This man wants ‘Uthmān to be the caliph.” ‘Alī replied, “I also know this; still I will sit with them in the *shūrā*, because ‘Umar by this arrangement has, at least publicly, accepted that I deserve the caliphate, while before he was asserting that *nubuwwah* (prophethood) and *imāmah* could not be joined in one family. Therefore, I will participate in the *shūrā* to show the people the contradiction of his actions and his words.”<sup>20</sup>

Why were Ibn ‘Abbās and ‘Alī sure that ‘Umar wanted ‘Uthmān to be the caliph? It was because of the constitution of the *shūrā* and its terms of reference.

‘Abdu ‘r-Raḥmān was married to ‘Uthmān’s sister; and Sa‘d ibn Abi Waqqāṣ and ‘Abdu ‘r-Raḥmān were cousins.

Seeing the hold which family ties had in Arabia, it was unthinkable that Sa‘d would oppose ‘Abdu ‘r-Raḥmān or that ‘Abdu ‘r-Raḥmān would ignore ‘Uthmān. So three votes were safely in the custody of ‘Uthmān, including the deciding vote of ‘Abdu ‘r-Raḥmān.

Ṭalḥah (ibn ‘Ubaydillāh) was from the clan of Abū Bakr, and since the day of *saqīfah* the Banū Hashim and Banū Taym felt nothing but enmity towards each other. On a personal level, ‘Alī had killed his uncle ‘Umayr ibn ‘Uthmān, his brother Mālīk ibn ‘Ubaydillāh and his nephew ‘Uthmān ibn Mālīk in the battle of Badr.<sup>21</sup> It was impossible for him to support ‘Alī.

az-Zubayr was the son of Ṣafīyyah, ‘Alī’s aunt, and after *saqīfah*, he had taken out his sword to fight those who had entered the house of ‘Alī to take him to Abū Bakr. And it was reasonable to expect him to favour ‘Alī. But on the other hand, he could be tempted to stand for the caliphate himself.

Thus, the most ‘Alī could hope for was that az-Zubayr was in his favour.

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20 Ibn Abi ‘l-Ḥadīd: *Sharḥ*, p. 189.

21 ash-Shaykh al-Mufīd: *al-Irshād*, (with Persian tr. of Sh. Muḥammad Bāqir Sā‘idi Khurāsāni), p. 65. [See also Eng. tr. of I. K.A. Howard, p. 47.]

Still four would have gone against him and he would have lost. Even if Ṭalḥah had favoured ‘Alī, he could not be caliph because in case of equal division, the opinion of ‘Abdu ’r-Raḥmān would have been upheld.<sup>22</sup>

After this study of the terms of reference, what happened in the *shūrā* is of academic interest only. Ṭalḥah withdrew in favour of ‘Uthmān; prompting az-Zubayr to withdraw in favour of ‘Alī (a.s.), and Sa’d in favour of ‘Abdu ’r-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf.

On the third day, ‘Abdu ’r-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf withdrew his name and told ‘Alī that he would make him caliph if ‘Alī pledged to follow the Book of Allāh, the traditions of the Holy Prophet and the system of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar. ‘Abdu ’r-Raḥmān knew very well what his reply would be. ‘Alī (a.s.) said, “I follow the Book of Allāh, the traditions of the Holy Prophet and my own beliefs.”

Then ‘Abdu ’r-Raḥmān put the same conditions to ‘Uthmān, who readily accepted. Thus, ‘Abdu ’r-Raḥmān declared ‘Uthmān to be the caliph.

‘Alī (a.s.) told ‘Abdu ’r-Raḥmān: “By Allāh, you did not do it but with the same hope which he (‘Umar) had from his friend.” (He meant that ‘Abdu ’r-Raḥmān had made ‘Uthmān caliph hoping that ‘Uthmān would nominate him as his successor.)

Then ‘Alī said, “May Allāh create enmity between you two.” After a few years ‘Abdu ’r-Raḥmān and ‘Uthmān grew to hate each others; they did not talk to each other till ‘Abdu ’r-Raḥmān died.

## 24. MILITARY POWER

‘Uthmān, the third Caliph, was killed by the Muslims who were not happy with his nepotism. The circumstances did not provide him the opportunity to choose his own successor. Muslims were, for the first time, really free to select or elect a caliph of their choice; they flocked to the door of ‘Alī

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<sup>22</sup> This analysis is attributed to ‘Alī (a.s.), himself by at-Ṭabarī in *at-Tārikh*, p. 35; (see note 19, above). In that report, the dialogue is said to be between ‘Alī (a.s.) and his uncle ‘Abbās.

(a.s.).

But during the twenty-five years which had passed since the death of the Holy Prophet, the nature and outlook of the Muslims had changed to such an extent that many prominent people found ‘Alī’s administration (which was based on absolute justice and equality, just like the government of the Holy Prophet) unbearable; they could not think of themselves as being treated equal to non-Arab Muslims. So first Ṭalḥah, az-Zubayr and ‘Ā’ishah revolted; then Mu‘āwiyah stood against ‘Alī (a.s.).

After the martyrdom of ‘Alī (a.s.), al-Imām Ḥasan wanted to continue the war with Mu‘āwiyah. But most of his officers were, meanwhile, bribed by Mu‘āwiyah; and many were the commanders who, when sent ahead to intercept Mu‘āwiyah, changed sides and went over to the enemy. In this situation, al-Imām Ḥasan (a.s.) had to accept the offer of Mu‘āwiyah to conclude a treaty.

After this treaty, the Sunnis claimed that military power is a valid way of acquiring constitutional caliphate.

Thus, the four ‘constitutional’ ways of caliphate came into being.

## **25. GENERAL REVIEW**

In the realm of politics, usually the constitution of a country is prepared beforehand. And when time comes to elect a government or enact legislation, every function is carried out according to the provisions of the constitution. Whatever conforms with it, is held valid and legal; whatever is contrary to it, is rejected as invalid and illegal.

Since, according to the Sunni point of view, it was the duty of the *ummah* to appoint a caliph, it was necessary for Allāh and His Prophet to provide them with a constitution (with details of the procedure for election of such a caliph). And if that was not done, then the Muslims themselves should have approved the constitutional measures in advance before proceeding to elect a caliph.

But strangely enough this was not done. And now we find a unique ‘unsettled constitution’ in which actions do not follow a constitution because there is none; rather the constitution follows the circumstances.

The best argument put forward by the Sunnis to support their claim is that the Muslims of the first era considered it their duty to appoint a caliph, and that they regarded it so important that they neglected to attend the funeral of the Holy Prophet and went to *saqīfah* of Banū Sā‘idah to settle the question of the caliphate. From that event they concluded that the appointment of a caliph was the duty of the *ummah*.

But they fail to understand that it is the validity of that very so-called ‘election’ which is challenged by the Shī‘ahs.

The Shī‘ahs claim that that event was illegal; the Sunnis claim that it was legal and correct. How can the Sunnis put their claim as their argument and proof?

To put their claim as proof is like saying: “This action of mine is legal because I have done it.” Which court of justice would uphold such an argument?

## 26. THE PRACTICAL SIDE

Leaving aside the academic side of these methods, let us see what effects they had on the Muslim leadership and Muslim mentality.

Within thirty years after the death of the Holy Prophet every conceivable way of acquiring power was used and canonized: election, selection, nomination and military power. The result, is that today every Muslim ruler aspires to occupy the seat of the *khilāfah* and “spiritual leadership” of the Muslims; and it is this basic defect of the Muslims’ outlook which has always been, and is today the underlying cause of political instability in the Muslim world. Every Muslim ruler who, as a Muslim, has been taught that “military supremacy” is a constitutional way to *khilāfah*, tries to weaken other Muslim rulers so that he himself may

emerge as the most supreme among the Muslim rulers. In this way, this “constitution” has directly contributed to the weakness of the Muslims in the world.

Apart from that, let us see once again how ‘all-encompassing’ these methods proved immediately after they were invented. This four-sided boundary of caliphate is so unsafe that anyone may enter into it, irrespective of his knowledge or character. The first caliph after Mu‘āwiyah was his son, Yazīd, who was ‘nominated’ by Mu‘āwiyah and had undisputed “military power.” Muslims had given their *bay‘ah* during the lifetime of Mu‘āwiyah; thus, there was *ijmā‘* also. So he was a “constitutional caliph.” But what were his beliefs and character?

Yazīd was a man who bluntly refused to believe in the Holy Prophet. He frankly stated his beliefs in his poem quoted previously that: “Banu Hashim staged a play to obtain the kingdom; Actually, there was neither any news (from Allāh) nor any revelation.”<sup>23</sup>

Neither did he believe in the Day of Judgment: “O my beloved! Do not believe in meeting me after death, because what they have told you about our being raised after death for judgment is only a myth which makes the heart forget the pleasures of this real world.”<sup>24</sup>

After assuming the caliphate, he openly made fun of Islamic prayers; and showed his disrespect for religion by putting the robes of religious scholars on dogs and monkeys. Gambling and playing with bears were his favourite pastimes. He spent all his time drinking (wine), regardless of place or time and without any hesitation. He had no respect for any woman, even those of the prohibited degrees such as step-mother, sister, aunt and daughter. They were just like any other woman in his eyes.

He sent his army to Medina. That holy city of the Prophet was freely looted. Three hundred girls, apart from other women, were criminally assaulted by his soldiers. Three hundred *qurrā’* (reciters) of the Qur’ān and seven hundred companions of the Prophet were brutally murdered.

23 See note 9 of Part One.

24 Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī: *Tadhkirah*, p. 291.

The Holy Mosque of the Prophet remained closed for many days; the army of Yazīd used it as their stable. Dogs made it their shelter and the pulpit of the Prophet was defiled.

Finally, the Commander of the army compelled the people of Medina to submit before Yazīd by giving their *bay'ah* in these words: “We are the slaves of Yazīd; it is up to him whether he gives us back our freedom or sells us in the slaves’ market.” Those who wanted to swear allegiance on the condition that Yazīd should follow the instruction of the Qur’ān and traditions of the Prophet were put to death.<sup>25</sup> It may not be out of place to mention that the Prophet once said: “May Allāh curse him who frightens the people of Medina!”

Then the army, on the order of Yazīd, proceeded to Mecca. That holiest city of Allāh was besieged. They could not enter the city, so they used *manjanīq* (catapult: an ancient military device used to throw heavy stones towards distant targets). With this, they threw stones and flaming torches towards the Ka‘bah. The *kiswah* (canopy of the Ka‘bah) was burnt and a portion of that holiest of buildings was damaged.<sup>26</sup>

## 27. AL-WALĪD AND HĀRŪN AR-RASHĪD

But this was not an exception; it sadly proved to be the general rule. al-Walīd ibn Yazīd ibn ‘Abdi ’l-Malik was another caliph from the Banū Umayyah. He was a drunkard. One night he was drinking with one of his concubines, till they heard the *adhān* (call for prayer) of the dawn prayer. He swore that the concubine would lead in the prayer. She wore the robe of the caliph and led in the prayer in the same condition of drunkenness.<sup>27</sup>

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25 as-Suyūfī: *Tārīkhu ’l-khulafā’*, p. 209, [see also Eng. tr. Major, H. S. Jarrett, p. 213]; Abū ’l-Fidā’: *at-Tārīkh*, vol. 1, p. 192; Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī: *Tadhkirah*, p. 288; Mīr Khwānd: *Rawḍatu ’ṣ-ṣafā’*, vol. 3, p. 66; Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī: *aṣ-Ṣawā’iqu ’l-muhriqah*, p. 79.

26 *Ibid.*

27 ad-Diyār Bakri: *Tārīkhu ’l-khamīs*, vol. 2, p. 320, as quoted by Nawwāb Aḥmad Ḥusayn Khān of Payānwān in his *Tārīkh Aḥmadi*, p. 328; [Ibn Shākir: *Fawātu ’l-wafayāt*, vol. 4, pp. 255-9.]

One day he molested his teenage daughter in the presence of her servant woman. She said that (it was not Islam) it was the religion of the Majūs. al-Walīd recited a couplet: “A man who cares for the (tongues of) people, dies in sorrow; the daring man gets all the pleasures.”<sup>28</sup>

Hārūn ar-Rashīd, the famous Caliph of *One Thousand and One Nights* who is thought as one of the greatest caliphs, wanted to sleep with one of his late father’s concubines. The woman rightly pointed out that this would be incest since she was in a position like his mother. Hārūn ar-Rashid called al-Qāḍī Abū Yūsuf and told him to help him find a way to satisfy his lust. The Qāḍī said: “She is just a slave woman. Should you accept whatever she says? No. Do not accept her words as true.”

So the Caliph satisfied his desire.

Ibn Mubārak comments: “I do not know who among these three was more surprising: the Caliph who put his hand into the blood and property of the Muslims and did not respect his step-mother; or the slave woman who refused to grant the desire of the Caliph; or the Qāḍī who allowed the Caliph to dishonour his father and sleep with that concubine who was his step-mother.”<sup>29</sup>

## **28. EFFECTS ON THE BELIEFS OF THE JUSTICE OF GOD AND ‘IṢMAH OF THE PROPHETS**

It has been explained that the Sunni beliefs regarding “constitutional caliphate” weakened the Muslims politically and compelled them to obey anyone who succeeded in his bid for power irrespective of his qualifications or character.

As though it was not enough, it compelled them to change their total religious outlook and beliefs.

First of all, an overwhelming majority of the caliphs were devoid of

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28 as-Suyūfī: *Tārikhu 'l-khulafā'*, p. 291.

29 *Ibid.*

any sense of religious propriety or piety. To justify the caliphate of such people, they claimed that even the prophets used to commit sins. Thus, the belief in the *'iṣmah* (sinlessness) of the prophets was changed.<sup>30</sup>

As there were perhaps hundreds of people more knowledgeable, more pious and more qualified for the caliphate than the caliph on the throne, they were compelled to say that there was nothing wrong with giving preference to an inferior person over a superior and more qualified one.

When it was pointed out by the Shī'ahs that it was 'evil' according to reason to give preference to an inferior person when a superior person was available, the Sunnis declared that nothing was good or evil in itself, whatever Allāh orders becomes good; whatever He forbids, becomes evil.<sup>31</sup>

As for 'reason', they denied that it exists anywhere in the religion. It is not possible to go into further detail to show how the belief in the Sunnis' 'constitutional caliphate' affected the whole fabric of Islamic theology, but the following short explanation may suffice for the time being.

It is clear that to protect the caliphs, not only the prophets were deprived of their *'iṣmah*, but even Allāh was deprived of His 'Justice'. From this vantage point, we may easily understand the full significance of the verse revealed at Ghadīr Khumm:

*O Apostle! deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; (i.e., the Caliphate of 'Alī (a.s.)) and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message (at all); and Allāh will protect you from the people ... (5:67).*

The purity of Islamic beliefs and deeds depended upon the Caliphate of 'Alī (a.s.); if that one message was not delivered, then it would be as though no message were delivered at all. The safety of the whole religion depended upon the Caliphate of 'Alī after the Holy Prophet.

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30 See the author's *Prophethood*, pp. 14-27.

31 See the author's *Justice of God*, pp. 1-2.



## 29. IS SHĪ‘ISM UNDEMOCRATIC?

Our opponents look at the succession of the early caliphs and Imāms and then claim that Shī‘ism is undemocratic. All the Twelve Imāms were of one family while the first four Caliphs were of different clans. They conclude that the Sunni school of thought is democratic in principle, which is supposed to be the best system of governance. Shī‘ism, in their opinion, is based on hereditary rule and therefore not a good system.

Firstly, no system of government is good or bad of itself; it is as good or bad as the person who holds the reins of the government in his hands. Accordingly, the Shī‘ite belief that an Imām is *ma‘ṣūm*, free from every shortcoming and defect, and superior in virtue, means that his rule would be the most perfect and just. On one side is the uncompromising justice of al-Imām ‘Alī (a.s.), the first Imām, during his short term of Imāmate; on the other, the accepted *ḥadīth* of the Prophet about the last Imām, al-Mahdi, that “he will fill the earth with justice and equity as it will be full of oppression and injustice.”<sup>32</sup> Our premise is not merely an abstraction.

Secondly, we should bear in mind that all the Sunni caliphs from Abū Bakr to the last ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Musta‘ṣim Billāh (killed by Hulāgu Khān in 656/1258) were from the Quraysh. Does it not mean that one family had ruled over all Muslims from eastern China to Spain for six and a half centuries?

Thirdly, the Sunni system of the caliphate, as already mentioned, was never based on democracy. The first Caliph was thrust upon the Muslims of Medina by a handful of the companions; the second was nominated by the first; the third was selected nominally by five people, but actually by one. Mu‘āwiyah took the caliphate by military overthrow. Before him it was, at best, oligarchy; after him it became monarchy.

So much for the democracy of the constitutional principles utilized. What of the performance of those early governments from the point of view of

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32 Abū Dāwūd: *as-Sunan*, vol. 4, pp. 106-9; Aḥmad: *al-Musnad*, vol. 1, pp. 377, 430; vol. 3, p. 28; al-Ḥākim: *al-Mustadrak*, vol. 4, pp. 557, 865.

the equality which democracy implies?

‘Umar made a decision that a non-Arab cannot inherit from an Arab unless that heir was born in Arabia.<sup>33</sup> Again, the Sunni law going back to early times, for the most part, does not allow a non-Arab man to marry an Arab woman, nor is a non-Qurayshite or non-Hāshimate man allowed to marry a Qurayshite or Hāshimite woman, respectively. According to the Shāfi‘ite law, a slave, even a freed one, may not marry a free woman.<sup>34</sup> This is in spite of the well-known declaration of the Prophet that: “There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab, nor for a non-Arab over an Arab, nor for a white man over a black, nor for a black over a white, except by piety. People are from Adam and Adam was from dust.”<sup>35</sup>

Also, it is in spite of the precedents the Prophet established when he married his cousin to Zayd ibn al-Hārithah, a freed slave, and gave the sister of ‘Abdu ’r-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf (a Qurayshite) in marriage to Bilāl, a freed Ethiopian slave.<sup>36</sup>

The Shī‘ite *sharī‘ah* clearly states: “It is allowed to marry a free woman to a slave, an Arab woman to a non-Arab, a Hāshimite woman to a non-Hāshimite and vice versa. Likewise, it is allowed to marry women of learned or wealthy families to men of little learning or wealth or of undignified professions.”<sup>37</sup>

In the matter of distribution of war-booty, the Prophet had established a system of equality; it was to be distributed equally to all who had participated in a particular battle. Abū Bakr continued that system, but ‘Umar in 15 A.H., just four years after the Prophet’s death, changed the system. He fixed annual stipends for various people, clans and tribes: ‘Abbās, the Prophet’s uncle, was allotted 12,000 or 25,000 dīnārs per year; ‘Ā’ishah, 12,000; other wives of the Prophet, 10,000 each; the participants in the battle of Badr, 5,000 each; those who joined between

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33 Mālik: *al-Muwatta’a*, vol. 2, p. 60.

34 al-Jazīrī: *al-Fiqh ‘ala ’l-madhāhibi ’l-arba‘ah*, vol. 4, p. 60.

35 as-Suyūfī: *ad-Durru ’l-manthūr*, vol. 6, p. 98.

36 Ibnu ’l-Qayyim: *Zādu ’l-ma‘ād*, vol. 4, p. 22.

37 al-Muḥaqqiq al-Hillī: *Sharā’i‘u ’l-Islām*, (“Kitābu ’n-Nikāḥ”), vol. 5, p. 300; al-Ḥakīm: *Minhāju ’s-ṣāliḥin*, (“Kitābu ’n-Nikāḥ”), vol. 2, p. 279.

Badr and Ḥudaybiyyah, 4,000 each; those who joined after Ḥudaybiyyah and before Qādisiyyah, 3,000 each. The amount gradually decreased to two dinars per year.<sup>38</sup>

This system corrupted the Muslim community to such an extent that wealth became their sole aim in life and the only benefit of their religion. Their outlook became materialistic and, as mentioned earlier, they could not tolerate the system of equal distribution which ‘Alī reinstated in the first speech he gave after taking over the caliphate. ‘Alī is quoted to have said:

Well, any man from the *muhajirūn* and the *anṣār*, from the companions of the Prophet, who thinks that he is superior to others because of his companionship (let him remember that) the shining superiority is tomorrow before Allāh, and its reward and wages are with Allāh. (He should not expect its reward in this world.) Any man who answered the call of Allāh and His Prophet, and accepted the truth of our religion and entered into it, and faced towards our *qiblah*, is entitled to all the rights of Islam and bound by its limits. You are the servants of Allāh; and all property is the property of Allāh; it will be divided among you equally; there is no preference in it for one against the other....<sup>39</sup>

Those who during the twenty years preceding ‘Alī’s caliphate had grown used to the unfair distribution, advised and requested ‘Alī to compromise; and when he proved unrelenting on matters of Islamic principle, they conspired against him.

After the victory of the Umayyads this inequality between Muslims was carried further. Even if someone accepted Islam, he or she was not accorded the rights of the Muslims. In some way their condition was worse than that of their compatriot non-Muslims. The latter were obliged to pay only *jizyah*,<sup>40</sup> but the Muslims had to pay that and the *zakāt* (the tax

38 at-Ṭabarī: *at-Tārikh*, (Annales I), vol. 5, pp. 2411-4; Nicholson, R. A.: *A Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 187.

39 Ibn Abi ’l-Ḥadid: *Sharḥ*, vol. 7, pp. 35-7; see also al-Imām ‘Alī’s Sermon no. 126 in *Nahju ’l-balāghah*.

40 *Jizyah*: poll-tax or tithes, payable by non-Muslims in the realm of Islam. (pub)

paid by the Muslims). During the Umayyad period (except for two and a half years during ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdi ’l-‘Azīz’s reign), *jizyah* was levied on all non-Arabs including the Muslims.<sup>41</sup>

It is not difficult to imagine how little this policy helped the cause of Islam. For centuries entire countries whose cities and capitals were “Islamic”, refused to convert. Even the Berbers (who responded after initial resistance to the Arab invasion and served so brilliantly in Spain and on into France), as a whole were not converted until the establishment of the first Shī‘ite kingdom in al-Maghrib. When Idrīs ibn ‘Abdillāh, a great-grandson of al-Imām Ḥasan and the founder of the Idrīsīd dynasty (789-985 A.D.), marched against them, most were non-Muslims. This was the result of the ill-treatment in earlier times. We hear that when Yazīd ibn ‘Abdi ’l-Malik occupied the Umayyad throne and assigned Yazīd ibn Abī Muslim Dīnār as Governor of al-Maghrib, the latter re-levied *jizyah* on those who had become Muslims and ordered them back to the villages where they had lived before their conversion.<sup>42</sup> The Idrīsīd change of policy and the extension of full Islamic rights to all the Muslims, brought the conversion of the Berbers.

This exaltation of Arabism is seen to be even more deeply interwoven in the decision of those early rulers that if a subject in a conquered country accepted Islam, he could not be accepted as a Muslim or accorded his Islamic rights unless he attached himself as a client to some Arab tribe. Such clients were called *mawālī*. Even then they were objects of ridicule and unequal treatment by their aristocratic patrons and at the same time continued to be exploited by the growing bureaucracy.

By restricting the right of rule to the twelve infallible Imāms, Allāh cut at the roots of strife, dissension, chaos and false electioneering, as well as social and racial inequality.

### 30. A DYNASTIC RULE?

Some say that the Shī‘ite school holds that the Holy Prophet wanted to establish a dynastic monarchy for his family (in which he obviously

41 aṭ-Ṭabarī: *at-Tārīkh*, (Annales II), vol. 3, pp. 1354, 1367.

42 al-Amīn: *Islamic Shī‘ite Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, pp. 38-41.

failed).

They imply that as the Holy Prophet was far above such selfish motives, the Shī'ite school must be wrong. But these very people say that the Holy Prophet said: الأئمة من قريش - "The Imāms will be from the Quraysh." Will they say that this *ḥadīth* means that the Holy Prophet wanted to establish a kingdom for his tribe? Will they say that the Holy Prophet said these words because of "selfish motives"?

It was explained above that Abū Bakr silenced the *anṣār* of Medina by saying that as the Holy Prophet was from the Quraysh, the Arabs would not accept any non-Qurayshite as caliph. This argument silenced the *anṣār*.

By the same argument, if a member of the family of the Holy Prophet (like 'Alī) were made caliph, all would have obeyed him and there would have been no strife or difficulty. This aspect of the appointment of 'Alī (a.s.), has been recognized also by some non-Muslim writers. Mr. Sédillot has written:

"Had the principle of hereditary succession (in favour of 'Alī - a.s.) been recognized at the outset, it would have prevented the rise of those disastrous pretensions which engulfed Islam in the blood of Muslims.... The husband of Fāṭimah united in his person the right of succession as the lawful heir of the Prophet, as well as the right of election."<sup>43</sup>

The fact is that such objectors have completely missed the point. The Shī'ahs have never claimed that "inheritance" has anything to do with the Imāmate. As explained earlier, an Imām must be *ma'sūm*, superior to all the *ummah* in virtue and *manṣūṣ min Allāh* (appointed by Allāh).

But it was one of the bounties of Allāh, bestowed on Prophet Ibraḥīm and the Holy Prophet (peace be upon them and their progeny) that, in reality and practice, all the Imāms who followed them came from their own family; that all those who had necessary qualifications for the Imāmate were of their progeny.

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43 Sédillot, L.P.E.A., *Histoire des Arabes*, (Arabic tr.), pp. 126-7.

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