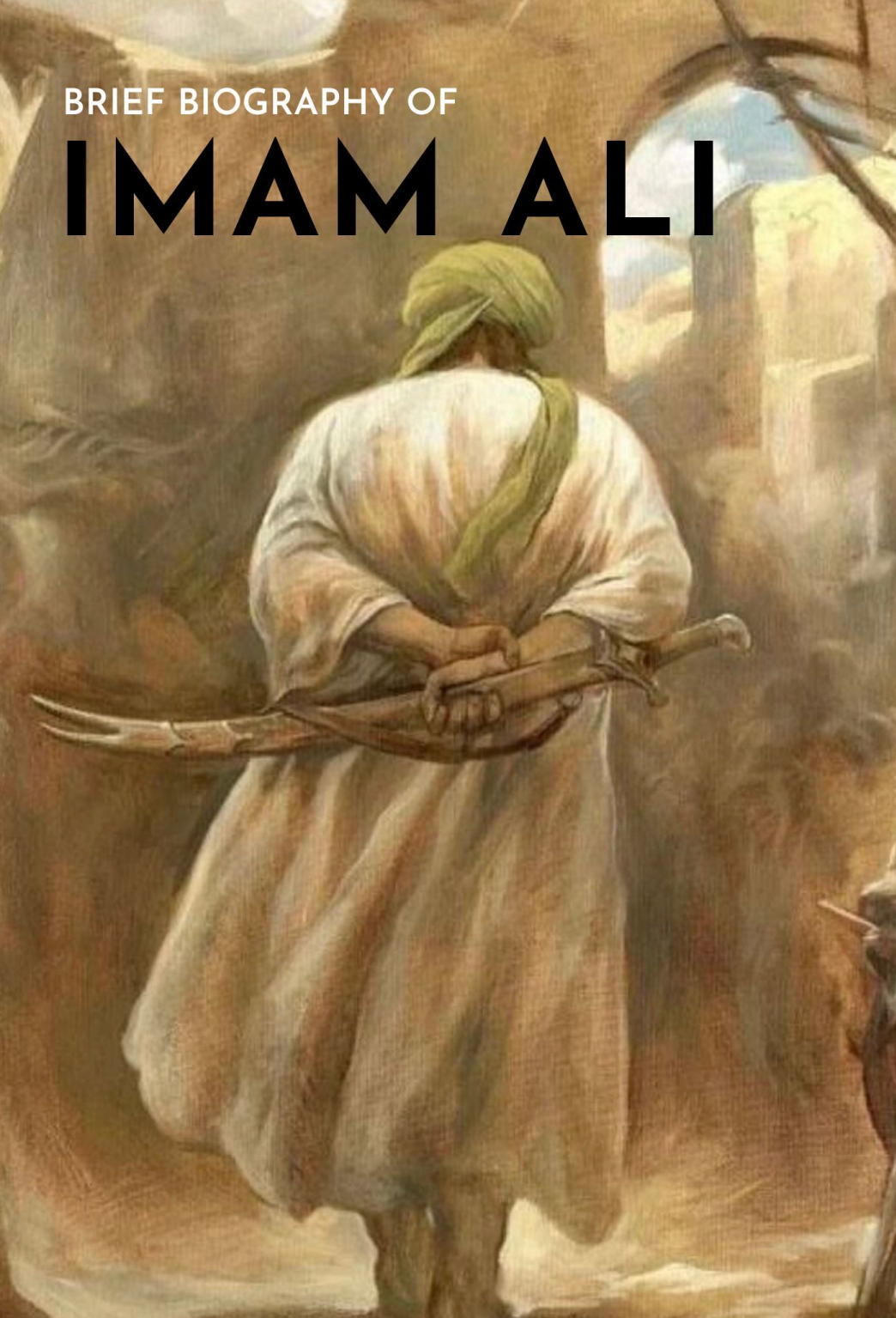


BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF

IMAM ALI





ISBN 9976 956 77 0

First Edition 1994

Published and Printed by:
Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania
P.O.Box 20033
Dar es Salaam – Tanzania

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PREFACE

This short biography of our 1st Imam, Hazrat Ali Ibne Abu Talib (a.s.) was written essentially as part of a course-work for those who have registered themselves as students of the correspondence course offered by the Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania.

The overall concern for writing this unit has been to provide brief notes on the main aspects of the life-history of our 1st Imam for the young readers who, for the first time, have been introduced to the formal study of this great personality in history. In no way therefore should this work be regarded as comprehensive or complete.

As a matter of fact, because this unit was prepared in a short time, it is possible that several corrections may become needful - in future.

In preparing this unit I found the following works quite useful:

ALI THE MAGNIFICENT By Yousouf. N. Laljee

THE BROTHER OF THE PROPHET MOHAMMAD VOL. I

❧ *II* By Mohamad Jawad Chirri

Mohamed Raza Mohamed Husein Dungersi, Ph.D.

New York

October 4, 1992

Jamadi-ul-Thani 1413

CHAPTER 1 : CHILDHOOD AND UPBRINGING

HIS BIRTH

Imam Ali (a.s.) was born in the Holy Kaaba at Mecca on 13th Rajab, in the 30th “Year of the Elephants” or 600 AD. Both the Prophet and Imam Ali (a.s.) belong to the same clan of Bani Hashim. The Prophet’s father, Abdulla, and Imam Ali’s father, Abu Talib (whose proper name was Imran) were sons of Abdul Muttalib from the same mother. The Prophet and Imam Ali (a.s.) were therefore cousins.

Imam Ali’s mother was Fatima, the daughter of Asad who also was from Bani Hashim and was Abu Talib’s cousin. After the death of Amina, the Prophet’s mother, Fatima Binti Asad took it upon herself to act like a mother to the Prophet who was then a boy of six or so. The Prophet always treated her like his own mother. When she died, the Prophet supervised her burial ceremonies himself and buried her in his own gown.

Miraculous circumstances surround Imam Ali’s birth. His mother had gone to perform “TAWAF” at “KAABA” - The House of Allah. Suddenly, she began to have labour pains.

She did not have strength enough to go ack home. She must have been worried thinking of giving birth to her child at such a public place. She therefore began to pray to Allah, asking Him in the name of her grandfather, the Prophet Ibrahim, to protect her and to guarantee safe delivery of the unique child that she was carrying in her womb.

Hardly had she finished her prayers, than she saw an opening on the walls of the Kaaba, wide enough for her to find a safe passage into the Kaaba. Without giving second thought, she walked through the opening and went inside the mosque. Thereafter, the opening

on the walls disappeared. As this incident was taking place, a few elders from the Quraysh such as Abbas Bin Abdul Muttalib were eagerly watching it, not believing what they had seen. When they recovered from the shock, they alerted Abu Talib.

The Custodians of the Kaaba tried to unlock the door so as to enter the House and bring Fatima Bint Asad out. However, the doors would not open. This was interpreted as a Divine objection for anyone to go inside. The chiefs of Quraysh and Abu Talib had no other option but to wait outside and see what would happen next.

On the third day, those who were waiting outside the KAABA saw an opening develop once again on the wans of the Kaaba and they then saw Fatima Bint Asad come out through it.

The difference was that whereas she had gone empty-handed, she came out with a newly born baby in her hands. The Prophet, Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.w.), may peace be upon Him and His Progeny, was amongst those waiting outside the Kaaba. Seeing Fatima and the baby, he went forward, took the baby in his hands and pressed it against his chest with care and love.

THE NEWLY-BORN IN THE HANDS OF THE PROPHET

Up to this moment, as reported by Fatima, though the baby boy was three days old, he had not opened his eyes nor suck any milk from his mother's breasts. Sensing himself in the hands of the Prophet, the boy now opened his eyes and looked straight into those of the Prophet.

Strange as it may sound, the child recited the kalimah of the "SHAHADAT" so clearly that those around him could hear it though they may not have understood it fully since up to that moment Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) had not yet declared his Prophethood. On being instructed by the Prophet, the child read loudly and clearly the opening verses of Chapter 13 - Sura of 'Al-

Muminiin' of the Quran, although the Quran had not yet been revealed.

The Prophet, kissing the boy's lips, passed his tongue into the boy's mouth. The boy obtained his first nourishment in this world from the saliva of the Prophet. This, as we shall see in the course of this unit, had a great effect on the personality of the child.

The Prophet named the child Ali.

There were three other boys in the family of Abu Talib and Fatima Bint Asad: Talib, Akil and Jafar and the Prophet loved all his cousins. But his love for Ali was unique. No wonder therefore that Imam Ali (a.s.) hardly grown up as a child when the Prophet adopted him as his own child.

Before examining the upbringing of Imam Ali (a.s.) in the care and company of the Prophet, it is important to divert a little and examine the incident of his birth to the extent that it sheds light on the faith of his parents.

THE FAITH (RELIGION) OF HIS MOTHER

It is not uncommon to come across Muslims who believe that the ancestors of both Prophet Muhammad and Imam Ali (a.s.) were polytheists. We shall see how and why this belief is absolutely wrong in Chapter 2. At this point we shall examine the faith and religion of Fatima Binti Asad.

The prayers that Fatima Binti Asad offered when she was in labour pains provide us with a window from which to see her religion. Her prayers were not to "LAAT", "MANAF", "HUBUL" or "UZZA". But to Allah, the One and the only One. This proves that she was not a polytheist ("MUSHRIKA"). If she were one she would have called them to help her since they were the Gods of the idol-worshippers of Mecca.

Moreover, she testified that the Allah that she worshipped was the same one that was introduced to her by her ancestors all of whom were followers of the religion taught to them by Prophet Ibrahim.

Fatima Binti Asad therefore was a believer of Islam taught by Prophet Ibrahim; so were her ancestors. Further evidence will be given in Chapter 2 to prove that both Abu Talib and Fatima Binti Asad were staunch followers of Islam since they were born in a family that followed Islam as taught by Prophet Ibrahim.

Let us now return to his childhood and upbringing.

HIS CHILDHOOD AND UPBRINGING

It is recorded that besides the four boys, namely Talib, Ali, Aqeel and Jafar, Abu Talib had a few daughters also. His family therefore was large. His means, however, were meagre. As a result, when once Mecca was stricken by a draught, Abu Talib began to feel the pinch through economic hardships. The Prophet was quick to sense this. He therefore approached his uncle Abbas, who was well to do, with a suggestion that they should come to Abu Talib's rescue by proposing to assume the responsibility of the upkeep of two of Abu Talib's sons.

As a result of this suggestion, Jafar went to live with Abbas and Imam Ali (a.s.) went to the care of the Prophet. Thus began the close father-son relationship between the Prophet and Imam Ali (a.s.) that was to last till the death of the Prophet.

In a sermon in NAHJUL-BALAGHA Imam Ali (a.s.) himself describes his early life in the company of the Prophet in the following lines.

“ ... HE SEATED ME ON HIS LAPS WHILE I WAS A CHILD, EMBRACING ME, MAKING ME JOIN HIM IN HIS BED, TOUCHING HIS HOLY BODY AND SMELLING THE SWEETNESS OF HIS FRAGRANCE. HE USED TO CHEW FOOD AND PUT IN MY MOUTH.

“.... I WAS FOLLOWING HIM AS BABY FOLLOWING HIS MOTHER HE USED TO RAISE FOR ME EVERY DAY A BANNER OF HIS ETHICS AND COMMANDS ME TO FOLLOW IT ... SEEING THE LIGHT OF REVELATION AND SMELLING THE FRAGRANCE OF THE PROPHETHOOD.”

Imam Ali (a.s.) was more than a son to the Prophet. In the Prophet, he saw a caring parent and a teacher. From him he was not only to derive love but also learn the high principles of life. Deep in his mind, he knew the position of the Prophet and the part he himself would be called upon to play in teaching these principles when the right time came.

The effect of the Prophet's upbringing on Imam Ali (a.s.) can be measured by the words of Imam Ali (a.s.) himself: “AND HE (THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH) NEVER FOUND AN UNTRUTH IN MY WORDS OR ANY WRONG IN MY DEEDS.” The result of this unique upbringing raised the position of Imam Ali (a.s.) so high that the Prophet would praise Imam Ali (a.s.) when still a child in these words, “CERTAINLY YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR AND YOU SEE WHAT I SEE, BUT YOU ARE NOT A PROPHET. YOU ARE A MINISTER AND YOU ARE ON A GOOD PATH.”

CHAPTER 2 : THE FAITH OF HIS PARENTS

ABDUL MUTTALIB'S FAITH

Some Muslims wrongly believe that the ancestors of the Prophet and Imam Ali (a.s.) were Pagans or Polytheists. The grandparents, and therefore the parents of the Prophet, were not only the followers but infact the custodians of the tenets of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.).

In this Chapter focus will be on some of those historic incidents which prove that Hazrat Abu Talib was a monotheist and a staunch believer of Islam taught by Prophet Ibrahim.

Abdul Muttalib, the Prophet's grandfather, had always known that Hazrat Muhammad was the Prophet and a Divinely appointed Messenger. On the night of the birth of the Prophet when Abdul Muttalib was near the "HOUSE OF ALLAH" (KHANA-E-KAABA), he had a dream in which he saw "THE HOUSE OF ALLAH" (KHANA-E-KAABA) being lifted. He also heard an announcement coming from it that it was going to be purified through the one born that night. He also saw an unusual brightness and heard the "TAKBIR" (ALLAHU-AKBAR). On going home he saw the same light emanating from the newly born boy, Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.w.). Safiya, the daughter of Abdul Muttalib, reports that at the time of the birth of Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) she saw six unique signs:

- As soon as the Prophet was born he went into "SAJDA"
- Then he lifted his head from "SAJDA" and said clearly "LA ILAHA ILLA ALLAH WA ANARASULULAL-AAH" meaning: "THERE IS NO GOD BUT ALLAH AND I AM HIS MESSENGER."
- With his birth the whole room was filled with light and brightness.
- When I (Safiya) wanted to give him a bath there came a

voice saying “THERE IS NO NEED TO CLEAN HIM, HE IS BORN PURE AND CLEAN.”

- The child was born circumcised.
- Between his shoulders there was the seal of Prophethood which read thus “LA ILAHA ILLALLAH MUHAMMADUR RASULULLAH”

ABU TALIB’S FAITH

No one supported Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) the way Abu Talib did when the former announced that he was the Messenger of Allah. So many examples of this support have been recorded in history that no one can deny them. For example Abu Talib refused to follow the examples of Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab in harming the Prophet. Instead, he became his protector.

The Quraysh of Mecca realised that so far as Abu Talib supported the Prophet, nothing could be done to the Prophet. Their wishes would come true only if they could turn Abu Talib against the Prophet. They first tried to bribe him; they promised they would give one of their own sons to him if only he could hand over Hazrat Muhammad to them. When Abu Talib turned down their offer, then the Quraysh decided to use a harsher method than before. They decided to boycott Abu Talib and his family socially and economically unless, of course, if he agreed not to support Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.w.).

Abu Talib decided to accept all these hardships but not to stop supporting Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) and his mission. He had to withdraw to his estate called “SHOBE ABU TALIB”. There was the fear that an enemy might quietly slip into “SHOBE ABU TALIB” and try to kill the prophet while he was asleep. He therefore made his own son Akil and Jafar change places at night with the Prophet so that if a killer did get to the Prophet’s sleeping place, Hazrat Muhammad’s life would be saved. The killer would instead kill Jafar or Akil thinking that he was killing Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.w.).

Some Muslims try to reduce the importance of Abu Talib's sacrifices for the Prophet of Islam saying that all these were done by a gracious uncle towards a needy nephew - no more, no less. They argue that Abu Talib was a very sincere person and whereas he would do anything for his nephew he could not change his faith and become a Muslim! If this was the case then why would he not warn his children and make them remain with their faith.

Common sense says that a sincere man like Abu Talib would warn his children and draw clear-cut lines for them, explaining to them that their support was for their cousin not his Mission. Far from doing that, Abu Talib openly told the Prophet to continue with his teachings and instructed his children to support the Prophet and help him propagate his mission.

On his deathbed, Abu Talib's last wishes to his clan, the Hashimites were: support Muhammad not only because he is your cousin, but more importantly because he is the messenger of Allah. Khalid Muhammad Khalid records, in his book *RIHAB ALI*, Abu Talib's last words as follows:

"I COMMAND YOU TO BE GOOD TO MUHAMMAD. HE IS THE MOST TRUSTWORTHY OF QURAYSH AND THE EVER-TRUTHFUL OF THE ARABS. HE BROUGHT A MESSAGE WHICH IS ACCEPTED BY THE HEART AND DENIED BY THE TONGUE FOR FEAR OF HOSTILITY. BY GOD, WHOEVER WALKS IN THE PATH OF MUHAMMAD SHALL BE IN THE RIGHT ROAD AND WHOEVER FOLLOWS HIS GUIDANCE SHALL HAVE THE HAPPY FUTURE. HAD THERE BEEN A BALANCE IN MY YEARS, I WOULD HAVE SHIELDED HIM AGAINST DANGERS AND DEFEND HIM AGAINST ADVERSARIES.

"AND YOU, THE HASHIMITES, RESPOND TO MUHAMMAD'S INVITATION AND BELIEVE HIM. YOU WILL SUCCEED AND BE WELL-GUIDED. ASSIST MUHAMMAD - CERTAINLY HE IS THE GUIDE TO THE STRAIGHT PATH".

It is in the light of these contribution that his father made towards Islam that made Imam Ali (a.s.) always feel proud of being the son of Abu Talib. Through sources traceable to Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.), Allama Tabrasi records in his work *AL-IHTIJAJ* that while at Ruhbah in Kufa surrounded by his companions, Imam Ali (a.s.) was confronted by a Muslim who said, "COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFULS, YOU ARE IN THIS GREAT POSITION GIVEN TO YOU BY ALLAH WHILE YOUR FATHER IS SUFFERING IN HELL." The Imam replied "BE SILENT. MAY ALLAH DISFIGURE YOUR MOUTH. BY THE ONE WHO SENT MUHAMMAD WITH THE TRUTH, IF MY FATHER INTERCEDES FOR EVERY SINNER ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH, ALLAH WOULD ACCEPT HIS INTERCESSION."

And why would not Allah accept Abu Talib as a intercessor when Allah himself regards Abu Talib as his appointee to raise the Prophet when the Prophet was an orphan? For says Allah in the Quran "DID HE NOT FIND YOU AN ORPHAN AND GIVE YOU SHELTER?" (Ch.93, v.6)

WHY DID ABU TALIB KEEP SILENT ABOUT HIS FAITH?

Actions speak louder than words. From the time Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) started teaching Islam up to the time of when Abu Talib died, the latter did everything possible to help Islam and the Prophet of Allah. His every action was with an intention to support Islam. It was necessary only for those who opposed Islam, like Abu Sufyan, to read "KALIMA" and become Muslims. Abu Talib was a Muslim from day one.

If Abu Talib did not over and over again say that he was a Muslim in earlier days he had a good reason for that. He wanted to retain his position as the custodian and protector of the Messenger of Allah. This was possible only by his silence regarding his faith. For so far as the Quraysh were not sure about his faith they would allow him to have his rights as one of the chiefs of his clan. Abu

Talib needed these rights to protect the Prophet. In fact, as soon as the Quraysh became sure that Abu Talib was indeed on the faith of his nephew, they decided to boycott him socially and economically. For example, they decided not to buy anything from him nor sell anything to him: Secondly, they decided not even to talk with him. He had to retire to his estate called "SHOBE-ABU TALIB". He became powerless.

By this time the message of Islam had already developed strong roots and could survive despite this boycott. However, if this boycott had come in the earlier days when the Prophet had just started his mission, the mission would certainly fail. Only Abu Talib's silence on his faith saved Islam.

Do not judge people only by what they say or do not say. Judge them by their actions; The actions of Abu Talib were those of a devout Muslim; When others like Abu Sufyan were harassing and planning to kill hazrat Muhammad, Abu Talib was sacrificing his own and his children's lives for the Messenger of Allah. Not letting the matter rest at that, whenever possible, Abu Talib would state his faith as he did on his death bed. To call Abu Talib a polytheist or pagan is to disrespect Allah and his Messenger!

CHAPTER 3 : INVITATION OF THE KINSMEN (DA'WAT DHUL-ASHIRA)

Almost three years had passed since the Prophet's declaration of his mission, when Allah instructed him to call his kinsmen and ask one amongst them to become his right hand man. The instructions from Allah were:

“AND WARN YOUR NEAREST KINSMEN AND LOWER YOUR WINGS TO THE BELIEVERS WHO FOLLOW YOU.” (Ch.26, v.214- 215)

The Prophet therefore invited his kinsmen to his house. Imam Ali (a.s.) at that time was present at this meeting; he was indeed in charge of organising and serving the guests on behalf of the Prophet. When the guests had helped themselves to bread and milk, the Prophet stood to address them. Sensing what was coming they all left with the exception of Abu Talib and his son Ali.

They were called on the second night; they did the same thing as they had done on the first night. However, on the third night they stayed to listen to him because Abu Talib made them do so. Then the messenger spoke, saying:

“O CHILDREN OF ABDUL MUTTALIB, BY ALLAH, I DO NOT KNOW ANY YOUNG MAN FROM AMONG THE ARABS WHO HAS EVER BROUGHT TO YOU THE GOODNESS OF THIS WORLD AND OF THE HEREAFTER, AND ALLAH HAS COMMANDED ME TO INVITE YOU TO IT. WHO AMONG YOU IS WILLING TO BE MINISTER IN THIS MISSION, AND HE WILL BE MY BROTHER, MY EXECUTOR, AND MY SUCCESSOR?”

None among the guests responded except Imam Ali (a.s.), who despite his tender age, spoke with the confidence of a warrior

saying “MESSENGER OF ALLAH, I WILL BE YOUR MINISTER IN THIS MISSION.”

Wishing to give them a chance lest they complain at a later date that Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) had not given them sufficient time, the Prophet made young Ali sit down. He repeated his invitation two more times but none other than Imam Ali (a.s.) showed any interest. The Prophet then putting his hand on the neck of Imam Ali(a.s.) said, “THIS IS MY EXECUTOR, AND MY SUCCESSOR. LISTEN TO HIM AND OBEY HIM.”

It is interesting to note that the guests turned towards Abu Talib and tauntingly said “HE ORDERED YOU TO LISTEN TO YOUR OWN SON AND TO OBEY HIM.”

If Abu Talib had the slightest doubts in his mind regarding the faith proclaimed by his nephew, common sense dictates that he would and should have voiced his concern. He would then or at a later date explain his position. That at this meeting and throughout his life he never tried to distance himself from the mission of Islam, confirms his belief in Islam as the true religion.

This incident has come to be known as “DA’WAT DHUL-ASHIRA” or the invitation of the Kinsmen.

THE IMPORTANCE OF “DA’ WAT DHUL-ASHIRA”

First and foremost, Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) was instructed by Allah to call this assembly. What ever he was going to say or do at such an assembly was therefore in complete agreement with Allah’s wishes.

Secondly, the main concern at this meeting was not just proclamation of Islam. There was a special work to be done. It is interesting to note that everybody was not invited. Only forty men from the Quraysh were called at this meeting and among them

the Prophet wanted one person to be his Minister. The reward for which would be that the said person would be his BROTHER, his “EXECUTOR”.

Thirdly, that no one was ready to take this job except Imam Ali (a.s.). However, the appointment had to be made. The mission of Islam had to go ahead, Imam Ali (a.s.) was therefore appointed by the Prophet as his “BROTHER”, his “EXECUTOR”, and “SUCCESSOR”

Readers are required to have this question in their minds from this point onwards and may make their own judgement at the end of this unit.

CHAPTER 4 : HIS YOUTH: BEGINNING OF THE PROPHET'S MINISTRY

No sooner had Hazrat Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) proclaimed his Prophethood then persecution started against him. This took different forms. To begin with, the polytheists of Mecca chose to disregard and ignore him calling him mad and liar. However, verbal insults changed into physical violence when it became clear to the Polytheists of Mecca that the mission of the Prophet was gaining strength day by day. Fearing the protests and possible reprisals from Abu Talib, the pagans of Mecca devised an ingenious plan. They trained their young children to harass the Prophet, hurling dirt and stones at him. When Abu Talib went complaining about this to the Meccans, the latter expressed their wonder at Abu Talib's concern blaming him for meddling with childish pranks.

IMAM ALI'S CALL ON DUTY

Imam Ali's first call on duty had begun. His mission as a minister of the Prophet was in progress. It was now the turn of the Meccans to come to Abu Talib to protest on behalf of their children. For in the words of AVAVAN the thirteen year old Ali " ... FELL UPON THOSE YOUNG MEN, BROKE THE NOSE OF ONE, TEETH OF THE OTHER, PULLED THE EARS OF THE THIRD AND THREW DOWN THE FOURTH"

Surely, the clever plans of the Polytheists of Mecca had been nipped in the bud. This was the beginning only.

As a course develops this theme shall uncover itself as does a sun-flower on a bright sunny day.

Imam Ali's first step in the service of Islam's mission was to become the Prophet's body guard - a Muslim warrior. (THE "MUJAHID").

ALI ON THE NIGHT OF HIJRA

With the death of Abu Talib, events began to take a sharp turn against the Prophet. With the shelter and protection in the person of Abu Talib gone and with fears of Islam's Mission growing stronger by being spread out by the migrating Muslims to the neighbouring Hijaz, the Polytheists of Mecca called an emergency meeting of their own. Three proposals were tabled as described by the following verse of the Holy Quran:

“AND WHEN THE INFIDELS PLOTTED AGAINST YOU, THAT THEY MAY DETAIN YOU (AS PRISONERS) OR PUT YOU TO DEATH OR EXILE YOU ...” (Ch.8, v.30)

After considering them thoughtfully, they ultimately accepted Abu Jahl's idea of killing the Prophet while he was in bed. So as to avert a particular family or clan being singled out for this murder, the plotters decided that one member from each of the opposing clans should participate in the killing.

It was no longer safe for the Prophet to remain in Mecca. The Angel Gibrael (Jibrail) brought the news of the danger to the Prophet and told him to leave for Medina that very night. For the safety of the Prophet it was very important that his intention to leave for Medina be kept top-secret. The Prophet's house was surrounded by the murderers. To divert their attention it was very important that somebody should sleep in the Prophet's bed, as the Prophet himself secretly walked out of his house. The person to substitute for the Prophet was required to have at least three qualities.

Firstly, he was supposed to resemble the Prophet so much that he could take his place without arousing any suspicion in the sharp minds of the murderers, with their eyes fully focused on the Prophet's bed.

Secondly, the person had to be very trustworthy. This information had to remain with him as he took the Prophet's place; any leakage

of information on the Prophet's strategy would ruin the mission, thereby endangering the Prophet's life.

Thirdly, the person who chose to "sit in" for the Prophet must have the courage, the will and the conviction all made of steel! It was not just the matter of lying under the mantle of the Prophet. He who slept there had to show complete composure despite the risk of losing his own life; any nervousness could blow off the cover.

Who else but Imam Ali (a.s.) could combine all these requirements and more, in his personality? But for him it was not a task to think about. For had he not volunteered to be the Prophet's Minister? for that matter, all who were present at "DHUL-ASHIRA" ten years earlier had known of such and similar risks that went with the proposed job. The only difference between them and Imam Ali (a.s.) was they were neither able nor willing to shoulder this responsibility; Imam Ali (a.s.) was.

The famous night of "HIJRA" had already begun. It began with the young soldier hardly twenty years of age sleeping in the Prophet's bed, looking in all respects like the Prophet. It ended with the Pagans of Mecca with their swords drawn surrounding the bed, confronted by Ali, son of Abu Talib. It needed the iron-nerve of the brave son of Abu Talib to ward off the anger of the murderers and of course their dangerous swords.

The task entrusted to him had just begun. He had saved himself for the moment. He had yet to provide a safe passage for himself and the Prophet's family out of hostile Mecca to Medina. In the mean time, some relatively lesser jobs had to be done; he had to return all the trusts to their owners who had left them to the Prophet as their trustee.

Mission accomplished, Imam Ali (a.s.) took to safety the Prophet's family despite the harassment and threat on his life by the Quraysh.

He joined the Prophet at Quba and from there they marched to Medina. This was on 16th Rabiul Awwal (July 2, 622 AD).

The job that Imam Ali (a.s.) did on the night of Hijra was so well done that Allah has recorded it in the Quran:

“AND OF MEN THERE IS ONE WHO SELL HIS SOUL FOR THE SAKE OF SEEKING THE PLEASURE OF ALLAH; AND ALLAH IS GRACIOUS TO HIS SERVANTS.” (Ch.2, v.207)

CHAPTER 5 :

THE WARRIOR OF ISLAM: THE BATTLE OF BADR

The migration of the Prophet to Medina caused one fundamental problem: the settlement of the Muslim refugees who had come with him. He had to find accommodation for them all and also find ways for them to earn their living. This had to be done without disturbing the pattern of life existing in Medina. This was the immediate problem needing immediate solution. Deep in his mind, the Prophet also knew that he had also to address the issue of defending Medina against the Quraysh of Mecca, since his intelligence and foresight must have warned him of the impending bloody assaults of the Pagans of Mecca. There was also the question of organising Medina so as to become a center from where the Prophet could spread the Message of Allah.

The accomplishment of these and other similar tasks made it very important for the Prophet to establish an Islamic State. For now he needed a Minister and an Executor. He had known of this all along and had for that reason appointed one ten years earlier at “DHUL ASHIRA”.

ESTABLISHMENT OF ISLAMIC STATE IN MEDINA

The first step that the Prophet took towards establishing the Islamic State was to establish the Principles of brotherhood amongst “THE MUHAJIR” (The refugees from Mecca) and the “ANSAR” (The well established Inhabitants of Medina) This move would serve social, economic, and religious functions. The Ansar would absorb the Muhajir in their economic activities to each others benefit. Based on this bond of brotherhood, economic progress would be built on fundamentals of Islam and avoid the possibility of starting the master-servant or master-slave relationship between the inhabitants of Medina and the refugees from Mecca. Through this approach the Prophet gave a practical example of the most sacred principle of Islam: that of the true brotherhood depended not on

blood but on Faith. Each “MUHAJIR” therefore became a brother to an “ANSAR”.

THE PROPHET NAMES HIS BROTHER

Muslims must have been eager to know whom amongst them would have the honour of being named the “BROTHER” of the Prophet. But not those who were present at the gathering of “DHUL ASHIRA”. For Imam Ali (a.s.) had already been appointed not only as a brother but also the Prophet’s “EXECUTOR” and “SUCCESSOR”. Therefore, the Prophet’s declaration in Medina - as quoted by the famous scholar Suyuti - that “YOU ARE MY BROTHER IN THIS WORLD AND IN THE NEXT,” was to let those who were not at “DHUL ASHIRA” know of the Ministry of Imam Ali (a.s.).

The whole incident, together with its effect in laying the foundation of the Islamic State, is beautifully described in the “*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*” by the famous Victorian orientalist called Gibbon in the following words:

“TO ERADICATE THE SEEDS OF JEALOUSY, MUHAMMAD JUDICIOUSLY COUPLED HIS PRINCIPAL FOLLOWERS WITH THE RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF BRETHREN; THE HOLY FRATERNITY WAS RESPECTED IN PEACE AND WAR, AND THE TWO PARTIES VIED WITH EACH OTHER IN A GENEROUS EMULATION OF COURAGE AND FIDELITY.”

The idea of Muslim brotherhood then not only paved way for the “MUHAJIRS” to find their daily requirements in leading a decent life, but it also ended, at least for the time being, the age old enmity between the two major clans of Medina the “KHAZRAJIS” and the “AWS”. More importantly, through this principle, Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.w.), the architect of Islamic State, had accomplished two major tasks; firstly, he had laid the foundation of the Islamic State and secondly, he had appointed his “BROTHER”, “EXECUTOR” and “SUCCESSOR” to be with him to do all that

now needed to be done so as to fulfil his task of spreading the message of Allah to mankind.

Hardly had the Prophet completed his immediate task of establishing his centre in Medina, when the first challenge came.

THE BATTLE OF BADR

In the first year of Hijra (624 AD), with the determination to kill the Prophet and destroy Islam once and for ever, the Quraysh of Mecca decided to invade Medina. Equipped with well-trained soldiers numbering 1000, Abu Jahl marched towards Medina. He was intercepted at a place called Badr by the Muslim force of 313 men, least equipped and hardly prepared to face them.

The hopelessness of the situation can be seen in the prayers that the Prophet offered on the Eve of the battle of Badr in which he said, “ALLAH, THIS IS QURAYSH. IT HAS COME WITH ALL ITS ARROGANCE AND BOASTFULNESS, TRYING TO DISCREDIT YOUR APOSTLE. O ALLAH, I ASK YOU TO HUMILIATE THEM TOMORROW. ALLAH, IF THIS MUSLIM BAND PERISHES TODAY YOU SHALL NOT BE WORSHIPPED.”

The concern of the Prophet was real. Muslim defeat would end all his efforts to establish the message of Allah. Defeat would deprive the Prophet of his best soldiers and companions, and would destroy the faith and confidence of those who managed to survive the Quraysh onslaught. What he needed was a decisive victory. And this he got, thanks to Imam Ali (a.s.).

Utbah and Sheiba Bin Rabia and Utba's son Walid from the forces of Pagans called out for Muslims to come to fight them. The Prophet sent out Imam Ali (a.s.), Hamza (Prophet's uncle) and Obeida (The Prophet's cousin) to fight these three enemies.

Imam Ali (a.s.) fought and killed Walid. Hamza fought and killed

Utbah. Sheiba wounded Obeida. But Sheiba was subsequently killed by Imam Ali (a.s.) and Hamza. Obeida died from wounds he received from Sheiba to become the first Muslim Martyr on the day of Badr. Other notable Pagan Soldiers to die at the hands of Imam Ali (a.s.) were Hanzala B. Abu Sufyan, Al-Aus B. Said and Tuaima B. Oday. In all seventy pagan soldiers were killed, at least twenty by Imam Ali (a.s.).

The Muslim won the battle. The hero of this Battle was Imam Ali (a.s.). His early victory over Walid and Sheiba gave Muslims courage and confidence to fight even though they were few in number and did not have enough fighting equipment. Again, by killing other soldiers when full scale battle began, he weakened the army of Meccans and made the work of Muslim soldiers easy.

We do not dispute the fact that other Muslims too had a share in the victory of this Battle. However, the share of Imam Ali (a.s.) was the greatest. Remember, over 40% of the enemies were killed by him alone and the remainder 60% were killed by 112 Muslims!

CHAPTER 6 : THE DEFENDER OF ISLAM: THE BATTLE OF OHUD

IMAM ALI (A.S.) - THE HERO OF OHUD

When Abu-Jahl and his soldiers left Mecca to wipe Muslims out of Medina from the face of the earth, they had not the slightest idea of what was in store for them. The victory of the Muslims left the Quraish of Mecca therefore stunned. Seventy of their choicest warriors and Noblemen lay dead at BADR. Many others fell prisoners in the hands of those whom they had always persecuted and discredited. To accept this defeat would be to put the last nail in their coffin. Devastated though they were, they were also burning with determination to take their revenge against the Muslims. One year after their defeat at Badr, the Quraish of Mecca marched once again towards Medina. Under the Banner of Talha B. Abu Talha there were three thousand soldiers: well-fed, well-trained from the finances set aside for this purpose alone from the revenue of their trade.

Muslim soldiers too - all in all numbering seven hundred marched under the Banner of Imam Ali (a.s.) towards Ohud, about five miles from Medina, where the encounter with Quraish of Mecca took place. Imam Ali (a.s.) weakened the Meccan forces by killing one after the other of their ten best Banner-Holders. He then led a heavy attack on the evil forces inflicting a heavy defeat on them. However, thanks to the greed of some Muslim soldiers who decided to go away from their positions so that they could take part in collecting the booty, the Muslims were attacked from behind. No more in a position to defend themselves, the Muslims ran for their own lives, leaving behind their Prophet at the mercy of the Polytheists of Mecca. They were no longer ready to help the Prophet although he was calling them for help. This incident is referred to in the Quran in the following lines:

“ALLAH CERTAINLY MADE GOOD HIS PROMISE TO YOU WHEN YOU DEFEATED THEM BY HIS LEAVE. THEN YOUR COURAGE FAILED YOU AND YOU DISOBEYED AFTER HE SHOWED YOU WHAT YOU WISHED. AMONG YOU ARE SOME DESIRING THIS WORLD AND SOME DESIRING THE HEREAFTER. THEN HE DIVERTED YOU FROM YOUR ENEMIES IN ORDER TO TEST YOU. BUT HE FORGAVE YOU. FOR ALLAH IS FULL OF MERCY FOR THE BELIEVERS. SEE YOU WERE CLIMBING UP WITHOUT LOOKING ON THE SIDES WHEN THE PROPHET WAS CALLING YOU BACK ..” (Ch.3, v.152-153)

EXCEPT FOR IMAM ALI (A.S.), OTHERS RAN AWAY

According to Al-Hakim the author of “*Al-Mustadrak*” only Imam Ali (a.s.) stood by the side of the Prophet throughout the duration of the war. Others deserted him to return after it was safe enough. In the meanwhile, only Imam Ali (a.s.) stood to fight and put off attempts to kill the Prophet. Amazed by Imam Ali’s devotion and self-sacrificing spirit the Arch Angel Gabriel said to the prophet “MESSENGER OF ALLAH WHAT A REEDEMER ALI IS”. The Prophet replied: “HE IS FROM ME AND I AM FROM HIM”. Gabriel said, “AND I AM FROM BOTH OF YOU”. (Said Muhseen Al-Amin in his book *A’yan Al-Shiah*).

For his efforts, Imam Ali (a.s.), in all received sixteen wounds which made him so weak that he fell from his horse several times. However, Angel Gabriel helped him back with such words of consolation and encouragement as, “GO ON FIGHTING O HERO! ALLAH AND HIS MESSENGER APPRECIATE YOUR SERVICES”

THE ROLE OF IMAM ALI (A.S.)

- The early victory was mostly because of Imam Ali’s victory over ten of the Banner-Carriers of the army of Meccan Pagans. By killing the ten most able warriors one

after the other, Imam Ali (a.s.) completely destroyed the morale of the army and made it weak against the Muslim warriors.

- The later defeat of the Muslims was halted by Imam Ali's efforts; when everybody else ran for his life he stood by the Prophet. He lifted the Prophet from where he had fallen and took him to a safer place. Seeing him fight, thirteen other Muslim warriors then returned to him. His contribution therefore overweigh that of the other thirteen warriors put together.
- The Pagan's victory was ended by Imam Ali (a.s.). Their main target was the Prophet. They succeeded in hurting him but thanks to Imam Ali's leadership, the Prophet's life was saved.
- The Hero of this Battle too turned to be Imam Ali (a.s.). No wonder therefore that noticing Imam Ali (a.s.)'s bravery and devotion, the Angel began to sing his praises saying: "THERE IS NO YOUTH BUT ALI AND NO SWORD BETTER THAN ZULFIQAR".

CHAPTER 7 : VICTORY OF ISLAM: THE BATTLE OF KHANDAK

THE PLOT TO KILL THE PROPHET OF ISLAM

As far as the Quraish of Mecca were concerned, the Battle of Ohud was only a partial Victory for them. Hinda, Abu Sufyan's wife, was still burning for revenge, although she had succeeded in getting Hazrat Hamza killed and had been able to cut and chew his liver, and wear parts of it as her necklace. They had resolved not to rest till they had killed the Prophet and totally and completely wiped out Islam from the face of the Earth. The experiences learnt both at Badr and Ohud convinced the Polytheists of Mecca that single-handedly they could not defeat the Muslims. They needed to join forces with all the clans and communities on the Arabian Peninsula. Abu Sufyan therefore formed an alliance under which a strong army of four thousand men from Mecca was to be helped by an additional six thousand soldiers from the Tribes of Ghafatan and Saleem. Their plan was to attack Medina from all sides, and taking the Muslims by surprise, kill them all once and for all.

The Prophet informed the Muslims about this plot and by the advice of Salman it was decided that a trench be dug around Medina. This would stop the enemies marching right into Medina. It took the Muslims six days to complete digging the trench. The Muslims had hardly finished digging the trench when the enemy under the Banner of Abu Sufyan came face to face with Muslims. This was in Shawwal 5 AH. (Feb 627 AD).

THE BATTLE OF KHANDAK BEGINS

Unable to cross the ditch, the Quraish army came to a halt and decided therefore to surround Medina on all sides. This siege continued for two weeks.

The Muslims and their enemies began to run short of food and fodder for their animals. Then the deadlock was broken. The

champion of the army of the Heathens, Amr B. Abd Wudd accompanied by Nawfal B. Abdulla, Dzarar B. Al-Khatlab and Ikrima B. Abu Jahl found the narrowest and weakly guarded part of the ditch and crossed it, riding on their horses.

Amr B. Abd Wudd was no ordinary soldier. His bravery was known and talked about in all homes in Arabia. It was believed that he could fight with one thousand ordinary soldiers at one go. In support of his bravery, his admirers said that, once while in combat, he lost his shield. In its place he picked a baby camel and used it as his protective shield. Naturally, when he challenged Muslims for a duel, none dare come out to face him. Never before had Muslim warriors experienced such a low spirit. Amr brought a message of Muslim defeat and destruction. For unless something immediate was done to silence him, others from his army would cross the ditch. Consequently, the Muslim defence would collapse and Muslims would be slaughtered. The mood of the Muslims at this time is caught in the following verses of the Quran:

“BEHOLD! THEY CAME UPON FROM ABOVE YOU AND FROM BELOW YOU, AND WHEN THE EYES GREW WILD AND THE HEARTS Gaped UP TO THE THROATS, AND YOU IMAGINED VARIOUS (VAIN) THOUGHTS ABOUT ALLAH! IN THAT SITUATION THE BELIEVERS WERE TRIED THEY WERE SHAKEN WITH MIGHTY SHOCK. AND BEHOLD! THE HYPOCRITES AND THOSE IN WHOSE HEARTS THERE IS A DISEASE (EVEN) SAY: GOD AND HIS APOSTLE PROMISED US NOTHING BUT DELUSION! BEHOLD! A PARTY AMONG THEM SAID: O PEOPLE OF YATHRIB (MEDINA). YOU CANNOT STAND (THE ATTACK). THEREFORE TURN BACK! AND A BAND OF THEM ASKED FOR LEAVE OF THE PROPHET, SAYING: TRULY OUR HOUSES ARE BARE AND EXPOSED THOUGH THEY WERE NOT EXPOSED; THEY INTENDED NOTHING BUT TO FLEE.” (Ch.33, v.10-13)

Imam Ali (a.s.) was not one of such people. Rather, he was amongst

those few whose position is explained by the following verse of the Quran:

“WHEN THE BELIEVERS SAW THE CONFEDERATE FORCES, THEY SAID: THIS IS WHAT GOD AND HIS APOSTLE HAD PROMISED US. AND GOD AND HIS APOSTLE TOLD US WHAT IS TRUE AND IT IS ONLY ADDED TO THEIR FAITH AND ZEAL IN OBEDIENCE. AMONG THE BELIEVERS ARE MEN WHO HAVE BEEN TRUE TO THEIR COVENANT WITH GOD: OF THEM SOME HAVE COMPLETED THEIR VOW (TO THE FULL), AND SOME (STILL) WAIT; BUT THEY HAVE NEVER CHANGED, (THEIR) DETERMINATION IN THE LEAST.” (Ch.33, v.22-23).

According to the historian Ibn Hisham noticing the damage done by Amr and his companions to the Muslim defensive system, Imam Ali (a.s.) made a fast move to prevent any further damage. Accompanied by few companions, he moved to the spot where Amr had made his entry towards the Muslim encampments and prevented any further crossings.

He then came back to accept the challenge of Amr. The Prophet, as he had done on the day of “DHUL ASHIRA”, did not accept Imam Ali’s offer immediately. He wanted to give others a chance if they dare take it. When Amr kept on calling the Muslims to come to fight him, the Prophet then let Imam Ali (a.s.) accept Amr’s challenge.

The Prophet put his own turban on Imam Ali’s head. He then gave him his own coat of mail and armed him with his own sword, Zulfiqar. Sending him to the battle field, the Prophet proclaimed, “COMPLETE FAITH IS GOING FOR AN ENCOUNTER WITH COMPLETE INFIDELITY.” He then raised his hands in prayers saying: “OH, ALLAH! OBEIDA, MY COUSIN, WAS TAKEN AWAY FROM ME IN THE BATTLE OF BADR, HAMZA, MY UNCLE, IN OHUD. BE MERCIFUL NOT TO LEAVE ME ALONE

AND UNDEFENDED. SPARE ALI TO DEFEND ME. YOU ARE THE BEST OF DEFENDERS.”

IMAM ALI KILLS AMR B. ABD WUDD

In fierce duel, Imam Ali (a.s.) killed Amr. His exclamation in the form of “ALLAHU AKBAR (ALLAH IS GREAT)” announced the victory of truth over falsehood. Fear of their lives now overcame Amr’s companions who sprang up in their horses and ran away to safety except for Nawfil who fell in the ditch and died from Imam Ali’s sword.

Amr B. Abd Wudd’s sister had this to say about her brother’s death: “IF THE KILLER OF AMR HAD BEEN OTHER THAN HIM (IMAM ALI) I WOULD HAVE MOURNED MY BROTHER FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE. BUT HIS KILLER WAS FEARLESS - WITHOUT AN EQUAL (i.e. IMAM ALI) - AND HIS FATHER WAS THE NOBLE OF THE TOWN.”

The death of Amr restored the courage and confidence of the Muslims in the same proportion as it destroyed that of the pagans. What Amr could not achieve none would. Who dare challenge him who killed a man like Amr in one single combat? Though the pagan army did not withdraw immediately, it did not have the courage to try another attack. What was needed was one strong wind to give them an excuse to end the siege and go back to where they came from, defeated and disappointed.

The victory of the Muslims was decisive. The greatest obstacle towards establishing the Islamic state - namely the Quraish of Mecca - had been dealt a fatal blow. No more would they dare approach Medina with the evil intention of killing the Prophet and then destroy Islam. It was just a matter of time before Mecca itself would fall back in the hands of Muslims. The Messenger of Allah hinted at this when he said, “AFTER TODAY WE SHALL INVADE THEM AND THEY WILL NOT INVADE US.” (Ibne Hisham)

Who was the Hero of this Battle? Of course Imam Ali (a.s.). The greatest of his contribution towards Muslim success could not have been explained any better than by the Prophet himself who was according to the author of "*Al-Mustadrak*", said on this occasion: "ALI'S SINGLE STROKE ON THE DAY OF THE DITCH OUTWEIGHS THE DEVOTIONAL WORSHIPS PERFORMED BY BOTH THE WORLDS (OF MEN AND ANGELS) TILL THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT."

CHAPTER 8 : THE VICTORY OF ISLAM: THE BATTLE OF KHAIBAR

THE JEWS OF KHAIBAR

The Muslim victory against the combined forces of the enemies of Islam at the “Battle of the Ditch” (Khandaq) accomplished by the treaty of Hodeibia meant that at least for the time being there was no threat from the heathens of Mecca. The immediate danger that needed to be dealt with was that from the Jews of Khaibar.

The Prophet, on coming to Medina, had tried not only to bring peace between the two feuding tribes of Aws and Khazraj, he also wanted to let minority communities which included Jews both in Medina and in the neighbourhood of Medina to live harmoniously. The agreement which he signed with them is reproduced in parts (as it appears in Ibn Hisham’s *“Biography of the Prophet”*) to show the concessions that the Prophet was prepared to make to the non-Muslim communities for the sake of harmony and general good.

“WHOEVER BECOMES A PARTY TO THIS AGREEMENT WILL BE ENTITLED TO OUR HELP AND WILL NOT FACE ANY INJUSTICE. NO MUSLIM SHALL WORK AGAINST HIM. THE CHILDREN OF OURS ARE A COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS. THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOKS ARE ALLOWED TO FOLLOW THEIR RELIGION IN THE SAME WAY AS MUSLIMS ARE ALLOWED TO FOLLOW THEIR RELIGION EXCEPT FOR THOSE ALLIES WHO COMMIT INJUSTICE OR SIN. FOR HE DOES NOT HARM BUT HIMSELF. THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK FROM BANU AL-HARITH AND BANU AL-SHATEEBAH HAVE RIGHTS EQUAL TO THAT OF BANU OUF.”

Had these communities respected and honoured this agreement, a lot of ill-feeling and bloodshed would not, have taken place. However, they broke this agreement whenever they liked. For

example, several tribes that marched to destroy Islam in the battle of Khandaq were parties to this agreement. The Banu Quraidhah of Medina joined the Pagans of Mecca promising to break the Prophet's defence system at Khandaq and kill the Muslims.

REASONS FOR TRIBES AROUND KHAIBAR TO BREAK AGREEMENT WITH MUSLIM

There were two reasons which made these minority tribes, especially those living in the area around Khaibar, to break the treaty which wanted to keep the Muslims and the non-Muslims together in and around Medina.

Firstly, these minority communities had expected the “new” Prophet to condemn the Christians, instead, the Prophet showed respect for Jesus and his mother and regarded them as “People of the Book”.

Secondly, these minorities made lots of money on interests that they charged for the loans that they gave to their neighbouring tribes, especially those needing funds to keep their fightings alive. Fighting in such communities helped these money lending communities in several ways. Their demand for cash was always growing and they were willing to pay high interests. Also the fighting communities could not spend time producing their basic needs such as food and clothing. The minority communities were the main suppliers and had the market monopoly.

Islam was against taking interest and exploitation. It preached justice, equality, and peace. These teachings were against the people of Khaibar and their kins in and around Medina.

Khaibar (“THE FORTIFIED PLACE”) was situated about hundred miles north of Medina. Valleys surrounding Khaibar were very fertile and supported wealthy and powerful Jewish communities. Strong forts were built throughout this area to protect those over-

looking the valleys. There were ten such forts built on the rocky hills overlooking the valleys. The strongest forts were those of Al-Khamus, Al-Qutieba and Al-Watih. Khaibar became the center for all Jews of Arabia. By 6 AH (628 AD) it became clear to the Prophet that if he did not take steps to end the growing power of the communities of Khaibar then these communities would attack the Muslims anytime. By then Muslims might not be in a position to defend themselves.

With the force of 1600 volunteers, the Prophet marched towards Khaibar. The soldiers of Khaibar were waiting for him at their strongest fort at Al-Khamus. The Muslims surrounded the forts but could not go into it. As Imam Ali (a.s.) was sick in Medina, the Prophet chose first Abu Bakr Bin Abu Kahafa and then Omar Bin Khattab to lead the Muslim army against the soldiers of Khaibar. Both of them failed to bring any result.

The position of the Muslims was very bad. They were at Khaibar for about a month and had made no progress. They were tired and losing hope. Their supplies were running short. It seemed that success was not coming at all.

The Muslims were in a serious bind. Unless the Prophet himself were to lead the army to attack the enemies, no one else could. Abu Bakr and Omar had proved complete failures. The only solution now was for Muslims to return to Medina. This would destroy their confidence that they had recently acquired at Khandak. Moreover the warriors at Khaibar would now be encouraged to attack Medina knowing that the Muslims were no longer capable of fighting.

IMAM ALI (A.S.) THE PROPHET'S SOLUTION TO WIN KHAIBAR

The Prophet then came with a solution which is presented here in the words of Al-Bukhari and Muslim who report on the authority of a famous eye-witness, Sahl B. Saad, who says:

“THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH SAID AT KHAIBAR. ‘I SHALL GIVE THIS BANNER TO MAN (RAJUL) THROUGH WHOM ALLAH WILL BRING VICTORY. THIS PERSON LOVES ALLAH AND HIS MESSENGER AND ALLAH AND HIS MESSENGER LOVE HIM.’

“THE COMPANIONS SPENT THE NIGHT ASKING EACH OTHER: WHO IS THIS MAN WHOM THE HOLY PROPHET MENTIONED? THEY CAME IN THE MORNING TO THE MESSENGER AND EVERY ONE OF THEM WAS HOPING THAT HE WOULD BE THE MAN TO GET THE BANNER. ‘WHERE IS ALI IBN ABU TALIB?’ THE PROPHET ASKED. ‘HE HAS PAIN IN HIS EYES,’ THEY SAID. THE PROPHET SENT FOR HIM. WHEN ALI WAS BROUGHT TO THE PROPHET HE TREATED ALI’S EYES WITH HIS BLESSED SALIVA AND PRAYED FOR HIM. ALI’S EYES WERE CURED INSTANTLY.

“THE PROPHET GAVE ALI THE BANNER. ALI ASKED: ‘MESSENGER OF ALLAH, SHALL I FIGHT THEM UNTIL THEY BECOME MUSLIMS LIKE US?’ THE MESSENGER SAID ‘GO ON UNTIL YOU REACH THEIR DWELLINGS. INVITE THEM TO ISLAM AND INFORM THEM OF THEIR DUTY TOWARDS ALLAH AND ISLAM. BY ALLAH, IF HE LEADS ONE MAN THROUGH YOU TO THE RIGHT PATH, IT WOULD BE BETTER FOR YOU THAN TO OWN PRECIOUS WEALTH.’”

Without wasting any time, Imam Ali (a.s.) took charge of the army and marched. Ibn Hisham, the famous biographer of the Prophet, describes what followed on the authority of an eye-witness whose name is Al-Akwa who says:

“BY ALLAH, ALI WENT OUT WITH THE BANNER RUNNING AND BREATHING FAST. WE WENT FOLLOWING HIM UNTIL HE PLANTED THE BANNER INTO A PILE OF STONES NEAR THE FORTRESS. A MAN FROM THE FORTRESS WENT UP AND ASKED ALI: ‘WHO ARE YOU?’ HE REPLIED: ‘I AM ALI

IBN ABU TALIB.' THE MAN SAID: 'BY WHAT WAS REVEALED TO MOSES, YOU HAVE THE UPPER HAND' (THE NAME ALI MEANS HIGH). AS THE HOLY PROPHET HAD SAID, THE ALMIGHTY ALLAH GRANTED ALI THE VICTORY. HE CONQUERED THE ENEMY BEFORE RETURNING TO THE PROPHET".

In this battle, Imam Ali (a.s.) killed seven of the most famous and powerful warriors. Their names were Marhab, Antar, Rabi, Dzajij, Daud, Morra and Yassir. This broke the backbone of the enemies. They lost their strength and ran away for protection in their forts. Miraculously, Imam Ali (a.s.) unhinged the door of the fort single-handedly. Normally, several people were needed to lift this door at the time of opening or closing it. Ibn Hisham reports this incident on the authority of another eyewitness by the name of Abu-Rafi who says:

"WE WENT WITH ALI IBN ABU TALIB WHEN THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH SENT HIM WITH HIS BANNER. WHEN HE CAME NEAR THE FORTRESS, THOSE WHO WERE IN THE FORTRESS CAME OUT TO FIGHT HIM. A MAN FROM THEM HIT ALI AND MADE HIM LOSE HIS SHIELD. ALI TOOK A DOOR FROM THE FORTRESS AND USED IT AS A SHIELD. HE KEPT IT IN HIS HAND UNTIL THE BATTLE ENDED. I FOUND MYSELF WITH SEVEN MEN TRYING TO MOVE THE DOOR BUT WE COULDN'T."

According to historian Suyuti (reporting in his book *Tarikhul Khulafa*) Imam Ali (a.s.) used the door which he had removed from its hinges as a bridge by holding it across the moat and letting Muslim soldiers walk across it. Suyuti also says that later on eighty people working together could not lift this door because it was very heavy.

Having accomplished this mission Imam Ali (a.s.) returned to the Prophet. The Prophet came out of this tent to receive him. He

embraced him, kissed his forehead and congratulated him. The author of *Yanabi-ul Mawwadah* has recorded the Prophet's speech at that time.

“ALI, HAD I NOT BEEN AFRAID THAT THE MUSLIMS WILL START REGARDING YOU AS CHRISTIANS REGARD CHRIST, I WOULD HAVE SAID THINGS ABOUT YOU WHICH WOULD HAVE MADE MUSLIMS RESPECT AND TO RESPECT EVEN THE DUST OF YOUR FEET. IT IS ENOUGH TO SAY THAT YOU ARE FROM ME AND I AM FROM YOU .. YOU WILL INHERIT ME AND I WILL INHERIT YOU, YOU ARE TO ME WHAT HAROON WAS TO MUSA. YOU WILL FIGHT FOR MY CAUSES. YOU WILL BE NEAREST TO ME ON THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT. YOU BE NEXT TO ME ON THE FOUNTAIN OF KAUTHAR. YOUR ENEMY IS MY ENEMY. A WAR AGAINST YOU IS A WAR AGAINST ME. YOUR FRIENDSHIP IS MY FRIENDSHIP. TO BE AT PEACE WITH YOU IS TO AT PEACE WITH ME. YOUR FLESH IS MY FLESH. YOUR BLOOD IS MY BLOOD. HE WHO OBEYS YOU OBEYS ME. TRUTH IS ON YOUR TONGUE, IN YOUR HEART, AND IN YOUR MIND. YOU HAVE AS MUCH FAITH IN ALLAH AS I HAVE; YOU ARE A DOOR TO ME. ON THE ORDER OF ALLAH I GIVE YOU THIS NEWS THAT YOUR FRIENDS WILL BE SENT TO HEAVEN AND YOUR ENEMIES WILL GO TO HELL.”

CHAPTER 9 : MASTER OF ALL TRADES

The work of Imam Ali (a.s.) as the Commander-in-Chief and the standard-bearer of the Muslim forces was not to end at Khaibar. In the remaining three years of his life, the Prophet gave Imam Ali (a.s.) other very important jobs leading the Muslims on several occasions some of which are as follows:

- **MARCH TO MECCA**

Imam Ali (a.s.) was the standard-bearer of the Muslim forces when the Prophet decided to free Mecca from the idol worshippers on Tenth Ramadhan 8 AH (1st January 689 AD)

The Prophet also carried Imam Ali (a.s.) on his shoulders so that he could remove idols placed high up on the wall in Khana-e-Kaaba.

- **BATTLE OF HUNAIN**

Imam Ali (a.s.) was given the Muslim standard and commanded to lead Muslim forces against such Bedouin pagans at Hawaazin and Thakif who were planning to fight the Muslims from their strong positions from the valley of Taif.

On their way to Taif, Muslims were attacked and almost defeated at a place called Hunain. Imam Ali (a.s.) showed his usual bravery. He killed the commander of the enemy forces and several others strong warriors. This destroyed the confidence of the enemy who fled, leaving behind large booty. The enemies lost seventy of their bravest soldiers, thirty of whom were killed by Imam Ali (a.s.) alone

- **THE BATTLE OF TAIF**

Those who were defeated at Hunain ran for protection to Taif. Muslims tried to defeat them but failed, until when Imam Ali (a.s.) was sent. He fought with their commander, called Shahab, and killed him. The enemies decided to accept defeat. The Prophet was

so much pleased with Imam Ali (a.s.) that he recited “ALLAHU AKBAR” when he saw him coming back. He then took him to a quiet place to talk to him secretly on Divine matters which were for Imam Ali’s ears alone.

- **BATTLE AGAINST BANI ZUBUDA**

Omar B. Kurb, the leader of the tribe of Bani Zubuda, killed Harith B. Kaab for no other reason than because he was a friend of the Muslims. To punish him, Imam Ali (a.s.) was sent with the Muslim army. Before the battle could start Omar B Kurb ran away leaving his people without a leader.

Imam Ali (a.s.) returned to Medina victorious.

So far we have dealt with Imam Ali’s jobs that are more or less military in nature. They show his bravery and discipline as a unique soldier. We shall now examine his other Jobs which show him as a great administrator

- **SETTLEMENT WITH BANI JAZIMA**

The clan of Bani Jazima lived about a day’s walk from Mecca. They had accepted Islam in name but had not yet come to Mecca to see the Prophet and learn to live as Muslims. Khalid Ibne Walid was sent only to inquire what was keeping the Bani Jazima from making a trip to Mecca. Khalid took this opportunity to settle a score he had been living with since his days of “JAHILIYA” when he was a Pagan. He killed several people amongst the Bani Jazima.

The Prophet was very sad at Khalid’s action. He needed somebody to go to Bani Jazima and see that not only was justice done but also that the true message of Islam was presented to these new converts. This task was very difficult: It needed somebody brave enough to risk his life to go to those whose blood had been spilt and who were itching for revenge. This job also called for skills needed to assess the losses suffered by the Bani Jazima, neither too much

nor too low. Thirdly, it also called for knowledge of the laws of compensation so that justice could be done; it also needed a person capable of being just and merciful at the same time. The task naturally fell on Imam Ali's shoulders. He did the job very well. From the limited sum of money allotted to him, he was able to satisfy all the affected parties. There was still some money left; this he distributed among the rest-of the clan.

The Prophet praised and thanked him for his excellent work.

- **IMAM ALI (A.S.) AS A GOVERNOR OF MEDINA**

In 9 AH (631 AD) Muslims under the command of the Prophet himself marched towards Tabuk to meet the Roman army which was reported to be preparing to invade Medina.

The Prophet (for reasons which we shall soon see) decided not to take Imam Ali (a.s.) with him. Instead, he appointed Imam Ali (a.s.) as his deputy in Medina. After the Prophet had left Medina, those left behind started spreading rumours that Imam Ali (a.s.) was no more in good books of the Prophet and had been left behind to take care of less important matters.

To clear these false rumours, Imam Ali (a.s.) left Medina to meet the Prophet who was now heading towards Tabuk. He let the Prophet know of the rumours in Medina. The Prophet then disclosed the main reason why he had made this choice. According to the famous historian Suyuti, the Prophet told Imam Ali (a.s.) that the hypocrites of Medina had designed a plot. By this plot those good people left in Medina as well as the family members of the Prophet would be killed and the seat of Islamic state in Medina be destroyed. To stop this plot, Imam Ali (a.s.) had been left behind. Then the Prophet pronounced the famous 'HADITH' in which he said "YOUR POSITION TO ME IS THE SAME AS THAT OF ARON (HAROON) TO MOSES (MUSA). THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BEING THAT THERE WILL BE NO PROPHET AFTER ME."

Imam Ali's role as saviour of Islam therefore lay not only in fighting like a lion on the battle field but also away from the battle field as an administrator.

- **IMAM ALI (A.S.) AS SPECIAL DEPUTY OF THE PROPHET**

In 9 AH the Prophet was instructed by Allah to stop the non-Muslims from taking part in the Pilgrimage. A full Chapter "SURA-E-BARAT" (Ch.9) was revealed and the Prophet was supposed to read it to the Quraish of Mecca. Not being able to go to Mecca himself he choose Abu Bakr Ibne Abu Kahafa to lead a group of three hundred Pilgrims and to read this chapter when in Mecca.

As soon as Abu Bakr had departed for Mecca, the Archangel Gibrail, appeared to the Prophet with special instructions from Allah. Either the Prophet himself had to deliver Sura-e-Barat to the pagans of Mecca or give the job to the one just like him.

Imam Ali (a.s.) was sent to take away the sura from Abu Bakr and deliver himself. This he did.

Abu Bakr returned back sad, inquiring from the Prophet what wrong had be done to have lost that assignment. According to Timirzi, the Prophet replied that he had instructions from Allah that this particular chapter of Quran should be delivered to the Pagans of Mecca either by the Prophet himself or Imam Ali (a.s.). Consequently, the Prophet explained, Imam Ali (a.s.) had to take over from Abu Bakr.

- **ALI AS A MISSIONARY TO YEMEN**

In the last year of his life, and before departing for his last Pilgrimage to Mecca, the Prophet assigned Imam Ali (a.s.) with yet another task. This time it was the task of a missionary.

In the province of Yemen there were several non-Muslim Communities who were Christians, Jews or pagans. Khalid B. Walid

had stayed among them for over six months trying to convert them into Islam but without any success. The job was therefore given to Imam Ali (a.s.) who travelled to Yemen with a group of about three hundred Muslims.

When in Yemen, he had the following work to do:

- To preach the laws of Islam.
- To invite the people of Yemen to become Muslims.
- To discuss with the people on the merits of Islam over other religions.
- To teach them the ways of living the life of Muslim.

Imam Ali (a.s.) did his job so well that the entire clan of Hamadan accepted Islam. Moreover. Several Jewish and Christian scholars became Muslim after a long discussion with him.

However brief any account may be on the greatness of Imam Ali (a.s.), it has to include the event of Mubahila otherwise this account will remain incomplete.

• EVENT OF MUBAHILA

In 9 AH a delegation of Christians from the town of Narjan (in Yemen) paid the Prophet a visit. The delegation was led by three most prominent Christians Priests and Scholars called Abdul Masih, Abdul Harris and Sayyeed. Their intention was to enter in a discussion with the Prophet and prove to him that Nabi Issa was God.

When they met with the Prophet the essence of their argument was: Nabi Issa did not have an earthly father, his father was God and he was therefore the Son of God and God himself. As their reply, the following verses were revealed to the Prophet.

“SURELY THE LIKENESS OF JESUS IS WITH ALLAH AS THE LIKENESS OF ADAM; HE CREATED HIM FROM DUST THEN SAID TO HIM ‘BE’ AND HE WAS.” (Ch.3, v.59)

When they refused to come to reason, Allah instructed the Prophet to challenge them to a “MUBAHAILA”. In other words the Prophet was to take along with him his closest and most pure family members and meet the group leaders of the Christians accompanied by their most close and sacred family members. Each side should then pray to their God to send his curse on the other party. The truthful side would be spared. The wrongful party would be punished. This challenge from Allah came in the form of Quranic Revelations:

“IF ANYONE DISPUTES IN THIS MATTER WITH YOU, AFTER (FULL) KNOWLEDGE HAS COME TO YOU, SAY: COME! LET US GATHER TOGETHER OUR SONS AND YOUR SONS, OUR WOMEN AND YOUR WOMEN, OURSELVES AND YOURSELVES. THEN LET US PRAY AND INVOKE THE CURSE OF GOD (ALLAH) ON THOSE WHO LIE” (Ch.3, v.61)

The Christians of Narjan accepted to challenge. On his side, the Prophet decided to go himself accompanied by his daughter Fatima, her two sons Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn, and Imam Ali (a.s.). Seeing what he saw, the leader of the Christians advised their followers not to accept the challenge, because “I SEE A DIVINE LIGHT ON THEIR FACES. TRUTH SHINES IN THEIR EYES. I AM SURE WHATEVER THEY PRAY FOR - EVEN FOR MOUNTAINS TO MOVE - GOD WILL GRANT IT. TO INVITE CURSE OF GOD FROM THESE PEOPLE IS TO INVITE DEATH”

The Christians backed out. Though they did not become Muslims, they agreed to pay annual tribute to the Muslims.

For Muslims this was a Joyous moment; it proclaimed their spiritual victory.

The most Important question that must now be answered is: How does this event explain the greatness of Imam Ali (a.s.)?

The Prophet was doing what the verse of the Quran said he had to do. When the verse says “WE SUMMON OUR SONS,” the Prophet brought Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn (a.s.). When the verse said “WE SUMMON OUR WOMEN” the Prophet brought Bibi Fatima (s.a.). When the verse said “WE SUMMON OURSELVES” the Prophet came himself and brought him who, in the presence of Allah, was part of the Prophet himself - that is Imam Ali (a.s.). If any other companion of the Prophet was meant by this verse, he too would have been chosen by the Prophet to go with him for Mubahila. By taking Imam Ali, the Prophet confirmed Imam Ali’s unique position in the presence of Allah.

After the Prophet, no other person, then can claim to be the saviour of Islam in the same way as Imam Ali (a.s.) was. Not only did he bring about military victories at Badr, Ohud, and Khandaq (to mention but a few of the many battles in which he was the standard-bearer) but he also helped the Prophet restore the proper image of Islam after it had been damaged at several occasions as mentioned previously.

CHAPTER 10 : IMAM ALI'S APPOINTMENT AT GHADIR KHUM

THE FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE

By the year 10 AH the Prophet had already shown by action how to perform such obligatory acts of worship as daily prayers ('salat'), fasting ('saum'), engaging in holy defensive wars ('jihad'), paying of dues ('Khums'/zakat') and all other similar acts.

However, he had not yet been able to show Muslims by his own actions how to fulfil those acts of worship required in the performance of 'Hajj'. He therefore decided to go to Mecca in the year 10 AH

The Prophet informed Muslims all over Arabia to go to Mecca that year, if possible. This was because it would be their first and last chance to perform Hajj in his presence and under his personal supervision. He made it clear that soon after this occasion he would leave this world. This Pilgrimage came to be known as "HAJJATUL WIDAA" or the "FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE".

The Prophet left Medina for Mecca on 25th Zilqad accompanied by 100,000 Pilgrims.

It should be remembered that Imam Ali (a.s.) was not present in Medina. He had gone to Yemen as the Chief Missionary and representative of the Prophet. He therefore went to Mecca directly from Yemen. When the Prophet saw him, he embraced him and asked him, "OH ALI, WHAT VOW HAVE YOU TAKEN FOR THIS PILGRIMAGE?" Imam Ali (a.s.) replied, "I HAVE TAKEN A VOW TO UNDERTAKE THE SAME PILGRIMAGE AS THE PROPHET IS GOING TO PERFORM". The Prophet was Pleased with this reply and assured Imam Ali (a.s.) that indeed the two would be together throughout the Pilgrimage.

On completion of the ‘Hajj’, the prophet accompanied by his followers left for Medina on 14th Zilhajj.

THE PROPHET AT GHADIR

On 18th Zilhajj 10 AH (10th March 632 AD), just before noon, the Prophet reached at Johfa. The town of Johfa is 13 miles North West of Mecca. It is at a crossroads; that is to say at a point from where Pilgrims from Medina, Iraq, Syria Egypt and Yemen would take their individual route to return home. It was also a point from where the Nomads of Arabia would branch off to their destinations. At this point there was a dried pond called “GHADIR-E-KHUM” (The Pond of Khum).

The Archangel Gibrael came to the Prophet with this Quranic revelation from Allah:

“O MESSENGER, PROCLAIM WHAT HAS BEEN REVEALED TO YOU. FOR IF YOU DO NOT, IT IS AS IF YOU HAVE NOT DELIVERED HIS MESSAGE AT ALL. ALLAH WILL PROTECT YOU FROM EVIL DESIGNS OF MAN.” (Ch.5, v.67)

The Prophet decided to break his journey at this point. Those who had already gone ahead were instructed to return. Those who were behind were told to hurry up and join the Prophet at “GHADIR-E-KHUM.” The Prophet then led the afternoon Prayers.

After the Prayers, the Prophet went on the Pulpit (‘Mimbar’) which had been specially made for this occasion by putting together the saddles from the backs of the camels. All Muslims gathered around him. He then addressed them by giving a long sermon which has become known as “KHUTBA-E-GHADIR”. Parts of the ‘Khutba’ are reproduced below.

“PRAISE BE TO ALLAH. IN HIM DO I PUT MY FAITH AND FROM HIM DO I SEEK SUPPORT. IN HIM DO I PUT MY TRUST AND FROM HIM DO I TURN FOR PROTECTION AGAINST EVIL DEEDS. THERE IS NO OTHER GUIDE BESIDES HIM.

THOSE WHO TURN TO HIM FOR GUIDANCE NEVER GO ASTRAY. I BEAR WITNESS THAT NO ONE BESIDES HIM IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP AND I, MUHAMMAD, IS HIS SLAVE AND MESSENGER.”

“O YOU PEOPLE, THE ALL KNOWING ALLAH HAS INFORMED ME THAT THE DAYS OF MY LIFE ARE COMING TO AN END AND SOON I SHALL BE CALLED AWAY FROM YOU. BUT YOU AND I MUST ANSWER HIM FOR ALL THINGS EXPECTED OF US. WHAT HAVE YOU TO SAY TO THAT?”

All present replied, “WE BEAR WITNESS THAT YOU HAVE DONE YOUR JOB OF PROPHETHOOD VERY WELL. YOU HAVE ALWAYS GUIDED US ACCORDING TO THE WILL OF ALLAH. MAY ALLAH BESTOW HIS REWARDS ON YOU.”

The Prophet then asked, “IS MY VOICE REACHING YOU ALL?”

When those gathered around him said “YES”, till Prophet continued saying, “THEN LISTEN TO ME CAREFULLY. I LEAVE BEHIND TWO MOST IMPORTANT THINGS: FIRST, THE BOOK OF ALLAH, QURAN, AND SECOND MY AHLUL-BAYT, MY FAMILY. ALLAH, THE KNOWER OF ALL SECRETS, HAS INFORMED ME THAT THESE TWO WILL NEVER SEPARATE UNTIL THEY REACH ME AT THE FOUNTAIN OF KAUTHAR. AS LONG AS YOU STAY WITH BOTH OF THEM YOU WILL NEVER GO WRONG. THEREFORE, O MY PEOPLE, IT IS MY LAST WILL AND DESIRE THAT YOU SHOULD REMAIN FAITHFUL TO THE QURAN AND MY AHLUL-BAYT UNTIL YOU DIE.”

He then asked. “WHOM SHOULD YOU OBEY MORE THAN YOUR SOULS?”

The Muslims replied, “ALLAH AND HIS MESSENGER KNOW BETTER.”

The Prophet, hearing this, said “ALLAH IS MY MASTER (MAULA) AND I AM THE MASTER (MAULA) OF THE FAITHFUL. I HAVE RIGHT OVER THEM MORE THAN THEY HAVE THEMSELVES.” Saying this he took the hand of Imam Ali (a.s.), raised it as high as he could and said. “OF WHOMSOEVER I AM THE MASTER (MAULA), THIS ALI TOO IS HIS MASTER (MAULA).”

Most of the historians say that the Prophet’s announcement that Ali was the ‘Maula’ of the Muslims in the same way as the Prophet was their ‘Maula’ was made once only. But according to the famous jurist Ahmad ibne Hambal (the Imam of Muslims of the Hambalite sect) the Prophet repeated this announcement three times.

The Prophet then raised his hand in Prayers saying, “O MY LORD BE A FRIEND TO HE WHO IS A FRIEND OF ALI AND BE AN ENEMY OF HE WHO IS AN ENEMY OF ALI. HELP HIM WHO HELPS ALI, LEAVE HIM WHO LEAVES ALI.

“O MY LORD WHICHEVER WAY ALI TURNS, LET RIGHT TOO BE IN THAT DIRECTION.”

In conclusion, the Prophet said to all who were there, “LISTEN, THIS IS A DUTY OF THOSE WHO ARE HERE TODAY TO PASS THIS INFORMATION TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT PRESENT HERE.”

Immediately after the Prophet had finished his “KHUTBA”, The Archangel Gibrail came to him again with this Quranic revelation: “TODAY I HAVE MADE YOUR RELIGION PERFECT AND HAVE COMPLETED MY FAVOUR ON YOU AND HAVE CHOSEN ISLAM AS YOUR RELIGION.” (Ch.5, v.3)

CELEBRATION OF GHADIR

This occasion was celebrated in several ways listed below.

1. The Prophet celebrated Imam Ali's nomination as his Successor by Crowning him with his special turban called 'Sahb' (or the cloud). He then looked him with love and said, "THE CROWNS WORN BY ANGELS LOOK LIKE YOURS."
2. A special tent was made for Imam Ali (a.s.) by the orders of the Prophet. All Muslims were instructed to pay their allegiance to Imam Ali (a.s.). The famous historian, Tabari reports in his book "*Al-Wilaya*" that Zaid Ibne Arqam the famous companion of the Prophet says that the Prophet told Muslims to congratulate Imam Ali (a.s.) by saying the following:
"WE GIVE OUR WORD OF HONOUR AND GIVE ALLEGIANCE (BA'AH). WE SHALL PASS THIS MESSAGE TO OUR CHILDREN AND OTHER MEMBERS OF OUR FAMILY ... WE SHALL HONOUR OUR PLEDGE AND ALLAH IS OUR WITNESS."
3. The Prophet instructed Muslims to address Imam Ali (a.s.) as "AMIRUL MOMINEEN" (OR THE COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFULS) from that day onwards.
4. All Muslims paid their allegiance to Imam Ali (a.s.) in groups. Among the first people to do so were Umar B. Khattab and Abu Bakr Bin Abu Kahafa. According to a tradition reported from Zaid Ibne Arqam, a famous companion of the Prophet, Umar Ibne Khattab congratulated Imam Ali (a.s.) using the following words: "GREETINGS BE TO YOU O SON OF ABU TALIB. YOU HAVE BECOME MY MASTER AND MASTER OF ALL FAITHFUL MEN AND WOMEN."
5. According to Abu Saeed Khudri, another famous companion of the Prophet, Hasan Bin Thabit wrote "QASIDA" (Poem) in honour of Imam Ali (a.s.) and the Day of Ghadeer.

The celebrations continued for three successive days. Hakim in his '*Mustadrak*' report that a man called Harith B. Noaman Al-Fahri

refused to accept Imam Ali (a.s.) as the Prophet's Successor even though the Prophet assured him that Imam Ali's nomination was made by orders from Allah. Harith instead said, "OH ALLAH! IF THIS BE TRUE THEN RAIN STONES FROM HEAVEN." Just as he said this a stone from heaven fell on him and he died there and then the following verse was also revealed: "A QUESTIONER ASKED FOR THE INEVITABLE PUNISHMENT TO BEFALL THE DISBELIEVERS WHICH NO ONE CAN AVERT." (Ch.70, v.1-2)

IMPORTANCE OF THE EVENT OF GHADIR

A famous contemporary Lebanese scholar by the name of Abdullah Al-Alaili says, "THE EVENT OF GHADIR IS PART OF ISLAM. WHOEVER REJECTS IT HAS REALLY REJECTED ISLAM ITSELF"

Why is this occasion so much important that if we reject it, we have rejected Islam itself? This is because on the day of Ghadir the Prophet made his last announcement regarding his Successor. And he did this when he was told to do so without any further delay. Also, as soon as he had sealed the appointment of his Successor, Allah again sent another Quranic revelation describing the Prophet's action as that which completed the message of Islam and made it perfect.

It is not an exaggeration if we say that in Islamic History no single event has been recorded as widely by as many narrators as that of Ghadir. As a way of example consider the following facts.

1. There are 110 independent eyewitnesses from whom historians have recorded the event of Ghadir; these eye witness were all companions of the Prophet e.g. Abu Bakr B. Abu Kanafa, Omar B. Khattab and Othmnan B. Affan.
2. There are 84 narrators of Ghadir who were themselves not present at the occasion but who heard of the occasion directly from companions of the Prophet present at Ghadir.

3. To date there are over 400 scholars who have carried out detailed research on Ghadir and have come to the conclusion that this event definitely took place and in the same way as it has been recorded.
4. The famous Allama Ziauddin Mukbibibi says that if the tradition of Ghadir is not accepted as correct then no other tradition in Islam can be accepted.

CHAPTER 11 : IMAM ALI (A.S.) AND THE FIRST THREE CALIPHS

IMAM ALI (A.S.) BURIES THE PROPHET

The Prophet did not live long after appointing Imam Ali (a.s.) as his Successor at Ghadir. He died on 28th Safar 11 AH. While Imam Ali (a.s.) was busy arranging for the burial of the Prophet, the “Muhajir” (the Migrants of Mecca) and the “Ansars” (the original people of Medina) met at a place called “Sakifa Bani Saeeda” to appoint a successor of their own. By the time Imam Ali (a.s.) and a few of those Muslims who had stayed behind had finished burying the Prophet, Abu Bakr Bin Abu Kahafa had already been appointed as the Prophet’s successor.

This news must have come as shock to Imam Ali (a.s.) and those few companions of the Prophet who were busy with the Prophet’s burial. Imam Ali (a.s.) protested, putting forward his own claim as the true successor of the Prophet. But he was told that Abu Bakr was the successor as he was nominated to succeed the Prophet. Imam Ali (a.s.) refused to recognise him as the true successor of the Prophet even when he was told that his life would be in danger.

He went to the Prophet’s grave crying and complained to him in these words: “O MY BROTHER! THESE PEOPLE TREAT ME WITH NO RESPECT AND THEY ARE THINKING OF EVEN KILLING ME.”

IMAM ALI (A.S.) CHOOSES TO REMAIN SILENT

Imam Ali (a.s.) had to make a difficult decision. He had either to fight for his rights using force, or to retire his house quietly and let the caliphate go in the hands of the usurpers. Imam Ali (a.s.) decided to keep quiet and let the oppressors rule.

On 22nd Jamadul Akhar 13 AH, Abu Bakr died. Before dying he appointed Omar Bin Khattab as his successor. Again Imam Ali (a.s.) decided not to use force to get what was his.

Omar ruled for ten years and he too died on 29th Zilhaij 23 AH. He chose a group of six people who were to nominate one amongst them as the new caliph. The composition of this committee of six people - one of whom was Imam Ali (a.s.) - was such that Imam Ali (a.s.) had no chance of winning the nomination.

Uthman Bin Affan, through the help of other members of the committee, namely, Saad Bin Abi Waqqis and Abdul Rahman Bin Auf (both of whom were his near relatives) became the third caliph of the Muslims after the Prophet.

On all the three occasions Imam Ali (a.s.) came forward asking his right to be the successor but on all the three occasions he was not given his rights. He refused to use force because of two reasons. First, just before his death, the Prophet had advised Imam Ali (a.s.) not to use force if he was denied his rights to be the caliph of the Muslims. Second, Islam was still in its early stages and if Imam Ali (a.s.) had turned to his sword to fight the oppressors, the mission of Allah would suffer.

Throughout this period of twenty five years, Imam Ali (a.s.) kept quiet. He was not given any public offices. The governments of Abu Bakr, Omar and Uthman neglected him despite his excellent skills and achievements as a soldier, an administrator, a scholar and a jurist.

IMAM ALI'S CONTRIBUTIONS DESPITE HIS SILENCE

However, whenever Islam itself was in danger, Imam Ali (a.s.) came to its rescue. For example, during the time of Omar, Imam Ali (a.s.) came to his help whenever Omar could not give a correct ruling on matters of law. This happened so many times that Omar himself would say "IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR ALI, OMAR WOULD HAVE PERISHED."

Again, Imam Ali (a.s.) extended a similar helping hand to Uthman when Uthman's career and life were in danger. Unfortunately,

Uthman refused to listen to Imam Ali (a.s.) and continued to be influenced by his evil son-in-law, Marwan Bin Hakam and other members of his Umayyad clan until it was too late . Despite that, Imam Ali (a.s.) did all that was possible to protect Uthman's life from the rebels. This is confirmed by Syed Ameer Ali in his book called *A Short History of the Saracens* he which he says,

“UTHMAN WAS BRAVELY DEFENDED BY ALI AND HIS SONS AND DEFENDANTS, AND THE INSURGENTS HAD DIFFICULTY IN MAKING ANY IMPRESSION ON THE DEFENDER. AT LAST TWO OF THE BESIEGERS SCALED THE WALL, AND THERE KILLED THE AGED CALIPH”

Uthman was thus killed on 18th Zilhajj 35 AH.

Uthman's cause of death was his own clansmen, the Bani Umayyah. They had complete control on him and made him run the Islamic Empire like it was his private property. The Muslim “Ummah” suffered very badly. If anyone tried to complain, he would be treated cruelly. For example, Abu Dharr, the beloved companion of the Prophet, was brutally brought from Damascus to Medina and then deported from Medina. He died from hunger. All this was done to him because he criticised Uthman and his corrupt governor, Muawiya, for oppressing the Muslims.

Muslims in the major parts of the Empire complained several times to Uthman. But Uthman never listened to them. Finally, they marched to Medina. When they found him not ready to change his evil ways, they killed him.

The death of Uthman created serious problems for Muslims. For who would now be the new Caliph? The Muslims now turned with one voice to Imam Ali (a.s.) asking him to become their Caliph.

IMAM ALI (A.S.) DOES NOT LIKE TO BECOME CALIPH

Imam Ali (a.s.) himself had never thought or liked using force to solve any problem; Otherwise, he himself would have turned to

his sword, when his rights were taken away from him. In fact, he tried very hard to make Uthman to deal fairly with his subjects who were crying for justice. Instead of listening to him, he went on doing things on his own ways. When the wife of the Prophet, Aisha, and the companions of the Prophet, Talha, and Zubair were crying for Uthman's blood, Imam Ali (a.s.) risked the life of his sons Hasan and Husayn to protect Uthman.

It was Imam Ali's excellent behaviour which he showed towards those who had taken away his rights and the fairness with which he used dealing with all parties that made him now the only acceptable candidate for the Caliphate.

Imam Ali (a.s.) was not willing to become caliph. He knew that those who had planned to get Uthman killed with the hope of getting a Caliph of their own choice would be more than disappointed. They would make things worse for him. (We shall see later how Imam Ali's fears became true).

Secondly, he wanted it to be known to everybody that he was not an opportunist; that is to say that he was not waiting for the position of the Caliph and when the right time came, he grabbed it. He made it clear that for him the post of a Caliph was valueless - like the water coming from the nose of a goat. He had no desire for it. He accepted it only when there was no one else to accept it. To make this case very clear, he asked if Talha and Zubair wanted the position. This was a very wise move as we shall see later on when dealing with the Battle of Jamal. Seeing the mood of the Muslims, neither Talha nor Zubair was prepared to come in the way of Imam Ali (a.s.). As a matter of fact, Talha and Zubair were the first people to accept (to give their "bayah") to Imam Ali (a.s.).

Imam Ali (a.s.) then became the Caliph four days after the death of Uthman.

CHAPTER 12 : IMAM ALI (A.S.) THE CALIPH

IMAM ALI (A.S.) ACTS TO REMOVE CORRUPTION

As soon as he became the Caliph, Imam Ali (a.s.) decided to redress the sufferings of the Muslims. The greatest problem was corruption, the governors appointed by Uthman were corrupt. They had been over taxing the Muslims so as to make themselves rich. Most of these governors were selfish, cruel, and had no feelings for Islam. Such governors included Muawiya (governor of Syria), and Abdallah Bin Abi Sarh (governor of Egypt).

Imam Ali (a.s.) decided to remove these corrupt and un-Islamic governors. In their places he appointed pious and God-fearing Muslims. He sent Obeidallah Bin Abbas to Yemen, Qais Bin Saad Bin Obada to Egypt, Qutharn Bin Abbas to Mecca, Samaha Bin Abbas to Tihama, Awn Bin Abbas to Yamama, Uthman Bin Honeif to Basra, Ahmara Bin Shahaid to Kufa, Said Bin Abbas to Bahrain and Sahel Bin Honeif to Syria.

Some of his well wishers advised him not to take this step. They feared that this would create many enemies for him. But Imam Ali (a.s.) was not ready to break the laws of Allah even for a second. Allowing these corrupt governors to remain in their positions would mean breaking laws of Allah. The Imam argued, “I MUST FOLLOW THE TRUE PRINCIPLES OF RELIGION AND THEREFORE SHOULD NOT WILLINGLY ALLOW ANY UNGODLY MAN TO RETAIN HIS OFFICE.”

Not only did Imam Ali (a.s.) remove the evil governors, but also excluded from his list of new governors those who were unfit even if they were important people. For example, Talha and Zubair were the companions of the Prophet, with a good number of followers. They had wanted to be Caliphs themselves, though the situation after the death of Uthman was such that they could not. If politics

was the only thing he had on his mind, he would have given them positions and kept them on his side. But they were undeserving and unfit. Therefore, Imam Ali (a.s.) refused politely but firmly to appoint them as governors of Kufa and Basra respectively when they asked him to do so.

IMAM ALI (A.S.) INTRODUCES RULES OF THE PROPHET

Soon it became clear to everyone that Imam Ali (a.s.) was going to rule exactly the way Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.w.) had done during his lifetime. The principles of Islam such as justice and equity were going to be followed very strictly. The class-system and the Privileges that go with it which had slowly come in the Muslim society was not going to be allowed any more. There was to be no more discrimination in the amount of state allowances payable to the public. The Arabs and non-Arabs - if they were Muslims - would be treated equally.

The rich people of the Empire were therefore angry. They had lost the favours that they had been enjoying under Omar and Uthman. They also realised that with Imam Ali (a.s.) they had no chance of acquiring any public office from which they could make fast and easy money.

IMAM ALI (A.S.) EXPECTS HIGH STANDARDS FROM HIS OFFICERS

To give an idea of the standards of life Imam Ali (a.s.) was expecting from those officers he had appointed, consider the following incidents.

Imam Ali (a.s.) came to know that his governor in Basra, Uthman Bin Honeif attended a dinner party organised exclusively for the rich. Imam Ali (a.s.) immediately wrote a letter to him warning him against the evil effects of attending such places where only the rich are invited. He advised him to keep away from such parties in the future.

Talha and Zubair visited Imam Ali (a.s.) at the time when the Imam was balancing the books of the Treasury. It was at night and he was doing his work under the candle light. Immediately, the Imam replaced the Treasury candle with one from his own. house. He explained to his visitors that since they had come to him to talk on personal matters it would be unfair to do so in the light of a candle paid by the public Treasury!

These high standards applied not only to his officers but also to his closest associates. His elder brother, Aqil came to him asking for an increase in his state allowance. In reply, the Imam lifted a red-hot iron bar, as if to burn Aqil. Aqil protested, saying he came for increase of his allowance not for a fire burn! The Imam replied, “HOW COME YOU DO NOT WISH TO BE BURNED AND YET WANT ME TO GET BURNED AND THAT ALSO FROM HELL FIRE. FOR WHAT YOU ARE ASKING ME TO DO IS TO BREAK LAWS OF ALLAH AND SO INVITE HIS PUNISHMENT.”

IMAM ALI (A.S.) FACES OPPOSITION

Imam Ali's determination to rule by the laws of Allah resulted in opposition from several sides.

Firstly, the majority of the corrupt governors and high-ranking officers whom he removed from offices, were from the clan of Bani Umayyah. Some of them therefore left for Damascus to rally around Muawiya, himself a Bani Umayyah. Muawiya refused to recognise Imam Ali's position as Caliph. Not only that, he also declared his intention to fight against Imam Ali (a.s.) blaming the Imam for the murder of Uthman. It is important to note that when Uthman was in trouble, he had asked for Muawiya's help. However, Muawiya refused to come to his help. He sent a force as far as the outskirts of Medina, but forbade it to come to Medina. It looks like he too was waiting and praying for Uthman's death so that he could claim the position of Caliph himself.

Secondly, Aisha, the wife of the Prophet became a centre of opposition against Imam Ali (a.s.). This is because she had taken active part in making people rise against Uthman. She would liken him to Nathan, the Jew, and call for his murder. When Uthman was on the verge of being driven out of office, she went on Pilgrimage to Mecca and while there, she prayed for his downfall. All along she had expected one of her two brother-in-laws, Talha or Zubair, to get the position of the Caliph. However, events back-fired on her. On her way back to Medina, she learnt of Uthman's murder. This naturally pleased her. However, when she was told of Imam Ali's succession, she was very much upset. Sir W. Muir describes this event in his work *The Early Caliphate* in these words.

“WHEN ON RECEIVING THE TIDINGS OF THE MURDER ON HER WAY BACK FROM MECCA. SHE DECLARED THAT SHE WOULD AVENGE UTHMAN'S DEATH. ‘WHAT’ CRIED HER INFORMANT, STARTLED BY HER ZEAL. ‘IS THIS THY SPEECH NOW, WHILST BUT YESTERDAY THOU WAS FOREMOST TO PRESS THE ATTACK UPON HIM AS AN APOSTATE?’”

Thirdly, Talha and Zubair, who saw no future for themselves in the reign of Imam Ali (a.s.), left for Mecca and joined hands with their sister asking for removal of Imam Ali (a.s.) apparently because he was responsible for Uthman's murder. It is interesting to note that Talha was one of those persons who was asking for the blood of Uthman when Muslims had rebelled. Ibn Al-Athir reports on the authority of Ibne Abbas that Talha had instigated the Egyptian rebels not to let anyone to go in or out of the Palace of Uthman. Uthman heard this and cursed Talha in these words, “THIS IS THE ORDER OF TALHA. GOD TAKE CARE OF TALHA. HE INSTIGATED THESE PEOPLE AGAINST ME. BY GOD I HOPE HE GETS NOTHING OUT OF THIS AND THAT HIS BLOOD BE SHED.”

And now he began to talk of avenging Uthman.

Fourthly, those noblemen who had enjoyed privileged positions in the previous governments but had now lost such honours became hostile to Imam Ali (a.s.). Though they did not openly come out to oppose him, they refused to support him. One such person was Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari. When we talk about the Battles of Jamal and Siffin, we shall see how men like him came to damage the cause of Imam Ali (a.s.).

The common fear and complaint of all these groups was that: If Imam Ali (a.s.) remains the ruler then their special position in society would come to an end. Their chance of retaining the illegally acquired wealth would be zero. It was very important therefore that Imam Ali (a.s.) be removed. How else could they remove him except through the use of force?

For the four years Imam Ali (a.s.) ruled, they forced on him three battles namely the battles of Jamal, Siffin and Nahrawan.

In the following three chapters we shall see how successfully Imam Ali (a.s.) dealt with his opponents in these Battles; he would have finally up-rooted the cause of all "FITNA", Muawiya, if he had not been assassinated while in prayer in the month of Ramadhan 40 AH.

CHAPTER 13 : THE BATTLE OF JAMAL

EVENTS LEADING TO BATTLE OF 'JAMAL'

Hardly four months had passed since the death of Uthman when Talha and Zubair decided to go to Mecca. Imam Ali (a.s.) knew their real motive but still allowed them to go. On reaching Mecca, they broke the oath of Allegiance that they had sworn to Imam Ali (a.s.). They joined hands with Aisha in blaming Imam Ali (a.s.) for the murder of Uthman, although as explained earlier they were the real culprits. The governor of Basra who was removed by Imam Ali (a.s.) also came with the money he had stolen from the treasury and joined forces with Aisha. Also the high-ranking officers from the clan of Bani Umayyah who were living in and around Mecca went to the side of Aisha.

Aisha managed to get on her side Hafsa, the daughter of Omar and a wife to the Prophet. However, another wife of the Prophet, Umm Salama not only refused to be on Aisha's side but also warned her that she was joining the rebellious mob about which the Prophet had warned all his wives. At first Aisha's determination to go on with her scheme softened but it was made strong again by Talha, Zubair and Zubair's son Abdallah who was also an adopted son of Aisha.

Aisha, sitting on a large camel, marched from Mecca to Basra. She was accompanied by Talha and Zubair. The Commander-in-Chief of this army of a thousand people was Abdallah Bin Zubair, Aisha's nephew and her adopted son. Their main motto and war-cry was "KILL THE MURDERERS OF UTHMAN, DESTROY THEM ONE AND ALL", to which Mughira B. Shoba, himself an Umayyad sympathiser shouted, "WHERE ARE YOU GOING FOR THE MURDERERS? THEY ARE BEFORE YOUR EYES ON THE HUMPS OF THEIR CAMELS (pointing out towards Talha, Zubair and Aisha). SLAY THEM AND GO BACK TO YOUR HOMES.

THEY ARE THE PROPER OBJECTS OF YOUR REVENGE.”

With the support they received from the people joining them on their way and those in Basra, Aisha’s force took away Basra from Imam Ali’s supporters. Uthman Bin Huneif, the governor was treated very badly; his beard and eye-brows were forcibly shaved and was then driven out of Basra.

When Imam Ali (a.s.) came to know of what had happened, he was left with no choice but to march towards Basra. However, he had difficulties in raising an army. Why would people want to risk their lives if they knew that there was no booty’ awaiting them? Again, there were those who went around discouraging people from joining the forces’ of Imam saying that it was a battle the best way to benefit from which was to stay away from it. Not being able to raise more than 900 people in Medina, Imam Ali (a.s.) sent his representatives to Kufa. Abu Musa Ash’ary who had been the governor of Kufa before, went around saying that common people should not get involved in the quarrels of the companions of the Prophet. He continued “YOU NEED NOT MAKE WAR AGAINST ANY. LET THOSE, WHO HAVE COME FROM MEDINA GO BACK.”

Finally, Imam Hasan (a.s.) had to go to Kufa and explain to Muslims of Kufa the innocence of his father, the circumstances surrounding his nomination and the real motives of those who had decided to fight against him. Imam Hasan (a.s.) had a great effect on the people of Kufa and because of his explanations 900 people volunteered to go to war.

THE BATTLE OF JAMAL

When Imam Ali (a.s.) had gathered about 20,000 soldiers on his side, he marched towards Basra. He tried very hard to avoid a fight. He wrote a letter to Aisha, Talha and Zubair requiring them not to go for war but they all refused.

When the two armies came face to face, Imam Ali (a.s.) again tried to settle for peace with Talha and Zubair. He reminded Zubair of the Prophet's warning which the Prophet had given to Zubair many years ago, telling him that despite the love that Zubair had showed to Imam Ali (a.s.) in the past there would come a time when Zubair would join hands with the wrong people and fight Imam Ali (a.s.).

At first it seemed as if Zubair had come to realise that he was making mistakes. He confirmed that, indeed, the Prophet had warned him but he had forgotten. Now that he remembered it, he was going back. However, his son, Abdallah, succeeded in stopping him from leaving the forces of Aisha.

The battle of Jamal started on 16 of Jamadi-ul-Thani 36 AH (November 656 AD) The battle was started by Aisha's side. The historian Ocle describes the battle in these words:

“TO THE VERY LAST MOMENT ALI EVINCE A DECIDED REPUGNANCE TO SHED THE BLOOD OF A MUSLIM; AND JUST BEFORE THE BATTLE, HE ENDEAVOURED TO TURN THE ADVERSARY TO ALLEGIANCE BY SOLEMN APPEAL TO THE QURAN. A PERSON NAMED MUSLIM IMMEDIATELY OFFERED HIMSELF FOR THE SERVICE; AND UPLIFTING A COPY OF THE SACRED VOLUME WITH HIS SACRED HAND, THIS INDIVIDUAL PROCEED TO ADMONISH THE ENEMY TO RECEDE FROM THEIR UNWARRANTED DESIGNS. BUT THE HAND WHICH BORE THE HOLY MANUSCRIPT WAS SEVERED FROM HIS ARM BY ONE OF THE INFURIATED MULTITUDE. SEIZING THE QURAN WITH HIS LEFT, THAT LIMB WAS ALSO SEVERED BY ANOTHER SCIMITAR. STILL, HOWEVER, PRESSING IT TO HIS BOSOM WITH HIS MUTILATED ARM, HE CONTINUED HIS EXHORTATIONS UNTIL FINALLY HE WAS KILLED BY THE SWORDS OF THE ENEMY. HIS BODY WAS SUBSEQUENTLY RECOVERED BY HIS FRIENDS AND PRAYERS PRONOUNCED OVER IT BY ALI IN PERSON;

AFTER WHICH, TAKING UP A HANDFUL OF DUST, AND SCATTERING IT TOWARDS INSURGENTS, THAT PRINCE IMPRECATED UPON THEM THE RETRIBUTION OF AN AVENGING DEITY, IN THE MEANTIME, THE IMPETUOSITY OF ALI'S FOLLOWERS COULD NO LONGER BE RESTRAINED. DRAWING THEIR SWORDS AND POINTING THEIR SPEARS THEY RUSHED IMPETUOUSLY TO THE COMBAT, WHICH WAS SUPPORTED ON ALL SIDES WITH EXTRAORDINARY FIERCENESS AND ANIMOSITY ...”

Despite the fact that Imam Ali's army was half the size of that of his enemy's still it easily defeated that of Aisha. Talha was killed, not by Imam Ali's soldiers but by Aisha's General, Marwan B. Hakam. Zubair left the battle ground. He was killed by a person who was neither on the side of Imam Ali (a.s.) nor on that of Aisha.

Aisha lost the battle. However, she was given the best treatment. She was sent back to Medina with respect and kindness.

Over 16,000 soldiers from Aisha's side were killed. Imam Ali (a.s.) lost over a 100 men. All men were buried together in one trench. Imam Ali (a.s.) forgave all who took part against him including Abdallah Bin Zubair and Marwan. Marwan decided to go to Damascus and stay with Muawiya.

CHAPTER 14 :

THE BATTLE OF SIFFIN

WHY IMAM ALI (A.S.) MOVED HIS CAPITAL TO KUFA

After the battle of Jamal, Imam Ali (a.s.) decided to make Kufa the seat of his government. This was because he was sure that Muawiya would be the next person to start a war on him. Muawiya had anxiously been waiting to see the outcome of the battle of Jamal. Whoever won this battle would become his target. The people of Kufa had supported the Imam in large numbers. As his army was made to a large extent by people of Kufa he had to be nearer to them if he were to deal with Muawiya successfully.

Secondly, Kufa was centrally located in the empire. It would be relatively easy to defend the empire from the Syrian attacks from Kufa than anywhere else.

Kufa therefore became the capital in Rajab 36 AH.

While Imam Ali (a.s.) was engaged dealing with the rebellion at Basra, Muawiya was busy preparing himself for a war. He had at least five advantages over Imam Ali (a.s.).

Firstly, after the death of the Prophet the Quraish had successfully kept Imam Ali (a.s.) out of the public's eyes for over twenty five years. Except for those who were present in the earlier days of Islam and had seen his great sacrifices or had heard directly the Prophet praising him, many Muslims who came in the fold of Islam later on were unaware of the greatness of Imam Ali (a.s.). On the other hand Muawiya who had governed Syria for about twenty five years was known to all Syrians. It was easier for him to raise an army than it was for Imam Ali (a.s.).

Secondly, although Muawiya was supposed to be only a governor, he had become the ruler of Syria. Both Omar and Uthman had hardly

questioned him as to how he was running Syria. Muawiya had complete control of the treasury. With the help of the unlimited wealth that he had with him, he bribed and thereby bought the favours of many leaders of the Arab tribes. By tradition, the whole tribe would follow their leader. In this way Muawiya succeeded to have a large following not only in Syria but in Iraq and Hijaz as well. Imam Ali (a.s.), on the other hand inherited an empty treasury. And then he would never use un-godly ways to make himself strong.

Thirdly, although he had succeeded in putting down the rebellion at the battle of Jamal, in so doing lost men and much energy. Also many more people became his enemies, especially those who lost their relatives or friends. Large funds were also used in this battle. Imam Ali's military position was weaker at the end of the war than it was before the war. Muawiya on the other hand, all this time was growing stronger and stronger.

Fourthly, the people of Syria had never known Imam Ali (a.s.). Muawiya took advantage of their ignorance and had them believe that Imam Ali (a.s.) was the murderer of the Prophet's successor, Uthman. He managed to obtain, with the help of Umme Habiba who was the Prophet's wife and Muawiya's sister, Uthman's blood-stained shirt. He used this shirt and Uthman's wife's finger which had been chopped off at the time of Uthman's murder to incite the people of Syria to rise against Imam Ali (a.s.).

Fifthly, Aisha, Zubair and Talha had a good number of followers. They blamed Imam Ali (a.s.) as the murderer of Uthman. In this way they put seeds of doubt in the minds of many Muslims who did not know Imam Ali's position in Islam. Muawiya used the same argument against Imam Ali (a.s.) and thereby made his position strong.

MUAWIYA DECLARES WAR ON IMAM ALI (A.S.)

Naturally, therefore, Muawiya delayed his reply to Imam Ali's letter

which demanded that he (Muawiya) pay allegiance to him (Imam Ali) when he was sure of victory. Having raised an army of about 120,000 soldiers, Muawiya released Imam Ali's messenger with a scornful letter of defiance, which was blank and with no reply. Only the messenger informed Imam Ali (a.s.) that not only had Muawiya refused to recognise him as the next Caliph, but was also preparing to remove Imam Ali (a.s.) from the throne with the help of a strong army.

Left with no other option, Imam Ali (a.s.) marched with an army of ninety thousand soldiers to meet the forces of Muawiya at Siffin.

THE BATTLE OF SIFFIN

Muawiya's forces were first to get at Siffin; they took control of the waters of the Euphrates and decided to cut off water supply to the army of Imam Ali (a.s.) According to Ibn-Al-Athir, Imam Ali (a.s.) sent a messenger to Muawiya telling the latter that he (Imam Ali) did not come to fight for water; he came to fight against falsehood and bring together Muslims separated into two camps because of one false leader. But Muawiya refused to let the Imam's army have water. Imam Ali (a.s.) forcefully removed the enemy's control on the waters of Euphrates. He could now deprive the enemies with water the way they had done to his army. However, Imam Ali (a.s.) said, "Allah has given us victory against them because of their injustice and aggression. Certainly, there are more important things to be taken care of than depriving them of water." And he let Muawiya's army take as much water and as often as they wanted from the Euphrates.

Imam Ali (a.s.) continued to negotiate with Muawiya so as to save Muslims killing their fellow Muslims but with no success. All chances of bringing unity amongst Muslims failed. Muawiya wanted nothing less than Imam Ali's defeat and death. The battle which had started on a small scale gradually assumed huge proportions.

In all ninety battles were fought but the most severe battle was fought on the beginning of 11th of Safar and continued non-stop till the 13th of Safar 37 AH. The night of 13th Safar has come to be known as “Lailatul Harir” or the night of clangour. The hero of this battle was Imam Ali (a.s.) himself and his Commander-in-Chief Malik Al-Ashtar.

That time was not far when the Syrians would be defeated and their leader Muawiya put to death. In fact, Muawiya wanted to escape from the battle field before it was too late. However, his crafty Commander Amr B. Aas. advised him not to do that as he had some better plans.

HOW AND WHY DID THE BATTLE OF SIFFIN END IN MUAWIYA'S FAVOUR?

Though sure of his victory, Muawiya at the onset the battle of Siffin had made some secret arrangements so that in case of necessity he could use them to win the war. He had secretly bribed some commanders in the army of Imam Ali (a.s.) so that in case of emergency he could use them to his advantage. One such commander was Ashas B. Qais who had the majority of the people of Kufa at his command. Counting on such traitors and their ability to cause trouble in the army of Imam Ali (a.s.), Amr B. Aas now came with this plan to save Muawiya from defeat and death.

Acting on the advice of Amr B. Aas, Muawiya made his soldiers put copies of the Quran on the spears and raised them calling the army of Imam Ali (a.s.) to stop fighting. The argument was: let us turn to Quran to solve the problem that was leading to spilling of Muslim blood.

It should be noted that all along Imam Ali (a.s.) was opposed to spilling Muslim blood. He had tried his best to avoid this battle. It was Muawiya who really wanted this battle as he was sure of winning it. Now that he was faced with defeat he came up with this trick.

Imam Ali (a.s.) saw the ulterior motive behind this trick and warned his soldiers not to pay any attention to it but to continue fighting. However, the army of Imam Ali (a.s.) except for a few soldiers like Malik Ashtar refused to continue fighting. Not only that, they want Imam Ali (a.s.) to give immediate instructions to end the fight or else they would kill him or take him as a prisoner and hand him over to Muawiya. The leader of these opponents was no other person than Ashas B. Qais.

Before finding out how Imam Ali (a.s.) acted in face of this coup is his own army, let us first examine the causes for this sudden change in the attitude of Imam Ali's soldiers.

There were four types of people in the army of Imam Ali (a.s.). First and foremost, there were those people who fully recognised Imam Ali (A.S.) as the true successor of the Prophet. Their reason for coming to fight against Muawiya was the same as that of Imam Ali (a.s.): to end falsehood and put in its place righteousness. They fully supported Imam Ali (a.s.) and would do whatever Imam Ali (a.s.) told them to do. Unfortunately, such people were but few. They included Malik Bin Ashtar and Ammar Bin Yassir. But at this point in time many of them like Ammar, had already been martyred.

The second group of people such as Ashas Bin Qais accepted handsome bribes from Muawiya and had become traitors. As they were also leaders of their tribes, they had a large following in the army. This was the group that decided to end the war when they saw copies of the Quran raised in the air by the Syrians.

Then there was that group of people who were stupid but fanatical. They were fooled by traitors into refusing to obey Imam Ali (a.s.). They had so much pride in their own knowledge of Islam that they began to question Imam Ali's wisdom. They became known as the "Khwareejs" or the seceders.

Lastly there were those, who for one reason or another, had come to the battlefield but were not very keen to fight because there was to be no material benefit to be obtained from this war. Besides, hadn't they also lost their relatives and friends in the battle of Jamal? Such people were looking for an excuse not to risk their lives any more. Examples of such people included the people of Basra.

Ashas B. Qais therefore had great support in the army. Not only did he force Imam Ali (a.s.) to end the winning war, but also with the help of the "Khwareejs" made the Imam agree to appoint arbitrators to find out the way to end the dispute between Imam Ali (a.s.) and Muawiya. The worst was yet to come. Imam Ali (a.s.) wanted his agent in the arbitration committee to be Ibn Abbas or Malik, who was Imam Ali's second choice. They forced Imam Ali (a.s.) to appoint Abu Musa Ashary as his representative in the arbitration panel. Muawiya on his part appointed Amr B. Aas without having any opposition.

Before going any further, let us consider the options that were available to Imam Ali (a.s.). Imam Ali (a.s.) had to choose between two options: to continue fighting or to end the fight. If he continued to fight, he would then have first to fight his own soldiers, who were all surrounding him. This would be very unwise. For as has already been noted before, the few people who supported him would all be killed and his fate would be the same. This problem is summarised by Imam Ali's own words which he spoke when Malik showed his concern for ending the war. The Imam said, "Malik I was the leader, now I have become the follower."

The followers had to do what the leaders wanted! Imam (a.s.) was forced into a situation for which he was to be blamed by those very people who forced him into it.

THE OUTCOME OF THE BATTLE OF SIFFIN

1. About seventy thousand people died of whom forty five

thousand were from Muawiya's side and twenty five thousand were from Imam Ali's side.

2. Amongst the most distinguished persons from the side of Imam Ali (a.s.) to be martyred were Ammar Bin Yasir and Khozayma Bin Thabit.

Ammar was that companion of the Prophet about whom the Prophet had announced "O Ammar, one day you shall be killed by a God-less and rebellious people". On the day of Siffin Ammar was 93 years old. Ibn Saad reports in his book 'AL-TABAQAT' that when Ammar was about to go to fight a woman brought him milk to drink. Ammar drank the milk and said. "Allahu Akbar! This is what my beloved, the messenger of Allah had said would happen to me. He said, 'Ammar, the aggressor's party shall kill you and your last drink in this world will be milk'".

3. Victory was stolen from Imam Ali (a.s.). He was forced into an arbitration, which we shall soon see, came out against him.
4. Muawiya escaped defeat with honour and dignity. Imam Ali (a.s.) lost victory because of the traitors and stupid fanatics. His army was made weak by disunity. Muawiya returned to Damascus, the Imam went back to Kufa.

THE ARBITRATION PANEL

As for the arbitration panel, it came with its decision. Many Muslim including Chiefs from Hijaz, Iraq, Egypt and Syria met at a place called Dumat-Al- Jondel.

The referees, Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari and Amr Bin Aas agreed in private that to end disputes they must both advise Muslims to remove Imam Ali (a.s.) and Muawiya from the office of the caliphate and have another person be Caliph.

Abu Musa was the first to speak. He said that the decision of the

referees was that both Imam Ali (a.s.) and Muawiya should be removed from public offices they occupied as this was the only way to end disunity. Muslims must then choose a new leader. He ended saying, "I therefore remove both Ali and Muawiya from Caliphate in the manner as I remove this ring from my finger."

It was now Amr's turn to speak. He said, "You have heard how Abu Musa has removed his Chief Ali. I, on my part also depose Ali. In his place I put my Chief Muawiya as Caliph and I confirm this as I put this ring on my finger". This happened in Ramadhan 37 AH (658 AD).

Abu Musa complained that Amr had played a foul game on him. Only Allah knows whether Abu Musa was genuinely cheated or whether he was himself part of the foul game that was being played against Imam Ali (a.s.). What we do know is that after this event Abu Musa retired to Hijaz to enjoy to the end of his life; - a handsome annual pension from Muawiya.

The arbitration then, if it did anything at all, weakened the position of Imam Ali (a.s.). After this event Muawiya was confirmed as Caliph by the Syrians. He started growing stronger and stronger. On the other hand as we shall see in the following chapter, Imam Ali's problems multiplied as disunity began to grow in his camp.

CHAPTER 15 : THE BATTLE OF NEHERWAN

THE KHWAREEJIES

Had it not been for the traitor and the Khwareej, Imam Ali (a.s.) would have a clear victory at Siffin. Muawiya's rebellion would have been ended and Muslims would be freed from their greatest enemy. Imam Ali (a.s.) would then be in a position to start an Islamic state on the same lines as that started by the Prophet. Indeed history would have taken different and a better course. Unfortunately, as we saw in the last chapter, this was not to happen. Not only was victory stolen from Imam a new problem was created for him. The Khwareejies consisting of about twelve thousand soldiers left Imam Ali's camp and went to a place near Kufa called Harura which became their headquarters. They also began to speak very badly about Imam Ali (a.s.), and began even to plan to fight against him.

The main complaint of the Khwareej was: Why did Imam Ali (a.s.) agree to go for arbitration with Muawiya? When the Imam explained to them that he had gone for arbitration because they, the Khwareej, had forced him to do so, they agreed that they had made a mistake. However, they argued that on realising that they had committed a sin they repented. They therefore expected Imam Ali (a.s.) to agree that he too had sinned and must therefore repent. Imam Ali (a.s.) had not committed any sin and therefore could not agree to their proposal.

Trying to bring them back to him so as to end this harmful division in his camp, Imam Ali (a.s.) put another proposal to them. Since the main complain to these dissenters was that Imam Ali (a.s.) should have continued fighting. Imam Ali (a.s.) told them that he would resume fighting Muawiya as soon as the outcome of the arbitration was known. But they refused; arguing that Imam Ali (a.s.) must not honour the arbitration agreement and must march

to Damascus immediately their slogan was “La Hukma illa lillah.” (There is no rule except that of Allah) by which they meant that no one can give a ruling and the issue of arbitration was against Islam. In short, they did not want to reconcile and as an excuse they asked for things meant breaking laws of Islam and which Imam Ali (a.s.) therefore could not do.

In the meantime, the results of the arbitration were out. Imam Ali (a.s.) therefore invited the Khwareej to join him as he was now proceeding to Syria to finish the job left incomplete at Siffin. The Khwareej had no excuse now. But they still refused to join him, arguing that Imam Ali (a.s.) was going for a war with Muawiya because the results of the arbitration were not in his favour.

Imam Ali (a.s.) had already assembled an army of sixty five thousand - sixty two thousand from Kufa and three thousand from Basra. He was about to march to Syria when bad news was brought to him. That stopped him from going on his mission to Syria.

The Khwareej, under the command of Abdallah Bin Wahab had moved to Neherwan, not very far from what is Baghdad today, and were carrying out dangerous activities against Muslims. They were attacking villagers around Neherwan and sparing the lives of only those who agreed to curse Imam Ali (A.S.) and Uthman as oppressors.

For example, they arrested and killed Abdallah Bin Khabbab, a companion of the Prophet, because he refused to curse Imam Ali (a.s.). They also killed three other innocent and helpless women from the tribe of Tay.

It was unwise to move to Syria leaving behind Iraq defenceless against these violent attacks. Imam Ali (a.s.) therefore decided to march to Neherwan instead of Syria.

THE BATTLE OF NEHERWAN

As in the earlier two battles of Jamal and Siffin, Imam Ali (a.s.) first tried to negotiate for peace. He sent a messenger to the rebels of Neherwan asking them to hand over to him the murderers of innocent Muslims. If they did so the remaining people would be free. They refused to co-operate, saying they were all jointly responsible for their deeds, and that the blood of Imam Ali (a.s.) and his followers was not sacred to them.

Imam Ali (a.s.) personally addressed them. He again reminded them that it was they who forced him to end the battle of Siffin, and to accept arbitration and to appoint an arbitration agent of their choice. He appealed to them to come to reason and save themselves from destruction in this world and in the hereafter. But it was like speaking to the deaf. They remained unmoved.

Imam Ali (a.s.) gave them the last chance. He gave a banner to Abu Ayub Ansari and declared that all those Khwareej who went under this banner would be guaranteed safety of their lives. Also those who left for their homes would be left to do so without any harm coming to them.

Many Khwareej decided to take advantage of this general amnesty. Except for 1800, the rest of them left.

Perhaps Imam Ali (a.s.) would have still given the remaining 1800 further chance of saving themselves if they had not decided to attack Imam Ali's army. By so doing they started the battle of Neherwan.

Having no other alternative but to fight back, Imam Ali (a.s.) gave instruction to his soldiers to charge. Only nine Khawarij survived, the remaining were all killed. Imam Ali (A.S.) lost seven men.

Although the battle of Neherwan was won with least losses on the

part of Imam Ali's army the consequences of this battle were very harmful.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE BATTLE OF NEHERWAN

1. Although the immediate danger from the Khwareej was ended, complete safety against them was not possible. Those who survived the battle continued opposing Imam Ali (a.s.). In fact, at a later date they succeeded in killing Imam Ali (a.s.).
2. The disunity in the camp of Imam Ali (a.s.) increased. The Khwareej after all had close relatives and friends in the camp of Imam Ali (a.s.). Their death had a bad effect on their relatives. They were therefore unwilling to continue to stay in the army. They had lost their fighting spirit.

Again, the most trusted generals of Imam Ali (a.s.) were no longer with him to keep the army together. Ammar Bin Yassir, Khuzayma Bin Thabit and Hashim Bin Al-Mirqal were all killed in Siffin. Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr was in Egypt, Malik Bin Ashtar was also dead having been poisoned by Muawiyah's people while on his way to Egypt to help Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr.

The new generals of the army requested Imam Ali (a.s.) to camp for a while at Nukhailah outside Kufa, giving the excuse that the soldiers needed to rest and repair the damages received from Neherwan. The Imam agreed. After a few days, the Imam was left with a handful of soldiers, the rest of them having quietly left for Kufa.

Imam Ali (a.s.) therefore had to go to Kufa to raise the army again. It was not easy to do so. People simply did not want to go for war giving all the false excuses that they could think of. For example, when they were told to march in the winter, they would complain of the cold weather and ask to wait for the

summer. When summer came, they would complain of the heat and asked to be excused till when the heat was over.

3. Muawiya took advantage of this situation. Knowing that Imam Ali (A.S.) would be in no position to take any immediate action because of the unwillingness of the people of Kufa to fight, Muawiya attacked Egypt. Imam Ali's governor in Egypt was Muhammad Bin Abu Bakr. He fought bravely but was defeated and killed brutally. Egypt fell in the hands of Muawiya.
4. To further weaken Imam Ali's position, Muawiya began sending troops to Iraq and Hijaz to kill Muslims and return unharmed. Imam Ali (a.s.) decided to wait no more. Warning his people that he would march towards Syria with or without them, he said, "By Allah, if you do not go with me ... I shall pray to Allah to punish you, then I will go to our enemy even if I have no more than ten men."

But Imam Ali (a.s.) did not live long enough to see that day. For not long after saying these words He was martyred on 21st Ramadhan 40 AH.

CHAPTER 16 :

HIS MARTYRDOM AND BURIAL

Imam Ali (a.s.) showed nothing but kindness to the Khwareej of Neherwan. He gave them opportunity after opportunity to save their lives in this world and in the hereafter. Unfortunately, they wished him nothing but death.

After their departure from Neherwan, they went to live in Mecca. They agreed among themselves that Imam Ali (a.s.), Muawiya and Amr Bin Aas must be killed because they were the cause of trouble among Muslims. Three volunteers came out to do the job. Abdul Rehman Bin Muljim agreed to kill Imam Ali (a.s.), Burk Bin Abdallah to kill Muawiya and Amr Bin Bakr to kill Amr Bin Aas.

The 19th Day of Ramadhan was selected to be the day. Muawiya escaped with a minor injury. Amr B. Aas did not go to the mosque in the morning of the 19th of Ramadhan. He He was therefore saved. Imam Ali (a.s.) became the victim of IBNE MULJIM'S poisoned sword.

On 19th day of Ramadhan Imam Ali (a.s.) came to the mosque in Kufa well before morning prayer time. He gave the prayers saying call to prayer and started praying. When he went in 'sijda' Abdul Rehman struck on his head a heavy stroke with his poisoned sword. This left a deep and deadly wound on the Imam's head. Instead of complaining, the Imam said "By Lord of Kaaba, I have become victorious."

His followers, friends and family members took him home. He passed away on 21st Ramadhan 40 AH at the age of 63.

In his services to Islam, he had made many enemies. He was afraid that after his death his enemies would want to play mischief with his grave. He was therefore buried at night and his place of burial remained a secret for many years.

Only during the time of Haroon Rashid in 175 AH was the grave of Imam Ali (a.s.) found out. Today, Imam Ali's grave is in Najaf. A magnificent mausoleum stood over the grave of the Imam for many years until the oppressor Saddam Husain destroyed it in 1991.

It is recommended to pay a visit to Imam Ali's mausoleum. The sixth Imam, Jafar Sadiq, has told his followers never to neglect paying visit to Imam Ali's grave as angels, Prophets and believers all pay such a visit.

CHAPTER 17 : IMAM ALI (A.S.) - HIS CHARACTER AND ACHIEVEMENTS

As Imam Ali (a.s.) was chosen by Allah to become the successor of the Prophet, he was the best person in the universe, second only to the Prophet. After the Prophet, he was the bravest, the wisest and the most knowledgeable person in the world. This point has been noted by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. To give you an idea on this matter some of these scholars are quoted below.

IMAM ALI'S GREATNESS DESCRIBED BY MUSLIM SCHOLARS

Imam Ahmad Bin Hambal says:

“Reading the merits of the companions of the Prophet of Allah, we have received none which exceeds that of Ali. At times they were presented in such abundance that they aroused the jealousy and hatred of Banu Umayyah. All acknowledge that he enjoyed the special confidence of the Prophet.”

Ibne Abil Hadid, the Muttazalite scholar, says:

“The world cannot come with an example of a person other than that of Ali who was a first class warrior, a marshall, a philosopher, a moralist and a scholar in theology all at the same time.

“A study of his life shows that in its early days of struggle in wars of defence, Islam received help only through him.

“For Islam he was the first to go for its defence and the last to come back. Who stood next to him in the battles of Badr, Ohud, Khandak, Khaybar and Hunain?

“This was only one side of his character is seen from his sermons, instructions, letters and sayings. They shed light on the knowledge

concerning the oneness of Allah. They are rich in philosophy. They explain to rulers how to be righteous and kind, good, benevolent and God-fearing. At the same time they call subjects to be faithful sincere and obedient....

“These are but proofs of his greatness .. Has history produced a greater person with all these qualities of mind and heart?”

Syed Ameer Ali, the famous author of *The Spirit of Islam* and *A Short History of the Saracens*, describes the character of Imam Ali (a.s.) in the following words:

“Mild, beneficent, and humane, ready to help the weak and distressed, his life had been devoted to the cause of Islam. His forbearance and magnanimity were misunderstood and his humanity and love of truth was turned by his enemies to their own advantage.”

“Ali is described as a man of ruddy complexion, not very tall but extremely strong, inclined to stoutness, with a flowing beard, soft grey eyes, and a look of great amiability and kindness. His bravery had won him the title of the ‘Lion of God’, his learning that of the ‘Gate of Knowledge’. Chivalrous, humane, and forbearing to the verge of weakness, as a ruler he came before his time. Most of the grand undertakings initiated by Omar for the welfare of the people were due to his counsel. Ever ready to succour the weak and to redress the wrongs of the injured, the accounts of his valorous deeds are recited with enthusiasm from the bazaars of Cairo to those of Delhi. How the mailclad knight rescued a stranger beset by lions in the desert; how the poor woman, captured by brigands with her wounded and dying husband, wailed for the succour which never failed, and how the “Lion of God” appeared and saved them, such stories bring back to Arab life the chivalry of the Arabs personified in their greatest hero. With his dying breath he inculcated lessons of charity, love, humility and self-abnegation to his sons. He expressly ordered that no harshness should be used towards his murderer, who should be executed with one blow.”

IMAM ALI'S GREATNESS DESCRIBED BY NON-MUSLIM SCHOLARS

George Gordon, a Christian historian, philosopher and linguist says:

“None can praise Ali to the extent that he deserves. So many instances of his piety and fear of God are cited that one starts loving and venerating him. He was a true, strict and scrupulous follower of Islam. His words and deeds bore stamps of nobility, sagacity and courage of conviction. He was a great man having his own independent views about life and its problems. He never deceived, misled or betrayed anybody. In various phases and periods of his life he exhibited marvellous strength of body and mind which were due to his true faith in religion and in his sincere belief in truth and justice. He never had a servant and never allowed his slaves to work hard. Often he would carry his household goods himself and if anybody offered to relieve him of the weight he would refuse.”

Davenport says:

“He was equally celebrated for his eloquence and valour while his surname of The Lion of God, sufficiently attests his prowess and renown of which one out of many instances is that at the siege of Khaiber in 628 AD. In Ali we find the example of a brave and worthy prince than whom a better is not to be found throughout the Mohammaden (sic) World.”

Philip Hitti, a Christian historian says:

“Valiant in battle, wise in counsel, eloquent in speech, true to his friends, magnanimous to his foes, he became both the paragon of the Moslem nobility and chivalry and the Solomon of the Arabic tradition around whose name poems, proverbs, sermonises and anecdotes innumerable have clustered. His Sabre Dhul-al Faqar, wielded by the Prophet on the memorable battle-field of Ohud, has been immortalised in words of verse found engraved on many medieval Arab swords, ‘La Saifa Illa Dhul-al-Faqar wa-la Fata illa Ali.’ (No sword can match Zulfiqar and no young warrior can compete with Ali.)”

As for his achievements, there are just too many to mention in this small book. However, to give you examples we shall examine a few contribution which the Imam made to humanity.

IMAM ALI (A.S.) THE FOUNDER OF ‘ILM-UL-TAFSEER’ (THE SCIENCE OF EXEGESIS) OF THE QURAN

Except for the Prophet himself, no one else knew and understood the Quran as thoroughly as Imam Ali (a.s.).

This was because as soon as any part of the Quran was revealed to the Prophet, he would tell everything about it to Imam Ali (a.s.). The Imam himself used to say, “By Allah. for every verse of the Quran I know what caused it to be revealed, where it was revealed and concerning whom it was revealed.” Some other times he would say, “Ask me about the Book of Allah, because for every verse I know whether it was revealed by night or by day, in the plains or in the mountains.”

He therefore, started the practice of explaining systematically the ideas which were in the Quran. Ibne Abbas used to take lessons from him. Later on Ibne Abbas became the authority as the commentator of the Quran. Ibne Abbas never forgot to mention Imam Ali (a.s.) as his teacher who gave him the knowledge that he was using to teach others. Once Ibn Abbas was asked how his knowledge compared with Imam Ali’s. He said, “It was not even a drop in the whole ocean.”

Imam Ali (a.s.) therefore was the founder of the science of producing exegesis on the Quran and he laid down its principles for those who were to follow him later.

IMAM ALI (A.S.) UPLIFTS ARABIC GRAMMAR AND LITERATURE

Imam Ali (a.s.) trained Abu-Aswad Al-Duwali in the formal principles of Arabic Grammar and the way to present grammar

systematically for learning purposes. For examples, the Imam laid down for him rules on the noun, the verbs and the particle. Using these as his foundation, Abu Aswad prepared general rules of Arabic Grammar.

He made Arabic literature rise to its highest pinnacle by the beauty of the language which he used in his sermons, his letters and his sayings. Syed Shariff Al-Razi collected them in the form of a book which came to be known as “*Nahjul Balagha*” - or “*The Peak of Eloquence*.”

According to historian Masudi, Imam Ali (a.s.) produced not less than 480 books, lectures and sayings on different subjects such as philosophy, religion, law, politics, to mention but a few of them.

The British historian John J. Pool says, “Ali was the first caliph to protect and encourage national literature. The prince was a scholar himself and many of his sayings and proverbs are published in a book. It is a remarkable work and deserves to be more widely read in the West.”

To give you an idea about the beauty and the wisdom that the works of Imam Ali (a.s.) have some of his sayings and proverbs are produced below.

1. Have such a relationship with people that when you die they should mourn you and when you are living they should love you.
2. Those who cannot make friends are weak. But weaker than them are those who cannot keep friends after having them.
3. Help honourable men when they are in trouble because none of them ever fails and is not then raised once more by Allah.
4. O son of Adam, if you see Allah blessing you with his bounties even when you are defying him, then be careful.
5. No one ever hid something but it be came known through the slip of his tongue and the expressions on his face.

6. The best kind of piety is one which is kept hidden.
7. The richest person is he who has a control over his desires.
8. If a person speaks bad about others, then they will speak lies about him.
9. Be careful of becoming a friend to the fool, for wishing to do you good he does you harm. Be careful of becoming a friend to the miser because he keeps away from you what you need the most. Be careful of becoming a friend to a disrespectful person because he will sell you for a useless thing. And be careful of taking a liar as your friend. He makes what is far look like it is near and what is near to look like it is far.
10. To be happy with the little that you have is like having wealth which will never end.
11. He who gives you warning is like someone who gives you good advice.
12. The more complete your mind is, the less words you will have.
13. Worries bring old age.
14. Do not feel shy to give charity because it is small. For by not giving you make your contribution even lesser.
15. The tongue stings if it is not used carefully.

IMAM ALI (A.S.) GIVES PERFECT IDEAS ON HOW TO RUN A JUST GOVERNMENT

It is very unfortunate that Imam Ali (a.s.) was not given enough time to work as a ruler. Otherwise he would have formed a state that would be a perfect example to be followed by the rest of the world. Even then, for the short period of about four years that he did get to work as a ruler, he set excellent examples on how a just ruler should run his government.

Not only did he describe these principles of excellent government verbally, he also put them down in writing in the form of instructions which he gave to Malik Bin Ashtar when sending him as governor of Egypt.

He went one step forward. He put in action these principles proving that they would work if an honest and God-fearing leader wanted to use them.

For those who truly want to serve people, the principles of good government have been left behind for them by Imam Ali (a.s.). Some of these principles are:

1. You must develop in yourself kindness and love for your subjects. Do not behave with them as if you were a wild beast.
2. Muslims and non-Muslims should be treated alike. Muslims are your brothers and non-Muslims are human beings just like you.
3. Do not feel ashamed to forgive. Do not be hasty with punishment. Do not quickly lose your temper over mistakes and failures of those over whom you rule. Anger and desire for revenge are not going to be of much use to you in administration.
4. Do not allow favouritism and nepotism to force you to break your duties to Allah and man and drive you towards cruelty and oppression.
5. While selecting officers take care that you do not select such persons as have served cruel and oppressive rulers and have been responsible for cruelties.
6. Select honest and kind persons as your advisers and from amongst them prefer those who speak out the bitter truth to you without fear or favour.
7. Appointments in the first place must be on probation.
8. Keep your officers well paid so that they may not be tempted to practice corruption or misappropriation.
9. Appoint confidential officers secretly to watch the activities of your officers and staff and report to you about their behaviour.
10. Your secretaries should be the cream of your civil, judicial or military services. Choose the best among them irrespective of age or period of service.
11. All letters or applications should be dealt with by the officers and replies or orders about them should be drafted by them

only. No subordinate must be allowed to be the eyes and the mind of these officers.

12. Take your subjects into your confidence and make them feel that you are their well-wisher and friend.
13. Never break a promise or go against the terms of a treaty. It is a sin against Allah.
14. You must take care of your traders but should never allow them to resort to hoarding, black-marketing and profiteering.
15. Help handicraft; it reduces poverty and raises the standard of life.
16. Agriculturists are assets to the state and should be protected.
17. Remember that your sacred duty is to look after the poor, the disabled and the orphans. Let not your officers humiliate them, ill-treat them or oppress them. Help them, protect them and let them approach you whenever they are in need of your help.
18. Avoid bloodshed; do not kill anybody unless he deserves to be killed according to the laws of Islam.

CHAPTER 18 : HIS FAMILY

MARRIAGE TO BIBI FATIMA - DAUGHTER OF THE PROPHET

Many companions of the Prophet would have given anything to win the hands of Bibi Fatima in marriage. But this honour went to Imam Ali (a.s.)

In *Tarikh-Al-Khulafa* the famous Muslim scholar Suyuti narrates from Abu Yala who reports on the authority of Abu Huraira who quoted Omar Bin Khattab as having said “Truly Ali has been given three qualities out of which if I had only one I would regard it more valuable than getting a high breed camel. His marriage with Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet; his being able to remain in the mosque all the time and his carrying the standard of Muslims on the day of Khaibar.”

This marriage took place on 1st Zilhajj 2 AH in Medina, and from it in all five children were born: the eldest born was Imam Hasan (a.s.), followed by Imam Husayn (a.s.), then Bibi Zainab and Bibi Umm Kulthum. The last was Muhsin who died in his mother’s womb.

So far as Bibi Fatima was alive Imam Ali (a.s.) did not marry any other woman. After her death, Imam Ali (a.s.) made other marriages at different times.

OTHER WIVES AND CHILDREN KHAULA BINTI QAYS AL-HANAFIA

She was from the clan of Banu Hanafia and came to Medina during the reign of Abu Bakr. Imam Ali (a.s.) married her and from this marriage was born a son named Muhammad Hanafia.

Muhammad Hanafia was born in 21 AH. He was famous for his

physical strength and bravery. He took active part on the battle field of Jamal, even though he was only fifteen years of age. He also took part in the battles of Siffin.

When Imam Husayn (a.s.) left Medina on his journey to Iraq in 60 AH, he left behind Muhammad Hanafia in Medina. Imam Husam (a.s.) left his will to him.

Muhammad Hanafia died in 81 AH.

FATIMA (UMM-UL-BANIN) BINTI KHAZAM BIN KHALID KALABI

Imam Ali (a.s.) married her on the recommendation of his elder brother Aqil.

Imam Ali (a.s.) wanted to have a brave son who could stand in his place near Imam Husayn (a.s.) on the day of Ashura. Imam Ali (a.s.) therefore asked Aqil to look for a woman from a clan known for bravery.

Aqil knew all the clans and he suggested the name of Fatima Kalabia whom the Imam married. From this marriage four sons were born: Abbas, Jafar, Osman and Abdullah. Fatima Kalabia came to be known as “Ummul Banin” or the mother of sons.

All these sons showed great courage and bravery on the Day of Ashura and were martyred on the battle field of Karbala.

ASMA BINTI UMAYS

She was first married to Jafar Bin Abu talib who was martyred in service of Islam in 8 AH.

She was married again to Abu Bakr; from the marriage was born a son named Muhammad.

After the death of Abu Bakr, Asma was married to Imam Ali (a.s.) and a son called Yahya was born from this marriage.

Nothing is recorded in history about Yahya. As for Muhammad, Imam Ali (a.s.) brought him up as his own son.

Muhammad was on the side of Imam Ali (a.s.) at battles of Jamal and Siffin. He was appointed governor of Egypt where he was killed by Amr Bin Aas, the commander of Muawiya.

Other wives whose names can be found in records are: Umme Habiba Binti Rabia, Laila Binti Masood, Sid Binti Urwa and Amama Binti Abil Aas.

According to Shaykh Mufid in all, Imam Ali (a.s.) had eleven sons and sixteen daughters.

QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 1

1. When and where was Imam Ali (a.s.) born?
Give two examples to show that Imam Ali's birth was different from the birth of an ordinary child.
2. Why did the Prophet take it upon himself to bring up Imam Ali (a.s.)?
3. What was the faith of Imam Ali's mother at the time of the Imam's Birth? Give two proofs in support of your Answer.
4. What type of a parent was the Prophet to Imam Ali (a.s.)?
What type of a child was Imam Ali (a.s.) to the Prophet?

CHAPTER 2

1. List all the examples you can find in this chapter to prove that Imam Ali's father, Abu Talib, was a Muslim.

CHAPTER 3

1. Briefly describe what happened at "Dawa-atul-Zulashira". In your description show what work Imam Ali (a.s.) did and what work he agreed to do in future.

CHAPTER 4

1. As a child how did Imam Ali (a.s.) help the Prophet?
2. On the night of "Hijra" why did the prophet make Imam Ali (a.s.) sleep in his place? Could anyone else do this work? Why not?
3. Write down the verse of the Quran in which Allah records Imam Ali's work on the night of Hijra.
4. Name two things that Imam Ali (a.s.) had to take care of after Prophet's migration to Medina?
5. What kind of person do you think Imam Ali (a.s.) was?

CHAPTER 5

1. When in Medina, the Prophet "Gave" every Muslim a brother.

Who was “Given” as a brother to Imam Ali (a.s.)?

2. Imam Ali (a.s.) was the hero at the battle of Badr. Give reasons to explain why Imam Ali (a.s.) did the best job than any other Muslim (except the Prophet) on that day.

CHAPTER 6

1. Describe briefly how well did Imam Ali (a.s.) fight in the battle of Uhud?
2. When everybody was running away why did Imam Ali (a.s.) stay behind on the battle field?
3. What did the angel Gabriel say to the Prophet about Imam Ali (a.s.)? What did the Prophet reply? What did Gabriel then say? Why?
4. How did Imam Ali (a.s.) save the Prophet's life?
5. How did angels praise Imam Ali (a.s.)?

CHAPTER 7

1. What did Imam Ali (a.s.) do when Amr B. Abdwudd called Muslims to fight him? Did the Prophet agree to let Imam Ali (a.s.) do this? Why not?
2. When Imam Ali (a.s.) went to fight Amr how and why did the Prophet praise him?
3. How did the Prophet praise Imam Ali after the Imam had killed Amr?
4. In your own words explain who was the hero of the battle of Khandaq. Give reasons.

CHAPTER 8

1. Was Imam Ali (a.s.) present when Muslims first attacked forts at Khaibar? If not where was he? What was he doing there?
2. Describe two miracles that the Prophet showed at Khaibar.
3. Describe the miracle that Imam Ali (a.s.) showed at Khaibar.
4. How did the Prophet welcome Imam Ali (a.s.) when he returned successfully from the battle?
5. Why was the Prophet afraid of telling Muslim everything about Imam Ali (a.s.)?

CHAPTER 9

1. How did Imam help Muslims at Hunain?
2. How did the Prophet treat Imam Ali (a.s.) after the Imam won the battle of Tayef?
3. Why was Imam Ali sent to Bani Jazhima? Why was Khalid B. Walid unsuccessful and Imam Ali (a.s.) successful?
4. Why did Imam Ali (a.s.) leave Medina and go to see the Prophet who was on his way to Tabuk?
5. Why was Imam Ali (a.s.) not taken to Tabuk.
6. Who delivered Sur-e-Barat to the Mecca? Why was this person given this job?
7. What did Imam Ali (a.s.) have to do in Yemen? How well did he do them?
8. Why was it necessary for the Prophet to take Imam Ali (a.s.) for “Mubahila” with Christians of Najran?

CHAPTER 10

1. Briefly describe the location of “Ghadir-e-Khum” and explain why this place was important for travellers?
2. Why did the Prophet decide to break his journey at “Ghadir-e-Khum”?
3. The Prophet said he was leaving behind him “Two great things”. What were these two great things?
4. What was the most important thing that the Prophet did at ‘Ghadir-e-Khum’? What date was it?
5. The Prophet told those who were present to inform those who were not present. What was the message?
6. At ‘Ghadir-e-Khum’ there were two verses which were revealed to the Prophet: What are these two verses and at what different times were they revealed?
7. List any three ways by which Muslims celebrated “Eid-e-Ghadeer” in the presence of the Prophet.
8. Why was Harith B. Noamam unhappy? How did the Prophet respond to him? How did he behave? How and by whom was he punished?

9. Why is the event of Ghadir very important?
10. If somebody tells you that the event of Ghadir-e-Khum never took place. How would you prove to him that this event did take place?

CHAPTER 11

1. Why was Imam Ali (a.s.) absent when some Muslims met at “Sakifa Bani Saeda”?
2. Did Imam Ali (a.s.) accept Abu Bakr as the successor of the Prophet? Why?
3. Why did Imam Ali (a.s.) go to the Prophet’s grave in tears?
4. Why did Imam Ali (a.s.) keep quiet when his rights were taken away from him?
5. Why did Imam Ali (a.s.) come to the help of those who took away his rights from him?
6. After the death of Osman why was Imam Ali (a.s.) not ready to become caliph? What made him finally agree to become caliph?

CHAPTER 12

1. Why did Imam Ali (a.s.) decided to appoint new governors? Why did his friends advised him not to do so? What was his reply?
2. What were the main things that Imam Ali (a.s.) wanted to do as the caliph? Why were many people unhappy with Imam Ali’s ideas?
3. Explain why each of the following did not like Imam Ali (a.s.):
 - i. Aisha
 - ii. Talha
 - iii. Zubair
 - iv. Muawiya
4. Explain how the following played part in the Murder Osman:
 - i. Aisha
 - ii. Talha
 - iii. Zubair
 - iv. Muawiya.

5. Explain how Imam Ali (a.s.) tried to stop a battle with Aisha and her friends? Why couldn't he stop it?
6. Who started the "Battle of Jamal"? How did it end (Hint: What happened to Aisha and her friends?)
7. How did Imam Ali (a.s.) threaten Aisha at the end of the battle?

CHAPTER 14

1. Give two reasons why Imam Ali (a.s.) changed his capital from Medina to Kufa.
2. Give any two reasons why Muawiya had stronger support than Imam Ali (a.s.)
3. Who started the battle of Siffin? Why?
4. What part was played by the following in the battle of Siffin:
 - i. Ammar B. Yasir
 - ii. Malik B. Ashtar
 - iii. Amr B. Aas
 - iv. Ashas B. Quais
5. Why was the battle stopped when Imam Ali (a.s.) was about to win it?
6. What were the result of this battle?
7. Who wanted the arbitration panel? Who benefited from this panel? How? (Hint Muawiya or Imam Ali (a.s.)?)
8. What kind of person do you think Abu Musa Ash'ary was? How does he compare with Amr Aas?

CHAPTER 15

1. Who were the "Khawarij"?
2. What was the slogan of the "Khawarij"?
3. What was the main complain of the Khawarij against Imam Ali (a.s.)? In what way was this complain only an excuse to cause problems for Imam Ali (a.s.)?
4. Explain where and when did the "Battle of Neherwan" take place? Name the two parties which were fighting. Who were the leaders? Which party won? How?
5. How did the "Battle of Neherwan" affect Imam Ali's Army?

6. Muawiya benefited from the battle of Neherwan. Explain how this happened.

CHAPTER 16

1. When, where, how and why was Imam Ali (a.s.) martyred?
2. Who was responsible for Imam Ali's martyrdom?
3. Why has the place of Burial of Imam Ali (a.s.) kept secret? When did the secret end? Where is this place today?
4. Why should we all, if possible, pay visit to Imam Ali's grave?

CHAPTER 17

1. Why did the Banu Umayyah hate Imam Ali (a.s.)?
2. Why does Ibne Abil Hadid say that there can be no other person like Imam Ali (a.s.)?
3. What do we learn from Imam Ali's sermons, letters and sayings?
4. Why was Imam Ali (a.s.) called the 'Lion of God' and the 'Gate of Knowledge'?
5. What does "La Fata Illa Ali, La Saifa Illa Dhu-alFaqr" mean?
6. How did Imam Ali (a.s.) help us understand the Quran?
7. How did he help those who want to learn Arabic Grammar?
8. How did Imam Ali make Arabic literature beautiful?
9. In a few sentences explain what you understand by "Nahjul Balagha".
10. What must leaders who want to rule with justice do?

CHAPTER 18

1. When and where did Imam Ali (a.s.) marry Bibi Fatima? Name the children born from this marriage.
2. Write briefly about Muhammad Hanafia and Abbas, the sons of Imam Ali (a.s.).



ISBN 9976 956 77 0

Published and Printed by:
Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania
P.O.Box 20033
Dar es Salaam – Tanzania