

The Greatest Defender of Faith and Justice

Imam Ali(a.s.)



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BY

International Islamic Thought Forum, Lucknow

L-III/35, Sector -D, Aliganj, Lucknow.

Email: basharathussain.72@gmail.com

siraj_naiyer@yahoo.com

a.kausar@rediffmail.com

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Telephone: Nos: 0522 - 4060946, 2262081, 2329317, 6526679

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FOREWORD

In the Name of Allah Most Gracious, Most Merciful Ali a versatile genius, an elevated soul, an exalted personality and a perfect human being. This is the brief description of Ali's personality, which cannot be described in one book. Justice Thakur Prasad has written about him "As I gather from the history of Muslims and non-Muslims both, I find no personality parallel to the personality of Ali."

He was an eloquent speaker having richest course of wisdom. He was firmest in maintaining justice. He was a distinguished theologian and a unique scholar. No one can come to him in generosity, in bravery, in knowledge and in all human deeds. His pledge had been taken from the Prophets, his traits of character were well reputed and his birth was honorable.

In his philosophy of religion Ali says religion is a vital and positive force of life if there is an ardent love for knowledge, devotion to the cause of humanity and desire to improve the lot of man.

He further says that religion is baseless without knowledge. As Hazrat Imam Jafar- as-Sadiq(a.s.) defines knowledge: "Enlightenment of heart is its essence, Truth is its principal object, Inspiration is its guide, Reason is its acceptor, God is its Inspirer and words of man its utterances".

Further, according to Ali evolution of mind is the essence of life and religion is the essence of the evolution of mind. How correctly Ali taught us that a man without mind is not a man and a mind without religion is worst than the instinct of a beast more harmful and more dangerous. Devotion without understanding will not bring blessings of God, it is useless.

Ali attaches so much value to mind and its correct ways of grasping Truth. He further says 'your first leader and guide is your mind'. At another place he says that nothing is useful to man than his intelligence or there is nothing wealthier than wisdom or there is no greater bounty of the Lord than the intellect granted to you.

International Islamic Thought Forum has tried to incorporate various aspects of Maula Ali's personality which rarely found in a single book. It is our endeavor to highlight the spiritual and visionary characteristics of Maula Ali which should be followed by the readers in order to make their lives an extraordinary accomplishment.

Abbas Ahmad
President
International Islamic Thought Forum

IMAM ALI (a.s.)

“Your authority (wali) is God and His Apostle and those believers who perform the prayer and pay alms (zakat) while they are bowing (in prayers)”. Quran: V- 55.(There is consensus of Muslim scholars that no one except Ali paid alms while bowing (in prayer))

Ali (a.s.), as a man, who is subject to rules of nature, time and place, who tried his utmost to serve sacred principles and tried to live by those principles and for those principles, was “brothered” by the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w) from among all the Muslims. The Prophet never chose for himself any other man as a brother. And this title was the dearest to the heart of Ali that he used to mention his brotherhood to the Prophet after mentioning his servitude to the Almighty. And it was pleasing to the Holy Prophet to call Ali “My Brother”.

The Muslim scholars, Sunni and Shia, agree that Ali was the most knowledgeable in the Holy Quran and the teachings of the Prophet among all the Companions, because he was brought up by the Prophet according to his ethical standards; then he chose him from among all men to be his brother. A distinguished Islamic theologian, historian and author of Lebanon Imam Mohammad Jawad Chirri writes; “He(Ali) was the richest course of wisdom and the most eloquent speaker, the greatest defender of faith, the firmest in maintaining justice and the most selfless endeavourer in the way of God. These qualities are the Islamic `criteria of distinctions, for the Holy Quran announces that God prefers the endeavors in His way to the inactive; that those who know and those do not know are not equal, and it announces that the noblest among people in the sight of God are their most righteous.

This makes it very clear that the Sunni and the Shia do not only agree on all Islamic principles stated in the Holy Quran or in the authentic hadiths of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (s.a.w.) but also agree on the religious and the scholarly place of the Imam Ali in Islam. Therefore, when the Sunni and Shia differ, they do so only politically; for they differ on the political-religious aspects rather than the Imam Ali’s religious and scholarly place in Islam”.

“While they agree that Ali was a righteous Caliph who came to power through a popular election, they disagree on whether he was, in addition to this, a Caliph by the Prophet’s selection. (Sunni scholars ignoring and out rightly rejecting the historical event of declaration of the Holy Prophet at Ghadir)”

Ironically, Imam Ali’s role, an important matter pertaining to his political-religious place in Islamic history, in founding the “Islamic State” was never mentioned clearly nor was a subject of a serious discussion among the historians and scholars of history. It is the duty of all Muslims to discuss and know Ali’s spiritual relationship to the Prophet of Islam, his contribution in establishing the Islamic State and the spread of the Faith of Islam.

HIS BIRTH:

According to traditions Ali was born under unusual circumstances in Holy Kaaba(the House of God) on the 13th of ‘Rajab’ in the 28th year of

The Elephant Era (Aamul Feel), which corresponds to 599 or 600 C.E/A.D. Some scholars have mentioned his birth on 21st March, 599 A.D. The Christian Viceroy of Yemen, Abraha, along with a huge army consisting of elephants, invaded Mecca with the intention of destroying the Kaaba, and shifting the centre of pilgrimage from Kaaba to Yemen. The invasion failed and the Christian army had to be at a retreat without achieving its object. That marked the retreat of Christianity from the heartland of Arabia and paved the way for the rise of Islam. Anyhow Ali was at the junction of the two centuries, the sixth and the seventh.

Ali was the son of Abu Talib, custodian of the Holy Kaaba and a prominent Quraish Chief. The mother of Ali was Fatima, daughter of Asad who was a son of Hashim. Fatima was cousin of Abu Talib. Both the father and mother of Ali were Hashimites and that was a great honor.

At the time of his birth his father and his cousin, Prophet Mohammad (a.s.) were out of Mecca; his mother gave him the names of 'Asad' and 'Hayder', when his father returned he called him 'Zayd'. But when the Holy Prophet (a.s.) came back to the city he took his young cousin and gave him the name of 'Ali', saying that it was the name decreed for him by Allah.

Ali was martyred at Kufa at the age of 62 years on 21st Ramadan 40 A.H. (28th February, 661A.D.)

CHILDHOOD

Ali was being prepared by Prophet (s.a.w.) for the Islamic State since the days of his childhood and as such he had the exclusive honor of having the strong tie to the great Messenger who took him to himself during the days of his childhood as a member of his own family. The Prophet directed the child's clear mind and illuminated nature towards the truth. He saturated him from the strength of his faith, knowledge, wisdom and purity. At the hands of that teacher, Ali grew and his qualities developed. He became mirror reflecting the lights of the Prophet. He arrived in his spiritual ascendance to a degree by which he became able to hear and see what the Messenger was hearing and seeing at the days of the commencement of his Prophethood. "Ali, you have attained a very eminent place. You see what I see and you hear what I hear"; the Holy Prophet (a.s.) told Ali. Thus the strong tie between Ali's endeavors and the birth of the Islamic State was not a product of chance. It was, rather, the product of spiritual evolution started at an early stage of his life.

ALI: Member of house of the holy prophet

All Muslims glorify the Members of the House of the Holy Prophet Mohammad who are called 'Ahl-e-Bait Mohammad' or 'Aal-e-Mohammad' or Aal-e-Rasool. This is in accordance with the Quranic instructions and with the instructions of Holy Prophet who commanded Muslims to pray simultaneously for the members of his House whenever they pray for him. By so commanding them, he actually required the Muslims to reserve a place for them next to his. And when instructing his followers on a religious matter, the Messenger of God did not speak out of his human desire, as the Quran says: "Nor does he (Mohammad) say (aught about religion) of (his own) desire. It is not but a revelation sent to him". (Ch.53, verse : 4-50). the

inclusion of the members of the House of Mohammad in prayers for him is not due to their blood-relationship. If so, it would not be in accordance with the Quranic principles. Being related or unrelated to the Prophet is not a matter of personal choice. None of us chose before our birth to be related or unrelated to a particular family, nationality or race.

It is important to know that the word Aal-e-Mohammad, which is repeatedly mentioned in the daily prayers, does not include all his relations. Only a very small number of them are included. Had they all been included, it would be a clannish or a tribal discrimination because many of them did not walk in the path of Mohammad, and to place them above others is to advocate a clannish supremacy. Kinship to the Prophet Mohammad does not mean acceptance by God; nor does it secure for his relatives a place in Paradise or insure them against Divine punishment. The truth is that the word 'Aal-e-Mohammad' means only the "chosen" relatives of Mohammad. These chosen individuals are not chosen nor honored because of their relationship to Mohammad, but because of their virtues. They live in true Islamic life, followed the instructions of the Holy Quran and the Messenger, and never parted with them in word or deed. And so chosen at Mubahila.

All Muslims agree that Ali, Fatimah(the Lady of Light) and their two children, the dearest Children of the Messenger, Hasan and Husain, are from the chosen members of the House of Mohammad and that they are included in our prayers for him. The Messenger of God said to Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husain: "I am at peace with whomever you are at peace; and I am at war with whomever you are at war".(Ibn Majah, Sunan Ibn Majah, Hadith No. 145). On another occasion the Messenger said: "The example of the Members of my House is like that of Noah's Ark. Whoever embarked on it was safe, and whoever failed to embark was drowned....."(Al Hakim, Sahih Al Mustadrak, Part-3 p. 151)

The Prophet also said: "I am leaving for you two precious and weighty symbols that 'if you adhere to BOTH OF THEM you shall not go astray after me'. They are the Book of Allah and my progeny, that is my Ahlul-Bayt. These two shall not separate from each other till they come to me by the Pool (of Paradise)". (Ref. Sahi Tirmize , vol. 5 pp. 662,663,328) . This has been narrated by 30 companions). "Do not be ahead of them(Ahlul-Bayt) for you will perish, do not turn away from them for you will perish, and do not try to teach them since they know more than you".; said Prophet Mohammad(s.a.w.).

Just as it is impossible for any Muslims to turn away from the Holy Quran or to adopt set of rules which is at variance with it, so when the Ahlul-Bayt have been unequivocally described as equal in weight and importance to the Holy Quran, the same attitude has to be adopted with regard to their orders, and it cannot be permissible to turn away from them in order to follow any other persons.

"Whosoever wished to live and die like me and enter that heaven(after death), which my Lord has promised me, namely the everlasting heaven should acknowledge "Ali"(a.s.) as his patron after me, and after him, he should acknowledge the sons of Ali, because they are the people who will never leave you outside the door of guidance, nor will they let you enter the

door of misguidance”: the Prophet insisted.(Ref. Kanz-al-Ummal, by al-Muttaqi al Hindi vol. 6, p. 155 - Tradition 2578, and Musnad of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal - vol. 5, page 32) In Mustadrak Hakim there is a Hadith from the Prophet (s.a.w) - He said : “My Ahlul-Bayt are the protected place of refuge about the dispute in religion”

The Holy Quran makes it explicitly clear that the love of Aal-e-Mohammad is an Islamic duty. “That is (the bounty) whereof God gives glad tidings to His servants who believe and do righteous deeds. Say: No reward do I ask of you for this except the love of (my) near kins. And if any one earns good deeds, We shall give him an increase of good in respect thereof; God is Oft-Forgiving. Most ready to appreciate (service).” (Chapter 42 verse - 23).

The House of Mohammad (s.a.w.) can be means of unity to the Muslims. This unity can be realized when Muslims take the attitude which God and His Messenger wanted them to take towards these people. It would be erroneous for the Muslims to separate Mohammad from the Members of his House while he himself wanted to be united with them. A man’s Itrah(close relative and progeny) is his close relatives(by birth) and his progeny. By this definition, the wives of the Prophet and his companions from the non-Hashimites are excluded. The members of the House of the Prophet are the ones who possess certain special qualifications; such as (1) they are true allies of the Quran who will never part from it. Thus impious men and women would be disqualified from the House of the Messenger; (2) the members are secured against disagreement with the Book of God. Such a security cannot exist without a profound knowledge in the Quran and all the Islamic teachings. Those who have limited knowledge in religion are excluded, even though they are close related to Mohammad (s.a.w.), because they are bound by their very lack of knowledge to fall intentionally or unintentionally into disagreement with all Quran. (3) The knowledge of the Aal-e-Mohammad is a knowledge of certainty rather than knowledge of conjecture; otherwise, they would have parted in many cases with the Holy Quran. Ali was with the Prophet from the time of his childhood until the time of the death of the Prophet. He was his trusted disciple and close associate and was his keen-minded student who attended his public as well as his private teaching. “Whenever the war became bloody and the Companions were unwilling to flight, the Messenger put the members of his House in the front, protecting his Companions through them from the heat of the swords and spears”. (Imam Ali’s message to Muawiyah in Nahjul-Balagha).

By commanding the Muslims to follow the Book of God and the Members of his House and by declaring that Ali, Fatimah, Hasan and Husain are the members of his House, the Holy Prophet actually placed Ali and his two sons at the seat of leadership of the Umma not only for that period but till “the day of judgment.” Thus, the two sons did not need to be appointed by their father, and Husain (a.s.) did not need to be appointed by his brother Hasan (a.s.).

IMPORTANCE OF IMAMATE (LEADERSHIP) IN ISLAM

“We have chosen from among them Imams who at Our command shall guide men to the right path, for they are patient and steadfast and have certain knowledge of Our signs”. (Quran - (32:24)

“God creates and chooses whatever He wishes, and men have no right to choose in opposition to His choice”. Quran: (28: 67 & 68)

In the world where our existence unfolds, we have never heard or seen an organization or administration that is left to its own devices without a supervisor being responsible for it. Human reason and intelligence cannot accept that social institutions be without a leader or ruler, and no thinker will approve of an organizational formula that lacks a responsible leader. Given that reason and logic emphasize the necessity of a responsible leader for even the smallest unit, how can humanity as a whole attain the basic goals to which it aspires or acquire the lofty values of which it is worthy, without a leader and chief?

Now the Creator, within the system of creation, has not withheld anything that may be needed for any being to advance and attain a fitting degree of perfection; He has placed the necessary means and tools at the disposal of all things, and given to each part of every animate being and plant exactly what it needs. How then can it be believed that in the system of legislation for the human being He should overlook the sending of Prophets and after them Imams (leaders), who play such a sensitive and multifaceted role in the evolution of the human being, or that He should remain indifferent to the fundamental pillar? Furthermore, any intelligent person cannot accept that the vast scheme of being, with all the wonder inducing manifestations of life should be based on aimlessness and purposelessness. It is not possible to attribute such an irrational act to the sublime Creator. It is an indubitable scientific principle that purposiveness is the concomitant of all life, thought and will. It is not possible that a wise being should consciously undertake an action in which no goal or purpose resides.

Furthermore a God who holds back nothing in order for every creature to attain its perfection cannot possibly be indifferent to the human being's attaining the degree of perfection suitable to him on the contrary just as He guides the human being to material perfection by means of his instincts, He guides him to his true perfection both by means of the innate guidance of his nature and by means of legislative guidance, for innate guidance needs help when confronting the instincts. The Quran says: “We will give help to both groups, those who worship the world and those who seek the hereafter, so that none should remain deprived of the favor and generosity of their Lord”.(17 : 18)

After the above background we come to the fundamental pillar of Islam i.e. IMAM. The Imam is, with respect to the masses composing the “Ummah”, the leader and exemplar from whose intellectual power and insight those traveling towards God benefit, whose conduct and mode of life they imitate, and to whose commands they submit. Imamate has a broad and comprehensive sense that includes both intellectual authority and political

leadership. After the death of the Prophet, the Imam was entrusted with the guardianship of his accomplishments and the continuation of his leadership, in order to teach men the truths of the Quran and religion and ordinances concerning society; in short, he was to guide them in all dimensions of their existence.

Such leadership, exercised in its true and proper form, is nothing other than the realization of the goals of Islam and the implementation of its precepts, precepts established by the Messenger of God; it bestows objective existence on the ideal of forming a community and codifying a law for its governance. Imamate and leadership are sometimes understood in a restricted sense to refer to the person who is entrusted with exclusively social or political leadership. However, the spiritual dimension of man is connected intimately with the mission of religion, and the true and veritable Imam is that exalted person who combines in himself intellectual authority and political leadership; who stands at the head of Islamic society to convey people the divine laws that exist in every sphere and to implement them; and who preserves the collective identity and the human dignity of the Muslims from decline and corruption. In addition, the Imam is one whose personality, already in this world, has a divine aspect; his dealing with God and man, his implementation of all the devotional, ethical and social precepts of God's religion, furnish a complete pattern and model for imitation. It is the Imam who guides the movement of men towards perfection. It is therefore incumbent on all believers to follow him in all matters, for he is a living exemplar for the development of the 'self' and of society and his mode of life is the best specimen of virtue for the Islamic community.

Imamate is a kindness from Allah to His people that He does not give except to His loyal slaves whom He has tried by faith, and purified from all kinds of injustice and defects. Imamate is an affair from the affairs of the Islamic life without Imamate the Islamic life does not go on properly, not only because it runs the religious life, but also it runs the economical, political and social life, and achieves to the nation independency and freedom and secures safety, ease and peace. Perhaps, the most important reason behind the need to Imamate is to make 'spiritual powers' dominate and to spread virtue and good between people and resist bad tendencies of selfishness, haughtiness, greed, envy and other kinds of deviations.

The Imamate in the view of the Shia is a form of divine governance, an office depending on appointment just like Prophethood, something God bestows on exalted persons. The difference is that the Prophet is the founder of the religion and the school of thought that proceeds from it, whereas the Imam has the function of guarding and protecting God's religion, in the sense that people have the duty of following in all dimensions of their life, the spiritual values and mode of conduct of the Imams.

At the time of the death of the Messenger of God, the Islamic nation had not reached the cultural or intellectual level that would have permitted it to continue its development towards perfection without guardianship and oversight. The program that Islam had established for the development and elevation of man would have remained soulless and incomplete unless the

principle of Imamate had been joined to it; Islam would have been unable to play its precious role in the liberation of man and the blossoming of his talents. Fundamental Islamic texts proclaim that if the principle of Imamate is subtracted from Islam, the spirit of the laws of Islam and the progressive, monotheistic society based on them would be lost; nothing would remain but a lifeless form.

The Prophet of Islam (s.a.w) said: “Whosoever dies without recognizing the Imam of his time dies the death of the “Jahiliyyah”. The reason for this is that during, Jahiliyyah - pre-Islamic era of ignorance - the people were polytheists; they knew nothing of either monotheism or of Prophethood. This categorical declaration by the Prophet shows the importance that he assigned to the Imamate, to the degree that if someone fails to place his spiritual life beneath the protective cover of a perfected ruler he is equivalent to one whose whole life was spent in the ‘Jahiliyyah’ and then went unredeemed to his death.

An important point in this context must also be noted that Imamate and Caliphate are inseparable, in just the same way that the governmental functions of the Messenger of God cannot be separated from his prophetic office. Spiritual Islam and Political Islam are two parts of a single whole. However, in the course of Islamic history, political power did become separated from the spiritual Imamate, and the political dimension of religion was separated from its spiritual dimension.

The great spiritual and revolutionary Allamah Ruhulla Khomeini , describing the spiritual aspect of the guidance of Holy Prophet and Imam Ali(a.s.), writes in his famous book “Aadab-us-Salat”(The Discipline of the Prayers - Ch.Four - titled ‘Some Discipline of Testifying to the (Prophet’s) Messengership Implying - Testifying to the Guardianship); “Beware that this spiritual journey and faithful ascension cannot be made with this broken legs, ruptured reins, blind eyes and lightless heart. “And whomever Allah has not given light, for him there is no light”.(Surah: Nur: 40). Therefore, in setting off upon this spiritual road and ascending to this gnostic’miraj’, it is must to adhere to the spiritual state of the guides along the ways of knowledge and the lights of the road of guidance, who are the devotees and the attainess to Allah. Scientifically speaking, to connect between the novel(hadiths) and the Eternal (qadim), the Changing and the Unchanging, there should be an ‘intermediate’, a connector, with the characteristic of being unchanging and changing, eternal and novel. Without such an intermediate, the Emanation of the Eternal and the Unchanging would not pass to the changing and the novel in divine law, and the universal and existential connection would not take place. it is the very position of the spirituality and the guardianship of the Seal of the Prophets, which is united with the position of Ali’s General Guardianship. Similarly, in ascending spiritual connection -- which is the opposite of the descending existential connection, or in other words, it is “the Contraction of existence”(Qabze Wujud) and returning to the Beginning -- there is need for an intermediate, without which it does not take place, and the connection of the imperfect and the chained hearts, and of the limited descending spirits, with the Complete, Super Complete and the Absolute from all

aspects, is not implemented without the spiritual intermediates and the Invisible Connectors”. In Wasa’ilush-Shi’ah there is a Chapter concerning that worship is invalid without adhering to the guardianship of the Twelve Imams and believing in their Imamate.

Allamah Khomeini further describes that :”The Messenger of Allah(s.a.w.) is the means of Allah’s Emanation and the Connection between Allah and the creatures..... He is the light mentioned in the ‘ayah’ of ‘Nur’. When the greatness of the legislator of the religion and of the Messenger of the Lord of the worlds enters a man’s heart, the importance of his precepts and rules enter the hearts too. Then, when the heart has comprehended the greatness, the other visible and invisible powers would submit to it, and the sacred “shariah” would be observed in the entire human kingdom. The sign of the truthfulness of the testimony (of the Messenger) is that its effects will appear in all the invisible and visible powers, and they will keep adherent to it.....the testimony (of Messengership) is the announcement to the mundane and the heavenly powers that the ‘salat’(Namaz), which is the reality of the ascension (miraj) of the believers, is the result of the complete revelation (kashf) of Muhammad (s.a.w.), who attained to a position “ at the distance of two bows or closer still”.(Proximity of the One is the original innate objective)

In the divine sciences it has been proved that the return of all beings is implemented by means of the Perfect Man. the final absolute Messengership is the big divine vicegerency and succession”. “Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said: When anyone of you says: ‘There is no god But Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah,’ let him say: ‘Ali is the Commander (Leader) of the believer”.(Al-Ihtijaj, vol. 1, p.230) the truth of the ‘khilafah’ and ‘wilayah’(successorship and guardianship) is the manifestation of divinity, which is the origin of existence and its perfection. Every being which has a share of existence, also has a share of the truth of divinity and its manifestation, which is the truth of the “khilafah” and “walayah”.”

ALI: THE TRUE IMAM

The Messenger of God (s.a.w.) said: “Every prophet has a legatee (wasiyy) and an heir (warith), and Ali is my legatee and heir”. (Ref. Ibn Asakir, al-Tarikh, vol. III, Pg. 5)

This reality cannot be denied that all good powers in the world are based on the faith in Allah, because this is the only way that protects the world from destruction and disasters of wars. The faith in Allah is the strongest weapon on the earth that keeps the world safe from misfortunes. In the eyes of the Holy Quran, (20:124), a man who forgets his Lord lives a straitened life even though in our eyes he may be living most luxuriously. Allah says: “And whosoever turns away from My remembrance, his shall surely be a straitened life.”(20:124). “There is no truth on earth but ‘monotheism’ and following tenets of Islam and there is no way for salvation of mankind but rule of Islam over mankind”, said Dr. Ahmadinijad in a meeting with Afghan Sunni and Shia Ulema in Iranian Embassy in Kabul. Imam Ali (a.s.) cared much for this side and raised the banner of faith high and struggled in the way of Allah too hardly. He invited people (and for future generation gave a thought) to ponder on the creation of everything in the world that leads to the inevitable faith, good morals and high qualities and warned to evil tendencies that lead to backwardness and deterioration. He invited towards spiritual nourishment that purifies the soul from the dregs of ignorance and pride. Imam al-Hadi- Mohammad Taqi(a.s.) praised the ‘jihad’ of his fathers in the fields of faith and the invitation to Allah in his Ziyarah called “al-Jamiah” saying : “Peace be on the propagandists to Allah, the absorbed in the love of Allah, the loyal in monotheism (unity of God) , the manifestors of the mission of Allah. You honored His glory, exalted His standing , glorified His generosity, kept His mention, assured His covenant, confirmed His obedience, were sincere to Him secretly and openly, called unto His way with wisdom and good exhortation, sacrificed your “selves” to please Him, were patient with what afflicted you for Him, offered prayers, gave zakat, enjoined the good, forbade the wrong, struggled truly in the way of Allah until you announced His mission, declared His obligations, spread His laws, fixed His verdicts, and became by that in the eye of His contentment, submitted to His fate, and believed in His past prophets.”

Imam Ali (a.s.) during his pious life had opened many sections of knowledge and sciences.(Al-Aqqad says about thirty two sciences). It was Ali who had informed about the technological progress and scientific development that would appear on the stage of life. He said: “A time will come where the people in the East can see the people of the West, and people in the West can see the people in the East.....A time will come where the people in the East can hear the people of the West, and the people in West can hear the people of the East.”

“A time will come to people where iron will move”: Ali said. Now it is true and a fact in the present world.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) presented the message of Islam in the “dawat dhu’l ashira”(Feast of the clan) and also introduced Ali as “my brother, my successor, and my caliph”. And then just a few month before his death, in

the biggest gathering of his life, at GHADEER, THE Prophet of Islam clearly appointed Ali as the “mawla” (the master, the leader) of the “Umma”(Muslim Community). In between the ‘dawat’ and Ghadeer Khumm, the Prophet introduced Ali to the people in various occasions. The appointment of Ali (a.s.) for “Imamate” and “Khilafat” was explicit and clear. A renowned scholar Syed Saeed Akhtar Rivzi wrote in “The Vicegerency of the Prophet” - Part - II (that) “The first open declaration of Ali’s Caliphate was made at the time of “Feast of the Clan” when Ali was only ten years old. The Prophet declared; “O my people! This Ali is my brother, my successor and my caliph amongst you. Listen to him and obey him.” He further writes: “It is interesting to note here that the Leiden edition (1879 A.D. page 1173) of “al-Tarikh of al- Tabari’ records the words of the Holy Prophet as “wasiyyi wa khalifati”(my successor and my caliph): but in the Cairo edition of 1963 A.D., (which claims to be checked with the Leiden edition) these important words have been changed to “kadha wa kadha” (so-and-so). How sad it is to see the academic world sacrificing its honesty and integrity on the altar of political expediency!”

Imam Muhammad Baqir (a.s.) said to his companion, Mohammad ibn Muslim,; “Know, O Muhammad, that the leaders of despotism and their followers are isolated from Allah’s religion. They are misleading and misled. So, their deeds are like the ashes at which a violent wind blows on a windy day and it disperses them.” (al-Kafi). Imam Baqir said : “ If a man spent his nights performing the ‘salat’, spent his days fasting, gave out all his wealth in charity, and went to hajj every year of his life, yet he did not know the guardianship of Allah’s friend to follow him and return to him in all his deeds, he would have no right to ask Allah, the Glorious and Almighty, for any award, nor would he be of the people of faith.” (Usullul Kafi : Vol. 3, p. 30., Ch. On “The Pillars of Islam” - Hadith No. 5)

SHIISM : THE RELIGION OF LOVE

“Despite the vast amount of information and the number of factual details assembled during the past century by Western scholarship in the fields of orientation and comparative religion, many gaps still exist in the knowledge of the various religion of the world, even on the level of historical facts. Moreover, until recently most of the studies carried out within those fields have suffered from a lack of metaphysical penetration and sympathetic insight. One of the most notable omissions in Western studies of the religions of East, and of Islam in particular, has occurred in the case of ‘Shiism’. Until now Shiism has received little attention; and when it has been discussed, it has usually been relegated to the secondary and peripheral status of a religio-political “sect”, heterodoxy or even hearsay Shiism is and has been a living reality in both its doctrinal and historical aspects.Shiism exists as an important historical reality within Islam and hence it must be studied as an objective religious fact. Further, the very attacks made against Islam and its unity by certain Western authors (who point to the Sunni-Shiite division and often fail to remember the similar divisions within every other world religion) necessitate a detailed and at the same time authentic study of Shiism within the total context of Islam. Many Sunni and Shiite ‘ulema’ are seeking in every way possible to avoid confrontation with each other in order to safeguard the unity of Islam in a secularized world which threatens Islam from both the outside and the insideIt (Shiism) was not a movement that in anyway destroyed the Unity of Islam, but one that added to the richness of the historical deployment and spread of the Quranic message. And despite its exclusiveness, it contains within its forms the Unity which binds all aspects of Islam together.....Shiism was already contained as a seed in the Holy Quran and in the earliest manifestations of the revelation, and belongs to the totality of Islamic orthodoxy.” (writes Seyyed Hossein Nasr in the preface, of the book “Shia”, captioned “The Study of Shiism”.)

Right from the time of the Prophet, who laid the basis of Shia sect there has been the whispering of love; when we hear from the Prophet: “Ali and his party (Shiah) will be the triumphant ones.” This is one of the greatest marks of distinction of “Shiism” over other sects due to its foundation and its bedrock of ‘love’. We see that there was a group around Ali(a.s.) who were devoted to him, extremely fond of him and most affectionately drawn towards him. Thus Shiism is the religion of love and devotion: taking Ali as one’s friend is the way of love. The element of love has completely penetrated Shiism, and the history of Shiism is joined in name with a chain of entirely unknown people, devoted, full of love and self-sacrificing. Although Ali administered the Divine Law, they did not turn away from him and their love for him did not diminish in the slightest.

Ali is the standard and criterion for assaying human natures and temperaments: he who has a sound nature and a pure temperament will never take offence at Ali, even though his sword may come down on his head, while he who has a diseased nature will never show any attachment to him, even if he does him great favors, for Ali is nothing but the embodiment of “truth”.

What is the effect to true love? It awakens sleeping powers, and frees chained and fettered forces, just like the splitting of the atom and the freeing of atomic power. It fires with inspiration and builds heroes - how many poets, philosophers and artists there have been who were created by a strong and powerful love. Love perfects the soul and brings out astounding latent abilities. From the point of view of the powers of perception, it inspires, and from the point of view of the emotions, it strengthens the will and determination, and when it rises to its highest aspect it brings miracles and supernatural events into existence. It purifies the spirit from the tempers and humors of the body; or in other words, love is a cathartic, it purges the base qualities arising from egotism, or from coldness and lack of warmth, such as envy, avarice, cowardice, laziness, conceitedness and self-admiration.

The effect of love in the body is the complete opposite of what it is in the spirit. In the body love is the cause of ruination, and the reason for indisposition and disorder in the digestive and the nervous system; but in connection with the spirit it is not so - it depends on the object of love and how the person responds to that object: it produces strength, compassion, serenity, singleness of purpose and determination and abolishes weakness, meanness, annoyance, uncollectedness and dullness. It removes confusions which are called "dassa" in the Quran (91:10), meaning adulterations of purity with impurity, destroys deceit and purifies the cheat. It must be kept in mind that a man is weak until he has outside his own "self". As soon as he takes a step outside his "self" and break down his defensive barriers, the ugly habits and qualities are also destroyed.

When affection for an individual or a thing reaches the summit of intensity so that it conquers man's

Existence and becomes the absolute ruler over his being, it is called 'love'. Love is the peak of affection and the sentiments. But sentiments, in their reality and essence, differ from the passion; these are noble sentiments in the language of Quran. "love and mercy".(30:21). In Sura Rum, 30:21 Quran says: "And He has sent between you love and compassion". A man said to Imam-as-Sadiq (a.s.): We have named our children after you and your fathers; will this action be of any benefit to us?" Imam said: "Yes, by God; is the religion (Islam) other than love?" Then Imam gave the verse "If you love Allah, follow me, and Allah will love you, and forgive you your sins", as evidence.(Quran : Surah Al - Imran: 3:31)

Whether Islam and the Quran have chosen some one we should love or not? Quran says; "I do not ask of you a wage for this, except love for (my) relatives (Aal - or - Itrah)". (ash-Shura : 42:23). In Sura Saba, 34:47 Quran says: "I have asked no wage of you; that shall be yours. My wage falls only upon God". Love and devotion to the Members of the House of Prophet brings no other result apart from obedience to the truth and adherence to virtues. "Zamakhshari" relates in his Quranic exegesis, "al- Kash-shaf": "When this verse was sent down they said: O Messenger of Allah! Who are the relatives to whom our love is due?" He said: "Ali and Fatimah and their sons". Thus friendship and love of them is obligatory on all the community. Ali was the most loved person before God and the Prophet, and thus naturally the best of those who are loved.

STRUGGLE AGAINST HYPOCRISY AND NARROW-MINDEDNESS

Hypocrisy:- The most difficult struggle is the one against hypocrisy, for it is the struggle against the cunning who use the stupid of their weapon. This fight is several degrees more difficult than the fight with unbelief, because, in the battle with unbelief, the struggle is against an unconcealed, open and unhidden current, while the struggle against hypocrisy is in fact a struggle against concealed unbelief. Hypocrisy has two faces: one is outward face - Islam and Muslim; the other inward - unbelief and evil. It is very difficult for the ordinary people to spot this latter aspect, and sometimes impossible; and thus the struggle with hypocrisy ends in failure because the great majority of people cannot extend the reach of their perception beyond outward forms and the hidden does not become apparent. They do not have a long enough range to penetrate the depths of the inward nature of things.

Amir-al- Muminin Ali (a.s.) wrote in the letter he sent to Muhammad ibn Abi- Bakr: "The Messenger of Allah said to me: 'I do not fear for my community from the believer or the unbeliever. As the believer, Allah will protect him because of his belief, and, as for the unbeliever, Allah will humiliate him because of his unbelief. But I fear about every one of you who is a 'hypocrite' in his heart and learned in speech. He speaks what you can accept, but he does what you cannot accept". The Prophet here points out the danger in hypocrisy and the hypocrite, because the majority of people is uninformed and unaware and is taken in by outward appearances. Care must be taken over the fact that with every bit that stupidity increases, the way opens further for hypocrisy. The struggle with the stupid and stupidity is the struggle with hypocrisy too, for the stupid is the tool in the hands of the hypocrites. Naturally the struggle with the foolish and with foolishness is to disarm the hypocrites, and take the sword out of their hands.

NARROW-MINDEDNESS: During the short reign of Ali's rule, he had to face a group of Muslims who called everyone irreligious and whose one of the special characteristics was narrow-mindedness and shortsightedness. They are known as Khawarij in Islamic history. Ali asked the Khawariji that if he had gone wrong and as a result of that he had become an infidel; but why then did they condemn the Muslim community as infidels? Did that mean that because someone had gone astray the others too were necessarily lost in error and should be called to account? He asked them why they carried their swords on their shoulders, and subjected the sinless and the sinners alike to the edge of their swords. Ali (a.s) objected to them on two accounts. One was that they had generalized the sin to those who were guiltless, and had taken them to account for it, and the other was that they deemed the perpetrator of sin as necessarily an infidel and outside of Islam, that is they had restricted the extent of Islam and said that anyone who stepped beyond the limits of some of the prescriptions of Islam had stepped out of Islam.

As such Ali condemned the narrow-mindedness and the shortsighted, and in reality the struggle of Ali with the Khawarij was a struggle with this way

of thinking not a struggle with individuals. For, if these individuals had not thought in this way, Ali would not have struggled with them so that these ideas would die with them that the Quran would be correctly understood, and the Muslims would understand Islam and Quran as they are and as their Law-maker wished.

The result of this shortsightedness and crooked thinking was that they were taken in by politics of holding the Quran up on spears, and thereby created the greatest of dangers for Islam (the Wahabis of the present time are also following the path of Khawarij). Ali had to deal with them. The conflict with Khawarij was an ominous event which happened to the Muslim Community at Naharwan. Due to the short-sightedness, the Khawarij practically refused to recognize other Muslim as Muslims, refused to recognize the animals they slaughtered as lawful food, recognized the spilling of their blood as lawful and marriage with them as prohibited. (Note: there are so many 'fatwas' of Wahabi Ulema on the line of Khawarij against other Muslim sects who do not follow their mis-interpretations of Quran and Hadiths of the Holy Prophet). They were ignorant and unknowing people, and because of their ignorance and lack of knowledge they could not understand realities, and wrongly interpreted events. Gradually this wrapped understanding of things took the form of a religion or faith in the process of establishing which they exerted themselves to their greatest self-sacrifice.

WHO ARE KHAWARIJ ? : The word 'Khawarij', that is, 'rebels' comes from 'Khuruj', which means 'revolt' and 'insurrection'. This group came into being during the process of arbitration at the battle of Siffin when fighting turned out in favor of Ali (a.s.) and with the intention to create confusion Muawiyah ordered his army to raise up Quran on the points of spears to show that they were people of prayers and the Quran, and that the Book should be used to arbitrate between the two sides. The proposal of arbitration before the start of battle had been placed by Ali but it was not accepted. With an intention to find a way to save and rescue themselves from sure defeat Muawiyah placed proposal of arbitration for settlement of dispute. Ali warned that the enemies want to protect themselves behind the words and writing of the Quran and afterwards carry on in their same old anti-Quranic way. They were using the paper and the writing of the Quran as an excuse to destroy its truth and meaning

.A group of indiscriminating, unknowing persons, who formed a sizeable proportion called out: "Should we fight against the Quran?" Ali said: "I also say I am fighting for the Quran. But they have no connection with the Quran. They have put up the words and writing of the Quran as a means to save their own souls". However, the ignorant and uninformed drew down a black curtain in front of their minds and kept out the truth. This group pressured Ali by saying they would attack from behind, at the moment when only an hour was needed to secure a victory; Malik-al-Ashtar, who was a brave, devoted and unselfish officer of Ali had thus gone out to destroy the pavilion of Muawiyah's command and to clear the path of Islam of obstacles.

After the failure of arbitration and not understanding where their error lay, Khawarij set to work as a religious sect. At the beginning they were a

rebellious and mutinous group and were called “Khawarij”, but they gradually drew up basic beliefs for themselves and created a “party” that only had a political colouring to begin with but which step by step assumed the form of a religious group, taking on a religious colouring. Afterwards the Khawarij moved into action as a vehemently propagandist group as supporters of a ‘religious sect’. They eventually got the idea that they had discovered a worldly, corrupt root in Islam, (at present time like Al-Qaida), and they come to the conclusion that ‘Uthman’, Ali and Muawiyah were all in error and sin. They decided that they had to struggle against this corruption that had come into existence, and they gave it the name of “bidding to good and forbidding evil”. Thus the Khawarij sect came into existence under this banner.

THE DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE KHAWARJI:

The spirit of the Khawarij is a very special one. They were mixture of the ugly and the beautiful, and as a whole, were such as to take their place in the end among the enemies of Ali. Ali's personality "repulsed" them, it did not attract them. Below are some positive and beautiful aspects and the negative and ugly aspects of their spirit, which when combined, made them dangerous and even horrifying.

They had the spirit of struggle and self-sacrifice, and they strived valiantly in the way of their beliefs and ideas.

They were people of worship and devotion; they spent their nights in prayers and were without any desire for the world and its charms.

They were strictly obedient to the laws and outward practices of Islam; they never put their hands to anything they considered a sin. They had their own principles and standards, and they never mixed these with principles against their own; they showed their disgust with anyone who was tainted with sin.

Ali (a.s.) said: "Do not kill any Khawarij after me, because one who seeks the truth and errs is not the same as one who seeks falsehood and find it". He meant that they were different from those around

Muawiyah, for they wanted truth, but had fallen into error, whereas those around Muawiyah were imposters from the start whose way was that of falsehood. Thus, if they were to kill the Khawarij after Ali had gone it would be to the advantage of Muawiyah who was worse and more dangerous than them. Imam Baqir (a.s.) (the fifth Imam) states that his great grandfather - Imam Ali - never labelled those who fought him with infidelity or hypocrisy, but used to say ; "they are our brethren who mutinied against us." This was the dealings of Ali with those who took up arms and practice terrorism. Imam Ali did not only endeavor to promote the culture of coexistence, but rather relentlessly contributed to creating an environment of awareness and understanding on individual and social levels in order to facilitate a positive and continuous coexistence.

The story of the Khawarij is one of the most edifying lessons for the history of Muslims and Shiism in particular, and for the world of Islam in general. Ali was himself aware of the importance and the exceptional nature of what action he took in these circumstances, as he recounted when he said: I have put out the eye of revolt. No-one had the daring to do this except me when its gloom had surged up and its rabidity had become severe. Ali said that Khawarij behaved like rabid dogs; they were not curable; they bit and infected and regularly added to the number of cases of rabies. This is why wise people will immediately kill a rabid dog; so that at least they can save others from the danger of rabies.

Apart from Ali and his insight and firm faith, no-one of the Muslims, who believed in God, the Prophet and the Resurrection dared to unsheathe their swords against them. Only someone who did not believe in God and Islam could have dared to kill this kind of people, not the ordinary believer. It was Ali and Ali only who realized the great danger that was pointing from the direction of these Khawarijs towards Islam. It was Ali who understood

that if they got a footing everyone would be afflicted with their blight that the world of Islam would become inflexible, adhering to the external aspects, superficial and fossilized, that Islam's back would become bent. Is it not this that the Prophet mentioned: 'Two groups will break my back - those who know but act recklessly, and those who are ignorant but profess piety'. "Ali wanted to say that if he had not fought against the Kharijite movement in the Islamic world, no other person would have come forward and dared to fight against

them. Apart from him there was no-one who saw that those whose foreheads were calloused by excessive prostrations were pious and religious men but a barrier in the way of Islam, people who saw themselves as working to the advantage of Islam, but who were in fact the real enemies of Islam; there was no-one to fight against them and spill their blood. Only he (Ali) could do that". " In fact Ali's conduct also opened the way for others so that they could, without fear, fight against any group that showed itself to be outwardly pious, to have pretensions to saintliness and to be religious, but who were really fools" (by Shaheed Murtuza Motahari in Polarization Around the Character of Ali)

NON MUSLIM VIEWS

Many non-Muslim historians, politicians and philosophers have written about Ali's personality and character with the highest of praise.

KOFI ANNAN: (Former Secretary General, United Nations Organization) says : “The words of Ali Ibn Abi Talib, ‘ O Malik ! The people are either brothers in religion or your equal in creation’, must be adhered to by all organizations and it is a statement that all humanity must embrace”.(Ali says, in his order to Malik-al-Ashtar: “Remember Malik that among your subjects there are two kinds of people; those who have the same religion as yours; and those who have other religions than yours and yet they are human beings like you”.) This order is clearly and perfectly in accordance with the Quranic instructions, as the Quran has taken special care of non-Muslims in the matter of their legal rights, it accords them full freedom in the matters of faith, economic activity, property, social security and the preservation of their culture and traditions. The rights of non-Muslim living in a Muslim State are covered by these instructions, whose lives are to be protected and whose bloodshed is prohibited. The verses of Surah al Anfal : 58 and Surah al - Nisa: 90-94, encourage Muslims to accept any offer of making peace by non-Muslims with the Divine promise that if they intend to deceive, God will protect Muslims.

After a few months, Annan suggested that the document of Imam Ali to Malik-al-Ashtar must be considered from the legal view point and after lengthy studies and considerations by the U.N. Legal Committee, member states voted that the document should be considered as one of the sources of International Law. The U.N. urged the Arab Nations to use that letter as a model. The UNDP in its 2002 Arab Human Development listed six saying of Imam Ali about the importance of knowledge and establishment of ideal governance.(The American media had, at that time, covered U.N. Legal Committee Reporting)

Today they (recommendations of Imam Ali to Malik - al- Ashtar) have remained to be known as the “Alawi Constitution, about which the Christian scholar George Geordac comments: “There is nothing in the United Nation Human Rights declaration except that you would find its equivalent in the Constitution of Ali ibn Abi Taleb, but then you would find in his constitution greater values and of higher essence”.

SHANKAR DAYAL SHARMA; (Former President of India) writes in his message dated 14th April, 1995 to International Congress on Nahjul Balagh , writes: “.....Hazrat Ali gained great fame as a just ruler, concerned for the oppressed and dedicated to justice. He sought to build a society based on the rule of law, respect for the truth, and tolerance. In war and in peace, he was uncompromising in his observance of a code of conduct. A multi-faceted genius, he was a philosopher and thinker, a wise administrator, a learned judge and a compassionate human being.Hazrat Ali's preachings are venerated for their moral and ethical values. They are also regarded as masterpieces of literary expression. Their message is universal: follow the righteous path, promoting good and resisting vice. Imam Ali makes us realize that the world is transient, that we are accountable for our actions. Though articulated in a specific historical

context, these messages have a relevance unrestricted by time or space.....It is not only that the truth expressed by Hazrat Ali find reflection in other faiths. The Imam himself was noted for his toleration. As the Caliph, he personally issued orders offering safety, security and religious freedom to minorities.”

JURGY Z Aidan (George Gordan): A famous Christians historian, Linguist, philosopher and poet of modern Egypt who had studied the life of Imam Ali (a.s.) in great depth, says: “He (Ali) 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 and exhibited marvelous strength of body and mind which were due to his true faith in religion and his sincere belief in truth and justice.”

SIR WILLIAM MUIR: says: “Endowed with a clear intellect, warm in affection, and confiding in friendship, he was from the boyhood devoted heart and soul to the Prophet. Simple, quiet, and unambitious, when in after days he obtained the rule of half of the Moslem world, it was rather thrust upon him than sought”.

DR. STUBBE HENRY ; “He (Ali) had a contempt of the world, its glory and pomp, he feared God much , gave many alms, was just in all his actions, humble and affable, of an exceeding quick wit and of an ingenuity that was not common, he was exceedingly learned, not in those sciences that terminate a speculations but those which extend to practice.”

ROBERT DUREY OSBORN: “With him (Ali) perished the truest hearted and best Moslem of whom Mohammedan history had preserved the remembrance”.

SIMON OCKLEY: “One thing particularly deserving to be noticed is that his (Ali’s) mother was delivered of him at Mecca, in the very temple itself which never happened to any one else”.

THOMAS CARLYLE: says about Ali (a.s): “.....noble-mindedfull of affection and fiery daring. Something chivalrous in him, brave as a lion, yet with a grace, a true and affection worthy of Christian Knighthood”.

SHEBLY SHMAYYIL: Another Christian scholar states: “Ali ibn Abli Talib is the leader and guide for mankind, and the East and West has never seen anyone like him, neither in the past nor in the present.”

“Had Ali been allowed to reign in peace, his virtues, his firmness, and his ascendancy of character would have perpetuated the basic principles of a good government and its simple manners”. Oelsner - says about Imam Ali.

MUSLIM VIEWS

Justice Amir Ali in his book “Spirit of Islam” says: - “ It was very easy for Hazrat Ali (a.s.) to divert the minds of masses towards foreign invasion and thus make them busy in murder and plunder. It had always been done by rulers and is even today considered as the best form of employing energies of a rising nation as well as the easiest way to form Empire and to propagate religion. But Hazrat Ali hated bloodshed, did not believe in Imperialism, and had no faith in propagation of religion with sword in one hand and the Quran in the other. He believed Islam to be a message of Peace and Love and wanted mankind to be ruled on the basis of equality and justice. Thereforenever seriously thought of expanding his domain”.

Quoting a French historian Justice Amir Ali states: “But for his assassination the Muslim world might have witnessed the realization of Prophets’ teaching in actual amalgamation of the first principles of true philosophy into positive action. The same passionate devotion to knowledge and learning which distinguished Mohammad (s.a.w) breathed in every word of Ali. With a liberality of mind - far beyond the age in which he lived - was joined sincere devotion of spirit and earnestness of faith. His words - a devout up looking towards the source of All Good, and an unbounded faith in humanity”.

On an other occasion Amir Ali writes : “Seven centuries before this wonderful man would have been apotheosized and thirteen centuries later his genius and talents, his virtues and his valour, would have exerted the admiration of the civilized world. Chivalrous, humane and forbearing to verge of weakness, as a ruler he came before his time”.

“ From the day of ascension to the rulership to the last day of his life Hazrat Ali did not get a day’s rest or peace. It is as wonder, that facing the heavy odds that he had to encounter, how and when he could get time to introduce reforms in the government, to lay out fundamentals of grammar for Arabic language, to deliver sermons(on philosophy, rhetoric’s, ethics), to advise people To introduce and to bring into effect principles of a benign government”.

Some Characteristics of Imam Ali (a.s.):

(According to Justice Amir Ali)

Ali was the first person to declare that a ruler’s share of income from the State is equal to that of any commoner.

Ali was the first Caliph to protect and encourage national literature. He was a great scholar himself. None can praise Ali to the extent he deserves. (says Mathew Arnold)

For Islam he (Ali) was the first line of defence, the second line of defence and the last line of defence.

Ali was an Imam in battlefield, was an Imam in politics, and was an Imam in religion also an Imam in ethics, in philosophy, in literature, in learning and wisdom.

He (Ali) was a man of such surpassing and pre-eminent attributes and such transcending and peerless qualities that many learned men got perplexed about him and imagined him to be an incarnation of God.

So far as comprehensiveness is concerned Ali's words come next only to the Quran

His speeches, letters, sermons and sayings are so supremely eminent that they are sayings of man and below only to the words of God.

Ali had supreme command over language, over ethics and over tenets of religion, at the same time he was a great orator.

About 8000 books have already been written on Ali

CONCLUSION

“Imam Ali endeavored to instill coexistence by implanting its principles through theory and practice such as pluralism, tolerance, non-violence, and justice. In every step and at all stages he transformed coexistence into an intuitive principle; he elevated it from the realm of notion to that of resolution. Thus his justice was able to support coexistence with the secret of life and eternity, until he was assassinated in the cause of that justice”. The Christian scholar Jib ran Khalil Jib ran declares, “Ali was killed in the alcove of his worship because of his intense justice”.

What Muslims achieved from the short span of Ali’s reign?

Allamah Tabatabai states:

“Despite the four years and nine months of his Caliphate, Ali was not able to eliminate the disturbed conditions which were prevailing throughout the Islamic world, but he was successful in three fundamental ways.

As a result of his just and upright manner of living he revealed once again the beauty and attractiveness of the way of life of the Holy Prophet, especially to the younger generation. In contrast to the imperial grandeur of Muawiyah, he lived in simplicity and poverty. He never favored his friends or relatives and family above others, nor did he ever prefer wealth to poverty or brute force to weakness.

Despite the cumbersome and strenuous difficulties which absorbed his time, he left behind among the Islamic Community a valuable treasury of the truly divine sciences and Islamic intellectual disciplines. In his talks and speeches he expounded the most sublime Islamic sciences in a most elegant and flowing manner. He established Arabic grammar and laid the basis for Arabic literature.

He was the first in Islam to delve directly into the questions of ‘metaphysics’ (falsafah-i-ilahi) in a manner combining intellectual rigor and logical demonstration. He discussed problems which had never appeared before in the same way among the ‘metaphysicians’ of the world. Moreover, he was so devoted to ‘metaphysics’ and ‘gnosis’ that even in the heat of battle he would carry out intellectual discourse and discuss metaphysical questions.(see Nahjul Balagha)

He trained a large number of religious scholars and Islamic savants, among whom are found a number of ascetics and Gnostics who were the forefathers of the Sufis. These men have been recognized by the later Sufis as the founders of gnosis in Islam. Others among his disciples became the first teachers of jurisprudence, theology, Quranic Commentary and recitation.

IMAM ALI’S SAYINGS

“To render relief to the distressed and to help the oppressed make amends for great sins.”

“Allah has made it obligatory on just leaders that they should maintain themselves at the level of the weak people”.

“The ruled hearts are the stores of their ruler; so whatever he places in them of justice or injustice will find it there”.

“The subjects’ love and faithfulness do not manifest except through their feeling that the State is not a heavy over their shoulders”

In Vol. IX of the Bihar al -Anwar; it has been related from al-Kafi that Amir al-Muminin said : “God has appointed me the leader of the people and made it my duty to adopt a way of living, in food and clothing, on a par with the poorest classes of society, so that, on the one hand, it may soothe the distress of the poor and, on the other, restrain the rich from revolting.”

“The world is a place of transit, not a place to abide. Its people fall into two categories: those who sell away their souls into slavery, and those who ransom their soul and liberate them”.

“Fulfill the demands of justice in your relationship with the people and be patient in matters regarding their needs ... Awaken your heart to kindness and mercy for the people and love and tenderness for them.”

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