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By: Sayyid 'Ali Reza Wasi'i

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Much has been said and written about the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (as). Throughout history, scholars, researchers, poets and others have focused through different angles in their efforts to fathom the multi-sided personality of the cousin, son-in-law and vicegerent of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.).

The different aspects presented by different writers speaks of the dynamic characteristics of the man who continues to shine like the resplendent sun despite the elaborate efforts made by his enemies, both in his lifetime and after his martyrdom, to belittle his merits and even to slander him.

In this article an attempt has been made to probe the current of enmity with Imam 'Ali (as) and the different causes and motives behind it, by referring to the words of the Imam himself in the book Nahjul Balaghah. The article will try to answer the questions as to what were the causes and the motivation for the opposition to and enmity with Imam 'Ali (as) especially during his caliphate.

The writer states that he has approached the subject without any religious or sectarian bias to the best of his ability as readers might judge, in order to have a clear and impartial picture of the reasons of enmity with Imam 'Ali (as).

Although from the viewpoint of religious belief it could be summed up in one sentence that the reason for enmity with Imam 'Ali (as) was because of the divine authority entrusted to him by the Prophet which some refused to acknowledge, this answer would discourage certain questions from being raised and might leave some people unsatisfied. Therefore, in order to probe the various causes behind the current of enmity, we intend to broadly focus on the following two points:

The motives for enmity with Imam 'Ali (as): Here we will discuss what motivated certain people to become the enemies of Imam 'Ali (as).

The various kinds of enmity with him: Here the types and degrees of enmity with Imam 'Ali (as) and the

methods used by the enemies will be scrutinized.

The Motives for Enmity with Imam 'Ali (as)

Enmity towards Imam 'Ali (as) started with the advent of Islam itself and lasted throughout his life. This sorrowful trend did not end with his martyrdom and continued even after that. By focusing on the events of the early period of Islam we will see what elements played the role in this enmity, especially during the brief caliphate of the Imam.

Tribal and Ethnic Motives

Although enmity based on tribal and ethnic motives might appear natural to some extent, it should be admitted that this trend neither camouflages the evilness of those who harbour rancour nor does it diminish in any way the greatness of Imam 'Ali (as).

Imam 'Ali (as) was a scion of the Bani Hashim clan of the Quraysh tribe. The Qurayshites were considered noble and enjoyed a special esteem and privileged status among the Arab tribes. The day the Ishmaelite leader Qusayy bin Kilab, the 5th ancestor of Imam 'Ali (as), became custodian of the holy Ka'bah and took charge of the administration of Makkah, his family came to enjoy a central and eminent position among not only the Quraysh but other Arab tribes as well.

The nobility of the Quraysh was now concentrated in the House of Qusayy and the Bani Qusayy became a privileged group. Their prestige was further enhanced among the Arabs because of the custodianship of Abraham's ancient edifice of monotheism, the Ka 'bah.

The sanctity of the Ka'bah, which since the beginning exercised a profound influence on public minds, gradually bestowed a halo on its custodians who came to be considered holy themselves. The wisdom and valour of Qusayy further increased the position of the custodian. Among the Arabs, blood and genealogy counted as marks of distinction and carried social prestige since members of each tribe felt proud of their descent from one chieftain and stood beside each other.

Thus any member who in addition to a perfect pedigree and impeccable blood bond could boast of personal traits of nobility was undoubtedly regarded as the chieftain, whose authority was binding on the whole tribe. Any disobedience to his commands or instructions was tantamount to insubordination and challenge to the tribal system, and swiftly brought down the displeasure on the rebel who was excommunicated and expelled by the whole clan.

With the death of Qusayy, his elder son 'Abd-Manaf succeeded to his post and was followed by his own son 'Amr or Hashim as the next custodian of the holy Ka 'bah and the chief administrator of Makkah. It was during this time that a certain Umayyah¹ claiming to be a son of Hashim's younger brother 'Abd Shams, made an unsuccessful attempt to seize the custodianship of the Ka'bah. This vain bid by

Umayyah split the clan into two broad segments, the Bani Hashim and the Bani Umayyah.[2](#)

The custodianship then passed on to Hashim's son 'Abd al- Mutallib and after him to his son Abi Talib the father of Imam 'Ali (as). It was during the time of Abi Talib that the Hashimites were faced with an internal crisis. Abi Talib lacked wealth which chieftains normally possess,[3](#) and this made two of his brothers, 'Abbas and Abi Lahab, challenge his leadership. The descendants of Umayyah who nursed a deep hatred towards the House of Hashim, saw it as their chance to renew a bid for leadership, especially since they regarded themselves as the military class of Makkah.

The emergence of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) from the Hashimite clan made other Makkans jealous and they thought prophethood to be a trick by the Bani Hashim to exalt them and continue their leadership. The following words of Abi Jahl to Akhnas bin Shurayq speaks of the inability of the infidel mind to understand God's revelations:

We and the sons of 'Abd Manaf vied with each other in nobility and greatness. Whatever they did we also did, so as to be their equals. Now suddenly they are saying that from us is a Prophet who receives revelation from heaven.[4](#)

Decades later in 61 AH when after the tragedy of Karbala the severed head of the Prophet's grandson Imam Husayn (as) was placed before the Umayyad scion Yazid who now ruled as caliph of Muslims, he recited the following couplet which are identical to Abi Jahl's words to Akhnas in the days of Jahiliyyah:

La 'ibat Hashim bi al-mulk fala; Khabar ja'a wa la wahy nazal.[5](#)

(The Hashimites played the game of kingdom; Neither any message came from heaven nor revelation.)

This is how retarded minds viewed the divine mission of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.). For them the growth and spread of Islam was the victory of the Bani Hashim over the other Arab tribes and clans. Although these short-sighted people may not have said this explicitly and with frequency – for the obvious fact they now called themselves Muslims and ruled over Muslims – deep down in their hearts and minds they harboured these thoughts which would at times come to their lips as is clear from Yazid's recitation of the above couplet. [6](#)

In view of these facts, when the question of Imam 'Ali's (as) caliphate was raised after the passing away of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.), some pretending to be religious and claiming to be near to the Prophet, said: "Prophethood and caliphate cannot be combined in one family."[7](#)

These words are indicative of the mindset of most Qurayshites who were jealous of the Bani Hashim.

This is the first open indication of enmity towards Imam 'Ali (as), who was a Hashimite, and for this reason those who had paled into insignificance against the glory of the Bani Hashim and harboured rancour against them out of an inherent inferiority complex, were not ready to see him as their leader and ruler. Thus enmity towards Imam 'Ali (as) was clear and deep rooted even at this stage and

continued in the subsequent periods.[8](#)

Mu'awiyah's letter to the Imam during the War of Siffin claiming equality with the Hashimites on the basis of what he boasted as his genealogy, was given a fitting reply by Imam 'Ali (as):[9](#)

...As for your saying that we are descendants of 'Abd Manaf it is true, but neither Umayyah was equal to Hashim nor Harb could be likened to 'Abd al-Mutallib or for that matter Abi Sufyan to Abi Talib. The muhajir (one who migrated to Madinah with the Prophet) is superior to the taliq [10](#)(freed slave – a reference to the Prophet's declaration of amnesty and emancipation of Abi Sufyan, his family and other Makkan infidels at the time of the surrender of Makkah in 8 AH). The one of clean descent cannot be compared to the one who is of doubtful lineage."

There is no similarity between the pursuer of truth and the adherent of the wrong or a believer and a hypocrite. How bad are the successors who go on following the predecessors who have fallen into hell..[11](#)

This statement of Imam 'Ali (as) has completely exposed Mu'awiyah in his true heathen colours till eternity.

Religious Factors

The advent of Islam gradually shifted the power balance in Makkah to the other side and whatever was hitherto regarded as meritorious yielded its place to factors which were beyond the comprehension of the Arabs. The boastfulness of the days of jahiliyyah, which was part of tribal life, was shattered and people were freed from the claws of idolatry. Now there were new life styles. Those who were of sincere heart and searched for truth and reality stepped into the vale of the faith of Islam and joined Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.).

The dividing line between the Hashimites and the Umayyads was redefined, and the barometers of genealogy and tribalism gave way to Islam and Kufr. There were new values of assessment. In this changed circumstances we find the young son of Abi Talib a frontrunner. Imam 'Ali (as), a boy of not more than ten years, emerges as the first Muslim' and stands peerless above all and everybody else in characteristics which define a human being and are considered humanitarian. To quote his own words:

O Allah I am the first to come towards You by hearing Your call and responding to it. No one has precedence over me in performing the prayer except the Messenger of Allah.)[12](#)

He stands head and shoulders above all other Muslims and could rightly be called the personification of Islam and its values:

I discharged duties when others lost courage (to do so), and I came forward when others hid themselves. I spoke when others remained mum. I strode with Divine Light when others remained

standing. I was the quietest of them in voice but the highest in going forward. I cleaved to its rein and applied myself solely to its pledge like the mountain which neither sweeping wind could move nor storm could shake... By God, I am surely the First to testify him (the Prophet)... "[13](#)

The seeds of enmity towards Imam 'Ali (as) were actually sowed on the day he stood up at the gathering of Dhu al-'Ashirah to testify to the divine mission of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) when the rest of the gathering mocked at the Messenger." "[14](#)

This hatred among the Makkan infidels grew when they found the young lad always at the side of the Prophet ready to frustrate their sinister designs. The night Imam 'Ali (as) slept on the Prophet's bed" to allow him to migrate undetected to Madinah, was the high point of frustration for the infidels who had planned to murder the Prophet.[15](#) In Madinah they found him an impregnable barrier to their military assaults which were always beaten back soundly with heavy losses.

Imam 'Ali (as) says in this regard:

By Allah, I was among their rear-guard till they turned back on their sides and were flocked in their rope. I never showed weakness or lack of courage, nor did I betray and become languid. By Allah, I shall split the wrong till I extract right from its wrongs." "[16](#)

Never for a moment did he neglect the commands of God and His Prophet and when others fled the field of battle he stood firm like a mountain and shielded the Prophet with his life.[17](#) No one was so close to the Prophet as he. His life started with a glance at the countenance of the Prophet[18](#) and the two were not separated until the passing away of the Messenger of God.[19](#)

So firm was the bond between the two cousins that the Prophet said: 'Aliyun minni wa ana min 'Ali ('Ali is from me and I am from 'Ali)[20](#)

The affinity between the two, if it was a great blessing for Islam, it aroused jealousy and hatred among those whose hearts overflowed with malice. In the lifetime of the Prophet these persons could not succeed in their malicious designs against Imam 'Ali (as), but after his passing away they exploited every opportunity and used different pretexts to undermine his position and display their enmity towards him. The ignoring of his claims for the caliphate on three occasions are indicative of the enmity towards him. To quote his own words:

By Allah the son of Abi Quhafah (Abi Bakr) dressed himself with it (the caliphate) and he certainly knew that my position in relation to it was the same as the position of the axis in relation to the hand mill. The flood water flows down from me and the bird cannot fly up to me..... [21](#)

The first ruler passed on the ball of caliphate to the person who had procured the vote for him at Saqifah Bani Sa'idah. Imam 'Ali (as) says in this regard:

I watched the plundering of my inheritance till the first one went his way but handed over the caliphate to

Ibn al-Khattab after himself. It is strange that during lifetime he wished to get rid of the caliphate but eased its way for the other after his death... This one put the caliphate in a tough enclosure where the utterance was haughty and the touch was rough. Mistakes were in plenty and so also the excuses. One in contact with it was like the rider of an unruly camel. If he pulled up its rein the very nostril would be slit, but if he let it loose he would be thrown.[22](#)

This state of steady deterioration continued for almost a decade and when the second stage of caliphate neared its end, it was again enmity which prevented the Prophet's cousin and heir from taking over his usurped right of political authority. He remained patient and turned down the conditional offer after finding himself named against his will in a strange council of five persons of whom the majority was against him such as Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, Talhah ibn 'Abdullah and 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Awf. The Imam says in this regard:

Nevertheless I remained patient despite the length of period of stiffness of trial, till when he went his way (of death) he put the matter (of caliphate) in a group and regarded me to be one of them. But good heavens! What had I to do with this shura (consultative council)? Where was any doubt about me with regard to the first of them that I was now considered akin to these ones...

One of them turned against me because of his hatred and the other got inclined the other way due to his in-law relationship and this thing and that thing, till the third man of these people stood up with heaving breasts between his dung and fodder. With him his cousins also stood up swallowing up Allah's wealth like a camel devouring the foliage of spring, till his rope broke down, his actions finished him and his gluttony brought him down prostate."[23](#)

With the death of the third caliph matters stood at a chaotic stage and the people fed up with the anarchy and looting of the public resources, pleaded Imam 'Ali (as) to take over the caliphate. He asked them to leave him alone and seek someone else since the matter was more complicated than it appeared.[24](#)

When I took up the reins of government, one party broke away and another turned disobedient while the rest began acting wrongfully as if they had not heard the word of Allah saying:

That abode in the Hereafter We assign for it those who intend not to exult themselves in the earth, nor (to make) mischief (therein); and the end (best) for the pious ones (28:83).

Yes by Allah they had heard it and understood it but the world appeared glittering in their eyes and its embellishments seduced them...If people had not come to me and supporters had not exhausted the argument and if there had been no pledge of Allah with the learned to the effect that they should not acquiesce in the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of oppressed I would have cast the rope of caliphate on its own shoulders, and would have given the last one the same treatment as to the First one.[25](#)

This turn of events was not unexpected for him since the Prophet had already told him all that would transpire. The main factor of enmity towards Imam 'Ali (as) him was actually enmity with the laws and principles of Islam and lack of steadfast belief in his opponents, as is clear from his reply to his archenemy Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan:

Certainly, we and you were on amiable terms as you say but difference arose between us and you the other day when we accepted the Belief and you rejected it. Today the position is that we are steadfast (in the Belief) but you are creating mischief. Those of you who accepted Islam did so reluctantly and that too when all the chief men had accepted Islam and joined the Prophet of Allah (S.A.W.).[26](#)

Political and Social Factors

Other causes of hatred towards Imam 'Ali (as) was the political and social factors. Islam had unified the Arab tribes and in addition to making them a political power granted them a social status not imagined before. Although faith did bestow a selfless and egalitarian outlook to the faithful, wherever profound belief was found lacking, political and social ambitions raised their heads to the detriment of the greater interests of Islam.

The criteria for authority were precedence in Islam as well as proximity to the Prophet and confirmation by him. But except for Imam 'Ali (as) no one else was worthy of the caliphate on the basis of these barometers despite the fact that certain companions of the Prophet had managed to seize the political power of the Islamic state on this contention.

When Mu'awiyah, in view of the impression of these factors on public minds, tried to cause mischief by referring to the political and social role of certain companions of the Prophet, the Imam gave him a fitting reply that would remove many doubts. Part of the answer of Imam 'Ali (as) to Mu'awiyah reads:

...Our Islam is well known and our (greatness of) pre-Islamic period too cannot be denied. Whatever remains has been mentioned in the Qur'an, it is:

"And blood relations have better claims in respect of one to the other according to the Book of God." (33:6)

"And verily of men the nearest to Abraham are surely those who followed him and this (Our) Prophet (Muhammad) and those who belief; and verily God is the Guardian of the faithful." (3:68)

Thus firstly we are superior because of kinship and secondly because of obedience. When at Saqifah the Muhajirs contended kinship with the Prophet of Allah (S.A.W.) they scored over them. If that success was based on kinship then the right would be ours better than yours otherwise the Ansar's contention stands... [27](#)

The position of Imam 'Ali (as) was well known to all, whether the muhajir or the ansar. However the pull

of the mortal world was so strong that it made even people like Talhah and Zubayr make a bid for power against him. Enmity to him made them blind of the realities including their own fate. The Imam has said in this regard:

Both of these two (Talhah and Zubayr) wishes the caliphate for himself, and is drawing it towards himself as against the other fellow. They do not employ any connection for getting access to Allah nor proceed towards Him through any means. Both of them bear malice against each other. Shortly his veil over it will be uncovered. By Allah if they achieve what they aim at, one of them would kill the other and one will finish the other..[28](#)

His keen insight laid bare the hidden intentions of Talhah and Zubayr by drawing attention to their real ambitions, which meant that they were ready to betray each other, let alone their disobedience to the Imam and the interests of the Muslims. Imam 'Ali's (as) analysis of the people and what social and political factors are influential in moulding their personal traits, are worthy to note:

O people we have reached the stage of such a wrongful and thankless period wherein the virtuous is deemed vicious and the oppressor goes on advancing in his excesses. We do not make use of what we know and do not discover what we do not know. We do not fear calamity till it befalls. People are of four categories.

(1) Among them is he who is prevented from mischief only by his low position, lack of means and paucity of wealth.

(2) Then there is he who has drawn his sword, openly commits mischief, has collected his horsemen and footmen and has devoted him to securing wealth, leading troops, rising on the pulpit and has allowed his faith to perish. How bad is the transaction that you allow (enjoyment of) this world to be a price of yourself as an alternative for what there is with Allah for you.

(3) And among them is he who seeks (benefits of) this world through actions meant for the next world, but does not seek (good of) next world through actions of this world. He keeps his body calm (in dignity) raises small steps, holds up his clothes, embellishes his body for appearance of trust-worthiness and uses the position of Allah's connivance as a means of committing sins.

(4) Then there is the one whose weakness and lack of means have held him back from conquest of lands. This keeps down his position and he has named it contentment and clothes himself with the robe of denunciation although he has never had any connection with these qualities.

Then there remain a few people in whose case the remembrance of their return (to God on Doomsday) keeps their eyes bent, and the fear of resurrection moves their tears. Some of them are scared away (from the world) and dispersed, some are frightened and subdued, some are quiet as if muzzled, some are praying sincerely, some are grief-stricken and pain-ridden whom fear has confined to namelessness and disgrace has shrouded them, so they are in (the sea of) bitter water, their mouths are closed and

their hearts are bruised....[29](#)

Ethical Factors and Transcendental Values

It is in the nature of man to incline towards virtue and try to acquire values that are deemed lofty and transcendental. Not all are equal in this quest for moral perfection since abilities vary from person to person. However, when we look at Imam 'Ali (as) we see him stand out as the model par excellence of all such ethical values. He strove selflessly and embodied the merits which rarely accumulate in one person.

These matchless traits, if they earned admiration and praise from God and his Prophet, appeared unpleasant to some and were another cause of breeding enmity in sick and jealous hearts. Some of these dynamic qualities which aroused animosity towards him are as follows:

1. Worship of God and Obedience to the Prophet's Sunnah

Anyone who attempts to write something about Imam 'Ali (as) will admit that he was a perfect man of God, obedient to the Creator in all aspects of life to the extent that he would not even entertain the idea of committing the most minute act of disobedience.

...By Allah even if I am given all the domains of the seven (stars) with all that exists under the skies in order that I may disobey Allah to the extent of snatching one grain of barley from an ant I would not do it. For me the world is lighter than the leaf in the mouth of a locust that is chewing it...[30](#)

He was a paradigm of piety and excelled all others in the worship of God, as he himself says:

"O people I do not impel you to any obedience unless I practise it before you and do not refrain you from any disobedience unless I desist from it before ..[31](#)

He lived according to the commandments of God and in accordance with the Sunnah of the Prophet and because of his commitment to these factors he refused to accept the caliphate after the death of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab when the condition spelled by the 6-man shura was that the new caliph should be bound to the behaviour and patterns set by the Shaykhayn (first two caliphs). [32](#)

2. Love for Justice & Practicing of Justice

Although justice is regarded as a much-cherished humanitarian principle there are very few who really adhere to justice and practice justice. History bears witness that persons in power show respect for justice and implement justice as long as it is in their interests. Justice in the lexicon of such persons has definite limits.

But for Imam 'Ali (as) justice had a transcendental meaning where self-interests cease to exist. He was

the epitome of the just ruler and spared no effort for the implementation of justice. When he heard that the agents of the rebel Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan had plundered the city of Anbar and snatched the jewelry from the women including those non-Muslims living under the protection of Islam, he said:

"If any Muslim dies of grief after all this he is not to be blamed but rather there is justification for him before [33](#)

In another place the Imam says:

By Allah, I would rather like to pass the night in wakefulness on the thorns of Sa'dan or to be driven in chains as a prisoner than meet Allah and His Prophet on the Day of Judgement as an oppressor over any person or a usurper of anything out of the worldly wealth. And how can I oppress anyone for (the sake of a life) what is fast moving towards destruction and is to remain under the earth for a long time. [34](#)

This lofty sense of justice for restoring people their denied rights, if it endeared him to the oppressed masses it made the oppressors his open enemies. The Commander of the Faithful was determined to restore to the public treasury the wealth of the Muslim that the third caliph 'Uthman bin 'Affan had distributed among his supporters who were now the wealthiest people. He says in this regard:

By Allah, even if I had found that by such money women have been married or slave-maids purchased I would have resumed it because there is wide scope in dispensation of justice and he who finds it hard to act justly should find it harder to deal with injustice. [35](#)

This is how Imam 'Ali (as) spelt out his state policy, but those who had prospered in earlier reigns due to rampant favoritism, nepotism and other forms of corruption, felt alarmed and became obstacles to the implementation of justice in the Islamic society.

3. Piety and Abstinence

It is in the nature of man to covet worldly positions and possessions. It would not be wrong to say that many people desire fame and publicity more than anything else and would resort to any method to achieve this since in their eyes the life of the mortal world is the ultimate goal. But Imam 'Ali (as) considered the world like the intestines of a swine in the hands of a leper" [36](#) or even worse than that. Addressing the world he says:

"O World! O World! Get away from me. Why do you present yourself to me? Or are you eager for me? You may not get that opportunity to impress me. Deceive some other person. I have no concern with you..." [37](#)

Despite being the ruler of a realm extending from Central Asia to North Africa he never forsook the company of the poor and the destitute and would even join them for meals at times. When he appointed governors and other officials for the far flung provinces, his first and foremost instruction was to cater to

the needs of the masses of common people³⁸ and to respect their rights. He reminded his officials:

"Certainly your assignment is not a morsel for you but it is a trust round your neck."³⁹

He served as the model of emulation for his friends and urged them to acquire the qualities he possessed:

In the past I had a brother-in-faith and he was prestigious in my view because the world was humble in his eyes, the needs of the stomach did not have sway over him, he did not long for what he did not get. If he got a thing he would not ask for more. Most of his time he was silent but if he spoke he silenced the other speakers and he quenched the thirst of questioners. He was weak and feeble but at the time of fighting he was like the lion of the forest or the serpent of the valley. He would not put forth an argument unless it was decisive.

He would not abuse anyone in an excusable matter unless he would have heard the excuse. He would not speak of any trouble except after its disappearance. He would say what he would do and would not say what he would not do. Even if he could not be exceeded in speaking he could be excelled in silence. He was more eager for keeping quiet than speaking and if two things confronted him he would see which was more akin to the longing of the heart and he would oppose it.

These qualities are incumbent upon you. So you should acquire them and excel each other in them. Even if you cannot acquire them you should know that acquiring a part is better than giving up the whole.⁴⁰

The Commander of the Faithful strove to build persons who will determine their own destiny and will not be influenced by anyone even if it means that they will be boycotted by those trapped in the material life of the world. Elsewhere, while describing the qualities of the faithful, he says:

Their countenance is the countenance of the truthful and their speech is the speech of the virtuous. They are wakeful during nights (in devotion to Allah) and are minarets of guidance during the day. They hold fast to the rope of the Qur'an, and revive the traditions of Allah and His Prophet. They do not boast nor indulge in self-conceit, nor misappropriate, nor create mischief. Their hearts are in paradise while their bodies (on earth) are busy in (good) acts.⁴¹

Those captivated by the glamour of world and greed for worldly possessions not even disliked the Imam but became his enemies.

4. Valour and Awe

It is normally seen that persons who possess sublime qualities and morals are not familiar with valour and hardships. Persons could either be polite or courteous or tough and hardened. It is said that piety and firm determination for solving the affairs of the material world, or tenderness of heart and courage in

the battlefield are poles apart and do not combine in one person. But Imam 'Ali (as) was the rare exception and combined himself these seemingly contrasting qualities to the extent that he is regarded as the perfect role model not only in the niche of prayer for the pious but in the battlefield for the warriors.

He wielded the sword so gallantly in the way of truth following the Prophet's migration to Madinah that the enemies were filled with awe and fear of his valour. In his letter to Mu'awiyah, the Commander of the Faithful reminds:

I am Abu al-Hasan who killed your (maternal) grandfather, your (maternal) uncle and your brother by cutting them to pieces on the Day of Badr. The same sword is with me and I will meet my adversary with the same heart. I have not altered the religion nor put up any new Prophet. I am surely (treading) on that very highway which you had willingly forsaken (in the beginning) and adopted perforce.[42](#)

His bravery and feats of valour during the battles fought in the time of the Prophet were crucial for Islam. At the same time his proverbial strength inspired awe among his adversaries, an awe that lingered on in their hearts even after renouncing idolatry and at times burst into open opposition to him albeit under the cover of Islam.[43](#)

5. Knowledge and Cognizance

Throughout history the element of ignorance has always opposed knowledge and the ignorant person has been at war with the learned. Sheer ignorance of knowledge and the refusal to open up the windows of the mind to the light of learning, was one of the factors of the enmity of certain people towards Imam 'Ali (as). The Imam classifying the types of people says:

O Kumayl People are of three types:

- (1) One is the God- wary scholar.
- (2) Then the seeker of knowledge who is also on the path of salvation.
- (3) Then the common rot who run after every caller and bend in the direction of every wind. They seek no light from the effulgence of knowledge and do not take protection of any reliable support.[44](#)

He then explained to Kumayl in a lengthy discourse that knowledge is superior to wealth and that the hoarders of wealth in contrast to the seekers of knowledge are dead persons even though they may be physically alive for the moment. Parts of the Imam's words are:

"O Kumayl knowledge guards you while you have to guard the wealth. Wealth decreases by spending while knowledge multiplies by spending..."[45](#)

What he advocated was knowledge with proper cognizance of God. As the divine scholar, Imam 'Ali (as)

enlightened all those who came to learn and encouraged them to ask questions with his famous words: Saluni qabla 'an tafqiduni (ask me before you lose me). He knew the passages of the skies more than the passages of the earth⁴⁶ and to him the world of esoteric reality was as familiar as the world of physical appearance. How can such a person be loved and respected by the arrogantly ignorant who were sunk in disbelief and whose minds were unable to comprehend beyond what could fill their stomachs?

6. Truthfulness and Straightforwardness of Imam 'Ali (as)

The world of politics is the world of deceit and ruse. Although we do not interpret politics in such negative terms, throughout history politicians and statesmen have stuck to lies, deceit and fraud to pursue their objectives. In contrast, Imam 'Ali (as) in his administration of the state and society, followed a straightforward and honest policy and abhorred the very idea of lies and craftiness during his caliphate. It was obvious that he neither pursued worldly possessions nor power. He says in this regard:

"I have neither spoken a lie nor have been told a lie. I have neither deviated nor have I been made to deviate."⁴⁷

Some naive or crooked-minded persons think that he was not a diplomat. But they fail to understand that in the lexicon of Imam 'Ali (as) who was brought up by the Prophet, words such as lies and fraud did not exist. What he did was to lay the foundations of politics and state administration based on lofty humanitarian values.

By Allah, Mu'awiyah is not more clever than I am but he deceives and commits evil deeds. Had I not been hateful of deceit I would have the most clever of all men. But the fact is that every deceit is a sin and every sin is disobedience (of Allah) and every deceitful person would have a banner by which he would be recognized on the Day of Judgement. By Allah, I cannot be made forgetful by strategy nor can I be overpowered by hardships.⁴⁸

In the light of these words it is crystal clear that the one who deemed the world devoid of any value and whose entire existence was devoted to God and administration of mankind's affairs, will neither speak against truth and reality nor will resort to dubious and contradictory methods. However, for the evil-minded and those unable to properly comprehend the law of God, such a person would appear weak. This was another reason why some people turned into his enemies.

To quote the words of the Imam

Certainly these people are agreed in disliking my authority. I would endure till I apprehend disunity among you; because if in spite of the unsoundness of their view they succeed, the whole system would be shattered. They are hankering after this world out of jealousy against him on whom Allah has bestowed it.⁴⁹

These were some of the various reasons why certain people became his enemies and started the current of enmity towards the person who personified the virtues and merits of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.).

Kinds of Enmity

The enmity towards Imam 'Ali (as), whatever were the reasons behind it, manifested itself in different ways. The injustice done to him, whether during the 25-year rule of the three caliphs or whether in his own brief four-and-a-half year period of caliphate, was of the same magnitude. However, this enmity took different forms and could be broadly divided as follows:

Suppression of Social Rights

In the time of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) whatever attempts that were made to vilify Imam 'Ali (as) were discouraged by the Prophet and rarely burst out into open enmity. It was after the passing away of the Prophet that the usurpation of his rights began. The Imam says in this regard:

"By Allah I have been continually deprived of my right from the day the Prophet (S.A.W.) passed away till today.[50](#)

This violation and usurpation of his rights and authority was the result of the dangerous mixing of truth with falsehood to the extent that it was difficult to ascertain what was right and what was wrong. When the Prophet was alive, truth was evident and could not be tampered with by anybody. But after his passing away, falsehood by donning the robe of truth raised its head in the society to spread hypocrisy and pretensions all around. Truth was thus sacrificed on the altar of these evils. The Imam says in this regard:

The basis of the occurrence of evils is those desires, which are acted upon, and the orders that are innovated. They are against the Book of Allah. People cooperate with each other concerning them even though it is against the Religion of Allah. If wrong had been pure and unmixed with right it would have not been hidden from those who are in search of truth. And if right had been pure without admixture of wrong those who bear hatred towards it would have been silenced. What is, however, done is that something is taken from here and something from there and the two are mixed. At this stage Satan overpowers his friends, and only those for whom virtue has been apportioned by Allah from before, achieve salvation.[51](#)

Satan thus stepped into the Muslim society and Imam 'Ali (as), whose rights were usurped, confined himself to his home. This behaviour with the Prophet's heir was not a spontaneous and sudden occurrence but was the outcome of a long-hatched plan. The first caliph was well aware that Imam 'Ali's (as) position in relation to the caliphate was like that of the axis to the hand mill, but he chose to deprive him. On several occasions Abu Bakr acknowledged that Imam 'Ali (as) was the right person for the

caliphate but he passed it on to 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, who in turn resorted to a deceit to make 'Uthman his successor. "[52](#)

The opposition and enmity towards Imam 'Ali (as) was intended to belittle and undermine him as is evident by his inclusion against his wish in the 6-man shura (consultative council) that was set up by 'Umar on his deathbed to determine the next caliph. The Imam refers to this injustice with a heavy heart in the sermon, which is known as Shishiyyah:

But good heavens! What I had to do with this shura". Where was any doubt about me with regard to the first of them that I was now considered akin to these ones. But (with reluctance) I remained low when they were low and flew high when they flew high.. "[53](#)

After 'Uthman when the Imam had to accept the caliphate because of the people's demand[54](#) and the chaotic conditions that the three previous rulers had created in the Muslim society, the enemies came out into open opposition to him. A party of them: broke the pledge they had sworn to him, while a second group started throwing obstacles in his way and another resorted to various other ways to undermine his rule.[55](#)

Vilification

Another form of enmity, which the vile enemies of the Imam practiced, was character assassination of the person who embodied; the ultimate truth after the Prophet. As part of their vain attempts to distort his image they resorted to lies and allegations, which could be summed up as follows:

Attributing Lies

Enmity, it is said, often blinds the vision. Since the clouded minds of the enemies were unable to comprehend the wisdom and high eloquence of the words of Imam 'Ali (as), they accused him of – God forbid– telling lies. The Imam says in this regard:

I have come to know that you say Ali speaks lie. Allah may ruin you. Against whom do I speak lie? Whether against Allah? But I am the first to believe in him. Whether against His Prophet (S.A.W.)? But I am the first to testify him (his Prophethood). Certainly not. By Allah it was a way of expression which you failed to appreciate and you were not capable of (comprehending) it. Woe to you.[56](#)

This shows the great intellectual gap between the Imam and his enemies. This uncouth and uncultured lot could not or did not want to understand that whatever the man whose veracity the holy Qur'an vouches was saying, were the words of God Almighty and the Prophet.

Fear and Inefficiency

Another accusation labelled against him was fear and weak leadership. Fear was something unknown to

the Imam who at every crucial turn, since the beginning of the Prophet's mission, had shown his courage and leadership prowess. [57](#)

It was these qualities which made him not to start any battle or a bout of single combat against any adversary till the argument was complete. In order to avert bloodshed and to keep the door of guidance open he would listen to what the opposing side had to say.

These were the qualities of a wise and astute leader. Yet these ignorant elements whose hands were always on the hilt of their swords were accusing him of fear," because he preferred to engage in dialogue before taking any action. These reluctant converts from idolatry were claiming that his leadership was weak and that he was afraid of death.[58](#) Imam 'Ali (as) replied to them in the following words:

"Well, as for your idea whether this (delay) is due to my unwillingness for death, then by Allah I do not care whether I proceed towards death or death advances towards me.[59](#)

In reply to those who alleged that his behaviour was suspicious against the Syrians, he said:

As for your impression that it may be due to my misgivings about the people of Syria, well, by Allah, I did not put off war even for a day except in the hope that some group may find guidance through me and see my light with their weak eyes. This is dearer to me than to kill them in the state of their misguidance although they would be bearing their own sins."[60](#)

On other occasions the enemies – some of whom were in the midst of his own forces – said that although he was brave he was a weak commander and does not know the technique of war. Imam 'Ali has given them a fitting reply by exposing their own cowardice and fickleness and recounting his prowess in leading armies into the battlefield:

Jihad is one of the doors of paradise, which Allah has opened for His chosen servants. It is the dress of piety and the protective armour of Allah and His trustworthy shield. Whoever abandons it Allah covers him with the dress of disgrace and the clothes of distress...

Beware! I called you to fight these people night and day, secretly and openly, and exhorted you to attack them before they attacked you, because by Allah, no people have been attacked in the hearths of their homes but they suffered disgrace; but you put it off to others and forsook it till destruction befell you and your cities were occupied... You have become the target at which arrows are shot...

You are being attacked but you do not attack. Allah is being disobeyed and you remain agreeable to it. When I ask you to move against them in summer you say 'it is hot weather spare us till the heat subsides'. When I order you to march in winter you say 'it is severely cold gives us some time till cold clears from us'.

These are just excuses... You shattered my counsel by disobeying me and leaving me so much so that the Quraysh started saying that 'Ali ibn Abi Talib is brave but does not know (the tactics) of war. Allah

blessees them. Is anyone of them braver in war and older in it than I am. I rose for it (battle) although yet within twenties, and here I am, having crossed sixty, but one who is not obeyed can have no opinion.[61](#)

Murder of 'Uthman

'Uthman who took over as the third caliph because of the choice of his kinsmen in the shura, proved a total failure. His inefficient advisors brought about the insurrection against him that ended in his killing. They could have helped him avert the crisis but they did not – as is the case of Mu'awiyah.[62](#) It was Imam 'Ali (as) who tried to mediate between 'Uthman and the insurrectionaries for the sake of protecting the Muslim dignity in the hope of resolving the crisis by pacifying the angry people and soothing the wounds of those who had suffered gross injustice at the hands of the caliph and his advisors. [63](#) And when the furious people were about to sweep away 'Uthman and his house it was the Imam who risked his life in refraining them.[64](#)

But when 'Uthman finally paid for his policies with his life and when the people pressed the Imam to become the caliph, opportunists on the pretext of avenging the third caliph's blood, tried to blame Imam 'Ali (as) for the assassination in spite of the fact they were well aware of the identity of the killers and the motives behind 'Uthman's death."[65](#) This wild and mischievous allegation against the Imam, misled many unsuspecting people and created a crisis.

Greed for Power

As part of their mudslinging campaign another baseless accusation buried against Imam 'Ali (as) by his enemies was the greed for power despite the obvious fact that he never fits the description of a person thirsty for power. Power-mongers – whether in history or in our own times – are so obsessed with authority and the means to acquire it that they try to justify whatever methods that are used to reach their goals.

But Imam 'Ali (as) offers the finest example of a person who did not pursue power even when he knew it to be his right (and was offered support to make a bid for it after the event of Saqifah Bani Sa'dah) [66](#). He had taken up the reins of caliphate because of the acute necessity of the times and his own responsibility in this regard in view of his primordial position in Islam. If circumstances had not warranted it, he would never have agreed to become the caliph. This sense of responsibility of the Imam was misinterpreted by persons who were greedy for power themselves, as power mongering. In his own words it is clear how he viewed his commitment to the commandments of God and what he felt about merely clinging to power and leadership:

By Allah, I shall not be like the badger, which feigns sleep on continuous (sound of) stone-throwing till he who is in search of it finds it or he who is on the lookout for it overpowers it. Rather I shall ever strike the deviators from truth with the help of those who advance towards it, and the sinners and doubters with the help of those who listen to me and obey, till my day (of death) comes. By Allah I have been

continually deprived of my right from the day the Prophet (S.A.W.) passed away till today."[67](#)

Unlike any politician he spelt out his policies in clear terms no matter what the outcome. As a matter of fact the real power-mongers were those companions of the Prophet who had prospered during 'Uthman's rule and who thought that Imam 'Ali (as) might continue the same policy of showing favours to them at the expense of the masses. But when they realised that he was committed to the letter and spirit of justice and truth, and on no account would yield to their demands, they turned into his enemies and labelled the wild accusation that he was thirsty for power. The Imam says about these persons:

They are hankering after this world out of jealousy against him on whom Allah has bestowed it (authority). So they intend reverting the matters on their back, while on us it is obligatory, for your sake, to abide by the Qur'an and the conduct of the Prophet of Allah (S.A.W.), to stand by his rights and revival of his Sunnah."[68](#)

Elsewhere he says:

"By Allah I had no liking for the caliphate nor any interest in government, but you yourself invited me to it and prepared me for it. When the caliphate came to me I kept the Book of Allah in my view and all that Allah had put therein for us, and all that according to which He has commanded us to take decisions; and I followed it, and also acted on whatever the Prophet (S.A.W.) had laid down as Sunnah."[69](#)

Wars and Battles

The most conspicuous enmity towards Imam 'Ali (as) were the wars and battles imposed on him during his caliphate. We will briefly mention the three-armed uprisings against his rule.

Battle of Jamal

His caliphate had not yet taken roots when the fraudulent and the malicious in their greed for worldly power gauged up together to break the pledge of allegiance they had sworn to him. They incited a group of Muslims to fight him in the armed encounter known as the Battle of Jamal (Arabic for 'camel' since 'Ayishah, one of the wives of the Prophet, mounted a red-haired camel and led the conspirators). Imam 'Ali (as) was not surprised at the behaviour of the two chief conspirators Talhah and Zubayr, and addressed them as follows:

"I always apprehended from you consequences of treachery and I had seen you through in the garb of the deceitful. The curtain of religion had kept me hidden from you but the truth of my intention disclosed you to me."[70](#)

The flames of war, although they devoured the conspirators who had ignited them, were not something pleasant for the Imam who had tried his best to dissuade them from such an action. The Imam's army won the battle, but Jamal like all other civil strife, caused cracks to appear in the system of caliphate and

emboldened Mu'awiyah to show his insolence towards Imam 'Ali (as) in a more elaborate manner.

War of Siffin

Mu'awiyah, who had put roots in Syria because of his long rule over that province since his appointment as governor by 'Umar ibn al-Khattab and the subsequent confirmation in that position during the 12-year rule of his kinsman 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, was not pleased with anything short of caliphate. The killing of 'Uthman and the sedition of 'Ayishah, Talhah and Zubayr, gave him the desired pretext, and by raising the deceptive slogan of 'vengeance for the blood of 'Uthman', he dared to confront Imam 'Ali (as) in battle – after refusing to comply by the new caliph's order of his dismissal from the post of governor. The War of Siffin with all its ups and downs dragged on for several months before ending with a deceptive act by Mu'awiyah's forces who raised copies of the holy Qur'an on spear points to avoid certain defeat. The forced arbitration which took place as a result did not end favourably for Imam 'Ali (as) –because of the duplicity of some of his followers'. The consequences of Siffin made a group of nitwits – who had at first fell to Mu'awiyah's ruse of arbitration – to desert the rightful Imam and accuse him of deviation from faith.⁷¹ Imagine, to what extent enmity with the First Muslim had blinded those who had no clear idea of Islam but still called themselves Muslims!

Battle of Nahrawan

Imam 'Ali (as) addressing these deviated elements who became popularly known as Khawarij (renegades) because of leaving the ranks of the Commander of the Faithful, says:

I had advised you against this arbitration but you rejected my advice like adversaries and opponents till I turned my ideas in the direction of your wishes. You are a group whose heads are devoid of wit and intelligence. Allah's woe be upon you. I had not put you in any calamity nor wished you harm.⁷²

Ignorance and blind prejudice had however, clouded the brains of the Khawarij. So little was their acquaintance with Islam and so intensely did their hearts burn in the enmity of the Imam that they failed to heed the voice of reason and chose to fight. Imam 'Ali (as) warned them of the consequences of battle" and the lineage they were unwittingly doing to Islam.⁷³ After victory in the Battle of Nahrawan he still pitied these hapless elements that were immersed in manifest error, and told his followers:

"Do not kill the Khawarij after me, because one who seeks right but does not find it is not like the one who seeks wrong and finds it (Mu'awiyah and his men).⁷⁴

This was in brief the trend of enmity with Imam 'Ali (as) and the sinister motives behind them, which manifested on various occasions and in different forms for reasons that totally lack justification. ⁷⁵

¹. Umayyah is said to have been a slave of 'Abd Shams rather than his son. 'Allamah Majlisi has related in Bihar al-Anwar (vol. 8, 383) from Imad al-Din Tabari's Kamil Baha'i that Umayyah was a Byzantine slave of 'Abd Shams and when the latter found him intelligent he freed him and treated him as an adopted child. As was the custom among the pre-Islamic Arabs Umayyah became known as the son of 'Abd Shams similar to the case of Zayd bin Muhammad (S.A.W.), until God

revealed the ayah that the Prophet was not the father of any male Arab (33:40).

[2.](#) Tarikh-i Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 13.

[3.](#) Sunan al-Nasa'i, vol. 4, p. 3.

[4.](#) Al-Siyar -wa al-Maghaz'i, p. 210.

[5.](#) 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Musawi al-Muqarram. Maqatal al-Husayn, p. 357, Dar al-Kitab al-Islami, Bayrut; Tadhkirah al-Khawass, Sibti ibn Jawzi, p. 235, Mu'assasah Ahl al-Bayt, Bayrut.

[6.](#) Jami' al-Bayan, vol. 4, p. 240.

[7.](#) Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, Vol. 3, p. 107.

[8.](#) Tashayyu' dar Masir-i Tarikh, part I.

[9.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Letter no. 17.

[10.](#) Imam 'Ali has used the word lathiq which means "one who is attributed to other than one's father". Apart from what cited in note no.1, two other instances of doubtful parentage can be pointed out in Mu'awiyah's lineage. The first concerns Harb who was said to be a slave of Umayyah. The Sunni scholar Ibn Abi al-Hadid in his Sharh Nahjul Balaghah, has quoted from Abi al-Faraj Isfahani's (himself of Umayyad descent) book al-Aghani that Mu'awiyah enquired from the Arab genealogist Di'bil whether he had seen Abd al-Mutallib and he replied in the affirmative.

He enquired about his personality and was told that 'Abd al-Mutallib was noble, handsome and a man of broad forehead with his face bearing the brightness of Prophethood. Then he enquired whether he had seen Umayyah and how was his appearance? Di'bil replied that when he saw him he was weak-bodied, bent in stature and blind in the eyes. He was always led by his slave. Mu'awiyah said it was Umayyah's son Harb, to which Di'bil retorted: You say so, but the Quraysh only know that he (Harb) was his slave.

The second doubt concerns Mu'awiyah himself, who to quote Ibn Abi al-Hadid, was the son of Hind, a woman notorious for her loose and immoral life. The Sunni scholar Zamakhshari in Rabi' al-Abrar does not believe that Mu'awiyah was the son of Abi Sufyan and has attributed his parentage to four persons. God knows best.

[11.](#) Al-Bada' wa al-Tarikh, vol. 2, p. 145.

[12.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 131.

[13.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 37.

[14.](#) Ahmad bin Hanbal, Musnad.

[15.](#) Hijrat, the Holy Qur'an, al-Baqarah 2:207.

[16.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 104.

[17.](#) The Battle of Uhud.

[18.](#) The Prophet took the infant 'Ali (a) into his arms when his mother stepped out of the Ka'bah after his birth.

[19.](#) He performed the last rites of the Prophet.

[20.](#) Hakim Nayshaburi, Mustadrak-al-Sahihayn, vol. 2, p. 241.

[21.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 3.

[22.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 3.

[23.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 3.

[24.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 92.

[25.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 3.

[26.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Letter 64.

[27.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Letter 28.

[28.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 146.

[29.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 32.

[30.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 224.

[31.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 175.

[32.](#) Al-Tabari, Abu Ja'far, Tarikh al-Muluk wa al-Rusul, vol.2, p. 580.

[33.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 27.

- [34.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 224.
- [35.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 15.
- [36.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Maxim no. 236.
- [37.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Maxim no. 77.
- [38.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, for instance the epistle to Malik al-Ashtar on his appointment as governor of Egypt.
- [39.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Letter no. 5, to the governor of Azerbaijan, Ash'athbin Qays.
- [40.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Maxim no. 289.
- [41.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 192.
- [42.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Letter no. 10.
- [43.](#) Many a roughneck infidel of Arabia including the kinsmen of Mu'awiyah fell to his flashing twin-bladed sword (Dhu'l-Fiqar). But the Imam's sword was not naked aggression against anyone who came against him. He did not kill those who sought clemency and repented of their error, neither did he pursue the fugitive, nor those who resorted to indecent acts during combat.

An example in this regard is the case of 'Amr ibn 'Abdawad who spat at him after being felled to the ground during the Battle of Khandaq. Imam 'Ali (as) instantly withdrew and allowed his fallen opponent to get to his feet since he did not want his personal feelings to interfere with the course of selfless jihad in the way of Allah.

When 'Amr refused to yield and renewed the combat the Imam made short work of him this time in equal combat. Another instance which stands out most vividly is the disrobing of 'Amr ibn 'As during Siffin out of fear of imminent death. The Imam turned his face away and allowed his shameless antagonist to flee the battlefield.

Another noteworthy point of Imam Ali's bravery is his conversation with his general Malik al-Ashtar when the latter after the Battle of Laylah al-Harir during the Siffin War felt proud that he had equalled the Imam's art of swordsmanship. Malik was reminded that he had killed whoever came in his way while the sword of the Imam had spared the life of those in whose seed true believers were to be born even seventy generations later.

- [44.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Maxim no. 147.
- [45.](#) Ibid.
- [46.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 189.
- [47.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 185.
- [48.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 200.
- [49.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 169.
- [50.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 6.
- [51.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 50.
- [52.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 3.
- [53.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 3.
- [54.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 3.
- [55.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 137.
- [56.](#) Nahjul Balaghah Sermon 71.
- [57.](#) A man fearful of battle would not have won single-handed such crucial encounters in the early days of Islam as the Battles of Badr, Khandaq, Khaybar, Hunayn, etc. And he showed his valour in this combats after the antagonists had spurned his invitation to accept Islam.
- [58.](#) If Imam 'Ali (as) was scared of death as his opponents alleged, he would not have risked his life to sleep on the Prophet's bed on the night of Hijrah when would-be assassins had surrounded the abode of divine revelation. Neither would he have stood steadfast beside the Prophet during the Battle of Uhud when most of the companions of the Prophet (including those who became caliphs afterwards) fled the battlefield for their dear lives the moment a detachment of infidel forces under the command of Khalid ibn Walid launched a surprise attack on the Muslims.
- [59.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 55.
- [60.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 55.

[61.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 27.

[62.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Letter no. 28 (In answer to Mu'awiyah's accusation. Imam 'Ali (as) says: "Then you have recalled my position vis-à-vis 'Uthman and in this matter an answer is due to you because of your kinship with him. So (now tell me) who of us was more inimical towards 'Uthman and who did more to bring about his killing? Who offered him his support but he made him sit down and stopped him (from helping) or who was that whom he called for help but he turned his face from him and drew his death near him till his fate overtook him...")

[63.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 164.

[64.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 3.

[65.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Letter no. 10 (The Imam refuting Mu'awiyah's baseless accusation says: "...You think you have come out seeking to avenge 'Uthman's blood. Certainly you know how 'Uthman's blood was shed. If you want to really avenge it, avenge it there...")

[66.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 5, When Abi Sufyan, hearing that Abi Bakr was chosen caliph, approached Imam 'Ali (as) and offered the military services of his clan in order to make a bid for his usurped right, he was told: "Steer clear through the waves of mischief by boats of deliverance, turn away from the path of dissension...It (the aspiration for the caliphate) is like turbid water or like a morsel that would suffocate the person who swallows it..-If I speak out they would call me greedy towards power but if I keep quiet they would say I was afraid of death...By Allah the son of Abi Talib is more familiar with death than an infant with the breast of its mother. I have hidden knowledge, if I disclose it you will start trembling like ropes in deep wells) can such a person be power-thirsty?

[67.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 6.

[68.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 169.

[69.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 205.

[70.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 4.

[71.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 122.

[72.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 36

[73.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 36.

[74.](#) Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 61.

[75.](#) It speaks of the radiant nature of Imam 'Ali (as) that he continues to shine as a beacon of guidance for humanity despite the fact that his wretched enemies, particularly Mu'awiyah and the Umayyads, had spared no effort to taint his personality. For decades after his martyrdom the Umayyads ordered the cursing of the Imam from pulpits throughout the Muslim lands, persecuted his followers and massacred his descendants, but it is the Prophet's cousin who continues to rule hearts while eternal shame is the lot of his opponents.

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- [5] <https://www.al-islam.org/printmobi/book/export/html/35328>
- [6] <https://www.al-islam.org/tags/nahj-al-balagha>
- [7] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/imam-ali>