

Ali Ibn Abi Talib and Allegiance

Ali Ibn Abi Talib and Allegiance



Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi

Al-Islam.org

Article

Authors(s):

[Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvi](#) [1]

Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) and Allegiance

By: Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi (r.a.)

Studying the Islamic history has proven that after the Prophet's demise, an entire discretionary campaign started. This campaign lasted for approximately 150 years. The aim of it was to discredit Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib (as) and praise the Bani Umaaya.

This article will provide three arguments against the opinion that Imam Ali (as) pledged allegiance to the three caliphs that ruled after the demise of our beloved Prophet (S).

Introduction

The foremost books on Islamic history “Al-Maghaazi” of Ibn Is’haaq and its summary “Seerah al-Nabi (S)” of Ibn Hisham were written in the second and third centuries AH. These were followed by “Tarikh at-Tabari” by Muhammad Ibn Jareer (or Jurair) al-Tabari also in 3rd Century AH.

It should be borne in mind that these original books on Islamic history were considered a part of Islamic traditions and like the traditions they even had a chain of narrators for every incident. The problems faced in the narration of history and traditions are therefore the same. The subject matter of both is equally important.

The first two Caliphs had banned the writing as well as oral narration of traditions. Moaviyah, during his reign, established an institution for forging and popularizing traditions. According to my knowledge, this was the first governmental propaganda machinery in the world. The main aim of this was to popularise false traditions in praise of the Caliphs, to project the Bani Umayyah as the most respected family of Quraish and the real relatives of the Holy Prophet (S) and on the other hand to ascribe all evils to Ameerul Momeneen Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) and his ancestors.

All those who would present such forged traditions were richly rewarded, granted high offices in the government hierarchy and would be included in the close coterie around the caliph and his governors. While those who would oppose this would have their lives, wealth and respect threatened.

This brief article cannot delve into the details of those dark times.

Those desirous of details should refer to “Kitabul Hadith” of Abul Hasan Ali Ibn Madaaeani or the

eleventh volume of “Sharh al-Nahj al-Balaaghah” of Ibn Abi al-Hadid al-Motazeli (Cairo Edition).

This process of criticising and humiliating the family of the Holy Prophet (S) coupled with honouring and respecting their enemies went on for more than 90 years. During this period, generations passed who used to consider the Bani Umayyah as the real family of the Holy Prophet (S) and embraced the cursing of Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) in the sermons of Fridays and days of Eid as a practice of the Holy Prophet (S).

Incidentally, it is necessary to clarify that the Bani Umayyah did not even consider Hazrat Ali (a.s.) as the fourth Caliph. Their view was that (God Forbid) Hazrat Ali (a.s.) usurped the caliphate for 4–5 years. This belief was prevalent till the time of Imam Ahmed Ibn Hanbal (exp. 241 AH.) who initially subscribed to this notion. Later, however, he changed his belief and started considering Hazrat Ali (a.s.) as the fourth rightly guided Caliph. The other scholars of Ahle Tasannun even criticised him for this.

This propaganda of about 150 years resulted in prevalence of thousands of forged traditions that wrongly indicated that Ameerul Momeneen Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) willingly acknowledged the Caliphate of the other Caliphs and had given the oath of allegiance to them. Also, the Caliphs used to take the advice of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) in matters of governance and he (a.s.) like a loyal subject used to follow their instructions. Even such false traditions were made rife which gave the impression that the Holy Prophet (S) and the Holy Imams (a.s.) used to commit mistakes (we seek refuge in Allah).

Such forged traditions served dual purposes. On one hand, a doubt was created about the infallibility of these (holy) personalities and on the other hand, an excuse was found for the characterless, lustful and sinning lives of the Caliphs of Bani Umayyah. How could one then question the misdeeds of the fallible Caliphs when even the infallible Prophet (S) was not safe from committing mistakes?

Such was the situation in the initial period of Islamic history. During this very period, books of traditions and history began to be written. Naturally, most of the traditions present in these books reflect the mood of that era. As a result, such an untrue historical record was created which presented a picture of unity between the family of the Prophet (S) and the Caliphs. They presented that Hazrat Ali (a.s.) had given his oath of allegiance and was regularly consulted by the Caliphs. There existed such mutual adoration between these two groups that Hazrat Ali (a.s.) married off his daughter to Umar Ibn Khattab and blah, blah, blah.

In Iran, I (viz. Maulana Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi (r.a.)) have explicitly mentioned this reality in various lectures that a correct analysis of historical matters has been undertaken by the scholars of India and Pakistan in the last 100 years. As a result, fact has been sieved from fiction. It is a matter of remorse that the scholars of Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, etc blindly narrate from the writings of Tabari and his ilk in their works as if his is the final word.

Refusal to Pay Allegiance

The only question which I want to clarify in this article is whether Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) had paid allegiance to the Caliphs? Traditions and historical records from the Ahle Tasannun show that till Janabe Zahra (s.a.) was alive, she did not consent to Hazrat Ali (a.s.) giving allegiance to Abu Bakr. After six months, when Janabe Zahra (s.a.) expired and the people stopped honouring Hazrat Ali (a.s.) as before, he paid allegiance to Abu Bakr. History however gives us three proofs which contradict this version.

The First Argument

The first instance is when Umar had formed a committee to select a caliph after him. This has been called “Shura” in history. Hazrat Ali (a.s.), Usman, Talhah, Zubair, Sa’d Ibn Abi Waqqaas and Abdur Rahman Ibn Auf were members of this committee. The selection of the Caliph was left unto them. They were to select a Caliph from among themselves. It was also ordered that if five of them agree on one person and the sixth opposes them then he should be killed. If four of them agree on one person and two oppose them then they two should be beheaded. If there are two groups of three each then that group should be accepted in which there is Abdur Rahman Ibn Auf and if the other three don’t accept then all the three should be killed.

Here, it should be mentioned that Abdur Rahman Ibn Auf was the brother-in-law of Usman. Sa’d Ibn Abi Waqqaas and Abdur Rahman Ibn Auf were cousins and from the same family of Bani Makhzum. Looking at the tribal bias present among the Arabs, it is unthinkable that Sa’d would oppose Abdur Rahman or that Abdur Rahman would ignore Usman. In this way, three votes were already in Usman’s favour including the deciding vote of Abdur Rahman.

As regards Talhah, he was from the family of Abu Bakr (Bani Tamim). After the incident of Saqifah e Bani Sadah there was extreme enmity between Bani Hashim and Bani Tamim. Also in the battle of Badr, Hazrat Ali (a.s.) had killed the paternal uncle of Talhah, Omair Ibn Usman and also two brothers of Talhah, Usman and Malik. Hence, it was not possible that Talhah would support Hazrat Ali (a.s.). After the formation of this committee, Hazrat Ali (a.s.) had told his uncle Abbas, “Even this time, this matter has gone out of our hands”.

Considering this composition of the “Shura” and analysing its effects, what happened later on is of no surprise. At the very outset, Talhah withdrew in favour of Usman. Zubair withdrew in favour of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and Sa’d Ibn Abi Waqqaas withdrew in favour of Abdur Rahman Ibn Auf. Abdur Rahman Ibn Auf then proposed that if he is given the authority to select the Caliph, even he will withdraw himself. Now, only Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and Usman remained. For two days continuously, Hazrat Ali (a.s.) presented such strong arguments proving his rights that all were dumb-founded.

The actual aim of installing Usman as Caliph seemed to be getting foiled. In the night, Abdur Rahman Ibn Auf visited Amr al-Aas and narrated the delicate situation to him. Amr al-Aas suggested to him:

“Tomorrow morning, you present the Caliphate to Hazrat Ali (a.s.) on the condition that he would act according to the book of Allah, the way of the Prophet (S) and the method of the Caliphs. Ali (a.s.) would not accept the method of the Caliphs. Thereafter, you put the same conditions before Usman and he will gladly accept. Instantly, you pay allegiance to him.” At that time Abdur Rahman expressed his reservations that what if Hazrat Ali (a.s.) accepted these conditions? Amr al-Aas replied that he will never accept the method of the Caliphs.

As predicted, the same occurred on the third day. Hazrat Ali (a.s.) flatly refused to accept the method of the previous Caliphs. The same conditions were put before Usman. He gladly accepted and was installed as the Caliph.

Why was Amr al-Aas so sure that Hazrat Ali (a.s.) would not accept the method of the previous Caliphs? If Hazrat Ali (a.s.) had already given his allegiance to them, then why was he so dead against accepting their methods that he even rejected the caliphate which was presented to him? If no one in this group asked, why anyone later also did not ask Hazrat Ali (a.s.) that since he had already given his allegiance to Abu Bakr and Umar, why he refused to act as per their way? An unbiased reflection on these questions will amply clarify the fact that Hazrat Ali (a.s.) had not paid allegiance to them and neither did he like their way.

The Second Argument

After meeting Imam Husain (a.s.), Umar Ibn Sa'd wrote to Ibn Ziyad that Imam Husain (a.s.) has agreed to return to Madinah or go to any border state and live like a common man or go to Yazid and after giving him the oath of allegiance accept his decision. (The third condition was added by Umar Ibn Sa'd himself and is not supported by any other historical document).

Ibn Ziyad was happy on reading the contents of this letter. Just as he was about to reply with his acceptance, Shimr instigated him. He said; “Husain (a.s.) will be further strengthened if he leaves your area without giving allegiance to you and you will be weakened”. Consequently, Ibn Ziyad rejected the proposals of Umar Ibn Sa'd and replied thus: “I have not sent you to make peace with Husain (a.s.) nor to make recommendations for him. If Husain (a.s.) and his companions are ready to obey me, send them to me. Otherwise fight them, kill them and after their deaths trample the corpse of Husain (a.s.) with horses. If the carrying out of these orders is not acceptable to you, you may hand over the command of the army to Shimr as I have authorised him so.”

When Shimr handed over this letter to Umar e Sa'd, he realized that this is the scheming of Shimr. He retorted angrily “I strongly suspect that you dissuaded Ibn Ziyad from accepting my conditions. The matter which I was trying to solve has been spoilt by you. By God! Husain (a.s.) will never agree to obedience (to Ibn Ziyad) as in his chest beats the heart of his father.”^{[1](#)}

This clearly indicates that neither Hazrat Ali (a.s.) had paid allegiance to any one nor is Imam Husain

(a.s.) going to do so. Had Hazrat Ali (a.s.) given allegiance, Shimr would have definitely replied that since Ali (a.s.) has previously given allegiance, Husain (a.s.) too would follow suit.

This conversation amply demonstrates that till the Muharram of 61 AH, it was clear to friends as well as enemies that Hazrat Ali (a.s.) had not paid allegiance to anyone.

Also, this statement of Umar e Sa'd also refutes the third option (which he had added from his side) in his letter to Ibn Ziyad that Imam Husain (a.s.) is ready to pay allegiance to Yazid (l.a.). Now, in his argument with Shimr, he mentioned the fact that Imam Husain (a.s.) will never accept submission.

The Third Argument

Now let us analyse the (Sunni) view in relation to the allegiance. This view clearly states that neither Janabe Zahra (s.a.) has herself paid allegiance to Abu Bakr and Umar nor did her husband. The virtues and merits of Janabe Zahra (s.a.) are an integral belief of all Muslim sects. She is a part of the Holy Prophet (S) and the leader of all the women as well as of the women of the Paradise. Yet, she has not given allegiance to Abu Bakr while the Holy Prophet (S) remarked, "One who dies without recognising the Imam of his time he dies the death of Jaahiliyyah (disbelief)."

Whether Janabe Zahra (s.a.) knew the Imam of her time or not? If Abu Bakr was the Imam of the time then by refusing allegiance to him how can she be the leader of the women of Paradise?

There is no excuse except to accept that in the view of Janabe Zahra (s.a.), Ameer ul Momeneen Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) was the Imam of the time and she accepted him as her Imam. That is why she is the leader of the women of Paradise. If after the death of the Holy Prophet (S), Hazrat Ali (a.s.) was the Imam, then after the death of Janabe Zahra (s.a.) how can he be discharged of the same?

It is also worth noting that according to Shia belief, both Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and Janabe Zahra (s.a.) were infallible. Neither paid allegiance to Abu Bakr for six months. This proves that near them the Caliphate of Abu Bakr was baseless and only by refusing allegiance to him they can remain on the path of truth. If refusal of allegiance was the correct thing for six months, how can giving the allegiance become the correct thing after six months? If paying allegiance was the right thing to do, then why Janabe Zahra (s.a.) opposed it throughout her life and Hazrat Ali (a.s.) stayed away from it for six months.

Conclusion

It is clear that refusing allegiance is a completely separate matter from that of giving correct advice when asked for. Avoiding bloodshed in-spite of opposition is again a separate issue altogether.

It is now beyond doubt that Hazrat Ali (a.s.) hadn't paid allegiance. Why did he then give correct advice when asked for on various occasions? Among the many reasons for this is the saying of the Holy Prophet (S) that, "When advice is sought from a person then he should be true".

Thus, correct advice should be given. Also, these advices used to be given for the benefit of the Islamic Ummah. As the true Imam, it was the duty of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) that he protects the interest of the Ummah.

As for avoiding bloodshed, Zaid Ibn Khalid referred to Imam Jafar Sadiq (a.s.) the objection of some people that why Hazrat Ali (a.s.) avoided fighting if was on the truth? He (a.s.) replied that to fight in absence of reliable supporters is the responsibility given only to one person and that is the Holy Prophet of Islam (S). He is supposed to wage a war all alone even in the absence of supporters as is mentioned in the Holy Quran:

“Fight then in Allah’s way; this is not imposed on you except in relation to yourself. . . ” Surah Nisaa, 4: Verse 84

For other people Allah mentions that:

“And whoever shall turn his back to them on that day– unless he turn aside for the sake of fighting or withdraws to a company– then he, indeed, becomes deserving of Allah’s wrath, and his abode is hell; and an evil destination shall it be.” Surah Anfaal, 8: Verse 16

Finally, Imam Sadiq (a.s.) said,

“Ali (a.s.) did not have a group which would help him in this. Hence waging a war was not his responsibility. If he had a group of supporters he would definitely have done so.”^{[2](#)}

¹. Al Balaazari, Ansaab al-Ashraaf; Shaikh al-Mufid (r.a.), Kitabul Irshad (Al Mutamir ul Aalami lil fatitul Ash Shaikh al Mufid, 1413 A.H.); Baqir Sharif al Qarashi, Hayatul Imamul Husain (a.s.), V.3, First Edition, p. 133

². Tafseer al-Ayyashi, Tehran edition, V.2, p.5; Tafseer Al-Mizan, V.5, p.25.

[Get PDF](#) [2] [Get EPUB](#) [3] [Get MOBI](#) [4]

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/articles/ali-ibn-abi-talib-and-allegiance-sayyid-saeed-akhtar-rizvi#comment-0>

Links

[1] <https://www.al-islam.org/person/allamah-sayyid-saeed-akhtar-rizvi>

[2] <https://www.al-islam.org/printpdf/book/export/html/41433>

[3] <https://www.al-islam.org/printepub/book/export/html/41433>

[4] <https://www.al-islam.org/printmobi/book/export/html/41433>