

# The Caliphate of Imam Ali

## Lesson 2



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ENRICHING THE SOUL

# Allegiance to Imam Ali

- After the murder of Uthman, fear and panic seized the companions of the Prophet and the wider Muslim community.
- Twelve years of mismanagement had shaken the Muslims out of their long slumber.
- Now they realized that the leadership of the community ought to be in the hands of a man who would put public interest ahead of the interests of his own family.
- Therefore, as soon as Uthman died, all eyes turned to Ali. The companions of the Prophet could not think of anyone else who had the ability to the anarchy.

# Allegiance to Imam Ali

- All the leading Muhajireen and Ansar, therefore, gathered in the Mosque of the Prophet, and agreed to ask Imam Ali to take charge of the government.
- A delegation then called on Imam Ali and requested him to accept this responsibility.
- The Imam did not accept the offer of the companions and said that he preferred to be an adviser rather than the caliph.
- After mounting pressure, Ali accepted but displayed no eagerness to assume power.

# Imam Ali's Inaugural Speech

- Imam Ali conducted first congregational prayer as caliph. After the prayer, he delivered the inaugural speech. He began his address by praising God, and by thanking Him for His countless and uncountable blessings and mercies one of which was that He had restored his (Ali's) right to him. He invoked God's blessings upon Muhammad Mustafa, and upon the members of his family, and then said:

# Imam Ali's Inaugural Speech

“O Muslims! You have given me your pledge of loyalty, and I know that you have not done so without forethought. Yet, your aims and my aims in the tasks lying ahead of us, may not necessarily be the same. I want to mobilize you for obedience and service to God; but many among you are hoping that I will give them rich estates or high ranks in the government. This is something that will not happen...”

# Imam Ali's Inaugural Speech

“Remember that there are two ways of life; the right and the wrong. Some of you will adopt the right way and others the wrong. You are free to choose. But if you see that a majority has adopted the wrong way, do not be dismayed or surprised by it. It has often been like that, and the world is full of paradoxes. But justice and truth will triumph in the end even if at a given moment they may appear to be on the defensive...”

# Imam Ali's Inaugural Speech

“Verily, when God sent Muhammad as His Messenger to this world, there was not a single soul in all Arabia who knew anything about guidance and rectitude. He led the Arabs out of the wilderness of sin and iniquity until they saw the light of guidance and found the road to eternal salvation. I was by his side from the beginning of his mission to its end, and I fought against disobedience to God all my life. I never felt weary of the struggle nor I was ever dismayed by the opposition of the guardians and champions of the pre-Islamic order, no matter how formidable it was.

# Imam Ali's Inaugural Speech

“O Muslims! I call upon you to assist me in my program of reconstruction. God is a Witness to my statement that my paramount objective is to restore justice in Muslim lands, just as it is His wish that I do so. I shall not rest until I have destroyed injustice. Listen to this with attention: I shall not transgress the bounds of the Book of God for anything. I will not be partial to anyone whoever he may be. In my sight, all of you are equal. I shall promulgate the Laws of God which are enshrined in His Book, and I shall do so in the light of the precedents only of His Messenger, Muhammad, the blessed one.



# Imam Ali's Inaugural Speech

“My mission today is the same as it was in the times of the Messenger of God, Muhammad; may God bless him and his family, and it's to establish or to re-establish the Kingdom of God on this earth.”

# Imam Ali's Sermons

- One of the key features of the Imam's government was transparency and education.
- If people are going to be politically engaged, they need to understand the vision of the leader they pledged allegiance to.
- The Imam regularly delivered public sermons to the masses to keep people informed.
- The majority of Muslims lacked proper Islamic education and thus the Imam took it upon himself to teach them authentic Islamic knowledge.

# Imam Ali's Sermons

- The sermons recorded in Nahjulbalagha were generally public speeches delivered during his caliphate.
- In his sermons he speaks about God, the concept of true worship, the transient nature of this life, and the reality of the hereafter.

# Dismissal of Uthman's Governors

- When Imam Ali took charge of the government, Uthman's governors and tax collectors were plundering the country without any fear of being questioned by the central government.
- Imam Ali's first act was to issue orders of their dismissal.
- Many companions of the Prophet (s) advised him against making any radical changes in policy and personnel.
- They warned the Imam that if he dismissed them summarily, before consolidating his own power, they would rebel against his authority.

# Dismissal of Uthman's Governors

- But such advice was not acceptable to Imam Ali. He believed that he was accountable to God for all his deeds, and he could not, therefore, allow unworthy and corrupt men to rule over the Muslims.
- He, in fact, considered himself accountable to God, not only for his own deeds, but also for the deeds of his governors. He, therefore, placed his trust in God, knowing that he was doing the right thing, and refused to rescind his orders.

# Dismissal of Uthman's Governors

- Some people imagine that if Imam Ali had not dismissed Uthman's governors, he would not have provoked them into challenging him. This in turn would have prevented the civil wars that he later fought.
- The reality is that the governors of Uthman would have challenged Ali regardless of what he had done.
- Why did the Imam dismiss Uthman's governments immediately and without hesitation?

# Dismissal of Uthman's Governors

- **1.** Imam Ali's aim was to restore the government that the Prophet had established which was guided by divine values. To do this, he had to “purify” the government which he had inherited by removing the corrupt Umayyad's who had plundered the wealth of Muslims. In their stead, he wished to appoint God-fearing men who believed they were accountable to God for all that they did.

# Dismissal of Uthman's Governors

- **2.** Muslims had requested Uthman to remove his corrupt administrators and governors, and to appoint pious men in their stead. But he turned a deaf ear to their request whereupon they took other steps to force a change of governors. If Imam Ali had been slow to dismiss these corrupt officials, they would have toppled his government just as they toppled the government of his predecessor.



# Dismissal of Uthman's Governors

- **3.** If Ali had not dismissed the governors of Uthman, he would have made himself vulnerable to the charge of “guilt by association.”
- **4.** Muawiyah was not content with ruling Syria alone; he wanted to rule the whole empire of the Muslims as its caliph.
- **5.** Uthman had appointed governors not because they had any ability or because they loved to serve the Muslims. He appointed them only because they were related to him. Imam Ali considered these appointments a trespass on the rights of those men who were qualified by their ability, piety, and service to Islam, to rule the Muslims. He, therefore, removed them.

# The New Governors

- In Muharram of 36 AH., Imam Ali appointed the following governors:
- **1. Qays b. Sa'd b. Ubada** قيس بن سعد بن عبادة: Imam Ali appoints him as the governor of Egypt.
- Qays was able to enter Egypt without opposition and to take charge of the government. In Egypt, he found the Muslims divided into three groups. One was composed of his own supporters; the second of his opponents, i.e., the supporters of Uthman; and the third group was undecided in its loyalty.

# The New Governors

- Qays decided not to meddle with the last two groups, but to give his whole-hearted attention to the administration of the country.
- Qays, in physical appearance, was the most impressive man in Medina. He was tall, stern and powerful in build; and he was noted for his knowledge, piety and eloquence. He was also a man of great perception and foresight, and was more than a match for men like Muawiya, Amr bin Aas and Mughira bin Shaaba in ingenuity and intelligence.
- But like his own master, Ali, he too did not believe that ends justified the means. His philosophy of life was governed by the principle that political policy must be subject to the ethics of Qur'an.

# The New Governors

- **2. Uthman b. Hunayf** **عثمان بن حنيف**: Imam Ali appointed him as the government of Basra.
- Uthman was also able to enter Basra and to take charge of the government. He too found the Muslims in Basra divided into three groups as Qays had found in Egypt, and he too adopted the same policy as Qays had in Egypt.
- Uthman bin Hunayf belonged to a distinguished family of the Ansars. He was a close companion of the Prophet.
- During the caliphate of Umar, he was the financial commissioner of Iraq.

# The New Governors

- **3. Sahl b. Hunayf** **سهل بن حنيف**: Imam Ali appointed him as governor of Syria.
- Sahl left Medina. Before he reached the Syrian frontier, he met a body of cavalry. They asked him who he was and where he was going. He told them that he was the new governor of Syria. They said they were Syrians and that they did not acknowledge anyone as their ruler except Muawiya. They also added that if he went any further, he would be killed. Thereupon, Sahl did not enter Syria, and returned to Medina.

# The New Governors

- Sahl was the brother of Uthman b. Hunayf. He too was a companion of the Prophet, and had fought in all his battles, distinguishing himself with his courage and valor.
- When Imam Ali set out for the Battle of the Camel, appointed Sahl as his representative in his absence.

# The New Governors

- **4. Ubayd Allah b. al-Abbas** **عُبَيْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَبَّاسٍ**: Imam Ali appoints him as the governor of Yemen.
- He was a cousin of the Prophet and Imam Ali.
- He entered Yemen without opposition and took charge of the government.
- Uthman's governor in Yemen, had left before his arrival, and had taken the state treasury with him.

# The New Governors

- **5. Qutham b. al-Abbas** قُتَمُّ بْنُ عَبَّاسٍ: Imam Ali appoints him as governor of Makkah and Ta'if.
- He was the cousin of the Prophet and Imam Ali and actually had a strong physical resemblance to the Prophet.
- Imam 'Ali wrote a letter to Qutham whereby he appointed him as a manager of hajj rituals.
- The letter shows that Qutham was considered by Imam Ali as an honest and just manager. The Imam advised him to treat people in a good manner and gave him a permission to issue religious edicts and and spend money from the public treasury.



# Talha and Zubayr

- When Ali was inducted into office as the caliph of the Muslims, two of the most powerful men in Medina, Talha and Zubayr, were the first to take the oath of loyalty to him.
- Both of them, like many others, had grown immensely rich during the reign of the three caliphs before Imam Ali.
- With Imam Ali's accession to power, they also wanted to become the governors of the rich provinces of Basra and Kufa.

# Talha and Zubayr

- When they were taking the oath of allegiance to Imam Ali, they were secretly hoping that as a quid pro quo, the Imam would appoint them governors.
- When Imam Ali selected other men as governors, and did not offer them anything, they felt betrayed.

# A'isha

- A'isha despised Uthman for reducing her monthly stipend and publically condemned him.
- “It is reported that A'isha used to say: ‘Kill this Na'thal (Uthman b. Affan); he has become an apostate.’”
- The siege of Uthman's palace had already begun when A'isha left Medina for Makkah to perform Hajj. Marwan begged her to stay in Medina but she paid no attention, and left the city. During her absence from Medina, Uthman was killed.

# A'isha

- When the news of Uthman's death was confirmed, A'isha decided to leave Makkah immediately. Her presence in Medina, she believed, was absolutely essential before the election of a new caliph.
- On her way back to Medina was was informed that Uthman had been killed and Ali is now the caliph.
- Upon hearing that Ali was the new caliph, historians note that she said:

**“O how I wish, the earth had split open or the sky had fallen on earth if Ali has become the caliph. Now I cannot go to Medina. I shall return to Makkah.”**

# A'isha

- A'isha ordered her camel-driver to return to Makkah, and said:
- “Uthman was killed while he was innocent. By God, I shall now seek vengeance for his blood.”
- Marwan who had left Medina at the accession of Imam Ali to power , also arrived in Makkah. He called on A'isha, and gave her a graphic account of the murder of Uthman which is said to have deeply moved her, and to have brought her to the edge of tears.

# A'isha

- A'isha launched a two-pronged campaign; she had to prove (1) Uthman's "innocence," and (2) Ali's "guilt."
- Travelers carried the news of A'isha's campaign to Medina. Talha and Zubayr were thrilled to hear the news. They saw a glimmer of hope for themselves in her campaign.
- They wrote letters to her, gave her their blessings, admired her for her initiative; encouraged her and urged her to step up her propaganda against Ali. Soon they themselves were to go to Makkah "to perform umrah."

# Muawiya

- After the death of Uthman, Imam Ali sent a letter to Muawiyah explaining what happened and how people have pledged allegiance to him.
- He also indicated that he was going to appoint a new governor in Syria.
- Muawiyah did not reply to the letter.

# Muawiyah

- There was no reply for 3 months
- Muawiyah was waiting for his army which was stationed outside of Medina to return to Syria.
- Uthman's wife had Uthman's blood-stained shirt and she gave it to the army to deliver to Muawiyah.
- When the army returned Muawiyah spoke of nothing but the murder of Uthman.
- He uses the murder of Uthman as a propaganda machine to delegitimize Imam Ali's government.



# Muawiyah

- Muawiyah starts writing letters to Talha and Zubayr encouraging them to revolt.
- He strokes their egos and promises them support.
- Muawiyah also writes to the deposed governors and urges them to unite against Ali.