

Islam and the Earliest Muslims

Two Conflicting Portraits

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Transliteration key

أ - 'ā	ض - ḍ
آ - ā	ط - ṭ
ب - b	ظ - ṣ
ت - t	ع - 'a
ث - th	غ - gh
ج - j	ف - f
ح - ḥ	ق - q
خ - kh	ك - k
د - d	ل - l
ذ - dh	م - m
ر - r	ن - n
ز - z	و - w, ū
س - s	ه - h
ش - sh	ي - y, ī
ص - ṣ	

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Introduction

All Praise belongs to Allah, the One, and peace and blessings
On His Messenger and Servant.

This slim volume is neither meant to demonstrate soundness of any particular creed, systems of belief or school of thoughts nor is this a polemical or scholastic effort to refute the beliefs of any sects. This work may prove disappointing to those who go through it with a view to find such matters discussed in it. There are innumerable works on the subject. Especially in languages spoken by the Muslims, such as Arabic, Persian and Urdu; so large is their number that it is not possible to touch upon them even briefly.

This work seeks to present a sketch of the earliest, ideal era of Islam; the period of Rasūlullāh ﷺ and his Ṣaḥābah; the new mode of thought and feelings Islam had produced; all of which was the result of Rasūlullāh's ﷺ teachings and guidance. It shows how the guidance provided by Rasūlullāh ﷺ differed and surpassed the endeavours of all previous reformers and founders of religions. The first Islamic society that came to existence solely through the efforts of Rasūlullāh ﷺ has been presented through the light of verifiable facts of history. The book brings out the divine scheme for the protection of the Qur'ān against every form of corruption, since it was destined to remain the last revelation from Allah for the guidance of humanity. It also highlights the basic difference in the policy pursued by the harbingers of revolution and founders of empires for perpetuation of dynastic rule, on the one hand, and the prophetic system and disposition, on the other, essential for bringing man to the

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threshold of Allah. This distinction is also illustrated by the behaviour, character and morals of Rasūlullāh's ﷺ household. The matters discussed in this connection bring into relief the need as well as the importance of Rasūlullāh ﷺ himself being the ultimate authority in every matter pertaining to creed and law from the inception of the prophetic mission to the end of time — the essentiality of the doctrine of *Khatm al-Nubuwwah* (finality of nubuwwah).

This doctrine upheld through consensus of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā'ah, uniformly and continuously, and the way it has been perceptible throughout the life-time of Rasūlullāh ﷺ and in subsequent ages has been set side by side with the beliefs and deeds of the Ithnā 'Ashariyyah sect of the Shī'ah (from its first protagonist to 'Allāmah Khomeini) as presented in the authentic works of their eminent theologians. It has been left to the discretion — common sense, prudence and better judgment—of the readers to form their own opinion as to which of the two portrayals is upheld by the Qur'ān as well as accepted by the historians, Muslim and non-Muslim. It has been left to the judgment of the readers to decide which of the two presentations of Islam befits a Nabī who was undoubtedly the most successful nabī of Allah and the greatest guide and reformer the world has ever seen. They can decide which of the two versions is consistent with the claim of a religion to show the path of godliness and virtue to all races and nations in every time and clime, to make man loving and kind-hearted and self-sacrificing, and to raise him to the highest reaches of humanness from the level of animalism.

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Prerequisites for Universal faith

There are four prerequisites for a religion which claims to be universal, eternal and true, the only saving principle, the only sound creed and the sole path of virtue; inviting man to open the gates of a new and lasting revolution for his own good, on the individual as well as social plane; and presenting itself as a revelation from on High. These postulates are clearly pointed out by human disposition and intellect, history of religions, insight into psychological factors governing the rise and fall of nations and races and the end-result of well-known revolutionary endeavours undertaken anywhere over the ages.

Miraculous Guidance

The first condition in the nabī giving the call of such a religion should be that he is able to transform those coming into contact with him as if they were reborn with a completely new outlook, thoughts and values; this revolutionary change should have to be brought about without any means or the methods employed by other wise-heads, or social organisations.

He should be dependent neither on fine art, nor literature, nor oratory, nor poetics, nor philosophic discourses, nor take recourse to rewards of positions and prestige, who is more often unlearned and unlettered, should be different in the influence exerted and the change brought about by all others to a marked degree — leaving no doubt that the two are basically different in their origination and consummation.

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The change in the character and morals resulting from such a prophetic guidance should be indicative of a divine will and succour. Which could not be attributed to anything save to a light vouchsafed to the nabī or the blessing of his sacred companionship.

As those who are guided by a nabī come to possess a living awareness of Allah, sincerity of purpose, humility and submission, selflessness, devotion, least regard for anything worldly, anxiety for salvation, self-analysis and steadfastness – the qualities which are conspicuous by the absence in the men trained and guided by all masterminds like great philosophers, pedagogues, thinkers and intellectuals.

The miraculous and revolutionary guidance provided by the ambiyā' of Allah has been vividly described in this verse of the Qur'ān:

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ
وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ ۚ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

It is He who has raised among the unlettered people a messenger from among themselves who recites His revelation to them, and purifies them, and teaches them the Book, and wisdom; for they were formerly clearly misguided.¹

At another place the sacred Scripture reads:

وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيْكُمُ
الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الرَّشِدُونَ

1 Sūrah al-Jumu'ah: 2.

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*However, Allah has endeared the faith to you and beautified it in your hearts and has made denial of truth, wickedness, and disobedience hateful to you.*¹

Yet another verse of the Qur'ān announces:

فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالزَّمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ
التَّقْوَى وَكَانُوا أَحَقَّ بِهَا وَأَهْلَهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

*Allah sent down His tranquillity upon His Rasūl ﷺ and the believers and made the word of piety binding on them for they were most worthy and deserving of it.*²

Success of Prophetic Guidance

Such a nabī should be able to bring about a marvellous change in the manner and morals of a large number of his comrades. He should be able to produce men with angelic qualities, each one of whom should be capable of converting an entire nation or country to his faith through his strength of character and virtuous behaviour. The nabī should be able to transform the life of his people in such large numbers that an ideal society should come into existence within his own life-time since a nabī who fails to accomplish this feat can hardly be expected to lay a claim that his successors would change the world or bring their contemporaries to inculcate a living awareness of Allah on a scale wider than the nabī had himself achieved.

1 Sūrah al-Ḥujurāt: 7 for a detailed discussion of Qur'ānic verses praising the companions of Rasūlullāh ﷺ see *Ayāt al-Bayyināt*, vol. 1. p. 12 - 31 by Muḥsin al-Mulk.

2 Sūrah al-Faḥ: 26.

Ambiyā' and Political Strategists

Anyone sent by Allah to call towards such a religion should bear no resemblance in his character and morals, procedure and behaviour patterns as well as in his ends and objectives with political leaders, conquerors and founders of empires. The methods applied by him in pursuance of his objectives should rather be contrary to the ways adopted by all other worldly-minded persons whose ultimate aim is to establish a dynastic rule. The history of Roman, Byzantine, Sassanid, Kiyāni, Suryavanshi, Chandravanshi and similar other dynasties is witness to the fact that the family of an empire builder is passed on the reins of government and if, for any reason, that is not possible, the clan, tribe or family of the victor comes to occupy a position of prosperity and privilege which is enjoyed by it for several generations. Their exploits are like the kill of a lion providing feast to other animals of the jungle. One would have hardly believed the stories of wanton enjoyment and festivity of the Roman and Persian emperors if these had not been recorded by reliable historians.¹ The grandeur of their palaces and the golden carpets² they contained as well as ostentatious living of the Indian rulers furnish an example of their luxurious way of life.

As against the kings and emperors, a nabī of Allah never builds an empire nor does he do anything to ensure a life of peace and prosperity for his progeny, nor does he vest his family with any exclusive right or privilege to be exercised by them by virtue of their relationship to him.

1 A Christensen. *Iran Sous Les Sassanides*, Paris, 1936 (trans. By Prof. Muḥammad Iqbāl, *Iran ba'ahd-i-Sāsāniān*).

2 See 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Sharar: *Tārīkh Islām*, vol. I, p. 356, *Tārīkh Ṭabari*.

Rather, his way is entirely different: he requires his family members to lead a life of hardship, austerity and self-sacrifice and they have to depend after him on their own capabilities and efforts. They are never allowed by a nabī to become social parasites like monks and priests.¹

Pure and Simple Scripture

The third essential feature is that the scripture revealed to such a nabī is the bull work of his religion, fountainhead of his teachings, a means to bring man closer to Allah, a lighthouse of true spirituality and, finally, a guidebook of his creed; it teaches nothing else than absolute and uncompromising monotheism. It has to retain these characteristics to the end of time. Allah takes the responsibility of protecting it from every corruption. It remains entirely unchanged, understood and recited by the people in large numbers and also treasured in human memory through divine dispensation unlike any other book. All this is made possible since it has to be presented as the last revelation to the coming generations for their salvation.

The annals of the Old and the New Testaments and other religious scriptures record the events leading to the destruction of these sacred writings sometimes by the invaders and enemies and often through interpolations by their own over-religious followers.² Some of these writings were even lost for ever by the heedlessness of their insincere and selfish trustees. The reason for it was that safekeeping of these scriptures was entrusted to their followers alone who were:

1 Details given elsewhere.

2 See *Tārīkh Suḥaf-e Samāwi* by Prof. Nawāb ‘Alī and the author’s *Islamic Concept of Prophethood*, p. 171-183.

اسْتَحْفَظُوا مِنْ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ وَكَانُوا عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَاءَ

*Bidden to observe it and there unto were they witnesses.*¹

Whereas the responsibility of protecting the Noble Qur'ān against every alteration and interpolation was assumed by Allah for He says:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

*It is We who have sent down the Reminder and it is We who will most surely safeguard it.*²

Fount of Guidance

The forth characteristic is that such a nabī should be the sole leader and guide and cynosure for his followers. Just as the Creator of the universe is to be accepted as the Only Lord and Master, the followers of such a nabī have to be unanimous in their obedience, love and regard for the unique personality of the nabī whom they should hold as the wisest of the wise, the last of the ambiyā' and the prince of all human beings. They ought to disdain regarding anybody else — howsoever near and dear he may be to the nabī — as impeccable, worthy of their unquestioning obedience or a recipient of revelation. In reality, the solidarity of his followers, protection against multiplicity of creeds and divisive forces and the guarantee of their own inherent spiritual strength lie in their acceptance of the principle of finality of nubuwwah.³

1 Sūrah al-Mā'idah: 44.

2 Sūrah al-Ḥijr: 9.

3 See Chapter VIII Muḥammad, the last Prophet of the author's *Islamic concept of Prophethood*, (Lucknow 1976). The creed of Imāmah held by the Shī'ī sect will be discussed later on.

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Now we shall discuss each of these four requirements for an abiding religion in order to examine each issue objectively in the light of observations of Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers and writers, and the record of events preserved by history.

Miraculous Moulding of Hearts.

Every nabī of Allah had guided and trained a band of followers, comprising of men who had given a new lease of life to our world, by making the existence of man more meaningful. Among the accomplishments of these ambiyā' those of Nabī Muḥammad ﷺ stands out as the most luminous and surpassing all others. His achievements in this regard, preserved by historians in much greater detail, show that his success was not only more than a match for earlier ambiyā' but that he had to start his work in circumstances more adverse than anybody else. He undertook the task of character building among a people who were as profligate as beasts and raised them morally to a standard never achieved by any nabī. Thus, beginning his work from the lowest, he took it to the highest standard.

The Soul Shining Through its Crystal-Covering.

Every man guided by Nabī ﷺ was the shadow of the divine perfection, of whom the entire humanity can justly be proud of. We do not find men with similar elegance and sublime character save among the ambiyā' of Allah. Their unflinching faith, depth of knowledge unsullied heart, simplicity, self-abnegation, clemency, pious disposition, kindness to others, courage and valour, devotion to Allah and eagerness to lay down their lives for Him, their vigils by night and engagements by day, indifference to the world and all it

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contains, probity and candidness and their direction and management were unprecedented in world history. Every one of them would have been taken as mythical figures if verifiable records of history had not preserved their extra ordinary achievements.

The Ṣaḥābah of Rasūlullāh ﷺ were a class by themselves; a group of men who had absorbed, through prophetic guidance, the highest qualities of head and heart ever aspired by man. Iqbāl, the poet of the East, has made an immortal verse of the acme of perfection which can be rephrased as under:

Child of earth and light, creature with divine traits, his heart is
indifferent to both the worlds, this and that.
Of hopes, he has little, but lofty in aims,
Winsome in his ways, his glance is sure to attract.
Courteous in speech, irresistible in effort,
Whether its war or peace he is pious, pure of heart.
His ways are strange, his exploits unsurpassed,
March ahead was his call to the times past.
Inspiring to the upward-looking, cup-bearer to the chaste,
His liquor is inebriate, truth is his sword.

Now we shall present some historical evidence to prove that the Ṣaḥābah of Rasūlullāh ﷺ truly deserve the above eulogy.

Khalīfah ‘Alī’s Testimony

We begin with two statements of Khalīfah ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ whose testimony is based on his personal knowledge. He is reported to have made these observations after most of his comrades had already reached their

journey's end. His attestation does not relate to his four confidants (Salmān al-Fārsī, Abū Dhar al-Ghifārī, Miqdād ibn al-Aswad and 'Ammār ibn Yāsir) who were alive when he was elected Khalīfah¹, but to all the departed Ṣaḥābah of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. These extracts have been taken from *Nahj al-Balāghāh*, an authentic compilation of his sermons, letters, orders and sayings. It was compiled by the noted Shī'ī poet and man of letters, al-Sharīf al-Raḍī (359 - 404 A.H./970 - 1013), and has been regarded highly ever since it came to be written. Another Shī'ī scholar Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (586 - 655 A.H./1190 - 1257) has written a detailed commentary of this work. The elegance, warmth and vigour of Khalīfah 'Alī's ﷺ diction are apparent in these statements in all its intensity and colour.

I have seen Ṣaḥābah of Nabī ﷺ. None of you leads a life like them; they used to spend their nights in prayer and meditation; they were very often standing or bowing before Allah; the apprehension on the Day of Judgment always was in their minds; thought of Allah the Almighty always kept them frightened. They feared His Wrath and kept hoping for His Blessing and Reward.²

In another sermon says 'Alī ﷺ:

Where have those people gone who when invited to Islam accepted it sincerely; who read the Qur'ān and whole-heartedly,

1 'Ammār ibn Yāsir ﷺ died in 37 A.H. and Salmān al-Fārsī ﷺ in 36 A.H., during the reign of 'Alī ﷺ who died in 40 A.H.

2 *Peak of Eloquence (Nahj al-Balāghāh)*, Sermons. Letters and Sayings of Imām 'Alī, ﷺ, 'Askarī Jaferī, Bombay, 1979, Sermon No. 100, p. 211 (published by Islamic Seminary for World Shia Muslim Organization, USA).

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followed the commands it contained; who loved Islam as a she-camel loves her young one and when ordered to fight in defence of Islam, they willingly left their homes and families. Some of them died like martyrs and some survived the ordeal. Success never overjoyed them and death never made them despaired. Sites of human misery saddened their lives, constant absorption of their minds and bodies in performance of the duties towards Allah and men had made them look pale and haggard; and humility manifested itself from their behaviour (as against the vanity of pseudo-pious people). They were brethren unto me. They have gone (are dead). I am justified in desiring to meet them once again and to be sad at separation from them.¹

Attestation by European Scholars

After this attestation by 'Alī رضي الله عنه, we would now cite few European scholars in confirmation of his observation. Caetani writes in *Annali dell' Islam*:

These men were true moral heirs of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the future apostles of Islam, the faithful trustees of all that Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم revealed unto the men of Allah. Unto these men, through their constant contact with the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and their devotion to him, there had already entered a new mode of thought and feeling, loftier and more civilised than they had known any before; they had really changed for the better from every point of view, and later on as statesmen and generals, in this difficult moments of war and conquests they gave magnificent and undeniable proof that the ideas and doctrines of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم had been seed cast on fruitful soil, and

1 Ibid., Sermon No. 124, p. 244.

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had produced a body of men of the highest worth. They were the depositories of the sacred text of the Noble Qur'ān, which they alone knew by heart; they were the jealous guardians of the memory of every word and bidding of the Prophet ﷺ, the trustees of moral heritage of Muḥammad ﷺ. These men formed the venerable stock of Islam from whom one day was to spring the noble band of the first jurists, theologians and traditions of Muslim society.¹

The noted French writer Dr. Gustave Lebon states about the Ṣaḥābah of Rasūlullāh ﷺ:

In short the new religion came across many crucial moments and, there is the least doubt, that it was the sagacity of the Prophet's ﷺ companions which helped them to succeed on these occasions. They selected men for the Caliphate whose only object in mind was to propagate the religion of Muḥammad ﷺ.²

About the first four Khulafā', the foremost Ṣaḥābah of Rasūlullāh ﷺ, the historian Edward Gibbon writes:

Any historian who balances the four Caliphs with a hand unshaken by superstition will calmly pronounce that their manners were alike, pure and exemplary; that their zeal was fervent, and probably sincere; and that, in the midst of riches and power, their lives were devoted to the practice of moral and religious duties.³

1 Caetani, *Annal dell' Islam*, vol. II. p. 429, cited from T.W Arnold, *Preaching of Islam*, London, 1935, p. 41-42.

2 Translated from Urdu translation *Tamaddun 'Arab* by Dr. S. 'Alī Bilgrami, p. 134.

3 Edward Gibbon: *The History of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. V London, 1911, p. 384-385.

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A historian taken as authority on the history of Arabia has the following to say about the first two Khulafā’:

Abū Bakr (632 - 634), the conqueror and pacifier of Arabia, lived in patriarchal simplicity. In the first six months of his short reign he travelled back and forth daily from al-Sunh (when he lived in a modest household with his wife, Ḥabībah) to his capital Madīnah, and received no stipend since the state had at that time hardly any income. All state business he transacted on the courtyard of the Prophet’s ﷺ Mosque... In character he was endowed with much strength and forcefulness than current traditions credit to him.

Simple and frugal in manner, his energetic and talented successor, ‘Umar (634 - 644), who was a towering height, strong physique and bald-headed, continued for some time after becoming Caliph to support himself by trade and lived throughout his life in a style as unostentatious as that of a Bedouin shaykh... His irreproachable character became an exemplar for all conscientious successors to follow. He owned, we are told, one shirt and one mantle only, both conspicuous for their patch work, slept in the beds of palm leaves and had no concern other than maintenance of the purity of the faith, the upholding of justice and the ascendancy and the security of Islam and the Arabians.¹

Another European writer, by no means sympathetic to Islam, has acknowledged the sterling qualities of these Ṣaḥābah of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. Writes William Muir:

1 Philip K. Hitti: *History of the Arabs*, London, 1953, p. 175-176.

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At his court, Abū Bakr maintained the same simple and frugal life as Muḥammad ﷺ. Guards and servitors there were none, nor anything approaching the pomp and circumstance of state. He was diligent in business... Abū Bakr never spared himself, and many incidents are related of the manner in which he descended to the minutest thing. Thus, he would sally forth by night to seek the destitute or oppressed person... In the choice of his agents for high office or command, he was absolutely free from nepotism or partiality, and was wise and discerning in his estimate of character.¹

In regard to Khalīfah ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, William Muir says:

Simplicity and duty were his guiding principle, impartiality and devotion characterised the discharge of his office; and responsibility so weighed upon him that at times he would exclaim: “O that my mother had not borne me; would that I had been this stalk of grass, instead!” — He was tender-hearted, and numberless acts of kindness are recorded, such as relieving the wants of the widow and fatherless.²

He portrays the great achievements of ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ in this manner:

So died ‘Umar, next to the Prophet ﷺ the greatest in the kingdom of Islam; for it was within these ten years, that by his wisdom of Islam, patience, and vigour, domination was achieved through Syria, Egypt, and Persia, which Islam has ever maintained... Yet throughout his marvellous fortune he never lost equipoise of wise and sober judgment, nor exalted himself

1 Sir William Muir: *Annals of early Caliphate*, London, 1882, p. 123.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 283-285.

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above the frugal and familiar style of an Arab chief. “Where is the Khalīfah?” would the visitor from distant provinces inquire, as he looked around the court of the great mosque; and all the while the monarch sat in homely guise before him.¹

Testimony of a Shīī Scholar

We shall not set forth the findings of any Sunnī penman here in favour of the two Khulafā’, but depend on a Shīī scholar, Justice Sayyid Amīr ‘Alī², who writes in *The Spirit of Islam*:

An examination of the political condition of the Muslims under the early khulafā’ brings into view a popular government administered by an elective chief with limited powers. The prerogatives of the head of the State were confined to administrative and executive matters, such as the regulation of the police, control of army, transaction of foreign affairs, disbursement of finances, etc. but could not act in contravention of the recognised law. The law was the same for the poor as for the rich, for the man in power as for the labourer in the field.³

1 *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, op. cit. p. 283.

2 Justice Sir Sayyid Amīr ‘Alī (1849 - 1928) was a descendent of a Shī‘ah family which immigrated to India from Khurāsān during the reign of Nādir Shāh. He first received education of English, Law, and Arabic in the Muḥsinīyyah Hoogli College, Calcutta and then was called to Bar in England in 1873. He retired in Bengal high Court in 1904 and took up residence in England. He was elected as the first Indian member of the Privy Council’s Law Committee in 1909 and died in 1928. Few Indians can claim to have a command over the English language and as a facile a pen as Sayyid Amīr ‘Alī, Major Osborn, the noted orientalist, once remarked that even English men envied his easy and forceful edition.

3 *The Spirit of Islam*, London, 1922, p. 27.

He also says:

The stern devotion of the early Caliphs to the well-being of the people, and the austere simplicity of their lives, were in strict accordance with the example of the Master. They preached and prayed in the mosque like the Prophet ﷺ; received in their homes the poor and the oppressed, and failed not to give hearing to the meanest. Without cortege, without pomp or ceremony, they ruled the hearts of men by the force of the character.¹

Syed Amīr ‘Alī has paid tribute, without any reservation to the simple and frugal living, even-handed justice and the service rendered to Islam by the first three Khulafā’, Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and Uthmān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمْ. The circumstances leading to the election of Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ as the first successor of Rasūlullāh ﷺ has been described as follows by him:

Among the Arabs, the chieftaincy of a tribe is not hereditary but elective; the principle of universal suffrage is recognised in its extremist form, and all the members of the tribe have a voice in the election of the chief. The election is made on the basis of seniority among the surviving male members of the deceased chieftain’s family. The old tribal custom was followed in the choice of a successor to the Prophet, for the urgency of the times admitted for no delay. Abū Bakr, who by virtue of his age and the position he had held at Makkah occupied a high place in the estimation of the Arabs, was hastily elected to the office of Caliph or Vicegerent of the Prophet ﷺ. He was recognised as a man of wisdom and moderation, and his election was accepted with their usual devotion to the faith by ‘Alī and the chief members of Muḥammad’s ﷺ family.²

1 *The spirit of Islam*, op. cit., p. 280.

2 S. Amīr ‘Alī: *A Short History of the Saracens*, London, 1955. p. 21.

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The character of Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ has been thus depicted by Amīr ‘Alī:

Like his Master, Abū Bakr was extremely simple in his habits; gentle but firm; he devoted all his energies to the administration of the new-born state and to the good of the people. He would sally forth by night to help the distressed and relieve the destitute.¹

The achievements of ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ as summed up by Amīr ‘Alī testify that:

The short government was too fully occupied with the labour of pacifying the dessert tribes to afford time for any systematic regulations of the provinces. But with the reign of ‘Umar — a truly great man — commenced that sleepless care for the welfare of the subject nations which characterised the early Muslim governments.²

He also says:

‘Umar’s accession to the Caliphate was of immense value to Islam. He was a man of strong moral fibre and a keen sense of justice, possessed a great energy and force of character.³

Martyrdom of ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ, according to Amīr ‘Alī, was one of the greatest disaster suffered by Islam:

The death of ‘Umar was a real calamity to Islam. Stern but just, far-sighted, thoroughly versed in the character of his people; he was perfectly fitted for the leadership of unruly Arabs. He held the helm with a strong hand and severely repressed the natural

1 *A Short History of Saracens*, op. cit., p. 26-27.

2 *The spirit of Islam*, op. cit., p. 278.

3 *A Short History of the Saracens*, op. cit., p. 27.

tendency to demoralisation among nomadic tribes and semi-civilised people when coming in contact with the luxury and vices of the cities... Of people habits, austere and frugal, always accessible to the meanest of his subjects, wandering about at night to inquire into the condition of people without guard or court—such was the greatest and most powerful ruler of the time.¹

Khalīfah ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān

History bears witness to the fact that purity of faith patriarchal simplicity dominated the life of the third Khalīfah ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه. He entertained guests with sumptuous meal, but he himself took bread with vinegar.² Very often he fasted continuously for days together. He mostly attended to his necessities himself and never woke up any servant at night. “The night is theirs”, he used to say if he was asked to take their help.³

‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه had a slave whom he had once pulled by the ear. After he had been elected to preside over the Khilāfah, he asked the slave to avenge himself and insisted until the slave had exacted the retribution. He even remarked on the occasion: “Satisfy yourself, and take your vengeance in this world so that nothing remains for the hereafter.”

‘Abd al-Malik ibn Shaddād relates that he saw ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه on the pulpit one Friday donning a coarse woollen sheet of Adan, hardly costing four or five dirhams.⁴

1 Ibid., p. 43-44.

2 Abū Nu‘aym, Ḥāfiẓ Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd Allāh, *Ḥilyat al-Awliyā’*, Lebanon, 1980 (cited on the authority of Sharjīl ibn Muslim), vol. I, p. 60.

3 Ibn Sa‘d: *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. III, p. 60.

4 Ibn Sa‘d: *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. III, p. 60.

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Ḥasan al-Baṣrī once saw ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه taking rest in the masjid at noon, and when he stood up the marks made by the pebbles were visible on his body. Those present on the occasion wondered at the austere ways of the Khalīfah.¹

So solicitous was he about the welfare of the people that he often enquired about the market rates of different commodities even after ascending the pulpit of the masjid. Mūsā ibn Ṭalḥah relates that he saw the Khalīfah sitting on the pulpit, while the iqāmah was being recited, and he was enquiring from certain persons about their welfare and itinerary.²

Nothing can illustrate his sincerity and self-abnegation more than the events dealing with his martyrdom. While the insurgents had besieged him in Madīnah, he calmly bade the citizens to go back to their homes since he did not want to fight or allow the blood of any Muslim to be shed for him. He died, while reciting the Qur’ān, at the hands of the rebels but did not succumb to their demands of retiring from the khilāfah, a trust committed to his care by the Muslims. He stood fast to his post till his last breath for he deemed a sacred office entrusted to him in accordance with the prediction of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم.³

“His chief merit lay in his piety”⁴, says Amīr ‘Alī while William Muir observes that he had a “kindly nature which might have made him, in less troubling times, a favourite of people.”⁵

1 Ibid., p. 60.

2 Ibn Sa’d: *Ṭabaqāt*, vol. III. p. 59.

3 Suyūṭī: *Tarikh al-Khulafā’*, Maktabah al-Sa’ādah, Egypt, 1952; Ibn Kathīr: *Al-Bidāyah wa l-Nihāyah*, Maṭba‘ al-Ma’ārif, 1966.

4 *A Short History of Saracens*, op. cit., p. 341.

5 *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 116.

His state policy has been described thus by Levi della Vida in the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*:

As Wellhausen pointed out and Caetani has expounded at length, 'Uthmān only followed and developed the policy of 'Umar.¹

The twelve years 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه held the helm, Islamic domination saw an unprecedented rapid expansion. Writes Amīr 'Alī:

The incursions of the Turks in Transoxiana lead to the conquest of Balkh. Similarly were Herat, Kabul and Ghazni captured. The rising in Southern Persia lead to the subjugation of Kerman and Sistan. In the settlement of the new acquisitions, the policy of 'Umar was followed. No sooner were these countries conquered, then effective measures were set on foot for the development of their material resources. Water-courses were dug, roads made, fruit trees planted, and security given to trade by establishment of a regular police organisation. Byzantine inroads from the north led to an advance on the country now called Asia Minor, towards the Black Sea. In Africa, Tripoli and Barco, and in the Mediterranean Cyprus, were conquered. A large fleet sent by the Romans to re-conquer Egypt was destroyed of Alexandria.²

In short, the limits of the Islamic empire were extended from Sindh, in the east, to Spain in the West. A powerful armada was organised although the Arabs did not earlier possess a single ship.

The enlargement of the grand square of the Ka'bah, undertaken in 26 A.H. was a great service to Islam by 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه. The Masjid of

1 *A Short History of Saracens*, op. cit., p. 47.

2 *A Short History of Saracens*, op. cit., p. 47.

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Rasūlullāh ﷺ in Madīnah was also enlarged and beautified in 29 A.H. He also sent orders to build new masjids in the conquered dominions and enlarge the existing ones. But still his greatest achievement was to secure the uniformity of the sacred Scripture for the sake of doing away with the differences in its recitation, and bringing the standard text into exclusive use throughout the far-flung Islamic dominions.¹ It would be interesting to mention here that when ‘Alī found certain citizens in Kūfah blaming his predecessor for standardisation of the Qur’ānic recitation he was filled with anger. “Silence!”, said ‘Alī ﷺ “‘Uthmān ﷺ acted as he did with the advice of leading men amongst us; and if I had been a ruler at the time, instead of him, I should myself have exactly done the same.”²

Khalīfah ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib

Nobody has ever disputed the angelical disposition of ‘Alī ﷺ except the Khawārij.³ We shall give here the reminiscences of Ḍirār ibn Ḍamurah, a comrade of ‘Alī ﷺ who described the character and temperament of ‘Alī ﷺ at the behest of Mu‘āwiyah ﷺ, who had been a long while at loggerheads with his predecessor. The picture of ‘Alī ﷺ portrayed by Ḍirār is really a graphic description of the chivalrous, human, forbearing and self-sacrificing companion brought up under the guidance of Rasūlullāh ﷺ:

He looked askance at the world and its pleasures; the night and its darkness were more agreeable to him. By my troth, his

1 *Dā’irat al-Ma’ārif Islamiyyah* Lahore, 1973, vol. XII.

2 *Annals of Early Caliphate*, op. cit., p. 308.

3 A section of ‘Alī’s army which mutinied during the Battle of Ṣiffīn and withdrew to Nahrawān on the borders of the desert and assumed a threatening attitude.

Two Conflicting Portraits

eyes were more often filled with tears and appeared to be care-worn. He had the touch of conscience which often made him to reproach himself. He was happy to wear garments made of coarse cloth and partake coarse food, lived like a common man, and made no distinction between himself and others. Whenever we asked anything, he would reply; whenever we went to him, he would salute first; and whenever we invited him, he came ungrudgingly; but despite this nearness, his awe never permitted us to talk to his presence or join his conversation. When he laughed, his teeth used to shine as hail stones. He respected the pious and loved the poor. More men of influence or authority could not hope to achieve any undeserved gain from him, nor did the weak ever give up hope of obtaining justice from him.

I declare to Allah that I have seen him often after the night fall, standing on the prayer-mat, holding his beard, weeping bitterly. I have heard him sobbing and lamenting: “O World, do you wish to entice me away? Have you brought your charms for me? Away! Away with you! Go about your business and deceive somebody else. I have already divorced you thrice. O World! Your pleasure is transitory, your life is short, and your allurements are unreliable and dangerous. Alas! I have but little provisions, the voyage is long and the route is extremely perilous.¹

Puritanical Life of the earlier Khulafā’

The sincerity, piety and nobility of the first four khulafā’ are demonstrated by their abstinence from the wealth that flowed from the newly conquered lands of the former Persian and Byzantine empires to the metropolis of Islam. Unlike other ambitious conquerors, they

¹ Ibn Jawzi: *Ṣīfat al-Ṣāfīyah, Dā’irat al-Ma’ārif* (Hyderabad, 1355-6 A.H.) vol. I, p. 122.

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did not lead a life of ease and sufficiency but preferred to pass their days as recluses — simple, austere and frugal — like the great Master. It would be rather more appropriate to say that they enjoyed greater contentment and peace of mind before they accepted the responsibility of presiding over the Islamic empire.

The way these khulafā' passed their days amidst power and prestige of the greatest empire of the time has made Edward Gibbon to concede that:

The courage of Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān had indeed been tried in the persecution and wars of the Prophet ﷺ; and the personal assurance of paradise must have taught them to despise the pleasure and dangers of the present world. But they ascended the throne in a vulnerable and mature age, and esteemed the domestic curse of religion and justice, the most important duties of the sovereign... The austere and frugal measure of their lives was the effect of virtue or habit, and the pride of their simplicity insulted the vain magnificence of the kings of the earth.¹

None of them ever tried to pass on his heritage to his son or a member of his family; they kept their near and dear ones away from the strings of power and sometimes even bade the electorate not to choose them as their successors. Of what we know of human nature and the propensities and practices followed by kings since times immemorial lead us to the conclusion that the khulafā' were absolutely sincere, free from human failings like self-indulgence, nepotism or partiality, their sole purpose in holding the helm was to propagate faith and

1 *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, op. cit., vol. V., p. 399.

strengthen the commonwealth committed to their care, and to save the nascent state against all internal and external dangers.

Had they been self-seeking, desirous of winning power and prestige, they would not have shunned the pomp and circumstances of a rapidly expanding state. Endowed with sovereign and absolute power, if they chose to maintain the simple and frugal life as Rasūlullāh ﷺ did, they could not be accused of insincerity by any man of understanding. These khulafā' were too shrewd to be deceived themselves, and too honest to act the part of deceivers.

Integrity of Abū Bakr.

We shall recount a few episodes relating to Abū Bakr and 'Umar رضي الله عنهما which will convince any man endowed with common sense to judge for himself the veracity of these saintly successors of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. The reputed historian Ibn al-Kathīr رحمه الله (1160 – 1234 A.H/1640 - 1722) relates an incident showing the conscientiousness of Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه.

Once his wife expressed the longing for some sweetmeats. When Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه expressed his inability she offered to save something from the daily expenses of the household. Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه gave his consent. She saved over a period some money and asked Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه to get some sweetmeats Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه took the money but remarked: “This seems to be in excess of our needs.” And put it back in the treasury. He also cut down his stipend to that extent.¹

Ḥasan ibn 'Alī رضي الله عنه, relates that just before his death, Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه said to his daughter, 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها: “The she-camel we had for milk,

1 'Alī ibn al-Athīr: *Tārīkh al-Kāmīl*, (Leyden, 1867-74) vol. II. p. 423.

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the pan in which we took meals and the bedspread we used were given to me since I served the Muslims. Send them to ‘Umar رضي الله عنه after I have passed away.” She sent all these things to ‘Umar رضي الله عنه as she had been bidden. Thereupon ‘Umar رضي الله عنه remarked: “May Allah have mercy upon you, Abū Bakr. You have laid a heavy burden upon me.”¹

It is also related that at the first Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه continued to maintain himself by trade; but finding it interfering with the affairs of the state he consented to forego his occupation and receive a yearly allowance of six thousand dirhams for his household charges. His conscience troubled him for having taken even what he did by way of stipend from people’s money; on his death-bed, therefore, he gave command that certain lands of his private property should be sold, and a sum equal to all that he had taken refunded to the public exchequer.²

Another report relates that he commanded to refund eight thousand dirhams for he had only taken that sum for his sustenance. He was wrapped in the same clothes in which he died; for he said: “New clothes befit the living, but old the mouldering body.”³

Khalīfah ‘Umar’s journey to Syria

The pomp and show attending royal visits are too familiar to be recounted here. The man reigning over the most powerful empire in the sixth century A.D. had also an occasion to undertake a journey to Jerusalem for capitulation of that city in 16 A.H/1636 A.D. After a siege of some duration the patriarch sued for peace, but refused to surrender

1 Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūfī: *Tārīkh al-Khulafā’*, Maktabah al-Sa‘ādah, Egypt 1952. p. 78.

2 *Annals of the Early Caliphate*. op. cit., p. 120 - 22.

3 Ibid., p. 119; Muḥammad Ibn Sa‘d: *Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*, Beirut. 1968. vol. III. p. 131.

the place to anyone but the Khalīfah in person. As Amīr ‘Alī says ‘Umar “acceded to the request, and travelling with a single attendant, without escort and without any pomp and ceremony arrived at Jabia.”¹ We shall relate the subsequent part of the journey as narrated by William Muir from the original sources:

It was a memorable occasion, being the first progress of a Caliph beyond the limits of Arabia, Abū ‘Ubaydah, Yazīd, and Khālīd, came from the north in state to welcome him. A brilliant cavalcade, robed in Syrian brocade, and mounted on steeds richly caparisoned, they rode forth as he approached. At the sight of all this finery, ‘Umar’s spirit was stirred within him. He stooped down, and, gathering a handful of gravel, flung it at the astonished chiefs. “Alas!” he cried; “Is it in this attire that you come out to meet me? All changed thus in the space of two short years! Verily, even if it had been after two hundred, you would have deserved to be degraded.”

... Dismissing the other generals to their respective commands, the Caliph, carrying with him ‘Amr and Shurahbīl, resumed the journey westward, and, crossing the Jordan below the Lake of Tiberius, proceeded thus to Jerusalem. They gave him a palfrey to ride on, which pranced with jingling bells after the fashion of Syria. He disliked the motion. “What ailed the animal?” he said; “I know not who has taught you this strange gait.” So he dismounted and rode upon his own horse again.²

‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ undertook another journey to Syria in 18 A.H /639 A.D. He asked ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ to deputise in his place in Madīnah on this occasion.

1 *A Short History of Saracens*, op. cit., p. 39.

2 *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, op. cit., p. 207-8.

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His way lay through the Christian settlement of Ayla, at the head of the gulf of Acaba. The reception he met with here brings out well the simplicity of ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, and his kindly feeling towards the Christians. He journeyed on a camel with small pomp or following; and as he was minded to enter the village unrecognised, he changed places with his servant.

“Where is the Amīr?” cried the eager crowds as they streamed forth from the villages to witness the Caliph’s advent. “He is before you”, replied ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, and he drove his camel on. So they hurried forward, thinking that the great Caliph was beyond, and left ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ to alight unobserved at the house of the bishop, with whom he lodged during the heat of the day. His coat, which had been rant upon the journey, he gave to his host to mend. This the bishop not only did, but had a garment made for him of a material lighter and more suited to the oppressive travel of the season. ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, however, preferred to wear his own.¹

‘Alī and His Predecessors

‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ always co-operated with his predecessors. As Amīr ‘Alī says the election of Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, on the demise of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ “was accepted with their usual devotion to the faith by ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and the chief members of Muḥammad’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ family.”²

William Muir has mentioned the misunderstanding arising between Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ on the question of inheritance of Rasūlullāh’s صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ personal property but adds that the latter

1 *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, op. cit., p. 236.

2 *A Short History of the Saracens*, op. cit., p. 21.

continued to frequent the Khalīfah's court like the rest of the chief Ṣaḥābah and even performed the functions of chief judicial officer.¹

He also says that the dispatches of Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ were chiefly indicted by 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ.²

In his introduction to *Nahj al-Balāghāh*, rendered into English for the Islamic Seminary, a World Shia Muslim Organisation, 'Askarī Jafery has mentioned several instances of 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, seeking the advice of 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and accepting them with gratitude.

He says that:

On the occasion of the invasion of Rome (Byzantine Empire) when 'Umar sought his ('Alī's رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) counsel as to the advisability of heading the army as the commander-in-chief, he advised him to be at the helm and to send some experienced general as commander... Similarly at the time of invasion of Persia he counselled the Khalīfah 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ not to leave the capital and to send somebody else.³

The well-meaning counsels offered by 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ finds confirmation in the sermons number 137 and 149 included in *Nahj al-Balāghāh*.⁴

It has been mentioned elsewhere that 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ left 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ as his deputy in Madīnah while he travelled to Syria in 18 A.H. The sympathetic reflections of 'Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ on the death of Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and 'Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ have been preserved by historians which speak

1 *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, op. cit., p. 65, 416.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 123.

3 *Peak of Eloquence*, op. cit., p. 57.

4 *Ibid.*, op. cit., p. 260 and 270.

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volumes of his earnest grief at parting company with these venerable comrades.¹

‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ nominated ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ as one of the members of the Council charged to elect his successor. The choice of the electorate fell upon ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and with his usual patriotism and devotion to the faith; ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ gave his adherence to ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ as soon as he was elected.² When the rebels blockaded ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, which lasted several weeks, denying food and water to the aging Khalīfah, ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ interposed and expostulated with the besiegers. Muir reports: “They were treating their Khalīfah,” he (‘Alī) told them: “More cruelly than they would treat Greek or Persian captives in the field. Even infidels did not deny water to a thirsty enemy.”³ But as the insurgents were deaf to his entreaty, ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ sent water and food to the Khalīfah during the siege and later deputed his sons and dependents to defend the Khalīfah.⁴

When ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ heard of the assassination of ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, he hastened to the place and asked his son how it happened.⁵ Death had not softened the rebels’ heart who pelted the litter of Khalīfah ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ with stones, but the funeral

procession was bravely joined by Ḥasan رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ along with the kinsmen of the departed Khalīfah.⁶

1 Muḥib al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī (d. 694/1295): *Al-Riyāḍ al-Naḍirah fī Faḍā’il al-‘Asharah*, (MSS No. 1784, Nadwat al-‘Ulama Library), p. 126-27, 187-88.

2 *A Short History of the Saracens*, op. cit., p.46.

3 *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, op. cit., p. 336.

4 *Peak of Eloquence*, op. cit., p. 61.

5 *Annals of the Early Caliphate*, op. cit., p. 341.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 341.

Şahābah and the Ahl al-Bayt.

The Qur’ān explicitly says that the Şahābah of Rasūlullāh ﷺ are:

أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رَحِمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ

*Severe against the disbelievers, merciful one to another.*¹

The lives of the people who have had the opportunity of keeping company with Rasūlullāh ﷺ are a living illustration of this sententious expression. Their mutual love and compassion, their comradeship and their willingness to undergo any sacrifice for their mates, signify the truth of divine revelation about them. Amīr ‘Alī has rightly remarked:

The intense faith and conviction on the part of the immediate followers of Muḥammad ﷺ is the noblest testimony to his sincerity and his utter self-absorption in his appointed task.²

Any allegations about the improbity of these elevated souls not only belies a historical fact but also raises doubts about the truth of divine revelation and effectiveness of prophetic guidance. A report related by *al-Bukhārī* on the authority of ‘Uqba ibn al-Ḥārith says:

Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه performed the ‘Asr Ṣalāh and came out of the maṣjid to take a stroll. He saw Ḥasan playing with other children. He lifted him up upon his shoulder and said: “May my father be sacrificed for him; he bears resemblance to Rasūlullāh ﷺ and not ‘Alī رضي الله عنه.” ‘Alī رضي الله عنه heard the remark and smiled.³

1 Sūrah al-Faṭḥ: 29.

2 *The Spirit of Islam*, op. cit., p. 22.

3 *Şahīḥ Bukhārī*, Maṭba‘ Muṣṭafā, Al-Bābī Al-Ḥalabī, Egypt, 1953, vol. II, p. 184 (Chap. Characteristics of the Prophet).

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Ḥusayn رضي الله عنه narrates:

‘Umar once asked me why I do not go and sit with him. Later on I went to his house but nobody was allowed to go inside and his son ‘Abd Allāh was waiting for him outside. I came back but when he met me next, he again said: “Son you did not come to me?” I replied that I had gone to see him but he was in privy, since his son ‘Abd Allāh was waiting for his permission to see him. ‘Umar replied: “Never mind the permission of ‘Abd Allāh, you could have seen me. The faith we have was due to your household.” Thereafter he patted me on the head.¹

Another report handed down by Zayn-al-‘Abidīn ibn Ḥusayn رحمة الله through Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Jā‘far al-Ṣādiq رحمهما الله has been narrated by Ibn Sa‘d. He says:

Once ‘Umar received some hullahs² from Yemen which were distributed by him among the people. Those who received the hullahs came wearing them to Rasūlullāh’s صلی الله علیه وسلم masjid while ‘Umar رضي الله عنه was sitting half-way between the grave of Rasūlullāh صلی الله علیه وسلم and the pulpit. The in-comers saluted him and he also greeted them. In the meantime Ḥasan and Ḥusayn رضي الله عنهما happened to come out of their house (which was part of the masjid) but none of them had a hullah on him. ‘Umar looked sad and depressed. When he was asked reason for it he replied that he had been saddened because of the two children, as there was no hullah of their size; all were for the grown-ups. ‘Umar then wrote to the governor of Yemen to send two hullahs for

1 Ḥusām al-Dīn ‘Alī al-Muttaqī: *Kanz al-‘Ummāl*, Vol, VII, p. 105.

2 A Shirt and overskirt made of the same but costly cloth. It was highly valued by Arabs.

Two Conflicting Portraits

Ḥasan and Ḥusayn رضي الله عنهما and also make haste in complying with his orders. ‘Umar رضي الله عنه was satisfied when these were received and he had both the children put them on.¹

‘Umar رضي الله عنه regulated the allocation of stipends on a fixed and systematic scale. Shiblī Nu‘mānī has described the rule of precedence laid by ‘Umar رضي الله عنه. He writes:

‘Umar رضي الله عنه had great regard for affinity to Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم. When he expressed the desire to fix the rates of stipend, ‘Abd al Raḥmān ibn al-‘Awf رضي الله عنه and few others expressed their opinions that ‘Umar رضي الله عنه should get precedence. However, ‘Umar disagreed with them and said that the affinity to Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم should be a criterion for priority. In such wise he commenced with the Banū Hāshim, and among them he began with ‘Abbas and ‘Alī رضي الله عنهما at the top. He gave fifth place to his own tribe Banū ‘Adī. Thus, the names of stipendiaries were listed in that order. In the fixation of allowances too, he kept the same rule in view; those who have fought at Badr were allowed the highest allowance. Ḥasan and Ḥusayn رضي الله عنهما were exceptions for they were allocated the same amount (as those who fought at Badr) although they did not fall in that category.²

‘Alī رضي الله عنه was the chief counsellor of ‘Umar رضي الله عنه whom he always took as the most sincere and well-meaning confidant. As stated elsewhere when ‘Umar رضي الله عنه declared his resolve to march forth in person to direct the Battle of Nahāwind, it was ‘Alī رضي الله عنه who dissuaded him from leaving Madīnah. When ‘Umar رضي الله عنه undertook the journey to

1 *Kanz al-‘Ummāl*, vol. VII, p. 105; Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-Iṣābah*: vol. I, p. 333.

2 Shiblī Nu‘mānī: *Al-Fārūq*, 1956, vol. II, p. 269 (cited from *Kitāb al-Khirāj* by Abū Yūsuf, p. 24-25).

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Jerusalem, he asked ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ to act as his vicegerent. How dear ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was to ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ can be gauged from the fact that the former gave his daughter Umm Kulthūm, by his first wife Fāṭimah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا, in wedlock to ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ.¹

He also gave the names of his predecessors — Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān — to three of his sons.²

Heavenly Social Order.

The social order we find portrayed in the Qur’ān, ḥadith and reliable annals, which was groomed and brought up under the prophetic care, presents the most shining and sublime picture of a body of men, virtuous, just, clement and noble, and who are not to be found even in a smaller number at any other time or anywhere else in the world. This, in itself, tends to show — on the one hand — the innate goodness of human nature, the heights to which man can raise his worthiness and the health of his soul and — on the other — the effective and lasting impact of the sincere pure-hearted guide that Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ was.

Actually these were the men of whom entire humanity can be proud of, for they were the men whom Iqbāl describes as “children of earth and light, creatures with divine traits.” No man belonging to such society can ever develop an inferiority-complex, malevolence or despondency. Rather every member of such a social order becomes upward-looking, takes the Nabī of Islam as his beau ideal, and his faith in the realities,

1 *Annals of Early History*, op. cit., p. 276. For a detail discussion on the controversy relating to it see *Āyāt-e Bayyināt* (Mirzapur, 1870) Vol, I, p. 127-162.

2 ‘Abbās Maḥmūd al-‘Aqqād: *Abqariyat al-Imām*, (Dār al-Futūḥ, Cairo, 1957), p. 956.

beyond the ken of human perception, turns into a living, veritable precept. Imām Ibn Taymiyyah رحمه الله has very correctly assessed the distinguishing feature of these emblems of human virtues:

Notwithstanding the weakness which is natural to human beings, no group or clan, excepting the messengers of Allah, can as a whole, be compared to the Ṣaḥābah of Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم. If one finds minor short-comings here and there, these are like faint marks on the white cloth. It is the faults of the cavaliers who see these stains only but not the tidiness of the cloth itself. Others compared to this group would be found to be wholly blemished with only a few white spots.¹

The Picture painted by the Shī'ah

An entirely different picture of these godly men is presented by a people claiming to be Muslims and swearing allegiance to Rasūlullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم; these are the Imāmiyyah or Ithnā 'Ashariyyah (the Twelvers) whose depiction of the earliest Muslim society speaks of total failure of the prophetic guidance and training — a failure unparalleled in history. It signifies the collapse of Rasūlullāh's صلى الله عليه وسلم efforts, not experienced even by those guides and reformers who were not commissioned by Allah for this purpose nor enjoyed His succour and blessings.

Shī'ī portrayal of the Ṣaḥābah presents them as self-seeking hypocrites who could stoop to lies, intrigues, treachery, falsification of text, forgery and betrayal for their worldly ends. Were this depiction to be true, nobody would endeavour to reform the morals and conduct

¹ Ibn Taymiyyah, Ḥāfiẓ Aḥmad Taqī al-Dīn, *Minhāj al-Sunnat al-Nabawiyyah* (Cairo. 1321 A.H.), vol. III, p 242.

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of one's fellow beings and would yield to despair with regard to the future of all human beings.

Only three persons remained, according to their version, truly wedded to the Islamic faith after the death of Rasūlullāh ﷺ, while the rest, who had been guided, groomed and trained for twenty-three long years, recanted their faith. Were this to be correct, then nothing else would be needed to establish bankruptcy of the prophetic guidance.¹

An authentic religious treatise of the Shī'ah entitled *Al-Jāmī' al-Kāfī*, contains the following statements of Imām Abū Ja'far (also known as Imām al-Bāqir) in the last section given the caption of *Kitāb al-Rawḍah*:

The people became apostates after Rasūlullāh ﷺ with the exception of three persons. (The narrator) asked: "Who were those three?" He said: "Miqdād ibn al-Aswad, Abū Dhar al-Ghifārī and Salmān al-Fārsī; may Allah bless them and have mercy on them."²

1 It is hardly necessary to mention here how the seemingly influence of Muḥammad's ﷺ nubuwwah produced countless miens as glittering gems. In different ages and places such godly souls were born among the followers of the last Nabī ﷺ who were able to change the morals and behaviour of the sinners and criminals just by casting a glance at them. No sooner than the wicked and perverted people came to their contact, that their behaviour and morals were entirely changed and they became virtuous and Allah-fearing. There are instances when a dissolute man would happen to pass a night with them and he would become pure of heart by the dawn. This has happened even centuries after the era of Rasūlullāh ﷺ and in far-off lands like India. One can, for instance, go through *Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd---His life and Mission* (published by the Academy of Islamic Research and Publications) to know more about such paradigms of spiritual perfection.

2 *Furū' al-Kāfī* (vol. III, entitled *Kitāb al-Rawḍah*), Lucknow, p. 115. Another report includes 'Ammār also in the list of exceptions.

Pronouncements of ‘Allāmah Khomeini

Leader of the present Iranian revolution and founder of ‘Islamic Democracy’ in his country, Imām Khomeini, who is also regarded as the representative of the last *Imām al-Ghā’ib* (hidden or concealed Imām), seeks to set forth the Ṣaḥābah of Rasūlullāh ﷺ as worldly-minded persons, impious, insolent and interpolators of the Qur’ān who will not be deemed as believers. He writes in his *Kashf-al-Asrār*:

These persons (the Ṣaḥābah) had nothing to do with Islam and the Qur’ān, save to utilise these as the means for their worldly gains and holding the helm. For the persons who managed to employ the Qur’ān to sub-serve their baser objective, it posed no problem to delete the verses (declaring ‘Alī as the vicegerent of Rasūlullāh ﷺ and the principle of Imāmah), to make interpolations in the divine Scripture and to put the Qur’ān out of sight to the end of time. The charge of corrupting, (the scriptures) laid by the Muslims against the Jews and the Christians is proven against these companions.¹

He says elsewhere in the same book:

Suppose that Imām had been mentioned by name in the Qur’ān, than how does it help us to conclude that there would have been no differences among the Muslims. Those who had leagued with Rasūlullāh’s ﷺ faith owing to their greed for power and position and were conspiring since long to enrol their supporters, would have never given up their ulterior ends because of the Qur’ānic injunctions. They would have adopted every device to achieve their objectives, or in that case the differences created would have been of such a nature that the

¹ *Kashf-al-Asrār*, p. 114.

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very foundations of the religion would have been demolished. For the possibility was that if those who were after wielding the sceptre had realised that they would not achieve their ends through Islam, they would have joined hands to form a clique against Islam and openly defied it.¹

‘Allāmah Khomeini’s *Kashf al-Asrār* contains numerous derogatory remarks about the first three Khulafā’ and other Ṣaḥābah of Rasūlullāh ﷺ, too sacrilegious to be cited here. One can refer to the book or read Mawlānā Manzūr Nu‘mānī’s *Shī‘iyat Kyā Hai*, if anybody wants to know more about it.

Impressions of Muḥsin-al-Mulk

I cannot do better than give the reactions of Muḥsin-al-Mulk², the author of *Āyāt-e Bayyināt* which reflects the burning reflections of the author who had found out the truth after a deep study of the subject. Every man endowed with common sense will reach the same conclusion if he dispassionately thinks about the matter.

1 *Kashf-ul-Asrār*, p. 113-114.

2 Sayyid Maḥdī ‘Alī (1253-1325 A.H.) son of Sayyid Ḍāmin ‘Alī Ḥusaynī, honoured with the title Nawāb Muḥsin al-Mulk and Nawāz Jang, was an eminent leader and reformer. Highly educated and liberal in his attitude, he renounced the Shī‘ī creed to accept the faith of the Ahl al-Sunnah. He took up service under the then Hyderabad state in 1291 A.H., at the invitation of Nawāb Mukhtār al-Mulk and was responsible for making far-reaching reforms in the state administration. He went to England in 1305 A.H./1786 A.D. and thenceforth became a close friend of Sayyid Aḥmad Khān. He was elected Secretary of the Madrasah al-‘Ulūm, Aligarh and Muslim Educational Conference in 1315/1797 and held that office for the rest of his life. He was instrumental in progress of the college which eventually became a Muslim University. He had an impressive personality and was a prolific writer. *Āyāt-e Bayyināt*, one of his creations, had immortal fame.

The truth is that the belief entertained by the Shī'ah about the Ṣaḥābah casts a doubt on nubuwwah and makes one sceptical of Islam. If anybody comes to hold a view that all those who gave their faith to Rasūlullāh ﷺ were really disbelievers; they pretended to be Muslims but they were infidels, in their hearts of hearts; and they fell away as soon as Rasūlullāh ﷺ closed his eyes; cannot acknowledge his nubuwwah. He can ask that if Rasūlullāh ﷺ was truly the messenger of Allah, his teachings would have surely impressed at least a few persons and made a dent in their hearts. Who believed in him out of more than hundred thousand persons swearing fealty to him? At least a few hundreds would have remained faithful to him! If the Ṣaḥābah were not perfect in faith, as you wrongly assert, then who are the persons on whom the teachings of Rasūlullāh ﷺ had left a lasting impression? How many were they who profited by his nubuwwah? If, Allah forbid, all barring the few to be counted on one's fingers were hypocrites and apostates, then who gave faith to Islam and who were those who derived any benefit from the teachings of Rasūlullāh ﷺ?¹

Observation of Imām Sha'bī

Imām Sha'bī (d. 110/728) has made a trenchant remark on the attitude of the Shī'ah. He says:

Jews and Christians are more well-disposed towards their ambiyā' of Allah. The Jews were asked: "Who were most virtuous amongst you?" They replied: "Those accompanying Mūsā عليه السلام." The Christians were similarly asked: "Who were the best in faith amongst you?" They replied: "The disciples of 'Īsā عليه السلام." But when

1 *Āyāt-e Bayyināt*, Mirzapur, 1870, vol. I, p. 6-7.

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the Shī'ah were asked: "Who were the worst amongst you?" They gave the answer: "They were the Ṣaḥābah of Rasūlullāh ﷺ."¹

Shī'ī Presumption

It seems that the Shī'ah of Iranian stock had assumed that the Ṣaḥābah of Rasūlullāh ﷺ were men of the same kidney as the greedy and selfish worldly-minded adventurers belonging to the Pahlavi, Kiyāni, Safawid and Qāchār dynasties of their country. If it is correct that the forefathers of Imām Khomeini had migrated from Oudh in India to Iran, then he must have taken the venerable Ṣaḥābah for those petty but scheming and litigant landed gentry of that region who were wont to go to any length for realisation of their petty interests. Verily Allah has already declared:

ذَلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۖ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۖ
وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ

This is their attainment of knowledge: Surely your Lord knows very well those who have gone astray.²

Rasūlullāh's ﷺ attitude towards his Household

The second condition we had set forth for a universal religion claiming to revolutionise and improve the morals and manners of the entire humanity was that its founder should not feign piety and self-abnegation for establishing a dynastic rule, like the kings and conquerors of the old. In other words, he should endeavour to neither promote the

1 *Minhāj al-Sunnah*, op. cit., vol. I, p. 6.

2 Sūrah al-Najm: 30.

interest of his near and dear ones nor foist them upon the people in anyway.

Viewed in this light, we come across a miraculous aspect of the character of Rasūlullāh ﷺ who has being guided from on High to answer the description thus expressed in the Qur'ān:

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ

*You are of a sublime nature.*¹

This was the characteristic feature of the prophetic morality emphasised by all the ambiyā' of Allah. Each of them has warned his people thus:

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ ۗ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

*I ask you no wage for this, for none can recompense me except the Lord of Creation.*²

The significance of this prophetic mark was well understood by Emperor Heraclius (610-641) who was versed in the Christian Scripture and also knew the ways of the Kings. On receiving the letter addressed to him from Rasūlullāh ﷺ, Heraclius decided to satisfy himself about the sincerity of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. He sent for Abū Sufyān رضي الله عنه, the Qurayshī chief, who happened to be there on business. He asked several questions to Abū Sufyān, one of which was if there had been any king in the family of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. On getting a reply

1 Sūrah al-Qalam: 4.

2 Sūrah al-Shu'arā: 109, Nabī Nūḥ, Nabī Hūd, Nabī Ṣāliḥ, Nabī Lūṭ, and Nabī Shu'ayb عليه السلام repeat this to their people in order to convince them of their sincerity. See verses 127, 145, 164 and 180 of the same sūrah.

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in the negative, he observed that the purpose of his inquiry was to ascertain that Rasūlullāh ﷺ was not trying to recover his lost kingdom.¹

Now let us examine this index of nubuwwah from another angle, for it will afford proof that Rasūlullāh ﷺ never wanted to wrest power from the Sassanid and Byzantine Emperors, for the Arabs, let alone for the Banū Hāshim and Banū Muṭṭalib or the Quraysh. Even the ordinary Ṣaḥābah had no doubt about this aspect of the mission of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. The answer given by Rabīʿ ibn ʿAmir رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ to Rustam, the Persian general, clearly illustrates this point. On being asked by Rustam why the Arabs invaded Persia, Rabīʿ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ replied:

Allah has appointed us that we liberate the creatures of Allah from the bondage of their fellow being and make them submit to the One and only Allah.²

Rasūlullāh's ﷺ attitude towards his relation and the members of his family was rather different or rather contrary to that usually adopted by worldly-minded leaders and rulers. Those who were nearest to him were made to face great trials and tribulations, but were always allocated the smallest share in the spoils of war and emoluments. When ʿUqbā ibn Rabīʿ, Shuʿbah ibn Rabīʿ and Walīd ibn ʿUtbā stepped forward in the Battle of Badr to challenge the Qurayshī Muslims, Rasūlullāh ﷺ ordered Ḥamzah, ʿAlī and ʿUbaydah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ to face those celebrated warriors. There were numerous Meccan Muslims present who were equally eager as well as competent to face the

1 Muḥammad Ismāʿil al-Bukhārī: *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb-al-Waḥī, (Matbaʿ Muṣṭafā Al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1953), vol. I, p. 7.

2 Ibn al-Kathīr, Imād al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Fidāʾ Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAmr, *Al-Bidāyah wa l-Nihāyah* (Egypt, 1966), vol. VII. p. 39.

enemy's combatants, while the three persons called up by Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ not only belonged to Banū Hāshim, but were closely related to him, as well as held dear by him. But he did not summon anybody else to fight the enemy, in order to save those who were nearer to him from the impending danger. They also succeeded in the task allocated to them; Ḥamzah and 'Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُمَا came back unhurt while 'Ubaydah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ was grievously wounded, but all three dealt a deathblow to their opponents.

Contrarily, when Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ proclaimed the levy of *zakāh* (a duty incumbent on every Muslim to pay a part of his savings; an institution for social welfare of the believers for all times to come), he disqualified his own clan of Banū Hāshim to derive any benefit from it. Again, when usury was declared impermissible, he made a beginning by asking his own uncle 'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib to forgo the interest due to him on the loans advanced by him. When he abolished all claims of blood-vengeance pertaining to the pagan past, he also declared that the reprisal of his own cousin Rabī' ibn al-Ḥārith ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib stood remitted with the announcement.

All these measures were announced by Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ during his Farewell Pilgrimage when he said in his sermon:

The usury of the days of ignorance is abolished, and the first usury I abolish is that of my uncle, 'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. Lo! The claims of blood-vengeance belonging to the pre-Islamic period have been abolished. The first claim on blood I remit is that of Rabī' ibn al-Ḥārith who was suckled among Banū Layth and was killed by the clan of Hudhayl.¹

¹ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Kitāb al-Ḥajj (Beirut, 1960), vol. II, p. 889; *Abū Dāwūd* on the authority of Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh.

The Last to receive any favour

Unlike the kings, rulers and political leaders, Rasūlullāh ﷺ always kept his kin and kindred in the background, and preferred others in giving out gifts and rewards. ‘Alī رضي الله عنه relates that Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها had to work hard in grinding corn. When she got news that some slave-girls have been brought to Rasūlullāh ﷺ, she requested one be given to her. Rasūlullāh ﷺ, however, was not present in the house.

Fāṭimah رضي الله عنها mentioned the matter to ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها who talked to Rasūlullāh ﷺ about Fāṭimah’s رضي الله عنها difficulty. ‘Alī says: “Rasūlullāh ﷺ visited our house when we had retired to our beds. We were about to get up but he told us to stay where we were. He then sat down so close to me that I felt the coldness of his feet on my chest. Then he said:

Let me guide you to something better than what you have asked. When you go to bed, recite *Subḥān Allāh* (Glory be to Allah) thirty three times, *Al-ḥamd lillāh* (Praise be to Allah) thirty-three times and *Allāh Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest) thirty-four times. This is better than what you had asked of me.¹

In another report of the same incident handed down through another source, Rasūlullāh ﷺ is reported to have added:

By Allah, I cannot give you anything at the time when the bellies of my companions of Ṣuffāh² have been hollowed by hunger.

1 *Bukhārī*, op. cit., Kitāb-al-Jihād

2 A raised platform in the masjid at Madīnah where lived the poor companions desirous of remaining in attendance upon Rasūlullāh ﷺ.

I have nothing to meet their expenses and I will sell these to provide for them.¹

Rasūlullāh ﷺ used to visit his daughter Fāṭimah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا whenever he went out of Madīnah and always saw her first on return. When Rasūlullāh ﷺ came back from the expedition of Tabūk he went to see Fāṭimah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا following his usual practice. Fāṭimah had purchased, a little while ago, a scarf for headwear and dyed it in saffron and hung a curtain on her door or spread a mattress on the floor. Rasūlullāh ﷺ saw this and turned back to his masjid without going inside her house. Fāṭimah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا sent for Bilāl رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ to enquire why her father had gone back from her door step. Bilāl رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ enquired from Rasūlullāh ﷺ who told him about the things he had seen at Fāṭimah's house. Bilāl رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ reported it back to Fāṭimah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا who tore down the curtain at once, threw away the decorative pieces and replaced the new scarfs with her usual one. Bilāl رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ again returned to Rasūlullāh ﷺ to tell him about it. Thereupon Rasūlullāh ﷺ went to see Fāṭimah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا and said:

Daughter, you ought to live like this.²

Another report says:

Once Fāṭimah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا made Ḥasan and Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا (then still children) put on a silver bracelet. When Rasūlullāh ﷺ saw them, he was annoyed and did not enter into her house. Perceiving the cause of her father's annoyance Fāṭimah took off the bracelets. The children felt disconsolate and went weeping

1 Ibn Ḥajar: *Fath-al-Bārī* (Cairo, 1348 A.H.), vol. VII, p. 23-24.

2 Ḥammād ibn Ishāq ibn Ismā'īl (199-267 A.H.): *Taraktum al-Nabī*, Madīnah, 1984; Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī; *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*.

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to Rasūlullāh ﷺ who took the bracelets from them and said: “Thawbān! Take these to such and such (destitute) person. They belong to my household and I would not like them to enjoy these pleasures in this very life.”¹

This has been the mental outlook of all the ambiyā’ of Allah, which was pronounced in the utterance of Rasūlullāh ﷺ when he said:

No one is heir of the ambiyā’; that which we leave is to be treated as alms and belong to all the Muslims.²

Always indifferent to pleasure of the worlds, Rasūlullāh ﷺ himself lived a frugal life, and desired the same for the members of his family. Once he beseeched Allah:

O Allah, give sustenance to the progeny of Muḥammad only to make the two ends meet.³

Key to Salvation

How can it be presumed, in these circumstances, that Rasūlullāh ﷺ would have thought of bequeathing a dynastic rule, dominion and command of the khilāfah or Imāmah⁴ to his kinsman.⁵

1 Ibid., p. 58; *Abū Dāwūd; Musnad Aḥmad.*

2 *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī; Sunan Abī Dāwūd.*

3 *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim.*

4 Imāmah has a wide connotation vested with the absolute and wide powers according to Shī‘ī theology which will be dealt with later on.

5 According to the Shī‘ī doctrine, Imāmah and Khilāfah devolved on ‘Alī who was divinely appointed as the first successor and was impeccable. The Imām should descend from the apostolic line and the world cannot last without him, it is also incumbent on all to acknowledge his leadership in all temporal and spiritual matters.

Two Conflicting Portraits

On the contrary, the ideal of human equality and brotherhood as preached by Islam was expressed in the maxim:

Verily, nobility lies in virtuous deeds.

It was necessary for upholding this doctrine that Rasūlullāh's ﷺ kinsmen and descendants were urged for striving eminence and distinction, like all other followers of Islam, by giving the proof of their superior knowledge and virtuous deeds, self-sacrifice and service to people. This was in harmony with these Qur'ānic dictums:

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ
أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

*And vie with one another, hastening to forgiveness from your Lord, and to a garden whose breadth is as heaven and earth, prepared for the God-fearing.*¹

Qur'ān clearly states that every man is his own redeemer; his success and failure in this world and the next, depends on his own endeavour.

وَأَن لَّيْسَ لِلإِنسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ ۚ وَأَنَّ سَعْيَهُ سَوْفَ يُرَىٰ ۖ ثُمَّ
يُجْزَىٰهُ الْجَزَاءَ الْاَوْفَىٰ ۚ

*And that a man shall have to his account only as he has laboured; and that his endeavour shall surely be seen, then he shall be recompensed for it with the fullest recompense.*²

1 Sūrah Āl 'Imrān: 133.

2 Sūrah al-Najm: 39-41.

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And nobody will be called to bear the burden of others; everybody will be responsible for his own omissions and commissions.

وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا عَلَيْهَا ۖ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ۗ

*Every soul earns only to its own account; no soul laden bears the load of another.*¹

Once Rasūlullāh ﷺ addressed his nearest kin calling them by name, to tell them that they could have anything they desired from his possessions but he would be of no help for them in the obligations they owed to Allah. He said:

O Banū ‘Abd Manāf, I would not be of help to you in obligations owed to Allah; O Ṣafiyyah, aunt of Rasūlullāh ﷺ, I would be helpless in affairs that relate to Allah; O Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad, ask whatever you want from that which I possess but in matters relating to Allah, I would be helpless.²

Indeed Rasūlullāh ﷺ settled the matter for all time to come by declaring that: “Whosoever trails behind in actions cannot get ahead by his lineage.”

Order of Khilāfah

The precedence of the first four khulafā’ is really indicative of divine wisdom. That Abū Bakr belonging to Banū Tamīm, was elected as the first Khalīfah by the Muslims, in preference to any one belonging to Rasūlullāh’s ﷺ household or his family or even Banū Hāshim or

1 Sūrah al-An‘ām: 164.

2 Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī.

Banū Muṭṭalib, was not by mere chance or nor was it brought about by intrigue or crafty manoeuvring. It came to happen in order that there should remain no doubt that Islam does not favour dynasty rule. Whether it be Khilāfah or Imāmah, the succession depends on one's capability, service rendered to the community and the opinions of the masses. It was also adventitious that for many centuries to come Banū Hāshim were treated in a like manner by Allah as well as the body-politic of the Muslims.

They were held in esteem by the entire community but only because of the knowledge, piety, self-abnegation and service to the community. Muslims loved and revered them as their leaders; whenever Islam was in danger, they came forward to defend it; and the Muslim society was always rejuvenated, given a new life by them through setting an example — an example of their own perfection of spirit and morals. Such is the ordaining of Allah, the Mighty, the All Knowing.¹

Accuracy and preservation of the Qur'ān

Yet another prerequisite, as indicated earlier, for a perennial nubuwwah is that the revelation vouchsafed to the last and final Rasūl ﷺ, which forms the basis of its doctrines and teachings, and serves as a connecting link between the Creator and the created, should be preserved without a change of a dot, should remain intelligible and be recited and learnt and studied by people at all times as a living scripture. It should not meet the fate of earlier revelations which were

¹The martyrdom of Ḥusayn and those of his progeny who fought against those tyrants and endeavoured for the revival of true faith is too well-known and their efforts find an honoured place in the annals of most of the Islamic countries, and are still a source of inspiration to all Muslims.

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mutilated and changed, nor should it become an ancient writing to be preserved like an archaeological exhibit.

Qur'ānic pronouncements on the subject are quite clear and explicit. At the time the Qur'ān was being revealed to Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ by the Archangel Jibra'īl عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, and Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ felt anxious to commit it all the more readily to his memory in order to produce the word of Allah exactly, without any change to others, he was promised that:

إِنَّا عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَ قُرْآنَهُ ۚ فَإِذَا قَرَأَهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ ۚ ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ ۗ ط

*Ours it is to gather it, and to recite it. So when we recite it, you follow its recitation. Then Ours is to explain it.*¹

The promise to fix the Qur'ān in the memory of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ having been fulfilled; it was conveyed to the people who memorised it in part or the whole of it. Thereafter expeditions and battles followed; Muslims began to be dispersed in distant lands, but the Qur'ān continued unchanged in its original form since Allah has already held out His word to safeguard it till the end of time.

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

*Verily We! It is We who have revealed the Reminder and We are its Guardian.*²

1 Sūrah al-Qiyāmah: 17-19.

2 Sūrah al-Hijr: 9.

Testimony of non-Muslim Scholars

It is not necessary to cite here the findings of Muslim scholars about the preservation of the Qur'ān for nobody has ever expressed any doubt about it except the Shī'ah. Absolute purity of the Qur'ānic text, free of all corruptions, accretions and mutilations, is the creed held by those belonging to Ahl-Sunnah.¹

Let us have a testimony of a few non-Muslim, especially Christian scholars, who agreed that the Qur'ān is “Most widely read book in existence.”²

European scholars of Islam, commonly known as Orientalists, do not share the faith of the Muslims that the Qur'ān was revealed by Allah, but they agree with them that the Qur'ān has never been subjected to anything, such as, redaction of the Holy Text. Sir William Muir, not very sympathetic to Islam and its Rasūl ﷺ, and whose allegations against the latter in his *Life of Mahomet* forced Sir Aḥmad Khān known for his liberal views and modernism, to pen the *Khuṭbāt-e Aḥmadiyyah* to refute him, acknowledges the textual purity of the Qur'ān in these words:

Contending and embittered factions, taking their rise in the murder of 'Uthmān himself within a quarter of a century from the death of Mahomet, have ever since rent the Mahometan world. Yet but one Corān has been current amongst them;

1 There are several treatises in Arabic dealing with the preservation, script etc., of the Qur'ān in Arabic. Urdu knowing people can go through the *Tārīkh Suḥaf-e Samāwī* by S. Nawab 'Alī.

2 Charles Fransis potter: *The Faith Man Lives By*, Kings Wood Surrey, 1935, p. 1; Philip K. Hitti: *History of the Arabs*, London, 1953, p. 126.

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and the consentaneous use by them all in every age up to the present day of the same Scripture, is an irrefragable proof that we have now before us the very text prepared by command of the unfortunate Caliph. There is probably in the world no other work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure text.¹

Wherry writes in his commentary on the Qur'ān:

The text of the Qur'ān is the purest of all works of a like antiquity.²

Lane-Poole testifies:

It is an immense merit in the Kuran that there is no doubt as to its genuineness... That very word we can now read with full confidence that it has remained unchanged through nearly thirteen hundred years.³

Bosworth Smith has reached the conclusion that:

In the Kuran, we have beyond all reasonable doubt, the exact words of Mohammad ﷺ, without subtraction and without addition.⁴

Prof. Arnold writes in the *Islamic faith*:

The text of this recension substantially corresponds to the actual utterances of Muhammad ﷺ himself.⁵

1 Sir William Muir: *Life of Mahomet*, London, 1912, vol. I, p. XXII-XXIII.

2 Wherry, E. M.: *A Comprehensive Commentary of the Qur'ān*, vol. I London, 1896, p. 349.

3 Lane and Lane-Poole: *Selection from the Kuran*, Turnber, London, 1879, Intro. p. c..

4 Bosworth Smith: *Mohammad and Mohammedanism*, London, 1874, p. 22.

5 Arnold, T. W.: *Islamic faith*, London, p. 9.

Many more evidences can be produced in support of the preservation of Qur'ānic text in its original form but it is perhaps not necessary to prolong with further citations.

Shī'ī Creed in regard to the Qur'ān

Let us now take the Shī'ī belief in regard to the Qur'ān. They hold that the Qur'ānic text was mutilated; there is almost consensus among their scholars on this point.¹

‘Allāmah Nūrī Ṭabrasī has written a treatise entitled *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb fī Ithbāt Taḥrīf Kitāb Rabb al-Arbāb*² (*The definitive conclusion in proving the distortion of the book of the absolute Lord of the lords*) in which he says that more than two thousand reports handed down by the A'imma positively assert that there have been many alterations in the text of the Qur'ān that we have at present.³ Until the tenth or eleventh century, that is, to the time of ‘Allāmah Bāqir al-Majlisī — who was the greatest expounder of the Shī'ī creed — or even thereafter, the Shī'ī doctors have been advertising the view that the Qur'ān has been subjected to alterations, additions and redactions.⁴

We have already referred to ‘Allāmah Khomeini's views in regard to the Qur'ān wherein he said that:

1 Only four Shī'ī scholars: Ṣadūq, Sharīf al-Murtaḍā, Abū Ja'far al-Ṭūsī and Abū 'Alī al-Ṭabrasī are exceptions to this agreed view of the Shī'ī theologians, but some of them have been reported to have recanted their view. Anyway, there is always a doubt that they might have expressed their opinions in favour of purity of the Qur'ān because of their accepted principle of taqiyyah or dissimulation of one's faith.

2 This book has recently been published in Pakistan.

3 *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb*, Najaf, 1298 A.H. p. 227.

4 For details see M. Manzūr Nu'mānī: *Irāni Inqilab, Imām Khomenī aur Shī'iyyat*, Lucknow, 1984, p. 156.

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It posed no problem to delete the verses (declaring ‘Alī as the vicegerent of Rasūlullāh ﷺ and the principle of Imāmah), to make interpolations in the divine Scripture and to put the Qur’ān out of sight to the end of time.

He also asserted that:

The charge of corrupting, (the scriptures) laid by the Muslims against the Jews and the Christians is proven against these companions.¹

Uṣūl Kāfī is one of the most authentic theological works on Shī’ism. It gives a number of examples to show that several verses were deleted from the Qur’ān while others were inserted in it.² The book makes the allegation that about two-thirds of the Qur’ān has been pilfered since it originally contained as many as seventeen thousand verses.³

Shī’ī scholars hold that the Qur’ān in its original form was compiled by Khalīfah ‘Alī ؑ and it is still safe in the custody of the *ghā’ib* (hidden) Imām. According to their belief the Qur’ān with the Imām al-Ghā’ib is entirely different from the existing one.⁴

A few of their A’immah are on record that they possess the original Qur’ān known as *Mushaf al-Fāṭimah* (Fāṭimah’s Scripture) which was three times more voluminous than the existing Qur’ān.⁵

1 *Kashf al-Asrār*, op. cit., p. 114.

2 Al-Rāzī: *Al-Uṣūl min al-Jāmi’ al-Kāfī*, Lucknow, 1302 A.H., p. 262, 264-66 and 267. The author is reported to have got it approved by Imām Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, the twelfth and the hidden Imām.

3 *Uṣūl Kāfī*, op. cit., p. 271.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 271.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 160.

Indifference to the Qur'ān

The Noble Qur'ān is read as a text-book by practically every Muslim in every part of the world and the number of those who commit it to memory runs into the millions; there is hardly a town where a ḥāfiẓ cannot be found or where the entire Qur'ān is not recited once or twice in the tarāwīḥ¹ ṣalāh during Ramaḍān; yet the Shī'ah have shown little interest in its teaching or preaching, which is apparently a logical result of their attitude towards the Word of Allah.

It is commonly believed that the Shī'ah do not have ḥuffāẓ or memorisers of the Qur'ān. The writer of these lines has had an occasion of meeting with an experience of a similar nature during his tour of Iran in 1973, which confirmed this impression. Wherever there is a Muslim religious gathering, Europe and America not excluded, a Muslim is found who can recite a small chapter or few verses of the Noble Qur'ān before initiating the proceedings of a meeting. But in Iran it was otherwise.

The writer had gone to that country as the head of a delegation deputed by the World Muslim Organisation. He was invited to a meeting held to welcome the delegates by an eminent theologian known as 'Ayatollah' at his residence in Zarrin N'āl, Tehran. The meeting began with the recitation of the Qur'ān, but it was read from the copy of the Scripture held by the son of the theologian. The writer also heard the recitation of the Qur'ān in the masjids of Qum and Mashhad replayed from the cassettes of Egyptian Qur'rā'.²

1 Special prayers offered during Ramaḍān.

2 Reciters of the Qur'ān.

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This indifference to the Holy Qur'ān seems to be the reason why Iranian libraries lack such illuminated copies of the Qur'ān as are normally found in almost every library of the Islamic world.

An Eye-opener to Deniers of the Qur'ān

How can anyone claiming to be Muslim but denying the absolute purity of the Qur'ān, present his creed to others with confidence or claim that Islam is the only saving principle for man? How ugly and unattractive is the picture of Islam and its early adherents painted by those who believe in the perversion of the Qur'ān and how can they, with these concepts in their brains, invite others to give faith to the truth of Islam? Does one need anything more to rebut the claim of Islam as the last and eternal faith of mankind?

The Doctrine of Imāmah

The fourth and the last condition mentioned by us for perennial nubuwwah was that the nabī should be the centre of affections and source of guidance to his followers. Like the Oneness of Allah, Rasūlullāh ﷺ is the sole expositor of divine laws and commands. Dr. Sir Muḥammad Iqbāl has correctly explained the cultural value of the finality of nubuwwah in Islam in one of his articles on Qadianism in which he says:

Muslims are naturally extraordinary sensitive to those movements which pose a threat to their unity; since Islamic unity derives its strength from the finality of the Prophet...

We believe that Islam as a religion was revealed by Allah but Islam as a society or community owes its existence to the personality of Rasūlullāh ﷺ.¹

1 Sherwānī, Laṭīf Aḥmad (ed.) *Ḥarf-e Iqbāl*, Lahore, 1947, p. 122, 136.

Two Conflicting Portraits

Let us now take the belief and doctrines of Imāmah held by the Shī'ah as given in *Uṣūl Kāfi*¹.

The imām, according to their belief, is a successor to Rasūlullāh ﷺ appointed by Allah. In that capacity he is infallible, endowed with a divine gift of impeccability, and has to be obeyed by all in religious as well as temporal matters. He is equal in dignity or rather excels the ambiyā'. Divine judgment of man's faith depends on the A'imma, for they are the source of religious certainty. The world cannot last without an imām and it is incumbent on every faithful to acknowledge his leadership. Therefore, he is to be obeyed like Rasūlullāh ﷺ.

The A'imma have the authority to declare anything permissible or impermissible for they are divinely protected against error or sin. One who had faith in an imām, he would attain salvation even if he were a sinner and wrongdoer. The A'imma are equal in dignity to the last Rasūl ﷺ but higher than all other ambiyā' of Allah; they possess the knowledge of what was and what will be, that is, the past, present and future. The deeds of all creatures of Allah are presented every day before the A'imma, who are continually visited by the angels. They experience *mi'rāj* (ascension) every Thursday while a new Scripture is sent down to them each year on *Shab al-Qadr* (Night of Power).

They possess authority over death and can grant whatever of this world or the hereafter they like on whomsoever they are pleased to confer. The significance of this concept of Imāmah has been construed even by non-Muslim writers as making the A'imma "partakers of the divine nature."²

1 *Uṣūl Kāfi*, op. cit., p. 103-259.

2 Thomas Patrick Hughes: *Dictionary of Islam*, London, 1885, p. 574.

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The inference drawn by another European writer, W. Ivanow is:

With the light of Imāmah continually flowing into the world, the institute of prophetship, or apostleship, occupied only an auxiliary position.¹

Phillip K. Hitti has also correctly assessed the implications of Imāmah for he says:

The founder of Islam made a revelation, the Koran, the intermediary between God and man; the Shi'ah made the intermediary a person, the Imām. To "I believe in Allah, the one God" and "I believe in the revelation of the Koran, which is uncreated from eternity", the Shi'ites now added a new article of faith: "I believe that the Imām especially chosen by Allah as the bearer of a part of the divine being is the leader to salvation."²

Iranian Influence

This exaggerated view of Imāmah which goes beyond racial and lineal chauvinism to raise the A'immah to the position of divinity, reflects the ancient creed of Iran in the divine origin of kings. In the pre-Islamic Iran, religious and temporal authority used to be exercised by particular tribes. It was concentrated in the region of Media in the ancient past; after Zoroastrianism consolidated its hold on the country; religious leadership came to be held by the al-Moghān tribe.

The Iranians believed that the priestly class was the shadow of Allah on earth, created for the service of gods and, therefore, the ruler of the

1 H.A.R. Gibbs and J.H. Kramers: *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, Leiden, 1953, p. 166.

2 *History of the Arabs*, op. cit., p. 248.

country should also be from their flesh and blood. In the estimation of the Iranians, the ruler was the incarnation of Allah and it was his prerogative to officiate as chief priest at the fire-alter.

The motive behind acceptance of Shī'ism by the Iranians and the peculiar concept of Imāmah held by them has been thus explained by an eminent Egyptian scholar Dr. Aḥmad Amīn in the *Ḍuḥā al-Islam*:

A great majority of the Iranians were led to the faith in Shī'āsm because they were accustomed to attribute divinity to their monarchs. They believed that the blood running in the veins of their rulers was different from that percolating in the body of a common man. Therefore, when they embraced Islam, they viewed the holy Prophet in the same light as they were attuned to treat their sovereigns. Thus they associated divinity to the Prophet's ﷺ household like the members of old imperial families.

When the Prophet bid farewell to the world, they were instinctively convinced that only the Prophet's kin could become his successors.¹

Faith in Imām al-Ghā'ib

The culminating point of this exaggerated concept of Imāmah attributing it with a substance of nubuwwah and frequently with divine attributes, is the belief in the twelfth concealed Imām or Imām al-Ghā'ib. His birth and subsequent concealment and then guidance of the faithful to the end of time transcend the law of physical existence earth. In accordance with their beliefs, the twelfth Imām Muḥammad

¹ *Ḍuḥā al-Islam*, Egypt, 1952, vol. III, p. 209.

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withdrew to a cave in the town of Surra man Ra'ā, ten days before the death of his father, the eleventh Imām, Ḥasan al-'Askarī. It is believed that he is still alive and will reappear again in the last days as the Mahdī or "Director" to rule over the whole world.¹

It is also held by the Ithnā 'Asharī or twelver sect of the Shī'ah that initially the last Imām maintained contact with his followers and guided them from his cave. After a time, he went into total concealment and nobody can have access to him until now he decides to reappear again.²

'Allāmah Khomeini's views about the A'immaḥ

Lest somebody may think that these incredulous dogmas were held by the people before the dawn of enlightenment but now the informed and educated persons, particularly after the Islamic revolution, must have changed their views, we give here the an extract from Imām Khomeini's *Al-Ḥukūmat al-Islamiyyah*. He says:

The Imām occupies the Glorious Station, the supreme place and wields such a delegated authority of genesis that everything in this universe submits to his surpassing glory. In accordance with the accepted tenets of our religion neither any angel of the highest rank nor anyone sent as a rasūl can attain the sublime position of an Imām. As related from our aḥādīth, the Great Rasūl and the A'immaḥ existed before the creation of this cosmic order in the form of light, encircling the Throne of Allah and enjoying such propinquity to Him as known only to Allah.³

1 *Uṣūl Kāfī*, op. cit., p. 202, 207.

2 Al-Nurī al-Tabrasī: *Iḥtijāj Ṭabrasī*, Tehran, 1302 A.H., p. 230.

3 'Allamah Khomeini: *Al-Hukūmat al-Islamiyyah*, Kutubkhāna Buzurg Islamī, p. 52.

Imām Khomeini entertains belief in the Imām al-Ghā'ib like all other theologians of the Ithnā 'Asharī sect. Although more than thousand years have passed since his concealment, the Imām may reappear, according to 'Allāmah Khomeini, after a lapse of another thousand years.

A Beatific Vision of Shāh Walī Allāh

These polytheistic beliefs about the Imām, bring to reason the beatific vision of Shāh Walī Allāh in which he claims to have seen Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and asked him about the Shī'ī sect. Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ is stated to have told him that the misbelief inherent in its creed could be understood by the term Imām.

Shāh Walī Allāh further says that:

After his descent from his spiritual transport he gave thought to the matter and came to understand how the belief in the impeccability of the Imām, unquestioning obedience to him in his reception and revelations — the distinctive features of the ambiyā' of Allah — amounted to the denial of the finality of the last Rasūl صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.¹

The Glorious Lamp of Heaven

The Rasūl of Islam صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ deserves not merely our submission to his commands but much more than that. Every believer has to cultivate an affection and devotion, an emotional and spiritual attachment to him that overpasses the love of one's own life, progeny and property.

1 Shah Walī Allāh: *Al-Durr al-Thamīn fī Mubashshirat al-Nabī al-Amīn*, Maṭba' Aḥmadī, Delhi, p. 504.

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Next to Allah, the ardour for Rasūlullāh ﷺ should be more intense than the regard for any human being, be he one of Rasūlullāh's household, a doctor of religion or a saint perfect of soul. Rasūlullāh ﷺ is like the glorious lamp of heaven while all others – his Ṣaḥābah, kinsmen, the reformers and the juro-consultants, the revolutionaries and the conquerors — bear resemblance to starry hosts made radiant by the sun.

Eulogistic Poetry

The doctrine of Imāmah is at odds with the nurturing of tender feeling for Rasūlullāh ﷺ. A logical result of the reliance on Imāmah as an article of faith has been that Shī'ī writers have failed to produce good biographies of Rasūlullāh ﷺ or odes in his praise. Their rhymes lamenting the martyrdom of Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ and panegyric poems in the honour of Rasūlullāh's household do express exquisite expressions of the heart and can be classed as paintings with the gift of speech, but when it comes to the eulogium of Rasūlullāh ﷺ himself, their compositions betrays the lack of poet's inner most feelings issuing in rhythmic language.

They have failed to produce any poet indicting laudatory verses comparable to even Amīr Manā'i, Altāf Ḥusayn Hālī, Muḥsin Kārkorwi, Muḥammad Iqbāl or Zafar 'Alī Khān, let alone in the calibre of Qudsi and Jāmī. The reason of their failure is not far to seek.

The writer of these lines had thrown light on this issue in one of his works entitled *Daryā-e Kābul se Daryā-e Yarmūk Tak*. It would not be out of place to reproduce his observations here.

Two Conflicting Portraits

The revered A'immah of Rasūlullāh's progeny have always been very like lighthouses of guidance in the surrounding sea of darkness. No Muslim true to his faith can have the least doubt about it. But we feel that the immoderate emotional attachment and extravagance of the Shī'ah in the adoration of Rasūlullāh's ﷺ household has overcome their intellect and conscience.

In our opinion this superabundance of affection for Rasūlullāh's ﷺ household has weakened their regard and ardour for Rasūlullāh ﷺ himself, although it should have been the ruling passion of every Muslim. For Rasūlullāh's ﷺ kin are honoured by us because of Rasūlullāh ﷺ himself, he deserves our devotion more than anybody else. It seems that a part of the love and regard which was due to Rasūlullāh ﷺ has got itself surreptitiously transferred to his household.

The eulogistical poetry of Iran versified in the later period lacks intensity of passion and exquisite felicity that immortalises the feelings of love for Rasūlullāh ﷺ. The panegyric poems in the honour of Rasūlullāh's ﷺ household and verses lamenting the martyrdom of Ḥusayn and 'Alī رضي الله عنهما as well as those describing the hardship undergone by them, breathe a spirit of tenderness. This difference in the painting of innermost passion can be seen everywhere in Shī'ī poetry. For instance, if we compare the elegies of Anīs and Dabīr with eulogistical rhymes composed by them or their contemporary poets, we would see a marked difference between the two. The one would seem to be a genuine work of art while the other an attempt at mimicry. This holds good, more or less, for the biographies of Rasūlullāh ﷺ and his household.

We have noticed the effect of this attitude in other spheres

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also. The Iranians have a greater regard for the shrines than the masjids and more intense longing of paying a visit to Najaf and Karbala and similar other holy places than performing ḥaj or undertaking a journey to call at the two sacred masājīd.

This attitude of our Shī'ī brothers might be a reaction to the failure of certain overzealous Sunnī scholars who sometimes fail to acknowledge the service of or do not pay the honour due to the household of Rasūlullāh ﷺ. But this turn of mind is something more than a mere reaction. Their intense passion of love, ardent regard and devotional leanings seem to be encircling the spiritual centre of Rasūlullāh's ﷺ household and their intemperate glorification of Imāmah is capable of holding it up as the rival of nubuwwah, attributing the characteristics of the latter to the former. If it comes to that course, the entire life-pattern of its votaries would be woven round an emotional centre which might come up to vie with the attachment to the leader and last of the *ambiyā'*.¹

Approbation or Denunciation

The incredulous beliefs of the Shī'ah and their exaggerated ideas presenting Rasūlullāh's ﷺ household as supernatural beings, sometimes making the A'imma partakers of divinity, help to portray them as characters with contradictory morals and behaviour. They present them — including 'Alī رضي الله عنه who was known for his valour, spirit and determination — as men lacking boldness, courage of conviction, losing their nerves in speaking out what they considered to be correct and right, procrastinating always and taking recourse to dissimulative as masters in the art of disguising their creeds, not at all

1 *Daryā-e Kābul se Daryā-e Yarmūk Tak*, Lucknow, 1978, p. 104-6.

in an apologetic way, but considering it as an act of merit and means of gaining propinquity to Allah.¹

They are sometimes stated to have concealed the truth and teachings of Rasūlullāh ﷺ when with a little courage or no great danger to their own person; they had the opportunity of winning the support of the people. The biographical accounts of the A'imma written by the Shī'ah present them as strategists and intriguers, spearheads of underground movements like the Free Masons and *Ikhwān al-Safa*.²

Their writings fail to stir up courage and ambition, fortitude and venturesome spirit for the cause of Islam which always appeared

1 Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq is stated to have told his disciple Salmān: "O Salmān! He among you is the most honoured before Allah who uses the taqiyyah most in concealing the faith and he is the most demeaned who publishes it." Imām al-Baqir is reported to have said: "He is dearest to me who is most pious, versed in jurisprudence and hides away our tenets." (*Uṣūl Kāfi*, p. 485-86). Shī'ah scholars even assert that nine-tenths of their faith consists of taqiyyah and one who does not practice it, has no faith at all. (p. 483)

2 *Ikhwān al-Safa* (Brethren of Purity) was a secret society during the 'Abbasid period. It was an interesting eclectic school of popular philosophy. The Ikhwān formed not only a philosophical but also a religious-political association with ultra Shī'ah, probably Ismā'īlī, views and were opposed to the existing political order, which they evidently aimed to overthrow by undermining the popular intellectual system and religious beliefs. Hence arises the obscurity surrounding their activities and membership. Baghdād was their centre in the fourth century A.H. They held meetings in privacy and no outsider was allowed to participate in them. A collection of their epistles, the names of writers were kept secret. Mu'tazilah and others sympathetic to their way of thought used to make out copies and smuggle them into other Islamic countries. These letters were published from Leipzig in 1883, from Bombay in 1886, and from Egypt in 1889, (for details see *History of the Arabs* op. cit., p. 372-73, 401).

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at the darkest hour of Muslim history and turned the tables on its adversaries.¹

Iqbāl has correctly listed the sterling features of such godly souls in a couplet which says:

The free-handed austere beats Dārā and Sikandar,
Whose poverty smacks of spirituality and valour.
Mark of courageous man is valour and truthfulness.
For lions of Allah know not how to be heartless.²

Character of ‘Alī and his Progeny

Rasūlullāh’s ﷺ household, his nearest kin, particularly ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ and his descendants were men of great respect. Unlike descendants of other religious leaders they never tried to take advantage of the love and regard of the people because of their relationship to Rasūlullāh ﷺ. Let alone deriving worldly benefit, they disdained to claim any kind of privileged position or miraculous powers as were attributed to them later on.

Historical and biographical literatures concerning these sons of Islam enumerate numerous examples of their restraint, simplicity, dignity and indifference to the worldly things. They were a class by themselves entirely different from those belonging to priesthood among the followers of other religions, living on the labour of others. A few instances of their lives will illustrate their character.

1 A detailed account of these revivalist movements will be found in the author’s *Saviours of Islamic Spirit*, vols. I-III.

2 *Bāl-e Jibra’īl*.

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Once Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was on an errand of making purchases. He asked a price of a certain article which was told by the shop-keeper. Thereafter, somehow the shop-keeper came to know that he was the grandson of Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. He reduced the price as a concession to him but Ḥasan رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ left the shop without purchasing the wanted article. He said later on that he did not want any concession to be made for him.

Juwayriyyah ibn Asmā’, the personal attendant of ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, who is also known by the name Zayn al-‘Ābidīn, relates that the latter never availed himself for any concession even equivalent to a dirham because of his kinship to Rasūlullāh صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.¹ Whenever ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ went on a journey he never allowed people to know his name and affiliation. On being asked the reason for it he replied: “I do not want that I be benefited by them while I am unable to do so.”²

The descendants of ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ had inherited the courage and fortitude of their forefathers who had always staked their lives in defence of what they considered to be true and right and had set a glowing example of self-sacrifice for a nobler cause. Zayd ibn ‘Alī (son of Zayn al-‘Ābidīn) attempted a rising in 122/740 against Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik, the Umayyad Khalīfah — who was the most powerful ruler of his day — who in turn carried a larger imperial army against Zayd رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ in several battles, and ultimately had him crucified.³

1 Ibn Kāthir: *Al-Bidāyah wa l-Nihayah*, op. cit., vol. IX, p. 106.

2 Ibn Khallikān: *Wafyāt al-Āyān*, Vol, II, p. 434.

3 The incident is mentioned by all the historians like Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabri, Ibn al-Athīr and Ibn Kathīr.

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Muḥammad, a great grandson of Ḥasan, whose lofty standard of virtue had obtained for him the name of al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah, or ‘the Pure Soul’, raised the banner of revolt against the ‘Abbasid Khalīfah Manṣūr in Madīnah in Rajab 145/September 762, while his brother Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Abd Allāh gave battle to the troops sent against him at Baṣra in Dhū al-Ḥijjah, 145/March 763.

Imām Mālik رحمته الله and Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمته الله, the founders of the two important and popular juristic school of Sunnī jurisprudence sided with Muḥammad and Ibrāhīm by urging their followers to take oath of fealty to them and also offered financial assistance for their cause. The struggle of the two brothers closed with a heroic fight and death of Muḥammad at Aḥjār al-Zayt near Madīnah on 15 Ramaḍān, 145/15 March 763. Imām Mālik and Imām Abū Ḥanīfah had to undergo severe hardships by incurring the displeasure of Khalīfah Manṣūr.¹

These insurrections speak volumes of the courage and intrepidity of the progeny of ‘Alī رحمته الله but few and far between occurrences of this nature tend to show that the descendants of ‘Alī رحمته الله had, by and large, arrived at the conclusion that there was no need to raise a revolt against the well-established ‘Abbasid Khilāfah, holding sway of a greater part of Asia and Africa, since it maintained law and order, promoting learning and arts and trying to enforce commandment of Islam as law of the land, they did not want to fan the fire of disorder and lawlessness against the Muslims. They desired no personal gain at the cost of the vast majority of their co-religionists. Instead, they

1 Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمته الله had also supported the revolt of Zayd ibn ‘Alī. Sayyid Manāẓir Aḥsan’s *Imām Abū Ḥanīfah ki Siyasī Zindaḡi* gives a detailed account of these events.

devoted their energies to the spiritual uplift and religious guidance of the Muslims, which, by no stretch of imagination, can be construed as procrastination or dissimulation as implied by imputing taqiyyah to them.

The author has made an appraisal of a valuable services rendered to Islam by the illustrious progeny of ‘Alī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ in his *Saviours of Islamic Spirit*. It will bear repetition here.

Although crass materialism had captured the soul of the ruling classes during the Umayyad (also ‘Abbasid) period, the masses had still not forsaken the moral values and the deep-seated deference for Islamic teachings. The regard for moral worth and tenets of Islam was due mainly to those scholars of impeccable worth and ability who were held in high esteem by the masses for their moral and spiritual excellence, selflessness, piety, sagacity and beneficence. Outside the governmental circles these persons wielded tremendous influence over the people which acted as the corrective force and saved the masses from falling prey to the pulls of worldly temptations.

The person most respected and loved during the period was ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ (Zayn al-‘Ābidīn). In the simple, pure and saintly life led by him, ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ had no peer. Once Hishām ibn ‘Abd al-Malik — the crown prince — came to the Ka‘bah for *ṭawāf* (circumambulation) but owing to the huge gathering, he could not reach the Ḥajr Aswad. He, therefore, sat down to wait till he could get a chance to kiss it. In the meantime ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ arrived and the people at once cleared the way for him to make *ṭawāf* and kiss the Ḥajr Aswad. Everyone present at the Ka‘bah received ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ with the utmost deference. At last

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Hishām, pretending as if he did not know ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn, asked who he was. The poet Farzdaq, who happened to be present on the occasion instantaneously composed an introductory ode for ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn عليه السلام, it is alleged that certain additions were made to this famous ode later on; it is still regarded as a masterpiece of Arabic poetry. It opened with the verse:

Pebbles and paths of Makkah affirm his virtue,
The house of Allah knows him well as the environs do.

Other highly reputed religious scholars of outstanding piety during the Umayyad period were Ḥasan al-Muthannā, his son ‘Abd Allāh al-Maḥaḍ, Salīm ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar, Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr, Saīd ibn Mussayyab and ‘Urwah ibn Zubayr. Complete detachment from the ruling circles of their day, immaculate selflessness, and unswerving truthfulness, readiness to serve and make any sacrifice for the cause of religion, erudition and moral worth had made each of these persons an ideal of Islamic piety.

The demoralisation that had set in owing to the frisky conduct of the ruling elite was undoubtedly on the increase but moral influence wielded by these persons on the masses was not without a salutary effect; their pure and simple life was a standing reproach to the unprincipled worldliness of the rulers, which made people think of reforming their intemperate life.¹

Contradictory Pictures of Early Islamic Era

What was the standard set by the earliest Islamic Era? What was the result; how the character and morals of the people were moulded

1 *Saviours of Islamic Spirit*, vol. I, (Lucknow, 1983), p. 16-17.

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under Rasūlullāh's ﷺ guidance; and were these men different from national leaders, founders of kingdoms and persons aspiring for personal aggrandisement? What was their attitude to their kin; did the posterity of Rasūlullāh ﷺ try to take advantage of its kinship to their great forefathers? How did these persons, particularly those belonging to Rasūlullāh's ﷺ household, conduct themselves towards one another? What was the conduct of those who held wide and absolute power over a vast empire in that era? Did they indulge in pleasure and how did they behave with those committed to their care? What is the verdict of history in this regard? How far the claim about incorruptibility of the Scripture, which forms the bedrock and buttress of this religion, is correct? Was it really protected against all mutilations, accretions and alterations? The answers to these questions portray two contradictory pictures of Islam. One of it is that presented by the creed of the Ahl al-Sunnah (followers of the Qur'ān and Sunnah) and the other is painted by the doctrines and tenets of Imāmiyyah Ithnā 'Ashariyyah (The Twelvers). These portraits are not only diverse but also antithetical and contradictory.

Now anyone endowed with reason, sense of justice and knowledge of history can easily decide which one of the two versions is correct. Which one of the two depictions befits a religion revealed as mercy to the world which claims that its teachings are practicable in any age and region? It is a religion which announces that its Rasūl ﷺ was the most successful among all the ambiyā' of Allah and the era of its Rasūl ﷺ was the most blessed period of its history. It was the era, it claims, of which the entire humanity can be proud of; for in the dark and dingy annals of the world with nothing but accounts of self-aggrandisement, wars for personal gains, struggles for power and

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prestige and taking advantage of one's victorious exploits, this was the only period when we find self-abnegating and truthful individuals, all working for the common weal.

Those were the times which bear testimony to what the Khalīfah 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz had thus given expression:

Rasūlullāh ﷺ was sent as guide of humanity and not as a collector of revenues.

But the picture of Islam that emerges through the creed and portrayal of events by the Shī'ah induces every intelligent and educated man to ask that if the call to Islam could not make any lasting impact on the people addressed by its founder and all of his followers barring four persons, became apostates just after his death, how can its claim to purify morals and behaviour of man be accepted? How can it claim to raise man from his baser instincts to the sublime stage of humanness? Let us suppose that a missionary of Islam is inviting people to accept Islam in a Western or any other non-Muslim country. A man, who has gone through the Shī'ī literature, interrupts him to ask:

How can u invite others to Islam when its Prophet had no more than four or five believers in him after labouring for twenty-three long years? The vast majority recanted its faith!

What answer could be given to the man raising these objections?

Shī'ī creed of 'Allāmah Khomeini

When Ayatollah Rūh Allāh Khomeini gave a call for Islamic revolution and established the so-called Islamic Republic of Iran by overthrowing the Pahlavi monarchy a few years back, it was expected that in order

to make his call more appealing and acceptable for all the Muslims, he would not open the door of Shī'ah - Sunni controversy — at least he would not begin it again if he was unable to close the chapter.

It was hoped that if he did not publicly renounce those Shī'ī tenets which were as much a stumbling block in the way of Islamic unity as in spreading the message of Islam, for reason of political expediency, he would at least not reiterate them publicly.

A man of his deep scholarship was expected to see the hand of Islam's enemy who had cleverly exploited the injured pride of Iranians by the loss of their empire to the Arabs for sowing seeds of dissension among the Muslims. With his astounding victory over the Emperor and a powerful fighting machine to back him, it would have not been difficult for him to announce that the Muslims should now open a new chapter of friendship and amity for making Islam strong and powerful as well as for reforming the Muslim society of its ills, by forgetting the painful past. This was expected of him to make the future of Islam bright and also for inviting others to accept the truth of Islam.¹

But these hopes were belied. He started publishing his Shī'ī views through his works and articles. In his works entitled *Al-Ḥukūmat al-Islamiyyah Wilāyat al-Faqīh* he describes the A'immaḥ and the Imāmaḥ in a way that elevates them to the stage of divinity; he makes them out

¹The reason is that Islam cannot be presented as a saving principle for mankind if out of more than a hundred thousand companions stated to be present on the occasion of the Rasūl's ﷺ last pilgrimage, only four of them remained wedded to the faith after the Rasūl's ﷺ demise, if the Qur'ān was totally mutilated and the real faith was kept secret by the A'immaḥ as claimed in *Uṣūl-Kāfi*, *Faṣl al-Khiṭāb* and *Kashf al-Asrār*.

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as superior to every nabī and angel; he pleads that the universe has been subordinated to them in its origin and creation.¹

Similarly in *Kashf al-Asrār*, written by him in Persian, he does not merely criticise but reviles and denounces and uses coarsely insulting language for the Ṣaḥābah, especially for the first three khulafā', befitting the most wicked and vicious conspirers.²

Both these, his propagation of the Shī'ī creed and imprecations of Ṣaḥābah are being publicised simultaneously on a wide scale through his works, for these are not his private epistles meant for his followers alone.

Followers of 'Allāmah Khomeini

The view of Imām Khomeini in regard to Imāmah and Rasūlullāh's ﷺ Ṣaḥābah are no secret. His works are being published widely both within and outside Iran. His pleadings for the Shī'ī faith: the danger his views posed to Islam's fundamental creed of Tawḥīd, the oneness of Allah; attributions of prophetic characteristics to the A'imma; and more than these, the invectives showered by him on Rasūlullāh's ﷺ Ṣaḥābah — who were held in the highest regard and whose era was held as the ideal period of the Islamic or rather world history — were expected to alienate at least those subscribing to the faith of Ahl al-Sunnah. It was hoped that his activities would undermine his claim as the leader of an Islamic revolution and founder of a truly Islamic form of government. However it is disheartening to see that a section of Muslims, projecting itself as the standard-bearers of Islamic thought and as the reviver of Islamic glory, have accepted

1 *Al-Ḥukūmat al-Islamiyyah*, op. cit., p. 52.

2 *Kashf al-Asrār*, op. cit., p. 113-14.

Imām Khomeini as the “Promised Guide”; it has lavished its affection and regard for him and is not prepared to condone even a word uttered in his criticism. This attitude leads to a two-fold conclusion.

Significance of Creed in Islam

First, the criterion devised by certain persons for approbation and disapprobation of anything is not that it should conform to the Qur’ān and the Sunnah or the practice or creed of our honoured precursors, but that it leads to establishment of an Islamic government, wresting of power for Islam, posing a challenge to any western power or creating difficulties for Western supremacy. This is what certain persons have come round to regard as the qualification for an ideal leader.

Secondly, fundamental Islamic creed is being taken lightly by our modern educated class. This is a dangerous development, sufficient to disturb all well-meaning believers. The dividing line between the movements launched by political leaders and the divine call given by the ambiyā’ of Allah is nothing but the creed propagated by the latter.¹ The ambiyā’ are never prepared to make any compromise at the cost of their creed. Their criterion for acceptance or rejection of any proposition is how far it is compatible with their creed. If the Muslims have been able to preserve their religion unadulterated, in its original form despite their numerous weaknesses, it has been on account of their sensitiveness and zeal for maintaining it in its purest form. The scholars of Islam, those charged with the protection and interpretations of its doctrines, have refused to be cowed down by the most tyrant and powerful rulers.

1 See the author’s *Dāsūr-e Ḥayāt*, Lucknow, 1978.

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They have never played safe nor kept mum whenever they have found any Islamic tenet being misconstrued by the kings and emperors, let alone accepting any non-conformist view for their own benefit or for the good of Muslim masses. The fortitude found by Aḥmad ibn Ḥambal (d. 241/856) in facing the persecutions of Khalīfah Ma'mūn and Mu'tasim, the two most powerful emperors of his time, on the question of the Qur'ān's creation¹ and the way Shaykh Aḥmad Mujaddid Alf-e Thānī (d.1034/1624) continued to struggle against the Emperor Akbar's claims of Islam's supersession by his eclectic religion of *Dīn-e Ilāhī* and the emperor's divine right of final say in all religious matters, until the Mughals were forced to change their policy², are but two examples that need to be cited here.

History of Islam offers innumerable shining examples of its votaries acting on the dictums: "Be truthful to the face of a tyrant ruler and no obedience to created beings involving disobedience to the Creator." The tempter in this regard is often a tyrant ruler, occasionally the public opinion, at times fame and popularity, and not infrequently success in life; while experience tells us that it is the latter ones which are hardest to withstand.

The teachings and the creed of Islam are really like a river which never changes its course nor does it go dry. Political powers, occasional revolutions, rise and fall of governments, movements and forces come and go. If the river is flowing in the right direction they pose no danger, but if the creed is distorted, it means that the river has changed its course or its water has been contaminated. Thus, no

1 See *Saviours of Islamic Spirit*, op. cit., vol. I, p. 67-86.

2 See *Saviours of Islamic Spirit*, Lucknow, 1983 vol, III.

mission, call or movement to make any country strong and powerful or to reform any society of its ills can ever be acceptable if its creed is not sound, seamless. This is essential for the stability of this religion and maintaining the vigour of its followers. This is why the servants and scholars of Islam, who have to safeguard the Sharī'ah and the Sunnah, cannot avoid taking steps apparently unpleasant to certain persons.

The Secret of Khomeini's Success

The reasons for the popularity of Ayatollah Khomeini are more than one. His success against the Shāh and a peculiar type of revolution in the Iranian society; failure of America, the greatest world power to face his challenge; the fire and passion of Iranian youths for self-sacrifice; the unsatisfactory state of affairs, religion and moral shortcomings apparent in several Arab and Muslim countries; dissatisfaction of the Muslim youth in the Indo-Pak sub-continent owing to the conditions obtaining in their own countries; their readiness to accept whatever is presented to them in the name of Islam, are some of the factors that have won the same popular regard for Imām Khomeini as was once enjoyed by Kamāl Atātürk in India and Gamāl 'Abd al-Nāsir in the Arab world.

There are also some heads of states in a few Muslim countries that were admired by their people even though they openly deny validity of the ḥadīth and the Sunnah, at times they make fun of these, endeavour to make their countries culturally part of the West and are known sympathisers of communism. Imām Khomeini, however, got ahead of all such leaders because of his religious appeal. He is held in the highest regard by some who would not listen to any argument even if it aims at an appraisal of Imām Khomeini's actions in the light of accepted creed,

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the Qur'ān or the Sunnah, they simply cannot tolerate any adverse criticism of Imām Khomeini. The way things are shaping is extremely dangerous for the future of Islam and the preservation of its spirit; this brings to mind a pithy remark by Khalīfah 'Alī رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ who said:

(There are those) who run after every rattler.

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً ۗ إِنَّكَ
أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ

O Rabb make not our hearts to swerve after You have guided us;
and favour us with Mercy from You. Verily You are the Giver.¹



1 Sūrah Āl 'Imrān: 8

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