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Sixth Session, Tuesday night, 28th Rajab 1345

A.H.

Mr. Ghulam Imamain, a respected Sunni merchant, came to the meeting place before sunset. He mentioned the reason for his coming. He said that he and some others were greatly influenced by the Well-Wisher's remarks. He said that he heard facts he had never heard before. He and some other Sunnis had an unpleasant discussion with their ulama', who could not refute Well-Wisher's arguments but who stuck stubbornly to their position. When the time for Maghrib prayers came, Mr. Ghulam Imamain offered both Maghrib and Isha' prayers led by Well-Wisher. When the others arrived, the discussion began with a comment by Nawab Sahib.

Nawab: Please continue last night's discourse. The interpretation of the verse was incomplete.

Well-Wisher: (Looking toward the Sunni ulama'.) Provided you so allow.

Hafiz: (A bit angrily) No harm. If something remains to be said, we are prepared to listen.

Well-Wisher: Last night I proved, from the grammatical point of view, that the statement of some commentators that this verse refers to the manner of determining the caliphate was unacceptable. Now I will argue from another point of view.

Sheikh Abdu's-Salam Sahib said last night that there are four qualities mentioned in this verse. These qualities, he said, indicate that the verse was revealed in reference to the first four caliphs and that the verse indicates the order of the caliphate. My response to this argument is, first, reliable commentators have never made such a statement about the significance of this verse.

Second, you all know that when a quality attributed to a person corresponds precisely with his characteristics, only then it worth considering. If we consider the facts objectively, we find that it is only 'Ali who had possessed the attributes described in this verse. These qualities in no way correspond with those named by Sheikh Sahib.

Hafiz: Weren't all those verses you have already narrated about 'Ali sufficient? Do you now wish through your rhetorical cleverness to prove that this Holy verse was also revealed in praise of 'Ali? If so, let us know how it does not fit in with the caliphate of the first four caliphs.

300 hundred verses in praise of 'Ali

Well-Wisher: I haven't falsely attributed verses of the Holy Qur'an in praise of 'Ali. You are confused. Can you ignore the fact that well known commentaries and reliable books written by your own ulama' mentioned many verses of the Holy Qur'an to be in praise of 'Ali? How can you regard it as being peculiar to me? Were Hafiz Abu Na'im Ispahani, the author of "Ma Nazala mina'l-Qur'an Fi 'Ali," and Hafiz Abu Bakr Shirazi, the author of "Nuzulu'l-Qur'an Fi 'Ali," Shi'as?

Were the great commentators, like Imam Tha'labi, Jalalu'd-din Suyuti, Tabari, Imam Fakhru'd-Din Razi, and other high-ranking ulama', like Ibn Kathir, Muslim, Hakim, Tirmidhi, Nisa'i, Ibn Maja, Abu Dawud, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, and even the intolerant Ibn Hajar, who collected in his 'Sawa'iq' the verses of the Holy Qur'an revealed in praise of 'Ali, Shi'as?

Some of the ulama', like Tabari, and Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i, in the beginning of his Part 62, narrating on the authority of Ibn Abbas, and Muhaddith of Syria in his 'Ta'rikh al-Kabir', and others have recorded as many as 300 hundred verses of the Holy Qur'an in praise of 'Ali.

Were these men Shi'as or did they belong to your great ulama'? We do not need to falsely attribute a verse of the Holy Qur'an for proving the rank of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali. His enemies (Amawis, Nawasib, and Khawarij) suppress his virtues, and his friends hesitate to report his excellence for fear of consequences. Still, books are full of his merits, and they cast light on all aspects of his attainment. So far as this verse is concerned, I have not indulged in "rhetorical cleverness." I have revealed the truth, arguing from your own books.

You have observed so far that I have not argued from the reports of Shi'as authors. Even if Shi'as books are left aside, I will prove 'Ali's unique superiority. What I have said regarding this verse agrees with the views of your own ulama'.

Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i, quoted the "Hadith of Similarity" in his 'Kifayatu't-Talib', Chapter 23, from the Prophet to the effect that 'Ali was similar to the prophets. He says that the reason 'Ali was called similar to Noah in wisdom was that 'Ali was vehement against the unbelievers and kind to the believers.

Allah has mentioned these attributes in the Holy Qur'an. 'Ali, who was always with the Prophet, was "vehement against the infidels and compassionate to the believers." And supposing, as Sheikh Sahib says, that the phrase "and those who are with him" refers to Abu Bakr because he remained for a few days with the Prophet in the cave. Can such a man equal him who remained with the Holy Prophet from

childhood and received instruction from him?

‘Ali first to declare belief in Prophet of Allah

Moreover, on the crucial occasion of the declaration of his prophethood, no one supported Muhammad except ‘Ali. Your eminent ulama’, like Bukhari and Muslim, in their ‘Sahihain, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his ‘Musnad’, and many others, such as Ibn Abdi'l-Birr in ‘Isti'ab’, Volume III, page 32, Imam Abu Abdu'r-Rahman Nisa'i in ‘Khasa'isu'l-Alawi’, Sibt Ibn Jauzi in ‘Tadhkira’, page 63, Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in ‘Yanabiu'l-Mawadda’, Chapter 12, on the authority of Tirmidhi and Muslim, Muhammad ibn Talha Shafi'i in ‘Matalibu's-Su'ul’, sub-chapter I, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in ‘Sharh Nahju'l-Balagha’, Volume III, p. 258,

Tirmidhi in ‘Jam' al-Tirmidhi’, Volume II, page 314, Hamwaini in ‘Fara'id’, Mir Sayyid ‘Ali Hamadani in ‘Mawaddatu'l-Qurba’, and even the fanatical Ibn Hajar in ‘Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa’, and other prominent scholars have, with slight variation of words, related from Anas Ibn Malik and others that "the Holy Prophet was ordained Prophet of Allah on Monday, and ‘Ali, declared his faith in him on Tuesday."

It is also narrated that "The prophethood of Allah was declared on Monday, and ‘Ali offered prayers with the Holy Prophet on Tuesday." And, again, "‘Ali was the first man who declared his faith in the Prophet." Also Tabari, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Tirmidhi, and others narrate from Ibn Abbas that "‘Ali was the first to offer prayers."

Training of ‘Ali from childhood by the Holy Prophet

I ask you to consider what your own learned theologian, Nuru'd-din Ibn Sabbagh Maliki in his ‘Fusulu'l-Muhimma’, Chapter "Tarbiatu'n-Nabi," page 16, and Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in his ‘Matalibu's-Su'ul’, Chapter 1, page 11, and others have reported.

During a famine in Mecca, the Prophet told his uncle, Abbas, that the latter's brother, Abu Talib, had too many children, and that his means of livelihood were narrow. Muhammad recommended that each of them ask Abu Talib for one child to support so that the heavy burden on him would be reduced. Abbas agreed.

They went to Abu Talib with their offer, and he accepted. Abbas took Ja'far al-Tayyar under his guardianship, and the Prophet took ‘Ali. Maliki continues, "‘Ali remained continuously with the Holy Prophet until the latter was formally declared the Prophet of Allah."

‘Ali declared his belief in him, and followed him as a prophet of Allah when ‘Ali was only thirteen. He was the first male to accept Islam. The Prophet's wife Khadija was the only person to accept the Prophet before ‘Ali.

In the same chapter, Maliki reports that Ibn Abbas, Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari, Zaid Ibn Arqam,

Muhammad Ibn Munkadar, and Rabi'atu'l-Mara'i said that the first person after Khadija who believed in the Prophet was 'Ali. He says that 'Ali referred to this fact, which has been narrated by your ulama'.

He said: "Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah, is my brother and son of my uncle; Hamza, the chief of the martyrs, is my uncle; Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, is my wife; and his daughter's two sons are my sons by Fatima. Who of you has shared such distinction as I have?"

I was the foremost in accepting Islam when I was only a child. The Prophet declared on the day of 'Ghadir al-Khum' that it was obligatory to accept me as your guide. (Then he said three times) 'Woe be to him who faces Allah tomorrow (on the Day of Judgement), if he has subjected me to cruelty.'"

Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in his 'Matalibu's-Su'ul', Part 1, Chapter 1, page 11, and many others of your learned men, have reported that these statements were in reply to Mu'awiya's letter, to 'Ali, in which the former had boasted that his father was the chief of his tribe during the "time of ignorance," and that in Islam he (Mu'awiya) was the King.

Mu'awiya also said that he was the "maternal uncle of the faithful," the "writer of the Wahi" (revelations), and a man of virtuous merits." After reading the letter, 'Ali said: "A man of his character – the son of the woman who chewed livers – boasts before me! (in reference to Mu'awiya's mother, Hind, who, after the Battle of Uhud, in a fit of rage, ripped open the dead body of Hamza, tore out his liver, and chewed it). Mu'awiya, even though he was bitterly opposed to 'Ali, could not deny these merits.

Moreover, Hakim Abu'l-Qasim Haskani, one of your learned ulama', narrates from Abdu'r-Rahman Ibn Auf, regarding the above verse of the ten Quraish who accepted Islam, that 'Ali was the foremost among them. Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Khatib Khawarizmi, and Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi narrate from Anas ibn Malik that the Prophet said: "The angels blessed me and 'Ali for seven years, for during that time no voice proclaimed the oneness of Allah except mine and 'Ali's." Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali, in 'Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha', Volume I, pages 373–5, recorded several hadith narrated through your scholars to the effect that 'Ali was the foremost of all others in the matter of Islam.

After recording the various versions, and narrations he concludes: "So the sum total of what we have stated is that 'Ali is the first of all men regarding Islam. The view contrary to it is rare, and not worth our attention."

Imam Abu Abdu'r-Rahman Nisa'i, author of one of the six books of authentic hadith, has recorded in 'Khasa'isu'l-Alawi' the first six hadith on this topic and has confirmed that the foremost person in Islam, and the first to offer prayers with the Prophet was 'Ali.

In addition, Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in 'Yanabiu'l-Mawadda', Chapter 12, recorded 31 hadith from Tirmidhi, Hamwaini, Ibn Maja, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Hafiz Abu Nu'aim, Imam Tha'labi, Ibn Maghazili, Abu'l-Muwayyid Khawarizmi, and Dailami, the conclusion of which is that 'Ali was the first in the entire Muslim community to have accepted Islam.

Even the intolerant Ibn Hajar Makki has in 'Sawa'iq Muhriqa', Chapter 2, recorded hadith on the same issue, some of which have been accepted by Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in his 'Yanabiu'l-Mawadda'.

Further, in 'Yanabiu'l-Mawadda', towards the close of chapter 12, he related from Ibn Zubair, Makki and he from Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari, a hadith about 'Ali's merits, which I would like to present here with your permission in order to conclude my argument.

The Prophet said: "Allah Almighty chose me as a Prophet and revealed sacred scriptures to me. I said to Him, 'O Allah, My master, You sent Moses to Pharaoh, Moses asked you to make his brother, Aaron, his vizier to strengthen his hand, so that his words might be witnessed. Now I ask you, O Allah, that you appoint for me from among my family a vizier who may strengthen my hand. Make 'Ali my vizier and brother, infuse gallantry into his heart, and give him power over the enemy. 'Ali was the first person to believe in me and to witness my prophethood and the first person to declare the oneness of Allah along with me.' Afterward I continued to pray to Allah.

Therefore, 'Ali is the chief of the successors. To follow him is a blessing; to die in obedience to him is martyrdom. His name appears in the Torah along with my name; his wife, the most truthful, is my daughter; his two sons, who are the chiefs of the Youth of Paradise, are my sons.

After them all the Imams are vicegerents of Allah over His creation after the prophets; and they are the doors of knowledge among my people. He who follows them is rescued from Hellfire; he who follows them is guided to the right path; he who is endowed by Allah with love for them will surely be sent to Paradise. So, enlightened people, take heed."

I could quote similar hadith all night, all of which have been recorded by your own scholars. But I think this is enough. 'Ali alone associated with the Holy Prophet from childhood, and therefore it is fitting that we consider him the person referred to in the words "those who are with him," and not the one who accompanied the Prophet on a few days' journey.

'Ali's faith while only a child

Hafiz: You have proven your point, and no one has ever denied that 'Ali was foremost in accepting Islam. But this fact does not qualify him as pre-eminent in comparison with other companions. True, the high caliphs professed faith in Islam years after 'Ali, but their faith was different from his and better.

The reason is that 'Ali was only a child, and these people were mature. Obviously, the faith of older, wise men was superior to that of a child. In addition, 'Ali's faith was only blind following, and the faith of these people was based on reason.

Faith acquired by reason is better than blind faith. Since a child, who is not under a religious obligation to perform duties, does not profess faith except by blind following, so 'Ali, who was only a child of thirteen, professed his faith only through blind following.

Well-Wisher: Such talk is really surprising coming from a learned man like you. I wonder how to refute such an argument. If I were to say that you adopt such a position out of malice, it would be against my disposition to attribute such a motive to a learned man. Let me put a question to you: was 'Ali's acceptance of Islam based on his personal wish or on the invitation of the Prophet?

Hafiz: Why do you take such a severe view of the way we talk since, when we have doubts, we must discuss them. In reply to your question, I admit that 'Ali accepted Islam at the invitation of the Holy Prophet.

Well-Wisher: When the Prophet invited 'Ali to accept Islam, did the former know a child is not bound by religious commitments? If you say that he did not know it, you attribute ignorance to him, and if he did know it and invited 'Ali anyway, then his action was absurd. Obviously, to attribute absurdity to the Prophet is infidelity since a prophet is infallible. Allah says about him in the Holy Qur'an:

"Nor does he speak out of desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed." (53:3-4)

The Prophet considered 'Ali a person worthy to be invited to accept Islam. Apart from this, youth does not necessarily preclude wisdom. Maturity is taken into consideration concerning discharge of religious obligations, but not for matters connected with wisdom. Faith is concerned with matters relating to wisdom and not religious laws. So 'Ali's faith during childhood is a virtue for him just as Allah tells us in the Holy Qur'an about Jesus in these words:

"He said: Surely I am a servant of Allah; He has given me the Book and made me a prophet." (19:30)

Also in this chapter He says about Prophet Yahya:

"...and We granted him wisdom while yet a child." (19:12)

Sayyid 'Ali Humairi Yamani, (died 179 A.H.), points to the same fact in his couplets. He says: "Just as Yahya reached the rank of prophethood in his childhood, 'Ali, who was the successor of the Prophet and the father of his sons, was also ordained Vicegerent of Allah and guardian of the people while only a child."

Virtue and dignity bestowed by Allah do not depend on age. Wisdom and intelligence depend upon an inborn tendency. I am surprised by your comment since such arguments were made by the Nasibis and Kharijis at the instigation of the Umayyads. They denigrated 'Ali's faith as being mere blind adherence to what he was taught.

Even your own scholars have acknowledged 'Ali's merit in this respect. Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i, Ibn Sabbagh Maliki, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid and others have quoted 'Ali's couplets. In one of his couplets he says: "I was first and foremost among you in embracing Islam when I was only a small child."

If 'Ali's faith at such a tender age had not been meritorious, the Prophet would not have characterized it as such. Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in his *Yanabiu'l-Mawadda*, Chapter 55, page 202, narrates from Ahmad Ibn Abdullah Shafi'i, quoting from the second Caliph, 'Umar Ibn Khattab, who said, "Abu Bakr, Abu Ubaida Jarra, and a group of people were present in the company of the Prophet of Allah when he patted 'Ali on the shoulder and said: 'O 'Ali! You are the first and foremost among all believers and Muslims in embracing Islam. You are to me as Aaron was to Moses.'"

Also Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal narrates from Ibn Abbas, who said that he, Abu Bakr, Abu Ubaida Ibn Jarra, and others were with the Prophet when he put his hand on 'Ali's shoulder and said: "You are foremost in faith in Islam among all the Muslims, and you are to me as Aaron was to Moses, O 'Ali! He who thinks he is my friend while he is your enemy is a liar."

Ibn Sabbagh Maliki records a similar hadith in *'Fusulu'l-Muhimma'*, p. 125, from *'Khasa'isu'l-Alawi'* as a narration of Abdullah ibn Abbas, and Imam Abu Abdu'r-Rahman Nisa'i reports in *'Khasa'isu'l-Alawi'* that he said: "I have heard 'Umar ibn Khattab saying 'Mention 'Ali's name with respect because I have heard the Prophet saying that 'Ali has three qualities. I ('Umar) wished that I had only one of them because each of those qualities is dearer to me than anything in this world.'"

Ibn Sabbagh has narrated the following in addition to what others have recorded. The Holy Prophet said about 'Ali, "He who loves you loves me, and he who loves me, Allah loves him, and whomever Allah loves, He brings to Paradise. But he who is hostile to you is hostile to me, and he who is hostile to me, Allah is hostile to him and condemns him to Hell."

'Ali's declaring himself a Muslim even while he was still a boy establishes the excellence of his wisdom and merit, which no other Muslim can attain. Tabari in his *'Ta'rikh'* quotes from Muhammad Ibn Sa'ad Ibn Abi Waqqas, who said: "I asked my father whether Abu Bakr was the first of the Muslims.

He said, 'No, more than fifty people embraced Islam before Abu Bakr; but he was superior to us as a Muslim.'" He also writes that 'Umar Ibn Khattab embraced Islam after forty-five men and twenty-one women. "As for the foremost one in the matter of Islam and faith, it was 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib."

'Ali's faith was part of his very nature

Besides the fact that 'Ali was foremost in embracing Islam, he possessed another merit, peculiar to him, and more important than his other merits: 'Ali's Islam derived from his nature, while that of others occurred only after previous unbelief. Unlike other Muslims and companions of the Prophet, 'Ali was never an unbeliever.

Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Ispahani in his *'Ma Nazalu'l-Qur'an Fi 'Ali'*, and Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani in *'Mawaddatu'l-Qurba'* narrate that Ibn Abbas said, "I swear by Allah that there was no one who had not worshipped idols before embracing Islam except 'Ali. He accepted Islam without having ever worshipped

the idols."

Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in his 'Kifayatu't-Talib', Chapter 24, quotes the Prophet as saying, "Those who took the lead in accepting faith in the oneness of Allah among the followers of the Prophets were three people who were never polytheists: 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, the man in the Sura Ya Sin, and the believer of the people of Pharaoh. The Truthful Ones are Habib al-Najjar, among the descendants of Ya Sin, Ezekiel among the descendants of Pharaoh, and 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, who excelled all of them."

Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani in 'Mawaddatu'l-Qurba', 'Mawadda 7', Khatib Khawarizmi in 'Manaqib', and Imam Tha'labi in his Tafsir narrate from the second Caliph, 'Umar Ibn Khattab: "I bear witness that I heard the Prophet say, 'If the seven heavens were put in one balance and 'Ali's faith in the other, 'Ali's faith would surely outweigh the other.'"

The same point has been included in couplets composed by Sufyan ibn Mus'ab ibn Kufi as follows: "By Allah, I bear witness that the Prophet said to us: 'It should not remain unknown to anyone that if the faith of all those living on the earth were placed in one scale of the balance and that of 'Ali in the other scale, 'Ali's faith would outweigh the other.'"

'Ali excelled all other companions and the whole community in merit

Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani Shafi'i has recorded many hadith in his 'Mawaddatu'l-Qurba', which supported 'Ali's excellence. In the seventh 'Mawadda' he quotes from Ibn Abbas that the Holy Prophet said, "The best of men of all the worlds in my period is 'Ali."

Most of your fair-minded ulama' have accepted the superiority of 'Ali. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his 'Sharh Nahju'l-Balagha', Volume 111, page 40, says that Abu Ja'far Iskafi, the chief of the 'Mu'tazilite' sect, declared that Bashr Ibn Mu'tamar, Abu Musa, Ja'far Ibn Mubashshir, and other ulama' of Baghdad believed that, "The most excellent person among all Muslims was 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, and after him his son Hasan, then his son Husain, after him Hamza, and after him Ja'far Ibn Abi Talib." He goes on to say that his master Abu Abdullah Basri, Sheikh Abu'l-Qasim Balkhi, and Sheikh Abu'l-Hasan Khayyat had the same belief as Abu Ja'far Iskafi regarding the superiority of 'Ali.

He explains the faith of the Mu'tazilite sect saying: "The best of the men after the Prophet of Allah, is the successor of the Prophet, the husband of Fatima, 'Ali; after him, his two sons, Hasan and Husain; after them, Hamza, and after him Ja'far (Tayyar).

Sheikh: If you knew the statements of the ulama' in support of the excellence of Abu Bakr, you would not have made such remarks.

‘Ali's faith superior to Abu Bakr's

Well-Wisher: All the reliable Sunni ulama' have acknowledged the superiority of 'Ali. For instance, you may refer Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali's 'Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha', Volume 111, page 264, in which the same statement has been quoted from Jahiz that Abu Bakr's faith was superior to that of 'Ali. However, Abu Ja'far Askafi, one of the eminent ulama' of the Mu'tazilite sect, rejected this claim, saying that 'Ali's faith was superior to Abu Bakr's and all other companions.

Abu Ja'far said, "We do not deny the excellence of the companions, but certainly we do not consider any of them superior to 'Ali." 'Ali was of such an exalted rank that to mention his name along with other companions is unbecoming.

In fact, the virtues of the companions cannot be compared with the sublime merits of 'Ali. Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani narrates in his Mawadda VII from Ahmad Ibn Muhammadu'l-Karzi Baghdadi, who said that he heard from Abdullah Ibn Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, who asked his father Ahmad Ibn Hanbal about the rank of the companions of the Prophet.

He named Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Uthman and stopped. Abdullah then asked his father, "Where is the name of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib?" His father replied, "He belongs to the Holy descendants of the Prophet. We cannot mention his name (being of such prominence) along with those people."

We see in the Holy Qur'an that in the verse of Mubahala 'Ali is referred to as the 'self' of the Holy Prophet. There is a hadith in support of this view, which is recorded in the same Mawadda VII, narrated from Abdullah Ibn 'Umar Ibn Khattab.

He said that one day while counting the names of the companions, he named Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Uthman. A man said, "O Abu Abdu'r-Rahman! Why did you omit the name of 'Ali?" He replied: "'Ali is one of the descendants of the Prophet. He cannot be included with anyone else. He is in the same category as the Prophet of Allah."

Let me relate another hadith from the same Mawadda. It is narrated from Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari that one day in the presence of Muhajirs (Meccan emigrants living in Medina) and Ansars ("helpers" of Medina who received the Muslim emigrants into their community), that the Prophet said to 'Ali, "O 'Ali! If a man offers complete prayers to Allah, and then doubts that you and your family are superior to all other beings, his abode shall be Hell."

(After hearing this hadith, all those present, particularly Mr. Hafiz, showed repentance, lest they should be among the doubtful ones). I have referred to only a few hadith. Your choice seems to be to reject all these authentic hadith, which are recorded in your own books, or to acknowledge that 'Ali's faith was superior to that of all the companions, including Abu Bakr and 'Umar.

I also ask you to consider the hadith (acknowledged by both sects) in which the Holy Prophet said on the

occasion of 'Ghazawa al-Ahzab' (also known as the Battle of the Trench), when 'Ali killed Amru Ibn Abd al-Wudd with one stroke of his sword: "One stroke of 'Ali in the Battle of Khandaq (the Trench) has earned more merit for him than the reward for good deeds of the whole community (jinn and men) until the Day of Judgement." If only one stroke of his sword was better in merit than the prayers of jinn and human beings combined, certainly his preeminence cannot be questioned by anyone except malicious fanatics.

'Ali as the self of the Holy Prophet

Had there been no other proof of 'Ali's superiority to all the companions and to humanity at large, the verse of Mubahala is sufficient to prove his excellence. It refers to 'Ali as the 'self' of the Prophet. The Holy Prophet was admittedly superior to all of humanity from beginning to end.

Hence, the word "anfusana" (ourselves) in the verse referring to 'Ali proves that he was also superior to all of humanity from beginning to end. Perhaps now you will admit that in the phrase "And those who are with him," the reference is to 'Ali. He was with the Prophet before anyone else from the beginning of Islam.

As to why 'Ali did not accompany the Prophet on the night of his migration from Mecca, it is clear that the Prophet entrusted 'Ali with more important duties. No one was as trustworthy as 'Ali. He was left behind to return to its owners the property entrusted to the Prophet. ('Ali's second responsibility was to send members of the Prophet's family and other Muslims to Medina. And even though 'Ali was not with the Prophet in the cave that night, he performed a more important duty as he lay in the Prophet's bed.)

Qur'anic verse in praise of 'Ali on his sleeping in the Prophet's bed on the night of hijra

Your own scholars have mentioned 'Ali's merit in their commentaries. For instance, Ibn Sab'i Maghribi in 'Shifa'u's-Sudur', Tibrani in 'Ausat', and 'Kabir', Ibn Athir in 'Usudu'l-Ghaiba', Volume IV, page 25, Nuru'd-Din Sabbagh Maliki in 'Fusuli'l-Muhimma Fi Ma'rifati'l-'aimma', page 33, Abu Ishaq Tha'labi Fazil Nishapuri, Fakhru'd-Din Razi and Jalalu'd-Din Suyuti, each in his Tafsir, Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Ispahani, the well known Shafi'i traditionist in 'Ma Nazala'l-Qur'an fi 'Ali', Khatib Khawarizmi in 'Manaqib',

Sheikhu'l-Islam Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Hamwaini in 'Fara'id', Muhammad ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in 'Kifayatu't-Talib', Chapter 62, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in 'Musnad', Muhammad ibn Jarir through various sources, Ibn Hisham in 'Siratu'n-Nabi', Hafiz Muhaddith of Damascus in 'Arba'in Tiwal', Imam Ghazali in 'Ihya'u'l-Ulum', Volume III, page 223, Abu's-Sa'adat in 'Faza'ilu'l-Itrati't-Tahira',

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in 'Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha', Sibte Ibn Jauzi in 'Tadhkira', and others of your prominent 'ulama', report that when the Holy Prophet intended, by divine command, to leave Mecca for Medina, he

asked 'Ali to wear his (the Prophet's) green cover sheet and to sleep in his bed. Accordingly, 'Ali slept in the Prophet's place.

Then Allah Almighty told the angels Gabriel and Michael that He had made them brothers, and that one of them would live longer than the other. He asked them which was prepared to give his brother his excess life, the extent of which neither of them knew. They asked Him whether the choice was obligatory. They were told it was not obligatory.

Neither of them chose to part with his excess life. Then followed the divine words: "I have created brotherhood between my vicegerent 'Ali and my Prophet Muhammad. 'Ali has offered to sacrifice his life for the sake of the Prophet's life. By sleeping in the Prophet's bed, he is protecting the Prophet's life. Now both of you are ordered to go to the earth and save him from the enemy's evil designs."

Accordingly, both of them came to the earth. Gabriel sat at 'Ali's head and Michael at his feet. Gabriel said, "Congratulations, O son of Abu Talib! in whom Allah Almighty takes pride in the presence of His angels." After this, the following verse was revealed to the Prophet:

"And there is the type of man who gives his life to earn the pleasure of God; and Allah is full of kindness to (His) servants." (2:207)

Now I entreat you, respected gentlemen, to consider this verse carefully when you return home tonight and to draw your own conclusion. Does superiority rightly belong to him who remained with the Prophet on a few days journey, expressing fear and grief, or to him who risked his life the same night valiantly and joyfully, for the safety of the Holy Prophet. Imam Ja'far Askafi, one of the great ulama' and chiefs of the Mu'tazilites, proves, as recorded in Abi'l-Hadid's Commentary on 'Nahju'l-Balagha', Volume III, page 269-281) that 'Ali's sleeping in the Prophet's bed was superior to the short stay of Abu Bakr with the Holy Prophet.

He says: "The Muslim ulama' unanimously hold that, in reality, 'Ali's excellence on this night is so exalted that no man could reach it except Ishaq (Isaac) and Ibrahim (Abraham) when they were prepared to sacrifice their lives in obedience to Allah's will." (Most commentators, ulama', and historians believe that it was Isma'il who offered himself for sacrifice and not Ishaq.)

On page 271 of 'Sharhe-Nahju'l-Balagha' the statement of Abu Ja'far Askafi in reply to Abu Uthman Jahiz Nasibi is recorded. He says: "I have already proved earlier that 'Ali's sleeping in the Holy Prophet's bed on the night of the migration was superior to Abu Bakr's remaining in the company of the Prophet in the cave. In order to emphasize my point, I will prove it from two other points of view. First, the Prophet of Allah having old and close associations with 'Ali, loved him dearly. Therefore, he felt the loss of love when they separated.

On the other hand, Abu Bakr enjoyed the privilege of going with the Prophet. Since 'Ali was suffering the pangs of separation, his recompense increased because the greater the agony in service, the greater is

the recompense for it.

Secondly, since Abu Bakr intended to leave Mecca, and had even left it once alone, his situation as a citizen there became increasingly difficult. So when he left Mecca along with the Prophet, his longing to depart was fulfilled. Hence, no such moral excellence is due to him as to 'Ali, who suffered utmost anguish in risking his life before the drawn swords of the enemy."

Ibn Sab'a Maghribi says in his 'Shifa'u's-Sudur' about the bravery of 'Ali: "There is complete unanimity among the Arab ulama' that on the night of Hijra (migration), 'Ali's sleeping in the Prophet's bed was superior to going out with him. 'Ali made himself the Prophet's representative and risked his life for the Prophet's sake. This point is so clear that no one has ever denied it except those afflicted with insanity or fanaticism."

I stop here and come to my main point. You said that the Qur'anic phrase:

"Vehement against the infidels" (48:29)

refers to the second Caliph, 'Umar Ibn Khattab. But this claim cannot be accepted merely because you say so. We must determine whether or not this attribute is characteristic of him or not. If it is, I am willing to accept it. Obviously vehemence can be displayed in two ways: in religious debates in which, through the force of argumentation, the ulama' of the opposite side are silenced. Second, it can be shown on the battlefield.

So far as learned discussions are concerned, there is not a single instance in history when 'Umar showed any vehemence. At any rate, I have not seen any historical records indicating that 'Umar displayed vehemence in learned discussion. I shall be obliged to you if you can cite any such instance.

In fact, your own ulama' have agreed that it was 'Ali who solved difficult legal and religious problems during the period of the first three Caliphs. Although the Umayyads and the blind followers of Abu Bakr fabricated innumerable hadith on their behalf, they could not hide the fact that when men of other faiths came to Abu Bakr, 'Umar, or Uthman, to solve difficult problems, the Caliphs referred the problems to 'Ali. 'Ali gave them such convincing replies that many non-Muslims embraced Islam.

The fact that Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Uthman acknowledged 'Ali's superiority is sufficient to prove my point. Your own scholars have written that Caliph Abu Bakr said, "Remove me, remove me, since I am not better than you so long as 'Ali is in your midst."

At least seventy times Caliph 'Umar admitted: "If 'Ali had not been there, 'Umar would have been ruined." Most of the circumstances involving danger have been mentioned in the books, but I don't want to dwell on this point. There may be more important topics to discuss.

Nawab: Which topics could be more important than this? Are these matters mentioned in our books? If they are, will you please let us know?

Well-Wisher: The just ulama' of your sect agree that 'Umar often admitted that 'Ali came to his rescue.

Evidence regarding 'Umar's saying "had 'Ali not been there, 'Umar would have been ruined"

Qazi Fazlullah Ibn Ruzbahan, the fanatic, in his Ibtalu'l-Batil; Ibn Hajar Asqalani in his Tihdhibu'l-Tahdid, printed in Hyderabad Daccan, page 337; Ibn Hajar in Isaba, Volume II, printed in Egypt, page 509; Ibn Qutayba Dinawari in Ta'wil al-Mukhtalafu'l-Hadith, page 201-202, Ibn Hajar Makki in Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa, page 78; Hajj Ahmad Afindi in Hidayatu'l-Murtab, page 146 and 152; Ibn Athir Jazari in Usudu'l-Ghaiba, Volume IV, page 22; Jalalu'd-Din Suyuti in Ta'rikhu'l-Khulafa, page 66; Ibn Abdu'l-Birr Qartabi in Isti'ab, Volume II, page 474; Sayyid Mu'min Shablanji in Nuru'l-Absar, page 73;

Shahabu'd-Din Ahmad ibn Abdu'l-Qadir A'jili in Zakhiratu'l-Ma'al; Muhammad ibn 'Ali As-Saban in Is'afu'r-Raghibin, page 152; Nuru'd-Din ibn Sabbagh Maliki in Fusulu'l-Muhimma, page 18; Nuru'd-Din 'Ali ibn Abdullah Samhudi in Jawahiru'l-Iqdain; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazili in Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha, Volume I, page 6, Allama Qushachi in Sharh al-Tarid, page 407, Khatib Khawarizmi in Manaqib, page 48, 60, Muhammad ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-Su'ul sub-Chapter 6, page 29, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in Faza'il as well as Musnad; Sibt Ibn Jauzi in Tadhkira, page 85, 87,

Imam Tha'labi in Tafsir Kafshu'l-Bayan, Allama Ibn Qayyim Jauzi in Turuqi'l-Hakim, recording 'Ali's judgments from page 41 to page 53; Muhammad ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in Kifayatu't-Talib, Chapter 57; Ibn Maja Qazwini in Sunan, Ibn Maghazili Shafi'i in Manaqib; Ibrahim ibn Muhammad Hamwaini in Fara'id; Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Hasani'l-Hakim in Sharh al-Fathi'l-Mubin, Dailami in Firdaus, Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, Chapter 14, Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Ispahani in Hilyatu'l-Auliya as well as in Ma Nazala'l-Qur'an fi 'Ali, and a host of other great ulama' of your sect, with slight variation in words, have narrated 'Umar's saying, "If there were no 'Ali, 'Umar would have been ruined."

The great theologian, Ganji Shafi'i, in Chapter 57, of his Kifayatu't-Talib Fi Manaqib 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, after narrating some authentic hadith, reports from Hudhaifa Ibn Yaman that "one day 'Umar met him and asked him: 'What was your condition when you awoke in the morning?'

Hudhaifa said, 'I rose in the morning hating the Truth, liking mischief, bearing witness to the thing unseen; learning by heart the uncreated, reciting salutations without being in the state of ritual purity, and knowing that, what is for me on the earth is not for Allah in the Sky.'

'Umar was infuriated by these remarks and intended to punish Hudhaifa when 'Ali came in. He noticed the signs of rage on 'Umar's face and asked why he was so angry. 'Umar told him, and 'Ali said: 'There is nothing serious about this remark: What Hudhaifa said was correct. Truth means death, which he detests; mischief means wealth and children, which he likes; and when he says he bears witness to what he has not seen, this means that he testifies to the oneness of Allah, death, the Day of Judgement, Paradise, Hell, the bridge over it named Sira, none of which he has seen.

When he says he learns by heart what is uncreated, this refers to the Holy Qur'an; when he says that he recites salutations without ablution, this refers to reciting salutations on the Prophet of Allah, which is permissible without ablution; when he says he has for himself on earth what is not for Allah in the sky, this refers to his wife, as He has no wife or children.' 'Umar then said, 'Umar would have been lost had 'Ali not arrived.'"

Ganji Shafi'i says that 'Umar's statement is verified according to reports of most of the narrators of hadith. The author of *Manaqib* says that Caliph 'Umar repeatedly said: "O Abu'l-Hasan! ('Ali). I would not be a part of a community without you." He also said: "Women are unable to give birth to a child like 'Ali."

Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in his *Matalibu's-Su'ul* and Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in *Yanabiu'l-Mawadda*, Chapter 14, narrating from Tirmidhi, record a detailed report from Ibn Abbas at the end of which he says: "The companions of the Prophet used to seek religious judgments from 'Ali, and they accepted his decisions. Thus, 'Umar Ibn Khattab said on various occasions, 'If it were not for 'Ali, 'Umar would have been ruined."

In religious matters and learned discussions 'Umar showed no vehemence. On the contrary, he admitted his own inability and acknowledged 'Ali as his refuge. Even Ibn Hajar Makki in Chapter III of *Sawa'iq Muhriqa*, reporting from Ibn Sa'd, quotes 'Umar as saying, "I seek Allah's help in deciding those difficult problems for which Abu-l-Hasan ('Ali) is not available."

Caliph 'Umar's bravery was never observed on any battlefield

As for 'Umar's vehemence on the battlefield, history recorded no instance of it. On the contrary, historians of both sects relate that whenever 'Umar encountered a powerful enemy, he took to his heels. Consequently, other Muslims also fled, and the Muslim army was often defeated.

Hafiz: You have gradually increased the unkindness. You have insulted Caliph 'Umar, who was the pride of the Muslims and in whose age the Muslims achieved great victories. Because of 'Umar, Muslim armies won their battles. You call him a coward and say that he ran away from the battlefield and that the defeat of the Muslim army was due to him! Is it proper for a man of your caliber to defame Caliph 'Umar?

Well-Wisher: I'm afraid you are mistaken. Though you have been with me for many nights, you have not understood me. Perhaps you think that it is due to enmity that I criticize or praise men. It is not. There is a great liability in religious debates, which has been a source of antagonism among Muslims for centuries. Such debates often excite malicious tendencies, which are not in accord with the injunctions of the Holy Qur'an.

The Qur'an clearly says:

"O ye who believe! Avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin."

(49: 12)

You assume that my statements are motivated by malice. The fact is otherwise. I have not uttered a word contrary to what your own ulama' have written. You have just said that I have insulted Caliph 'Umar. But there was not the slightest indication of an insult. What I said corresponds to the records of history. Now I am constrained to give a clearer view of facts in order to quiet this antagonism.

Conquests not due to personal merits of 'Umar

You said that Caliph 'Umar was responsible for the Muslim conquests. No one denies that the Muslims achieved great conquests during the caliphate of 'Umar. But remember that, according to the evidence of your prominent ulama', like Qazi Abu Bakr Khatib, in his History of Baghdad, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in Musnad, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in Sharhe-Nahju'l-Balagha, and many other writers, Caliph 'Umar sought guidance from 'Ali in all administrative and military matters. And he acted on 'Ali's advice. In addition, there was a difference in the Islamic conquests of different periods.

The first kind refers to conquests during the time of the Prophet himself, which were due primarily to 'Ali's gallantry. Everyone agrees that 'Ali was the bravest of the brave. If he did not fight in a battle, victory was not achieved.

For instance, in the Battle of Khaibar, he suffered from an eye ailment, and it was impossible for him to go to battle. The Muslims suffered repeated defeats until, when he was cured by the Prophet, 'Ali advanced toward the enemy and conquered the forts of Khaibar.

In the Battle of Uhud, when the Muslims broke ranks and ran, it was 'Ali who stood firm. Dauntless, he protected the Prophet from the enemy until a hidden voice proclaimed, "There is no sword other than Dhu'l-fiqar, and there is no brave youth other than 'Ali."

The second kind of conquest pertains to those battles which were fought after the Prophet's death. These victories were due to the bravery of the great Muslim soldiers and their expert planning. But we are not concerned here with the Islamic conquests during 'Umar's caliphate. Our topic is the courage of Caliph 'Umar himself. It is not verified by any historical evidence.

Hafiz: It is insulting to claim that Caliph 'Umar ran from the battlefield and that this led to the defeat of the Muslims.

Well-Wisher: If citing historical facts about men is an insult, then this insult has been recorded by your own ulama'.

Hafiz: Where have our ulama' written that Caliph 'Umar fled from the battlefield? When did he cause the defeat of the Muslims?

Abu Bakr's and 'Umar's defeat in the battle of Khaibar

Well-Wisher: Since 'Ali was suffering from an eye ailment on the first day of the battle of Khaibar, the Prophet gave the Muslim flag to Abu Bakr, who led the Muslim army against the Jews. Suffering a defeat after a short battle, he returned. The next day the Muslim flag was given to 'Umar, but before he reached the place of battle, he fled in panic.

Hafiz: These statements are Shi'as fabrications.

Well-Wisher: The Battle of Khaibar was an important event of the Prophet's life, recorded in detail by historians of both sects. Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Ispahani in his *Hilyatu'l-Auliya*, Volume I, page 62, Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in *Matalibu's-Su'ul*, page 40, from the *Sira* of Ibn Hisham, Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in *Kifayatu't-Talib*, Chapter 14, and many others of your ulama' have recorded this event.

But the most authentic narrations are those of two great scholars: Muhammad Ibn Isma'il Bukhari, who writes in his *Sahih*, Volume II, printed in Egypt, 1320 A.H., page 100, and Muslim Ibn Hujjaj, who writes in his *Sahih*, Volume II, printed in Egypt, 1320 A.H., page 324, that "Caliph 'Umar fled from the battlefield on two occasions." Among the many clear proofs on this point are the unambiguous verses of Ibn Abi'l-Hadid the Mu'tazilite, known as "Alawiyyat al-Sab'a, in praise of 'Ali. Regarding the "Gate of Khaibar," he says: "Have you heard the story of the Conquest of Khaibar?"

So many mysteries are linked together which bewilder even the wise mind! These two (Abu Bakr and 'Umar) had no liking for, or acquaintance with, bearing a flag (leading an army). They did not know the secret of maintaining the prestige of a flag, they covered it with scorn and took to their heels, though they knew that fleeing from the battlefield is tantamount to infidelity.

They did so because one of the brave Jewish soldiers, a tall youth with a naked sword in hand, riding on a steed of towering stature, attacked them, like an excited male ostrich, which had gained its strength from spring air and vegetation. He was like a huge bird which had adorned itself with a beautiful color and was going towards its beloved. The blaze of the fire of death from his sword and lance shown and frightened the two men."

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid addressing them (Abu Bakr and 'Umar) says further: "I apologize for you, for your defeat and fleeing, since everyone dislikes death and loves life. Like all others, you too did not like death although there is no immunity from death. But you could not court death."

My purpose is not to insult anyone. I relate historical facts to show that the Caliph had no such bravery which would entitle him to the epithet "vehement against the infidels." The fact is that he ran from the battlefield. The attribute in question belonged to 'Ali alone, who in every battle was vehement against the infidels. This fact has been attested to by Allah in the Holy Qur'an. He says:

"O you who believe! Whoever of you turns away from his religion, soon Allah will bring another people; He loves them and they love Him, lowly before the believers, mighty against the infidels, striving hard in Allah's way, and they fear not the censure of any censurer; this is the grace of Allah. He gives it to whomsoever He desires."(5:54)

Hafiz: It is astonishing that you try to ascribe this verse to 'Ali. It refers to the believers who possess these qualities and are Allah's loved ones.

Well-Wisher: It would be better if you asked me what argument I could furnish in support of my assertion. My reply is that if this verse were revealed in praise of the believers, they would never have run from the battlefield.

Hafiz: Is it fair to accuse the believers and the Prophet's Companions of fleeing from danger? These people fought bravely in battle.

Well-Wisher: It is not I who have called them "runners." History shows them as such. Perhaps you have forgotten that in the battles of Uhud and Hunain both the believers and the companions in general, including the great companions of the Prophet, sought safety in flight. As reported by Tabrini and others, they left the Prophet alone among the infidels. Is it possible that those who turned their backs to the enemy leaving the Holy Prophet alone to face the enemy were the loved ones of Allah and His Prophet?

I am not the only one to claim that this verse is in praise of 'Ali. Abu Ishaq Imam Ahmad Tha'labi, whom you regard as the chief of your traditionists, writes in his *Kashfu'l-Bayan* that this verse was revealed in praise of 'Ali because no other person possessed the attributes mentioned in it.

No historian – ours or foreigners – has written that in any of the 36 battles fought by the Prophet did 'Ali ever falter. In the Battle of Uhud, when all the other companions fled, and the enemy's 5,000 troops attacked the Muslims, the only person who stayed at his post until victory was achieved was 'Ali.

Although wounded in several places and bleeding profusely, he rallied those who had fled and continued fighting until victory was achieved.

Hafiz: Are you not ashamed to attribute "fleeing" to the great companions? All the companions in general and the two Caliphs – Abu Bakr and 'Umar – in particular bravely surrounded the Prophet and protected him.

Well-Wisher: You have not studied history very carefully. In general, historians have written that in the battles of Uhud, Hunain, and Khaibar all the companions fled. I have told you about Khaibar. As for Hunain, Hamidi in his *Jam' al-Bainu's-Sahihain* and Halabi in his *Siratu'l-Halabiyya*, Volume III, page 123, say that all the companions fled, except four: 'Ali and Abbas were in front of the Prophet, Abu Sufyan Ibn Harith held the reins of the Prophet's horse, and Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud stood on his left.

The fleeing of the Muslims at Uhud has not been denied by anyone. Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i

in his *Kifayatu't-Talib*, Chapter 27, with his own sources, quotes Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud as saying that the Prophet said: "Whenever 'Ali was sent alone in a battle, I saw Gabriel on his right side, Michael on his left, and a cloud sheltering him from above until Allah made him victorious."

Imam Abu Abdu'r-Rahman Nisa'i narrates hadith 202 in his *Khasa'is al-Alawi* that Imam Hasan, wearing a black turban, came to the people and narrated the qualities of his father, saying that in the Battle of Khaibar, when 'Ali went toward the fort, "Gabriel was fighting on his right and Michael on his left side. He encountered the enemy with great valor until he achieved victory and was entitled to Allah's love."

'Ali was the loved one of Allah and of the Holy Prophet

In this verse Allah says that He loves those who possess these attributes and that they too love Him. This quality of being loved by Allah is peculiar to 'Ali. There is a great deal of evidence in support of this view. Among the many hadith relating to this matter is the one reported by Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in his *Kifayatu't-Talib*, Chapter 7.

He narrates, through his own sources, from Abdullah Ibn Abbas, who said that one day he was sitting with his father, Abbas, before the Holy Prophet, when 'Ali came in and saluted him. The Prophet stood up, took him into his arms, kissed him between his eyes, and made him sit down at his right side. Abbas then asked the Prophet if he loved 'Ali. The Holy Prophet replied, "O my respected uncle! By Allah, Allah loves him more than I love him."

Hadith of the standard in the conquest of Khaibar

The strongest proof of 'Ali's being the loved one of Allah, and of his bravery on the battlefield, is the hadith al-Rayah (Hadith of the Ensign), which is part of your authentic collections of traditions. None of your prominent ulama' has denied it.

Nawab: What is the hadith al-Rayah? If you don't mind, please quote it with its sources.

Well-Wisher: The prominent ulama' and historians of the two sects have both narrated the hadith al-Rayah. For instance, Muhammad Ibn Isma'il Bukhari, in his *Sahih*, Volume II, *Kitabu'l-Jihad Wa's-Siyar*, Chapter *Du'au'n-Nabi*, also Volume III, *Kitabu'l-Maghazi*, Chapter *Ghazawa al-Khaibar*; Muslim Ibn Hajjaj in his *Sahih*, Volume 2, page 324; Imam Abdu'r-Rahman Nisa'i in his *Khasa'isu'l-Alawi*;

Tirmidhi in his *Sunan*; Ibn Hajar Asqalani in *Isaba*, Volume II, p. 508; *Muhaddith al-Sham* in his *Ta'rikh*; Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his *Musnad*; Ibn Maja Qazwini in *Sunan*; Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in *Yanabiu'l-Mawadda* Chapter 6; Sibte Ibn Jauzi in *Tadhkira*; Muhammad ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in *Matalibu's-Su'ul*, Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Isfahani in *Hilyatu'l-Auliya*; Abu Qasim Tibrani in *Ausat*.

And Abu Qasim Husain ibn Muhammad (Raghib Isfahani) in *Muhaziratu'l-Udaba*, Volume II, page 212.

In short, virtually all of your historians and traditionists have recorded this hadith, so that Hakim says:

"This hadith has reached the stage of unanimity." Tabrini says: "Ali's victory in Khaibar is proved by its unanimity."

When the Muslim army laid siege to the Fort of Khaibar, it suffered defeat three times under the command of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, and they fled. The companions were greatly frustrated. In order to inspire the companions, the Prophet announced that Khaibar would be conquered. He said: "By Allah, tomorrow I will give the standard to one who will return successful. He is one who attacks repeatedly and never leaves the battlefield and never retraces his steps until he achieves success.

He loves Allah and the Prophet of Allah, and Allah and the Prophet of Allah love him." That night the companions could not sleep, wondering who would be given this special favor. At dawn, all put on their military garb and presented themselves before the Prophet. The Prophet asked, "Where is my brother and son of my uncle, 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib?" They told him, "O Prophet of Allah, he is suffering so much with sore eyes that he cannot move." The Prophet asked Salman to call 'Ali. Salman took 'Ali by the hand and brought him to the Prophet.

He saluted the Prophet, and after returning the salutation, the Prophet asked, "How are you, O Abu'l-Hasan?" He replied, "It is all well by the grace of Allah. I am suffering from headache and so much pain in the eyes that I cannot see anything."

The Prophet bade him come near. When 'Ali had moved closer, the Prophet applied the saliva of his own mouth to 'Ali's eyes and prayed for him. Soon his eyes were bright, and his ailment vanished completely. He gave 'Ali the flag of victory. 'Ali proceeded to the forts of Khaibar, fought against the Jews, slew their brave soldiers, like Harhab, Harith, Hisham, and Alqama, and conquered the hitherto invincible Forts of Khaibar.

Ibn Sabbagh Maliki in his *Fusulu'l-Muhimma*, page 21, has quoted this report from the six books of tradition, while Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in his *Kifayatu't-Talib*, Chapter 14, after narrating the hadith says that the Prophet's chief poet, Hasan Ibn Thabit, was present on this occasion. He composed couplets in praise of 'Ali: "Ali was suffering from an eye disorder. Because there was no physician, the Prophet cured him with his own saliva. So both the curer and the patient were blessed.

The Holy Prophet said, 'Today I will give the standard to a highly skilled horseman, valiant and chivalrous, my comrade in battle. He loves Allah and Allah loves him; so through him He will make us conquer the Forts.' After this, leaving all others aside, he selected 'Ali and made him his successor."

Ibn Sabbagh Maliki narrates from *Sahih Muslim* that 'Umar Ibn Khattab said: "I never aspired for bearing the standard, but that day I had a keen desire for it. I was repeatedly making myself conspicuous before the Prophet, wishing that perhaps he might call me, and that I might be blessed with this honor. But it was 'Ali who was called by the Prophet and the glory went to him."

Sibt Ibn Jauzi has recorded this report in his *Tadhkira*, page 15, and Imam Abu Abdu'r-Rahman Ahmad

Ibn 'Ali Nisa'i in his Khasa'isu'l-Alawi, after narrating twelve hadith on the topic of 'Ali's bearing the standard at Khaibar, quotes the same report in the eighteenth hadith about 'Umar's hope for getting the standard.

Also Jalalu'd-Din Suyuti in his Ta'rikhu'l-Khulafa, Ibn Hajar Makki, in his Sawaiq, and Ibn Shirwaini in his Firdausu'l-Akhbar, narrate that 'Umar Ibn Khattab said: "Ali has been endowed with three things, and if I possessed only one, I would have preferred it to all the camels in my possession: 'Ali's marriage with Fatima; his staying in the mosque in every condition, and this was not permissible for anyone except 'Ali, and his bearing the standard in the Conquest of Khaibar."

My argument, based on the records of your own traditionists, proves that the reference in the verse – "He (Allah) loves them and they also love Him" – is to 'Ali. Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in his Kifayatu't-Talib, Chapter 13, relates that the Prophet said: "If one wishes to look at Adam, Noah, and Abraham, look at 'Ali." He says that 'Ali is the one Allah refers to in the Holy Qur'an:

"And those who are with him are strong against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves." (48:29).

As for your contention that the phrase in the verse "Compassionate among themselves" refers to Uthman and indicates his place as the third Caliph, this is not supported by historical evidence. In fact, his character was just the opposite. There are many arguments to prove this, but I will stop here. What could be said might provoke hostility.

Hafiz: If you confine yourself to authentic references, there is no reason why we should be displeased.

Well-Wisher: I will mention some of them.

Uthman's character and way of life compared to that of Abu Bakr and 'Umar

Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Khallikan, Ibn A'sam Kufi (it is also recorded in Siha al-Sitta), Mas'udi in Muruju'dh-Dhahab, Volume I, page 435, Ibn Hadid in Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha, Volume I, and others of your ulama' affirm that when Uthman Ibn Affan became Caliph, he acted against the examples set by the Holy Prophet and also against the ways of Abu Bakr and 'Umar.

Both sects agree that in the Consultative Council in which he was selected as Caliph Abdu'r-Rahman Ibn Auf offered him allegiance based on the Book of Allah, the hadith of the Prophet, and the ways of Abu Bakr and 'Umar.

One condition of his allegiance was that Uthman would not let the Bani Umayya interfere nor would he give them any authority. But when his position became secure, he violated these pledges. According to the Holy Qur'an and reliable hadith, to violate an agreement is a great sin.

Your own ulama' say that Caliph Uthman broke his pledge. Throughout his caliphate he acted in contradiction to the way of Abu Bakr and 'Umar. He gave the Bani Umayya full authority over the people's lives and property.

The wealth of caliph Uthman

Hafiz: In what way did he act against the teachings and practice of the Prophet and the ways of Abu Bakr and 'Umar?

Well-Wisher: The famous traditionist, Mas'udi, in his Muruju'dh-Dhahab, Volume I, page 433, and other historians have recorded that Uthman built a sophisticated stone house with doors made of sandalwood. He accumulated great wealth, which he bestowed lavishly on the Umayyads and others.

For instance, the religious levy (Khums) from Armenia, which was conquered during this time, was bestowed on the cursed Marwan without any religious sanction. He also gave him 100,000 dirhams from the Baitu'l-Mal (the public treasury).

He gave 400,000 dirhams to Abdullah Ibn Khalid, 100,000 dirhams to Hakam Ibn Abi'l-As, who was cursed and banished by the Prophet, and 200,000 dirhams to Abu Sufyan (as recorded by Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha, Volume I, page 68).

On the day he was murdered, his personal fortune amounted to 150,000 dinars and 20 million dirhams in cash. He owned property in Wadiu'l-Qura and Hunain valued at 100,000 dinars and huge herds of cattle, sheep, and camels. As a consequence of his actions, the leading Umayyads amassed great wealth at the expense of the people.

For a caliph of Islam to accumulate such wealth when many people were starving was certainly wrong. Moreover, this behavior was completely at variance with the ways of his companions, Abu Bakr and 'Umar. Uthman pledged in the Consultative Council that he would follow in their footsteps.

Mas'udi in his Muruju'dh-Dhahab says about Caliph Uthman, that when Caliph 'Umar went with his son, Abdullah, to perform the Hajj (pilgrimage), their expenditure on the journey, both ways, was sixteen dinars. He told his son that they had been extravagant. If you compare the frugal ways of 'Umar with the lavish expenditures of Uthman, you will admit that the latter's way of life was contrary to his pledge at the Council.

Caliph Uthman encouraged the evildoers among the Umayyads

Uthman also gave the Umayyads authority over the life and honor of the people. Consequently, disorder prevailed in Muslim lands. He appointed his favorites to high positions against the wishes of the Holy Prophet, Abu Bakr, and 'Umar. For instance, he gave high positions to his uncle, Hakam Ibn As, and Hakam's son, Marwan, both of whom were banished and cursed by the Prophet.

Hafiz: Can you prove that they were cursed?

Well-Wisher: There are two ways to prove that they were cursed. Allah called the Bani Umayya "The Accursed Tree" in the Qur'an (17:60). Imam Fakhru'd-Din Razi, Tabari, Qartabi, Nishapuri, Suyuti, Shawkani, Alusi, Ibn Abi Hatim, Khatib Baghdadi, Ibn Mardawaih, Hakim, Maqrizi, Baihaqi, and others of your ulama' narrate from Ibn Abbas that the "Accursed Tree" in the Qur'an refers to the Umayya tribe. In a dream, the Prophet saw monkeys climbing up and down his pulpit (and driving men away from his mosque).

When he woke, the Angel Gabriel revealed this verse and told the Prophet that the monkeys were the Bani Umayyads, who would usurp his caliphate after him. His place of prayer and pulpit would remain in their control for a thousand months. Imam Fakhru'd-Din Razi narrates from Ibn Abbas that the Prophet mentioned the name of Hakam Ibn As. He is, therefore, accursed since he belongs to the Accursed Tree.

There are many hadith from Sunni sources about their being cursed. Hakim Nishapuri, in his Mustadrak, Volume IV, page 437 and Ibn Hajar Makki in Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa, quote from Hakim the following hadith from the Prophet: "Verily, my family will shortly be dispersed and assassinated by my community. Bani Umayya, Bani Mughira, and Bani Makhzum are the most callous of our enemies."

The Prophet said about Marwan, a child at that time, "This is a lizard, son of a lizard, a cursed one, son of a cursed one." Ibn Hajar relates from 'Umar ibn Murratu'l-Jihni, Halabi in Siratu'l-Halabiyya, Volume I, page 337; Baladhuri in Ansab, Volume V, 126; Sulayman Balkhi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda; Hakim

in Mustadrak, Volume IV, page 481; Damiri in Hayatu'l-Haiwan, Volume II, page 291; Ibn Asakir in his Ta'rikh; Imamu'l-Haram Muhyi'd-Din Tabari in Zakhairu'l-Uqba, and others have narrated from 'Umar ibn Murra that Hakam Ibn As sought an interview with the Prophet. The Prophet, recognizing his voice, said: "Let him come in. Curse be on him and on his descendants, excepting those who believe, and they will be few."

Imam Fakhru'd-Din Razi, in Volume V of his Tafsir al-Kabir, writing about the verse "The Accursed Tree..." and its meaning, refers to the statement of A'ysha, who said to Marwan: "Allah cursed your father when you were present in his semen; so you are also a part of him, who has been cursed by Allah." Allama Mas'udi says in his Muruju'dh-Dhahab, Volume I, page 435, that Marwan Ibn Hakam was condemned and banished by the Prophet.

He was exiled from Medina. He was not allowed to enter Medina during the caliphate of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, but when Uthman became caliph, he acted contrary to the teaching of the Holy Prophet, Abu Bakr, and 'Umar and allowed him to enter Medina. He kept him close to himself with all other Umayyads and showed them favor.

Nawab: Who was Hakam Ibn Abi-l-As, and why was he banished by the Holy Prophet?

Well-Wisher: Hakam Ibn As was the uncle of Caliph Uthman. According to Tabari, Ibn Athir, and Baladhuri, who writes in *Ansab*, Volume V, page 17, he was the neighbor of the Prophet in the Age of Ignorance. He abused the Holy Prophet, particularly after the announcement of his prophethood.

He walked behind the Prophet and ridiculed him by imitating his gestures. Even during prayers, he pointed towards him scornfully. After the Prophet cursed him, he remained in a paralytic condition permanently and eventually he lost his sanity.

After the conquest of Mecca, he came to Medina and apparently embraced Islam, but he often insulted the Prophet. When he went to the Prophet's house, the Holy Prophet soon came out of his house and said, "No one should seek pardon on his behalf. Now he and his sons, Marwan and others, should leave Medina."

Accordingly, the Muslims immediately banished him from Medina and drove him out to Ta'if. During the time of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, Uthman supported him, saying that he was his uncle and that he should be allowed to return to Medina. But the others did not accept this, saying that since he was cursed and banished by the Holy Prophet, they would not let him return.

When Uthman became caliph, he called all of them back. Although many people objected to it, Uthman showed his relatives and other favorites special favor. He made Marwan his assistant and chief officer of the court. He gathered round him many wicked people of the Umayyads and appointed them to high positions.

The result was that, according to 'Umar's prediction, they were responsible for Uthman's fate. Among the people appointed by Uthman was Walid Ibn Aqaba Ibn Abi Mu'ith, who was sent to be the Governor of Kufa. According to the report of Mas'udi in *Muruju'dh-Dhahab*, Volume I, the Prophet said concerning Walid:

"Verily, he is one of those who will go to Hell." He openly indulged in sinful acts. According to the statement of Mas'udi in *Muruju'dh-Dhahab*, Abdu'l-Fida in his *Ta'rikh*, Suyuti in *Ta'rikhu'l-Khulafa*, page 104, Abu'l-Faraj in *Aghani*, Volume IV, page 128; Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in *Musnad*, Volume I, page 42; Yaqubi in *Ta'rikh*, Volume II, page 142; Ibn Athir also in *Usudu'l-Uqba*, Volume V, page 91, and others said that, during his governorship in Kufa, Walid passed the whole night in self-indulgence.

He came to the mosque for the dawn prayer intoxicated and offered four rak'ats of the morning prayer (instead of two) and then told the people: "What a pleasant morn! I would like to extend the prayer further if you consent."

Some said that he vomited under the dome of the mosque which caused great annoyance to the people, who complained to Caliph Uthman. One of these well known people was Mu'awiya, who was made Governor of Syria. Walid was replaced by Sa'id Ibn As as Governor of Kufa.

When people learned of the policies of Uthman, policies in contradiction to the teachings of the Prophet, they became furious. They took actions which eventually caused such serious results. Uthman was responsible for his murder because he did not consider the effects of his deeds. He rejected 'Ali's counsel and was misled by servile flatterers. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid quotes a conversation between 'Umar and Ibn Abbas in his Sharh Nahju'l-Balagha, Volume III, page 106.

Caliph 'Umar said something about each of the six members of the Consultative Council and pointed out their defects. When the name of Uthman was mentioned, "After sighing three times, 'Umar said that if the caliphate reached Uthman, he would place the sons of Abi Mu't (Umayyads) over the people.' Then the Arabs will surely rise in rebellion against him and kill him."

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid agrees with 'Umar's assessment. When Uthman became caliph, he gathered round him the Bani Umayya. He appointed them as governors, and when they abused their authority, he looked the other way. Caliph Uthman did not even detach himself from Marwan. The people, seething with discontent, revolted against him and finally killed him.

Holy prophet cursed Abu Sufyan, Mu'awiya and his son Yazid

It would be helpful if you would read the great History by Jarir Tabari, one of your eminent ulama', who wrote: "The Holy Prophet saw Abu Sufyan riding a donkey. Mu'awiya was pulling it from the front, and his son, Yazid, was pushing it from behind. The Prophet said, 'Curse be upon the rider, the puller, and the pusher.'"

Your own prominent ulama', like Tabari and Ibn A'sam Kufi, faulted Caliph Uthman for not putting Abu Sufyan to death when the latter, in the open court, denied Islam, the wahi (revelation), and the presence of Gabriel. After giving Abu Sufyan a slight reproof, Uthman brushed the matter aside.

I also ask you to consider Address 163 of the Nahju'l-Balagha, and the narration which Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh Nahju'l-Balagha, Volume II, (printed in Egypt), page 582, and quotes from Tabari's Ta'rikh al-Kabir that some of the companions in various provinces wrote letters urging the people to declare Jihad (Holy war) to protect themselves from Uthman's cruel oppression. In 34 A.H. people with complaints against officials appointed by Uthman came to 'Ali in Medina and asked him to intervene.

Uthman did not accept counsel of 'Ali

'Ali went to Uthman and warned him about the horrible consequences of continuing his present policies. 'Ali said, "I tell you, for Allah's sake, let yourself not be a murdered leader of this community. It has been said that a leader of this community will be killed, after which the doors of bloodshed and murder will remain open until the Day of Resurrection." But Marwan and the Umayyad companions rejected 'Ali's advice. After 'Ali's departure, Uthman ordered people to gather in the mosque.

He went to the pulpit and, instead of pacifying the people, he antagonized them further. The result was as Caliph 'Umar predicted: Uthman was killed by insurgents. Unlike Abu Bakr and 'Umar, who followed 'Ali's advice, Uthman rejected his warning and suffered the consequences.

Uthman mercilessly beat companions of Holy Prophet

Moreover, Uthman beat the companions who objected to his oppression. Among them was Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, who was a Hafiz, Qari (Qur'an reciter), treasurer of the public treasury, a scribe who recorded the revealed verses, and one of the chief companions of the Holy Prophet. He was held in high esteem by Abu Bakr and 'Umar, both of whom used to take counsel from him. Ibn Khaldun in his History commented that Caliph 'Umar insisted that Abdullah remain with him because he possessed complete knowledge of the Holy Qur'an and because the Prophet spoke highly of him.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid and others have written the same thing. Your ulama' agree that when Uthman intended to compile the Holy Qur'an, he obtained all the copies from the scribes. He demanded the copy of the Holy Qur'an from Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud also. Abdullah did not give it to him. Uthman himself went to his house and took the copy of the Holy Qur'an from him by force.

Later, when Abdullah learned that, like other copies of the Holy Qur'an, his copy had been burnt, he was much aggrieved. In social and religious gatherings, he narrated the condemnatory hadith which he knew about Uthman.

When this news reached Uthman, he had Ibn Mas'ud so severely beaten by his slaves that his teeth were broken, and he was confined to bed. After three days he succumbed to his injuries. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid writes in detail about these facts in Volume I, pages 67 and 226 of Sharh Nahju'l-Balagha (printed in Egypt) under "Ta'n VI," and goes on to say that Uthman went to see the ailing Abdullah.

They talked together for some time. Uthman said, "O Abdu'r-Rahman! Pray to Allah for my forgiveness." Abdullah said, "I pray to Allah to take my right from you" (that is, that justice be done).

When Abu Dharr, a close companion of the Holy Prophet, was banished to Rabba, Abdullah went to see him off. For this Abdullah was given forty lashes. So Abdullah insisted to Ammar Yasir that Uthman not be allowed to offer Abdullah's funeral prayers. Ammar Yasir agreed, and after Abdullah's death, he offered the funeral prayers along with a group of the companions.

When Uthman learned of the funeral arrangement, he came to Abdullah's grave and asked Ammar why he had said the funeral prayers. He replied that he was constrained to do it because Abdullah had willed it.

Ammar beaten by order of Uthman

Another example of Uthman's cruelty was his beating of Ammar Yasir. Ulama' of both sects relate that when Umayyad oppression increased, some companions of the Prophet wrote to Uthman, asking him to relent. They said that if he continued to assist his cruel Umayyad Governors, he would not only be harming Islam, but he would himself be subjected to serious consequences.

They asked Ammar Yasir to deliver the petition since Uthman himself had acknowledged Ammar's virtue. They had often heard Uthman say that the Prophet said that faith was blended with the flesh and blood of Ammar.

So Ammar took the letter to Uthman. When he arrived, Uthman asked him, "Do you have business with me?" He replied: "I have no business of a personal nature. But a group of the Prophet's Companions has written in this letter some suggestions and advice for your welfare. They have sent them to you through me."

After reading a few lines, Uthman threw the letter down. Ammar said: "It was not good of you. A letter from the companions of the Holy Prophet of Allah deserves respect. Why did you throw it on the ground? It would be proper for you to have read it and replied to it?"

"You are lying!" Uthman shouted. Then he ordered his slaves to beat him, and Uthman himself kicked him in the stomach. He fell, unconscious; his relatives came and took him to the house of Ummu'l-Mu'minin Umm Salma (one of the Prophet's wives). From noon until midnight he remained unconscious. The tribes of Hudhail and Bani Makhzun turned against Uthman because of his cruelty to Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud and Ammar Yasir.

Uthman was also cruel to Jandab Ibn Junada, known as Abu Dharr Ghifari, one of the intimate companions of the Holy Prophet and a learned man. Great traditionists and historians of both sects have reported that this ninety-year-old man was unjustly exiled from place to place with utmost ignominy – from Medina to Syria, to Medina again, and then from Medina to the desert of Rabza. He rode on a naked camel accompanied by his only daughter. He died in Rabza in penury and neglect.

Your prominent ulama' and historians, including, Ibn Sa'd, in his *Tabaqat*, Volume IV, page 168; Bukhari in *Sahih*, *Kitab al-Zakat*; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his *Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha*, Volume I, page 240 and Volume II, pages 375–87, Yaqubi in his *History*, Volume II, page 148; Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali Ibn Husain Mas'udi, the famous traditionist and historian of the fourth century in his *Muruju'dh-Dhahab*, Volume I, page 438, and many others have recorded Uthman's cruelty.

It has been widely reported how he mistreated the pure-hearted Abu Dharr, the loved one of the Holy Prophet, and also how Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, the hafiz and recorder of Wahi, who was given forty lashes because he bid farewell to Abu Dharr Ghifari. Insulting treatment was likewise shown to 'Ali for the same

reason.

Hafiz: If torment was inflicted on Abu Dharr, it was because of unworthy officials. Caliph Uthman, who was very kind and soft-hearted, was unaware of these events.

Well-Wisher: Your defense of Caliph Uthman is contrary to facts. The anguish inflicted on Abu Dharr was due to the explicit orders of Uthman himself. To prove this fact, one need only refer to your own ulama'. For instance, you may consult Ibn Athir's *Nihaya*, Volume I, and his *Ta'rikh al-Yaqubi*, and particularly page 241 of Volume I of *Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha* by Ibn Abi'l-Hadid. These scholars have recorded Uthman's letter to Mu'awiya.

When Mu'awiya sent a malicious report against Abu Dharr from Syria, Uthman wrote to him, "Send Jundub (Abu Dharr) to me on an unsaddled camel, alone, with a harsh man driving it day and night."

When he reached Medina, Abu Dharr's legs were bruised and bleeding. And yet your own ulama' have recorded hadith saying that Abu Dharr was specifically mentioned by the Prophet as one whom all mankind must love. Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Isfahani in *Hilyatu'l-Auliya*, Volume I, page 172; Ibn Maja Qazwini in *Sunan*, Volume I; page 66.

Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Shafi'i in *Yanabiu'l-Mawadda*, Chapter 59, recording the fifth of forty hadith written in *Sawa'iq Muhriqa* by Ibn Hajar Makki as correct, having been taken from Tirmidhi and Hakim, as narrated by Buraida, and he from his father; Ibn Hajar Asqalani in *Isaba*, Volume III, page 455; Tirmidhi in *Sahih*, Volume II, page 213; Ibn Abdi'l-Birr in *Isti'ab*, Volume II, page 557; Hakim in *Mustadrak*, Volume III, page 130; and Suyuti in *Jam'u's-Saghir* have recorded that the Holy Prophet said:

"Allah has ordered me to love four people; and He has informed me that He also loves them." The people said, "O Prophet of Allah! Let us know their names." The Holy Prophet said, "They are 'Ali, Abu Dharr, Miqdad, and Salman." Would justice allow such loved ones of Allah to be treated so cruelly and call that treatment kindness?

Hafiz: Historians have reported that Abu Dharr was a disturbing figure. He carried on relentless propaganda in Syria in favor of 'Ali, drew the attention of the Syrians to 'Ali's rank, and said that he had heard the Holy Prophet saying that 'Ali was his successor.

Because he called the others usurpers and said that 'Ali was the rightful caliph appointed by Allah, Caliph Uthman, to preserve unity and avoid disturbances, had to call him from Syria. If a man attempts to cause dissension among the people, it is the duty of the caliph to remove him from the area.

Well-Wisher: If a man speaks the truth, is it fair to exile him and torture him because he does so? Does Islam allow us to force old men to ride a thin, unsaddled camel, driven fiercely by a hot-tempered slave, without stopping for rest, so that he reaches his destination bruised and bloody? Does this indicate soft-

heartedness?

Apart from that, if Uthman wanted to maintain unity and avoid disturbances, why didn't he remove the miscreant Umayyads, like Marwan, who was cursed and banished by the Holy Prophet and the heretic, Walid, an exposed sinner who offered prayers while drunk and who vomited under the arch of the mosque? Why didn't he remove the corrupt politicians from his government, men who oppressed the people, who finally rebelled and murdered Uthman.

Hafiz: How can you say that Abu Dharr spoke the truth? How do you know that what he said was based on correct knowledge and that he did not fabricate hadith in the name of the Holy Prophet?

Well-Wisher: We say so because the Holy Prophet himself testified to Abu Dharr's veracity. Your own ulama' have written that the Prophet said: "Abu Dharr among my people is like Jesus among the Bani Isra'il in truthfulness, devotion, and piety."

Muhammad Ibn Sa'd, one of the high-ranking ulama' and traditionists of your sect, in *Tabaqat*, Volume IV, pages 167, 168; Ibn Abdu'l-Birr in *Isti'ab*, Volume I, Chapter of Jundab, page 84; Tirmidhi in *Sahih*, Volume II, page 221; Hakim in *Mustadrak*, Volume III, page 342; ibn Hajar in *Isaba*, Volume III, page 622; Muttaqi Hindi in *Kanzu'l-Ummal*, Volume VI, page 169.

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in *Musnad*, Volume II, page 163 and 175; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in *Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha*, Volume I, page 241; from Mahidi; Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Isfahani in *Hilyatu'l-Auliya* and the author of *Lisanu'l-Arab*, on the basis of several authorities have related that the Holy Prophet said: "The earth has not borne nor has the sky covered, a man more truthful than Abu Dharr."

If the Holy Prophet confirms the truthfulness of a man, we can be certain that that man spoke the truth. Nor does Allah call that person his loved one who is a liar. If there were a single instance of Abu Dharr telling lies, the early ulama' of your sect would have recorded it, as they have concerning Abu Huraira and others.

The Prophet testified to his righteousness and also predicted his torture. Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Isfahani, in his *Hilyatu'l-Auliya*, Volume I, page 162, narrates from his own sources that Abu Dharr said that he was standing before the Prophet when the latter said to him: "You are a pious man; soon after me you will suffer a calamity." I asked: 'In the way of Allah?' He said, 'Yes in the way of Allah!' I said: 'I welcome Allah's command!' Surely the suffering the venerable companion Abu Dharr endured in the desert by the order of Mu'awiya, Uthman, and their Bani Umayya was the same calamity predicted by the Holy Prophet.

The hadith "all companions are like stars" applied also to Abu

Dharr

I really wonder at your self-contradictory statements. On the one hand you narrate the hadith from the Prophet that "All my companions are like stars; if you follow any one of them, you will be rescued."

On the other hand, when one of the most venerable companions of the Holy Prophet is tortured and dies in misery, you defend the offender! You should either disprove the statements of your own ulama', or admit that the attributes mentioned in the verse under consideration do not relate to those who brutalized the revered companions of the Holy Prophet.

Hafiz: Abu Dharr chose to go to Rabza of his own free will.

Well-Wisher: Such statements reflect attempts of your fanatical ulama' to conceal the misdeeds of their elders. Abu Dharr's forced banishment to Rabza is commonly acknowledged. As an example, I will confine myself to quoting one narration, which has been recorded by Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in Musnad, Volume V page 156, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha, Volume I, page 241, and Waqidi in his History from Abu'l-Aswad Du'ili.

Abu Dharr was asked about his journey to Rabna. Abu Dharr said that he was forcibly exiled and sent to the wilderness. He continued: "The Holy Prophet informed me about this. One day I fell asleep in the mosque. The Prophet came and asked me why I was sleeping in the mosque. I said that I fell asleep inadvertently. He asked me what I would do if I were banished from Medina. I said I would go to the Holy land of Syria.

He asked me what I would do if I were banished from there, too. I said I would come back to the mosque. He again asked me what I would do if I were turned out from here also. I said I would draw the sword and fight.

He asked me if he should tell me something which would be to my benefit. When I said 'Yes,' he said to me: 'Go to whatever place they take you.' So I listened to what he said, and I obeyed him. After this Abu Dharr said, 'By Allah, when Uthman will go before Allah, he will stand a sinner regarding my case.'"

'Ali ibn Abu Talib's kindness and generosity

If you consider the facts with an open mind, you will agree that 'Ali possessed the attributes of mercy and kindness to the highest degree. All historians, including, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, report that when 'Ali assumed the caliphate, he did away with the abuses and innovations that had crept in.

He removed the ungodly officials of the Bani Umayya, who had oppressed the provinces during the period of Uthman's caliphate. Selfish politicians advised him to postpone his decision about deposing officials until 'Ali was more firmly established in authority.

The Holy Imam said: "I swear by Allah that I will not allow such sly deceptions. You insist that I use conciliatory measures, but you do not understand that as long as they remain in authority representing me, they would be perpetrating the same tyranny and outrage for which I shall be answerable in the divine court of justice. I cannot allow this injustice."

‘Ali’s deposition of officials led to the hostility of power-hungry people, like Mu’awiya, and prepared the way for the battles of Jamal and Siffin. If Talha and Zubair had been appointed as governors, they would not have fomented disturbances at Basra and let the Battle of the Camel take place.

His kindness and generosity extended to friends and enemies alike. Uthman had been very unkind to him (more so than Abu Bakr and ‘Umar had been) but when insurgents enforced a blockade of Uthman’s palace, cutting off water and food, he appealed to ‘Ali for help. ‘Ali sent his sons, Hasan and Husain, with water and bread.

Ibn Abi’l-Hadid describes this incident in detail in *Sharhe Nahju’l-Balagha*. Caliph Uthman had a reputation for charity and benevolence, but it was only for his family, like Abu Sufyan, Hakam Ibn Abi’l-As, and Marwan Ibn Hakam. He showered money and gifts on them from the public treasury without religious sanction.

But the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali never gave more than what was due, even to near relatives. His elder brother, Aqil, came to him and requested more money than he was usually given. ‘Ali paid no heed to his request. Aqil insisted and said that since ‘Ali was the Caliph and had sole authority over affairs, that his needs should be fulfilled. As a caution to his brother, ‘Ali secretly heated a piece of iron and placed it near Aqil’s body. He cried out like a man in intense agony, afraid he would be burned.

‘Ali said: "Let mourners mourn your death, O Aqil! You shrieked when an iron heated by man was brought near you, and yet you draw me toward that fire which Allah has created of His wrath. Is it proper that you should seek shelter from this ordinary pain, and that I should not protect myself from Hellfire?"

‘Ali’s kindness to marwan Abdullah ibn Zubair

Even after subduing his enemy, ‘Ali was kind. The cursed Marwan, son of the cursed Hakam, was ‘Ali’s fierce enemy. But when ‘Ali overpowered Marwan in the Battle of Jamal, he pardoned him. Abdullah Ibn Zubair was another bitter enemy.

He abused ‘Ali openly, and in Basra when Abdullah read his address before the people, he said: "Verily, ‘Ali Ibn Abu Talib is debased, mean, and stingy." (Allah forbid) But when the Holy Imam won the Battle of Jamal and this wicked man was brought as a captive before him, ‘Ali did not utter a harsh word against him. ‘Ali turned his face from him and pardoned him.

‘Ali's kindness to A’ysha

The best example of ‘Ali's compassion was his behavior towards A’ysha. The way she came face to face to fight him and railed at him would have enraged a lesser man. But when ‘Ali defeated her, he treated her with dignity. He assigned to Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr, her brother, the duty of looking after her welfare.

On his order, twenty strong women dressed as men escorted A’ysha to Medina. When she reached Medina, she expressed her gratitude to the women and the wives of the Prophet. She said that she would always remain grateful to him.

She admitted that, although she had been harsh with him and had been responsible for such tumult, he had not uttered a word against her. She said she had only one complaint against him. She wondered why he had sent her to Medina escorted by men. The women slaves immediately removed their masculine garb. It became clear that this scheme was adopted for the purpose of protecting their property from bandits.

Another instance of ‘Ali's compassion was his treatment of Mu'awiya in the Battle of Siffin. Mu'awiya's 12,000 soldiers had sealed off the Euphrates River. When ‘Ali's army found that their expected supply of water had been intercepted, ‘Ali sent a message to Mu'awiya saying that Mu'awiya should not seal off access to the water. Mu'awiya replied that he would deny them use of the water. ‘Ali sent Malik Ashtar with a unit of cavalry. He pushed back Mu'awiya's army and secured access to the Euphrates.

The companions said, "O ‘Ali! Let us retaliate and deny them water, so that the enemy may die of thirst and the battle will be over." ‘Ali said: "No! By Allah, I will not retaliate by following their example. Let their troops have access to the Euphrates."

Your own ulama’, like Tabari, in his Ta’rikh, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha, Sulayman Balkhi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, Chapter 51, Mas'udi in Muruju'dh-Dhahaba, and other historians have written in detail about the magnanimity of ‘Ali.

You may examine these accounts and then decide who is the likely referent of the verse, "And compassionate among themselves...." In the verse under consideration, Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah, is the subject, and what follows is its predicate. All those attributes are for the same person.

To be with the Holy Prophet, to be vehement against the unbelievers on the battlefield and in learned discourses, to be compassionate to friends and foes – all these qualities refer to one who never left the Prophet or even thought of leaving him. That person is ‘Ali Ibn Abu Talib. I have already said earlier that the great scholar, Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i has written in his Kifayatu't-Talib that in this verse Allah praised ‘Ali.

Sheikh: There are many replies to your statements, but you simply misinterpret the verse. The phrase

"and those who are with him" is plural and cannot refer to one person only. If the attributes mentioned in the verse referred to one person only, why were the pronouns plural?

Well-Wisher: First, you say that there are many answers to my statement. If this were true, then why not mention them? Your silence is proof that there are not "many replies" to my statements. Second, what you just said is fallacious. You know that in both Arabic and other languages the use of the plural for the singular is common as an indication of respect. There are many examples of this usage in the Holy Qur'an, such as the verse:

"Only Allah is your Friend and His Apostle and those who believe, those who perform the prayer and pay the poor-rate while they bow." (5:55)

This verse is unanimously acknowledged to be in praise of 'Ali. Commentators and traditionists, such as: Imam Fakhru'd-Din Razi in Tafsir Kabir, Volume III, page 431; Imam Abu Ishaq Tha'labi in his Kashfu'l-Bayan; Jarullah Zamakhshari in Tafsir Kashshaf, Volume I, page 422; Tabari in his Tafsir, Volume VI, page 186; Abu'l-Hasan Rammani in his Tafsir; Ibn Hawazin Nishapuri in his Tafsir; Ibn Sa'dun Qartabi in his Tafsir, Volume VI, page 221; Nasafi Hafiz in his Tafsir, page 496 (by way of commentary on Tafsir of Khazin Baghdadi); Fazil Nishapuri in Gharibu'l-Qur'an, Volume I, page 461; Abu'l-Hasan Wahidi in Asbabu'n-Nuzul, page 148;

Hafiz Abu Bakr Jassas in Tafsir Ahkamu'l-Qur'an, page 542; Hafiz Abu Bakr Shirazi in Fima Nazala Mina'l-Qur'an Fi Amiru'l-Mu'minin; Abu Yusuf Sheikh Abdu's-Salam Qazwini in his Tafsir Kabir; Qazi Baidhawi in Anwaru't-Tanzil, Volume I, page 345; Jalalu'd-Din Suyuti in Durru'l-Mansur, Volume II, page 239; Qazi Shukani San'a'i in Tafsir Fathu'l-Qadir; Sayyid Muhammad Alusi in his Tafsir, Volume II, page 329; Hafiz Ibn Abi Shaiba Kufi in his Tafsir; Abu'l-Baraka in his Tafsir, Volume I, page 496;

Hafiz Baghawi in Ma'alimu't-Tanzil; Imam Abu Abdur-Rahman Nisa'i in his Sahih; Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-Su'ul, page 31; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha, Volume III, page 375; Khazin Ala'u'd-Din Baghdadi in his Tafsir, Volume I, page 496; Sulayman Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, page 212; Hafiz Abu Bakr Baihaqi in Kitab Musannaf; Razin Abdari in Jam' Bainu's-Siha Sitta; Ibn Asakir Damishqi in Ta'rikh Sham; Sibte Ibn Jauzi in Tadhkira, page 9; Qazi Azudal'iji in Mawaqif, page 276;

Sayyid Sharif Jurjani in Sharhe Mawaqif; Ibn Sabbagh Maliki in Fusulu'l-Muhimma, page 123; Hafiz Abu Sa'd Sam'ani in Faza'ili's-Sahaba; Abu Ja'far Askafi in Nagzi'l-Uthmaniyya; Tibrani in Ausat; Ibn Maghazili Faqih Shafi'i in Manaqib; Muhammad ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in Kifayatu't-Talib; Mulla 'Ali Qushachi in Sharhe Tajrid; Sayyid Muhammad Mu'min Shablanji in Nuru'l-Absar, page 77;

Muhibu'd-Din Tabari in Riyazu'n-Nuzra, Volume II, page 247 as well as many others of your notable ulama' all have narrated from Sadi, Mujahid Hasan Basri, A'mash, Atba Ibn Hakim, Ghalib Ibn Abdullah, Qais Ibn Rabi'a, Abaya Ibn Rabi', Abdullah Ibn Abbas, Abu Dharr Ghifari, Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari, Ammar, Abu Rafi', and Abdullah Ibn Salam, and others acknowledge that this verse was revealed in praise of 'Ali.

This verse refers to the time that 'Ali gave a ring to a beggar during ruku' (bowing in prayer). Here also the words are plural out of deference and respect to the rank of Wilaya (guardianship), and to prove that 'Ali was the Imam and successor to the Prophet.

The emphasis of the word "inna," renders the meaning – the decision of Allah – final and fixed, i.e., the decision of Allah that the guardian of the believers should be Allah, His Prophet (Muhammad), and the believers who give charity while praying, the latter referring specifically to 'Ali.

Sheikh: Surely you will admit that your interpretation is not established since there are different views about it. Some say that it refers to the Ansar (helpers), some say that it is in praise of Ibadat Ibn Samit, and some say that it refers to Abdullah Ibn Salam.

Well-Wisher: It is indeed astonishing that scholars like you can contradict your own ulama'. You take the view of a few ignorant and unreliable people whose reports are rejected. Your great men of learning have claimed unanimity on this point, men like Fazil Taftazani and Mulla 'Ali Qushachi, who says in Sharhe Tajrid: "According to the unanimous view of the commentators, this verse was revealed in praise of 'Ali, who, while in ruku' (bowing) in prayer, gave away his ring to a beggar."

Doubts and complications regarding the "verse of guardianship" and their clarification

Sheikh: In the course of your talk concerning this verse, you have tried to prove that 'Ali was the immediate successor of the Prophet, though the word "Wali" in this verse means "friend" or "loved one," and not "Imam" or "successor." If your view is accepted, that "Wali" means "successor" and "Imam," then according to the agreed-upon principle, it is not confined to one person, but others are included in it, 'Ali being one of them.

Also in the verse, "Verily, verily your guardian is Allah, and His Prophet, and those who believe..." the use of the plural refers to people in general. To say that the plural form is an indication of respect is not justified without any valid reasoning, Qur'anic example, or other authority.

Well-Wisher: You have misconstrued the phrase "...your guardian..." "Wali" is singular, and "kum" (your) is plural, which refers to the people and does not imply the singular. Of course, "Wali" is for one person who is the guardian for the whole community in every age.

Second, in the verse under consideration, where the plural is used, some of the fanatics have said that it cannot be interpreted as singular as in the verse "...those who establish prayer..." I replied to this objection earlier. I said that eminent writers have often used the plural connoting the singular.

You also claim the plural form in the verse refers to people in general. We say that according to the emphasis of the word "verily," the reference is to 'Ali, but we do not say that the reference is peculiar to

him alone. Others of the Holy family of the Prophet are included in it.

According to authentic hadith, all the Imams of the progeny of the Prophet are included in this verse. Jarullah Zamakhshari writes in Kashshaf that this verse was revealed in particular in praise of 'Ali, but the plurals used in it mean that others also should follow him.

Sheikh: In this verse "Wali" definitely means "helper." If it meant guardian, which includes the rank of successor, then he should have been appointed to that office during the Prophet's life.

Well-Wisher: The rank of 'Ali is permanent. The grammatical construction of the sentence and the word "Wali" used as an attribute prove the permanent position of 'Ali. This fact is further supported by the Prophet declaring 'Ali his vicegerent on the journey of Tabuk and never withdrawing it.

Our point of view is further strengthened by the hadith al-Manzila (Hadith of Rank), which the Holy Prophet repeatedly narrated: "Ali is to me as Aaron was to Moses," which I have explained on previous nights. This in itself is another proof of 'Ali being the Wali (guardian) or vicegerent of the Holy Prophet during the Prophet's life and after his death.

Sheikh: If we were to give due consideration to the matter, we would admit that this verse does not refer to 'Ali. His rank is above that which we want to prove from this verse. It does not prove any excellence for him, it rather lowers his position.

Well-Wisher: Neither you nor I – none of the community – including the great companions of the Prophet, have any right to interfere with the real interpretation of the verses. Qur'anic verses are not revealed according to our wishes. If some people interpret their meaning based on mere opinion or point out the occasion on which they were revealed, they are certainly irreligious.

For example, followers of Abu Bakr say that according to the hadith narrated by the notorious forger Akrama, this verse was revealed about Abu Bakr. Can you tell us how this verse lowers the position of 'Ali?

Sheikh: One of the characteristics of the dignity of the rank of 'Ali is that while offering prayers he never diverted his attention to any other object. 'Ali was once wounded in battle. Arrows had lodged in his body, and it was not possible to take them out without inflicting intense pain.

But when he stood in prayer, the arrows were taken out, and because he was engrossed in his worship of Allah, he felt no pain. If while praying, he gave away a ring to a beggar, there was a great flaw in his prayer. How could a man be so engrossed in Allah's mercy and at the same time remove his attention from Allah in response to the voice of a beggar?

Moreover, in the performance of every good deed and for payment of the poor-rate, an intention is obligatory. While performing the prayer, one's attention must be towards Allah alone. How is it possible that his intention deviated from the prayer and turned toward a created being?

Since we consider 'Ali's rank to be very high, we do not accept your interpretation. And if he did give anything to a beggar, it was certainly not during the prayer, since ruku' (bowing down) means humble submission before Allah.

Well-Wisher: You have learned well how to recite, but you have missed the way to invocation. This objection is weaker than a spider's web. First, 'Ali's action does not in any way lower his rank. In fact, to give attention to the beggar to give him charity, is a source of excellence. In this case, he combined his bodily and spiritual prayer with a material prayer. Both prayers were in the way of Allah. Dear fellows! The distraction which weakens prayer is one which is conceived with selfish notions.

Attention towards another prayer, while performing a particular prayer, is a sign of excellence. For instance, if during the ritual prayer, one weeps for the dearest of his relations, his prayer will be invalidated. But if he weeps in his extreme love for Him, or in fear of Him, then it is a sign of excellence.

You said ruku' (bowing down) means sincere submission to Allah. This meaning may be appropriate for some occasions. But if you say that bowing down in prayer, which is definite and compulsory, carries the same literal sense, learned men would scoff at you. You also tried to exclude or ignore the verse's clear meaning. You gave a figurative meaning to it, even though you know that the term describes a required action of the ritual prayer, which is bowing down with our palms reaching the two knees.

And this fact has been acknowledged by your prominent ulama', as I have stated earlier. Fazil Qushachi, in his Sharhe Tajrid, explains the views of the commentators in general that 'Ali, while bowing down in prayer, gave the ring to the beggar. Leaving all things aside, please tell us whether this verse was revealed in praise or in condemnation?

Sheikh: Obviously it was in praise.

Well-Wisher: So when the ulama' of both sects have said that this verse was revealed in praise of 'Ali, and that it contains the commendation Allah, why would you make frivolous objections, agreeing with the fanatical Kharijīs, whose views have been thrust into your pure mind from childhood? Why don't you acknowledge this fact?

Sheikh: Excuse me! Since you are an eloquent speaker, you often use allusions and references which may create in uninformed minds ideas that may produce unhappy results. It would be better if you refrained from such talk.

Well-Wisher: In my talk there is nothing but reality. Allah be my witness, I never intended to use allusions or indirect references. There is no need for that. Whatever I wish to say, I say clearly. Please tell me what allusion you mean.

Sheikh: A short while ago during your talk in connection with the verse under consideration, you said that the attributes mentioned therein are peculiar to 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, who, from the beginning to the

end of his life, had never any doubt in his faith. In this way you imply that others were guilty of apostasy. Had the great caliphs or the companions any doubt in their faith? Assuredly the companions, like 'Ali, never doubted the truth of Islam. Never for a moment did they deviate from the Prophet's teaching.

Well-Wisher: First, I never used the words you just used. Second, you know that to prove something for someone does not disprove the same thing for someone else. Third, although you are trying to criticize me, I think others have no such thing in mind. Allah be my witness, I have not made any indirect reference to anything, nor have I thought of doing so. And if anything occurred to your mind, you might have asked me about it privately.

Sheikh: The manner of your talking shows that there is some point on which you are silent. I ask you to let us know what you have in mind and to give authentic references for what you say.

Well-Wisher: It is you who have created such things in our minds; you insist that the issue be discussed. Again, I ask you to ignore this matter and not insist on it.

Sheikh: If there was anything unmannerly, it is finished. Now you have no choice but to reply. If you will not give a clear reply, either in the affirmative or in the negative, then I will be obliged to conclude that what you said was baseless.

Well-Wisher: There is nothing unmannerly in my remarks, but since you insist, I have no choice but to reveal the truth. Your great ulama' agree that the Prophet's companions whose faith was not yet perfect often entertained doubts. Some of them maintained that doubt and apostasy. Some verses of the Holy Qur'an were revealed in their condemnation.

For instance, there were the munafiqin (hypocrites) in whose condemnation a full chapter of the Holy Qur'an was revealed. But such questions should not be discussed openly. I again ask you to refrain from pursuing this topic.

Sheikh: You mean that the great caliphs were among those who had doubts.

Well-Wisher: If my reply causes an unfortunate reaction among uninformed people, you are responsible. You have just said, "You say this or you say that." But again, it is your own ulama' who have recorded these facts.

Sheikh: On which topic have they written, and on what occasion did caliphs express their doubt, and who were the persons who doubted? Please let us know.

Well-Wisher: Many people had serious doubts but returned to their original faith. Some of them persisted in their doubt. Ibn Maghazili Shafi'i, in his *Manaqib*, and Hafiz Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Abi Nasr Hamidi in his *Jam' Bainu's-Sahihain al-Bukhari*, and Muslim write: "Umar Ibn Khattab said, 'I never doubted the prophethood of Muhammad as I did on the day of Hudaibiyya.'" This statement shows that he doubted Muhammad's prophethood more than once.

Nawab: Excuse me. What was the occasion in Hudaibiyya which prompted doubt about the Prophet?

Well-Wisher: The Prophet saw one night in a dream that he went to Mecca with his companions to perform the Umra. Next morning, when he related the dream to his companions, they asked him to interpret it. The Prophet said, "Allah willing, we shall go to Mecca and fulfill this performance."

But he did not specify the time for it. With the intention of visiting the House of Allah, the Prophet set out with his companions toward Mecca the same year. When they reached Hudaibiyya (a well near Mecca), the Quraish came there and prevented them from moving forward.

Since the Prophet had not gone there prepared to fight, he offered to make peace with them. A treaty was signed and the Prophet returned to Medina. On this occasion, 'Umar had doubts. He went to the Prophet and said: "Are you not the Prophet of Allah and a truthful man? Did you not tell us that you would go to Mecca and perform the Umra and have your head shaved and beard trimmed? Why have you now failed to do this?"

The Holy Prophet asked him whether he had fixed the time for that or if he had told them that he would go there in the same year. 'Umar admitted that the Prophet had not specified a time. The Prophet said that what he had told them was correct and, Allah willing, they would go to Mecca in the future and the dream would be realized.

Of course the time for the fulfillment of the interpretation, be it sooner or later, depends upon Allah's will. Then for confirmation of the statement of the Holy Prophet, Gabriel appeared and revealed the following verse of the Qur'an:

"Indeed Allah has fulfilled for His prophet the vision with truth (that) certainly you will enter the sacred Mosque, if Allah pleases, in security, with shaved head, (some) with their hair shortened, without fear; for He knew you knew not and He had ordained besides this a near victory." (48:27).

Victory, here, means the conquest of Khaibar. This was, in short, the event of Hudaibiyya, which was in fact a test for the faithful and for the wavering people.

At this stage there followed a discussion of whether to continue the discussions, in view of the schedule of the Sunni visitors from Afghanistan as well as Well-Wisher, the outcome of which was a decision to continue.

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