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Seventh Session, Wednesday Night, 29th Rajab 1345 A.H.

Sayyid Abdu'l-Hayy (Imam of the Sunni Congregational Mosque): Some nights ago you made some statements for which Hafiz Sahib demanded proofs, but you cunningly evaded a reply or created confusion among us, and the whole matter was very disturbing.

Well-Wisher: Please let me know which of your questions was left unanswered, since I do not recall the incident to which you refer.

Sayyid: Did you not say some nights ago that 'Ali had unity of 'self' with the Holy Prophet and so was superior in rank to all the prophets?

Well-Wisher: It is true. That was my statement, and it is my belief.

Sayyid: Then why did you not reply to our query?

Well-Wisher: You are greatly mistaken. It is strange that you have been listening closely throughout our discussions, yet now you accuse me of adopting cunning methods or confusing your minds. If you consider deeply, you will understand that I said nothing irrelevant, but the learned Mullas had put certain questions, which I was obliged to answer. Now if you have any question to put, you may do so, and with Allah's help, I will answer it.

Sayyid: We wish to know how it is possible that two individuals may be united so that their unity is such that they become one and the same.

Difference between assumed unity and real unity

Well-Wisher: Obviously, it is not possible for two persons to form a real unity. When I said that the Commander of the Faithful had a unity of 'self' or 'soul' with the Holy Prophet, you should not take it as actual unity, because no one has ever claimed that, and if anyone believed it they would be absolutely

wrong. The unity I referred to is only assumed, not actual, and intends to indicate that both of them have the same excellence of soul and merits, not the same body.

Hafiz: Then according to this proposition they should both be prophets, and from what you say, the revelation should have come to them both.

Well-Wisher: That is a manifest misconception. No Shi'as holds such a belief. I would not have expected you to indulge in such talk and waste our time. I have just told you they are associated in all matters of virtue and excellence, excepting those attributes for the exclusion of which there are specific ordinances or grounds. Such an exception is prophethood with all the characteristics attached to it – one of them being the reception of revelation, and through it communication of the Divine Ordinances.

Perhaps you have forgotten my statements on previous nights, in which I proved through the hadith of Rank (Manzila) that 'Ali possessed the rank of prophethood, but that he followed, and was subject to, the religion and the code prescribed by the Holy Prophet. His rank in prophethood was no more than the rank of Aaron in the time of Moses.

Hafiz: But if you believe in 'Ali's equality with the Holy Prophet in all matters of virtue and excellence, it follows that you must believe in his equality in matters of prophethood and the characteristics attached to that.

Well-Wisher: It might seem so, but if you think carefully you will see that it is not so. As I have proved earlier from verses of the Qur'an, prophethood is of different ranks, and the prophets and Messengers of Allah are superior to one another in ranks. As the Holy Qur'an clearly says:

"These prophets, We have exalted some of them above the others." (2:253)

And the most perfect in rank of all the prophets is the special rank of Muhammad, as Allah says:

"Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but the prophet of Allah and the seal of the prophets." (33:40)

It is that perfection of prophethood which led to the sealing of prophethood. So in this attribute of perfection, none else could be included. In all other matters of excellence, there is association and equality, for which there are innumerable justifications.

Sayyid: Can you advance any argument from the Holy Qur'an to prove this assertion.

The verse of imprecation (Mubahala) proves the unity of the soul of 'Ali with the Holy Prophet

Well-Wisher: Of course, our first argument is from the Qur'an, which is the strongest Divine evidence,

namely the Verse of Imprecation (Ayah al-Mubahala) in which Allah says:

"And to him who disputes with you therein after the knowledge has come to you, say 'Come, let us summon our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves and then let us invoke and lay the curse of Allah upon the liars.'" (3:60)

Your notable ulama', such as Imam Fakhru'd-Din Razi, Imam Abu Ishaq Tha'labi, Jalalu'd-Din Suyuti, Qazi Baidhawi, Jarullah Zamakhshari, Muslim ibn Hujjaj, and many others, have written that this Holy verse was revealed on the Day of Imprecation, which was the 24th or 25th of Dhu'l-Hijja in 9 AH.

When the Holy Prophet invited the Christians of Najran to Islam, they selected their most learned men like Sayyid, Aqib, Jasiq, Alqama, etc., numbering more than 70 and sent them to Medina with 300 of their followers, to meet the Holy Prophet and learn what Islam was. They entered into scholarly discussions with the Holy Prophet and were non-plussed by his cogent reasoning.

He proved the truthfulness of his mission from their own reliable sources and said that Jesus, himself, had through various signs predicted his (Muhammad's) arrival, and the Christians were awaiting the fulfillment of the prophecies of Jesus according to which such a man would appear riding a camel from the Faran hills (in Mecca) and would emigrate to a place between 'Ayr and Uhud (which was Medina).

These arguments strongly impressed the Christians, but their love of worldly position kept them from admitting the truth. Then the Holy Prophet informed them of Allah's command, which they agreed upon as the means of settling the discussion and for distinguishing between the truthful and the liars.

The Holy Prophet's arrival for the imprecation

According to their mutual understanding, the next day the entire party of the Christians, including more than seventy of their scholars, waited outside the gates of Medina for the Holy Prophet. They expected him to come with pomp and circumstance and a large number of comrades to over-awe them. But when the gates opened, the Holy Prophet came forth with a young man on his right, a dignified woman on his left, and two children in front of him.

They remained under a tree, facing the Christians. Asqaf, the most learned man of the Christians, asked who those persons were who had come out with Muhammad. He was informed that the young man was his son-in-law and cousin, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, the woman was his daughter, Fatima, and the two children were his daughter's sons, Hasan and Husain.

Addressing the Christians, their leader, Asqaf, said: "Look there, how confident Muhammad is! He has brought with him his nearest kindred, sons and dear ones, to this spiritual contest of imprecation. By God, if he had any doubt or fear about his stand, he would never have selected them. Now it is not advisable to enter the contest against them. Had we no fear of the Emperor of Rome, we would have embraced the faith of Islam. It would be expedient to compromise on their terms and return home."

All of them agreed with him. Accordingly, Asqaf sent a message to the Holy Prophet, saying: "We do not want to contest with you, but would like to make peace with you." The Prophet accepted their proposal.

The agreement was written by the Commander of the Faithful. The Christians agreed to pay an annual tribute in the form of 2,000 coats of mail, each worth about 40 dirhams (A dirham was equal to 1/2 ounce of gold), and 1,000 mithqals of gold (a mithqal was equal to 1/6 ounce). Half of this was to be paid in the month of Muharram and half in Rajab. The agreement having been signed by both parties, the Christians returned to their homes.

While they were on the way, one of their scholars named Aqib said to his companions: "By God, you and I know that this Muhammad is the same prophet of God who was the expected one, and whatever he says is from God. I swear by God that whoever has contended with a Prophet of God was ruined, and none of their young or old remained alive.

Surely, if we had contended with them, all of us would have been killed and no Christians would have survived in the world. By God, when I looked at them I saw faces which, if they invoked God, would have moved mountains."

Hafiz: What you have said is quite true and is accepted by all Muslims, but it has no bearing on our topic, namely, that 'Ali was spiritually united with the Holy Prophet.

Merits of 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husain proven by the verse of imprecation

Well-Wisher: I argue from the word 'ourselves' in this Holy verse, since from this even many questions are resolved. First, the cause of truth preached by the Holy Prophet is proved. That is, if he had not been on the side of truth, he would not have dared to come out for the contest nor would the great Christians have run away from the field of Mubahala. Second, this even proves that Hasan and Husain were sons of the Prophet of Allah, as I have already mentioned in my talk on the first night.

Third, it proves that the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husain were spiritually the most exalted persons of the whole of creation and the most beloved ones of the Holy Prophet, as even the bigoted and fanatic ulama' of your sect, like Zamakhshari, Baidhawi, and Fakhru'd-Din Razi, and others have written in their books.

Particularly Jarullah Zamkhshari, writing about this Holy verse, gives explanatory details about the gathering of these panjetan ('five bodies') and says that this verse is the strongest proof of the excellence of the Ashab-i-Ayba, the five persons who had gathered under a blanket with the Holy Prophet.

Fourth, it shows that the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, surpassed all other companions of the Holy Prophet in merit and rank, because Allah has called him in this Holy verse the soul of the Prophet.

Obviously, the word "ourselves" does not mean the Holy Prophet's own self, because to summon means to summon somebody else; a man is never asked to summon himself. Hence the word refers to somebody else who is like the Prophet's own self or soul.

And since, according to the unanimous view of reliable commentators and traditionists of both sects, no one else except 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husain were present with the Holy Prophet at the imprecation, the phrase in the Holy verse, "our sons and your sons, our women and your women" refer, respectively, to Hasan and Husain and Bibi Fatima and the other person, who could be identified as "ourselves" in the Holy group was the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali. Hence, this word "ourselves" proves the unity of self between the Prophet Muhammad and 'Ali.

Since actual unity of two souls is impossible, Allah's calling 'Ali the 'self' of the Prophet Muhammad means an assumed unity of the two selves.

You are well aware that basically it is better to identify a word with a near assumption than with a distant one, and the nearest assumption means association in all merits excepting those which have been excluded by some particular reason. And we have already told you that it is the Holy Prophet's special prophethood and the granting of Wahi (Revelation) on him which are peculiar to him.

Hence, we do not consider 'Ali his associate in regard to these two characteristics. But according to this Holy verse, 'Ali shares with the Holy Prophet in all other merits, and assuredly the All-Gracious Allah endowed 'Ali through the Holy Prophet with all His blessings. This in itself proves the union of their souls, which we wanted to establish.

Hafiz: Why do you insist that the verse does not mean the summoning of his own 'self'? Why isn't this supposition better than the other assumption?

Well-Wisher: I hope you will not waste time in illogical talk and digress from the course of justice. In fact justice demands that when we have settled a point, we should move forward. I did not expect a man of your rank and learning to indulge in such a false argument.

As you know yourself and according to all men of learning, one self is identified with another self by way of assumption. Among literary men it is common to claim an assumed association, as I have stated earlier.

It is often seen that one person says to another: "You are my own life and soul." Particularly in the language of hadith and narratives, this relationship has often been stated about the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, and every such narration taken separately is a proof to establish the truth of my point of view.

Further narrations and hadith as evidence of the essential unity of the Holy Prophet and 'Ali

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, in Musnad, Ibn Maghazili, the Shafi'i theologian, in his Manaqib, and Muwafiq Ibn Ahmad Khawarizmi in his Manaqib, narrate that the Holy Prophet said, "Ali is from me, and I am from 'Ali; he who loves him, loves me; and he who loves me, loves Allah."

Also Ibn Maja in his Sunan, Part I, p. 92; Tirmidhi in his Sahih; Ibn Hajar in Tradition v of Forty Traditions concerning the merits of the Commander of the Faithful narrated in the Sawaliq from Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Tirmidhi, Imam Abu Abdu'r-Rahman Nisa'i, and Ibn Maja; Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in Musnad, v.4, p.164;

Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in chapter 67 of Kifayatu't-Talib from the Musnad of Ibn Samak, v. 4, and the Mu'jim Kabir of Tibrani; and Imam Abu Abdu'r-Rahman Nisa'i in Khasa'is, and Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanbiu'l-Mawaddat from the Mishkat – all have related from Jash Ibn Junada as-Saluni that during the farewell pilgrimage, the Holy Prophet said at 'Arafa: "Ali is from me and I am from 'Ali. Nobody recompenses me (that is no one discharges the duty of my mission) except me and 'Ali."

Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in his Yanabi'u'l-Mawaddat, Ch vii, narrates from Zawa'id al-Musnad of Abdullah Ibn Ahmad Ibn Hanbal on the authority of Ibn Abbas that the Holy Prophet said to Ummu'l-Mo'minin Salma "Ali is from me and I am from 'Ali. His flesh and blood is from my flesh and blood. He is to me as Aaron was to Moses. O Umm Salma! Listen, and be a witness that this 'Ali is the master and lord of the Muslims."

Hamidi in his Jam' Bainu's-Sahihain and Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharhe-Nahju'l-Balagha narrate that the Holy Prophet said "Ali is from me and I am from 'Ali. 'Ali is to me as the head is to the body; one who obeys him, obeys me; and one who obeys me, obeys Allah."

Muhammad Ibn Jarir Tabari in his Tafsir and Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamdani, the Shafi'i theologian, in Muwadda viii of Muwaddatu'l-Qurba narrate from the Holy Prophet who said:

"Verily, Almighty Allah helped this faith of Islam through 'Ali, since he is from me, and I am from him, and this Holy verse was revealed for him - 'Is he then like him who has a clear proof from his Lord and follows a witness (like 'Ali) from Him?" (11:17)

Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi has specified in the 7th chapter of his Yanabi'u'l-Mawadda this very topic under the caption: "About 'Ali's being like the self of the Holy Prophet and the tradition that 'Ali is from me and I am from 'Ali." In this chapter he has narrated 24 traditions in different ways and with different words from the Holy Prophet, who said that 'Ali was like his own self.

Toward the end of the chapter he narrates a tradition from the Manaqib as reported by Jabir, who said

that he had heard from the Holy Prophet that Hazrat 'Ali possessed such characteristics that if someone possessed only one of them, it would have been enough to establish his dignity and excellence, and by those characteristics were meant the sayings of the Holy Prophet about him such as:

"For whomsoever I am the Master, this 'Ali is his Master," or "'Ali is to me as Aaron was to Moses," or "'Ali is from me and I am from 'Ali," or "'Ali is to me as my self is to me, obedience to him is obedience to me," or "Fighting against 'Ali is fighting against Allah, and peace with 'Ali is peace with Allah," or "A friend of 'Ali is a friend of Allah, and 'Ali's enemy is Allah's enemy," or "'Ali is Allah's Hujjat (proof) over His servants," or "Love for 'Ali is faith and enmity against him is infidelity," or "'Ali's party is the party of Allah, and the party of his enemies is the party of Satan," or "'Ali is with the Truth and the Truth is with me, they are inseparable," or "'Ali is the distributor of Paradise and Hell," or "One who remained aloof from 'Ali remained aloof from me, and one who remained aloof from me remained aloof from Allah," or "The partisans of 'Ali will be rescued on the Day of Judgment."

Finally, he quotes another detailed tradition from the Manaqib at the end of which the Holy Prophet says: "I swear by Allah, Who bestowed Prophethood upon me and made me the choicest of His creations: O 'Ali! Verily you are Allah's Hujjat (proof) for the people, His trustee, knower of His secrets, and His Caliph over His servants."

There are many such hadith in your books. The word "ourselves" clearly shows the nearest association between the Prophet and 'Ali in all matters of excellence. I think that this verse is the most convincing proof of my point of view. Moreover, your second question is answered by the same verse. We have proven that, with the exception of Prophethood and Wahi (revelation), which apply only to the Prophet, 'Ali was associated with him in all matters of excellence.

It also follows that in meritorious characteristics, 'Ali was superior to the companions and to everyone else in the community. In fact, this verse also proves that he excelled all other previous prophets, just as the Prophet excelled all other prophets.

Since the Holy Prophet was superior to all other prophets, 'Ali was also superior to them

In Ihya'u'l-Ulum by Imam Ghazali, Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha by Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali, the Tafsir by Imam Fakhru'd-Din Razi, and Tafsirs by Jarullah Zamakhshari, Baidhawi, Nishapuri, etc., you will find this hadith of the Holy Prophet: "The ulama' of my community are like the prophets of the Bani Isra'il."

In another hadith he said: "The ulama' of the Prophet's community were equal to or better than the prophets of the Bani Isra'il simply because their source of knowledge was that fountainhead of learning, the Prophet Muhammad.

Therefore, 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib was definitely superior to the prophets, since the Prophet said: "I am the city

of knowledge, and 'Ali is its gate." He also said: I am the house of wisdom and 'Ali is its gate." When 'Ali, himself, was asked about this topic, he explained some aspects of his superiority to the prophets of the Children of Isra'il.

On the 20th of Ramadhan, when 'Ali was on his death bed following the attack by Abdu'r-Rahman Ibn Muljim Muradi, he asked Imam Hasan to call in the Shi'as who had gathered at the door of his house.

When they entered, they surrounded his bed and wept silently. 'Ali said: You may ask any question you like before I leave you, but your questions should be brief." One of those present was Sa'sa'a Ibn Suwhan. Your own great ulama', like Ibn Abdu'l-Birr and Ibn Sa'ad, have written about his life and character, have relied on him, confirming that he was a man of great learning.

Sa'sa'a said to 'Ali: "Let me know who is superior, you or Adam." The Holy Imam said: "It is not proper for a man to praise himself, but according to the maxim: 'Declare the blessings that Allah has given you,' I tell you that I am superior to Adam." When asked why this was so, 'Ali explained that Adam had every means of mercy, comfort, and blessings for him in paradise. He was asked simply to abstain from the forbidden food. But he could not restrain himself, and he ate from the tree.

As a result, he was expelled from paradise. Allah did not forbid him, 'Ali, from eating wheat (which, according to Muslim belief was the forbidden 'tree'). But since he had no inclination towards this temporal world, he voluntarily refrained from eating wheat. (The point of 'Ali's remark was that excellence of a man before Allah lies in piety and devotion, and that the height of piety lies in abstaining even from what is permissible.)

Sa'sa'a asked: "Who is superior, you or Noah?" 'Ali replied: "I am superior. Noah called his men to worship Allah, but they did not obey. Their shameful mistreatment was torture to him. He cursed them and invoked Allah: 'O my Lord! Leave not on the earth a single person of the unjust ones.' After the death of the Prophet, even though the people caused me extreme difficulty, I never cursed them. I suffered their torment with patience."

Sa'sa'a asked: "Who is superior, you or Abraham?" 'Ali replied: "I am superior, for Abraham said:

***'My Lord! Show me how Thou Givest life to the dead.' He said: 'What! do you not believe?' He said: 'Yes, but that my heart may be at ease.'* (2:260)**

My faith was such that I said: 'If the veil over the unseen were lifted, my faith would not increase."

Sa'sa'a asked: "Who is superior, you or Moses?" The Holy Imam replied: "I am superior, for when Almighty Allah ordered Moses to go to Egypt to invite Pharaoh to the truth, Moses said:

***'My Lord! Surely I killed one of them, so I am afraid that they will slay me. And my brother Aaron, he is more eloquent of tongue than I. Therefore send him with me as an aide, to help me. Surely I fear that they will reject me.'* (28:33-34)**

The Holy Prophet ordered me, by the command of Allah, to go to Mecca and to recite the verses of the Chapter 'Al-Bara'a' from the top of the Ka'ba to the Quraish infidels. I was not afraid, even though there were few people there who had not lost a near relative by my sword. Obeying his order, I performed my duty alone. I recited the verses of 'Al-Bara'a' and returned."

Sa'sa'a asked: "Who is superior, you or Jesus?" 'Ali said: "I am superior, for when Mary became pregnant by the Grace of Allah, and the time of her delivery approached, a revelation was granted to her: 'Leave this Holy House for this is a House for prayers, not a place for the delivery of children.' Accordingly, she left the Holy House and went to the wilderness where she gave birth to Jesus.

But when my mother, Fatima Bint al-Asad, felt labor pains within the precincts of the Holy Ka'ba, she clung to the wall and prayed to Allah in the name of that House and the builder of that House, to lessen her pain. Soon a fissure appeared in the wall, and my mother heard a mysterious voice telling her, "O Fatima! Enter the House of the Ka'ba.' She went in, and I was born inside of the Holy Ka'ba."

The mirror of all the prophets as shown by the hadith of similitude (Hadith al-Tashbih)

It is also recorded in the books of your ulama' that 'Ali was the mirror of the high qualities of all the prophets. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali in his Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha, Volume XI, page 449, Hafiz Abu Bakr Faqih Shafi'i, Ahmad Ibn Husain Baihaqi in Manaqib, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in Musnad, Imam Fakhru'd-Din Razi in Tafsir al-Kabir in connection with the verse of Mubahala, Muhyi'd-Din Ibn Arabi in Yawaqit-o-Jawahir, Issue 32, page 172;

Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, the beginning of Chapter 40 on the authority of Musnad of Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Sahih of Baihaqi, and Sharhi'l-Mawaqif wa't-Tariqati'l-Muhammadiyah, Nuru'd-Din Maliki in Fusuli'l-Muhimma, page 120; from Baihaqi; Muhammad ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-Su'ul, page 22.

And Muhammad ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in Kifayatu't-Talib, Chapter 23, have narrated from the Holy Prophet with slight differences of words here and there, saying: "Whoever wishes to see the knowledge of Adam, the piety of Noah, the submission of Abraham, the sublimity of Moses, or the devotion of Jesus, may look upon 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib."

Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani has narrated the same hadith with some additions, in his Mawaddatu'l-Qurba, Mawadda VIII. He narrates from Jabir that the Prophet said: "Verily, Allah has combined ninety qualities of the prophets in 'Ali, which He has not given to anyone else." The great Hafiz Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i, after quoting this hadith, makes this comment: "'Ali was similar to Adam in knowledge in that Allah taught Adam everything, as He says in the Holy Qur'an,

'And He taught Adam All the names....' (2:31)

Similarly, 'Ali had knowledge of all things. Because of knowledge which came directly from Allah, Adam was granted the vicegerency of Allah, as the Holy Qur'an says:

"...I am going to place in the earth a Caliph...." (2:30)

Since Adam's knowledge led to his superiority, so that even the angels prostrated themselves in obeisance to him, 'Ali was also most exalted of the whole creation and the caliph after the Prophet. 'Ali's knowledge is similar to Noah's in that 'Ali was vehement against the infidels and compassionate toward the believers.

Allah praised him in the Holy Qur'an:

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

This is another proof that this verse was revealed in praise of 'Ali, as I have said earlier. Noah was very harsh towards the infidels, as the Holy Qur'an says:

"And Noah said: 'My Lord! Leave not upon the land any dweller from among the unbelievers.'" (71:26)

'Ali was similar to Abraham in tenderness of heart. The Holy Qur'an says of Abraham:

"Most surely, Abraham was very tender-hearted." (9:114)

'Ali possessed all the qualities and attributes, which the other prophets possessed individually. This unanimously acknowledged hadith proves that 'Ali possessed the highest virtues, each of which was equivalent to the most exalted qualities of the prophets. Obviously, one who possessed the highest virtues of all the prophets excelled all others in rank.

Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in his Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, Chapter 40, quotes from Manaqib of Khawarizmi through Muhammad Ibn Mansur, who said that he heard Ahmad Ibn Hanbal say, "There were no such praises for any of the companions of the Prophet, as there were for 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib." Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i also narrates words to the same effect.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali in his Sharhe-Nahju'l Balagha, Volume I, page 46, says: "'Ali was the most fitting person for the position of Wilaya (guardianship) by virtue of his excellence. With the exception of the Prophet of Allah, he was the most deserving person for the office of caliph."

'Ali was certainly most deserving of the caliphate, but he was cast aside by the political maneuvering of lesser men. At least they should have informed 'Ali that they were convening a meeting at Saqifa Bani Sa'da to deliberate on the important issue of electing a Caliph. They did not do so in order to deprive him of his right of succession.

Consensus for Abu Bakr

Hafiz: Are we unjust or you? You say that the Prophet's companions elected those who usurped the caliphate. Of course you think we are all fools who blindly follow our ancestors. But what proof is stronger than Ijma, general consensus? All the companions and umma, including 'Ali, appointed Abu Bakr and swore allegiance to him. Obviously common agreement by the people is final, and agreeing to it is compulsory.

The Prophet said: "My people do not agree in error; my people do not agree in deviation from the right path." So we have not followed our ancestors blindly. The fact is that on the first day after the Prophet's death, the community unanimously decided in a meeting to elect Abu Bakr as Caliph. Because it was a settled fact, we should acknowledge it.

Well-Wisher: Please let us know on what grounds is the caliphate based?

Hafiz: It is obvious. The best proof for the existence of the caliphate after the Prophet is the ijma (general consensus) of the umma through which the caliphate came into being. Apart from this, the best qualification for Abu Bakr and 'Umar for the caliphate was their maturity. 'Ali, for all his virtues and nearness to the Prophet, had to be passed over because of his youth. And, to be just and fair, it was not appropriate for a youth to override the claims of the mature companions.

And we do not regard this passing over of 'Ali as a defeat for him, for his excellence is otherwise generally accepted. There is also a hadith narrated by Caliph 'Umar from the Prophet, who said: "Prophethood and leadership are not combined in one family." Accordingly, 'Ali was denied the caliphate because he belonged to the Prophet's family. He was not eligible for that office.

Arguments against validity of ijma

Well-Wisher: I'm astounded that you can put forward such silly arguments. First, you said that ijma, the consensus of the umma, is the most valid reasoning, and in support of your point you narrated a hadith. The word "ummai" means "my umma," so the hadith (supposing it to be true) means that when the whole umma agrees to something, the decision cannot be wrong. I cannot accept this. Allah has distinguished this umma by virtue of the fact that among them there shall be a rightly guided sect. A vicegerent of Allah will be among them.

When the umma gathers together, that rightly guided sect will be among them. But this hadith (even if genuine) does not furnish any evidence that the Prophet surrendered his own right and authorized the umma to appoint the caliph. And even if the Prophet had left it to his umma to choose the caliph, this right is assigned to the entire umma. Since all Muslims benefit from the caliphate, they should have the right to express their opinion in the choice of a caliph.

Accordingly, the assembly of the whole umma after the death of the Prophet would have been necessary so that, with their common consent, a perfect man might be appointed as the caliph. Was there was such an assembly of Muslims? Was this the way Abu Bakr came to the caliphate?

Hafiz: Abu Bakr remained in the office of the caliphate for a little more than two years. During this period Muslims in general swore allegiance to him and obeyed him. This in itself means unanimity of opinion among them, which is a proof of legitimacy.

Well-Wisher: You are trying to skirt the issue. My question was not about the whole period of Abu Bakr. I asked about the decision made under the roof (Saqifa) of Bani Sa'da. Did the gathering there comprise the whole umma, or were there only a few people who took the oath of allegiance?

Hafiz: Obviously there were only a few of the Prophet's prominent companions, but later ijma did take place.

Well-Wisher: Did the Prophet, the most fit person to guide the umma, surrender his right in favor of his umma? Did he surrender his right so that the people of the Aus clan, who were hostile to the Khazraj clan, might take the oath of fealty for fear of their opponents coming to power? Did he abandon his right so that his people could form a government based on fear and greed?

Can you call such a small group of people a community? Didn't the Muslims of Mecca, Yeman, Jeddah, and other cities belong to the umma? Didn't they have a right to give their opinion regarding the caliphate? If there was no conspiracy, why didn't they wait to find out the viewpoint of all Muslims in such an important matter as the caliphate? In this way, the ijma in its true sense might have been achieved.

Even today, in order to establish a democratic state or to select a nation's leader of a nation, general elections are held. Citizens cast their votes and the leader is selected by majority vote. Leaders of civilized countries and all cultured people would scoff at the crude proceedings of your "ijma."

Hafiz: Why are you indulging in unpleasant talk? Ijma means that there was a gathering of intelligent people and prominent companions who assembled in the Saqifa.

Well-Wisher: You say that ijma meant that there was an assembly of intellectuals and distinguished companions of the Prophet, but you have no basis for this assertion except the hadith you cited. Where do the hadith mention intellectuals or distinguished companions? I repeat that the word "ummai" means the entire umma, not a limited number of companions, even though they be learned.

Even if what you say is correct, that "ijma" means "the assembly of intellectuals and distinguished companions," were the intelligentsia and the companions of the Prophet confined only to those few people who assembled under the small roof on that day? Were there no other intelligent people and distinguished companions in the Muslim world? And did they, unanimously vote for the caliph?

Hafiz: Since the matter of the caliphate was a serious affair, the people were afraid that some

disturbance might arise. It was not possible to inform Muslims in other places. When Abu Bakr and 'Umar heard that some Ansars had gathered there, they also went there to talk. Because 'Umar was a seasoned statesman, he considered it desirable for the umma to swear the oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr.

Others followed him and offered the oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr, but a faction of the Ansars and the people of the Khazraj clan, supporting Sa'd Ibn Ubaida, did not swear the oath of allegiance and left the Saqifa. That was why they made haste.

Well-Wisher: So you also acknowledge, as your prominent historians and ulama' have acknowledged that on the day of Saqifa, when the basic proceedings were held, there was no ijma. Abu Bakr, for reasons of political expediency, proposed the names of 'Umar and Abu Ubaida Ibn Jarra, and they too, returning the proposal, suggested the name of Abu Bakr, telling him that he was the most qualified for the position. They immediately swore allegiance to him.

Some of the Aus clan also present took the oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr in view of their hostility against the Khazraj clan, and also because they feared that Sa'd ibn Ubaida might otherwise become the Amir. In this way support gradually grew wider.

However, if ijma were a strong argument to be relied upon, they should have waited until the whole umma – or, as you said: the intelligentsia – had gathered there, to achieve the entire community's consensus.

Hafiz: I told you that fear of disturbances forced the group to act. The people of Aus and Khazraj clans had assembled in Saqifa and were confronting each other. Each of them wanted to decide the sovereignty of the Muslim state for itself.

Well-Wisher: I agree with what you say. Muhammad Ibn Jarir Tabari (see his Ta'rikh, Volume II, page 457) and others have written that the Muslims had not assembled under the Saqifa to elect their caliph. The Aus and Khazraj wanted to appoint an Amir for themselves. Abu Bakr and 'Umar benefited from their differences. If they had really gathered together to discuss the caliphate, they should have surely invited all Muslims to express their opinion in the matter.

As you said, they were not in a position to inform all Muslims, and time was running short. It was true that they had no immediate access to Mecca, Yemen, Ta'if, or the other distant Muslim cities. But had they no means of approach even to Usama Ibn Zaid's army, which was encamped near Medina? Couldn't they have informed the notable companions of the Prophet who were there? One of them was a distinguished personality, the commander of the Muslim army, appointed by the Holy Prophet himself. Abu Bakr and 'Umar were subordinate to him.

When Usama heard that through a conspiracy three persons had appointed the caliph without consulting other people or even informing them, and that they had sworn fealty to one man, he rode his horse to

the door of the mosque and cried aloud: "What is all this uproar? With whose permission have you appointed a caliph? What was the significance of a handful of people who, without consulting the companions, appointed a caliph?"

‘Umar stepped forward to appease him and said: "Usama! The work is finished. The oath of allegiance has been sworn. Do not create discord now among the people. Take the oath of fealty yourself." Usama became angry. "The Prophet made me your Amir," he said. "How is it possible that the Amir appointed by the Prophet should pay homage to the subordinates who were placed under his command?" Although much more happened this much is sufficient to make my point.

‘Ali was deliberately kept uninformed of the meeting at saqifa

If you say that Usama's army was also at a distance from the city and that time was running short, will you also claim that the distance from the Saqifa and mosque to the residence of the Prophet was also great? Why didn't they inform ‘Ali, or Abbas the respected uncle of the Prophet? Why didn't they consult the Bani Hashim, the descendants of the Holy Prophet?

Hafiz: In all probability the situation at that time was so tense that they dared not be careless and leave the Saqifa.

Well-Wisher: Excuse me, they had time. They deliberately avoided informing ‘Ali, the Bani Hashim, and the distinguished companions.

Hafiz: How can you say that they deliberately did not inform them?

Well-Wisher: One obvious indication is that ‘Umar came to the door of the Prophet's house but did not enter it.

Hafiz: Assuredly this story is fabricated by the Rafizis.

Well-Wisher: Look at page 456 of the Ta'rikh, Volume II by Muhammad Ibn Jarir Tabari, one of your eminent ulama'. He writes that ‘Umar came to the door of the Prophet's house but did not enter. He sent a message to Abu Bakr: "Come immediately; I have urgent business with you." Abu Bakr sent word to him that he had no time. ‘Umar sent another message: "We are faced with a crisis. Your presence is necessary."

Abu Bakr came out and ‘Umar told him secretly about the gathering of the Ansars in the Saqifa and said that they should immediately go there. Both departed, and on the way they met Abu Ubaida and took him with them. For Allah's sake, be fair. If they had not hatched a conspiracy, why did ‘Umar go to the door of the house of the Prophet but not enter it?

They could have asked for help. Was there in the whole umma only Abu Bakr, who was all wisdom, and

were the other companions and the descendants of the Prophet aliens who did not deserve to be informed about this matter?

Was this ijma of yours rightfully constituted by three men? Where in any part of the world is such a procedure acceptable? Suppose that three people or any group of people, assemble in a city and form an ijma and appoint the head of the state. Is it incumbent on the ulama' and intellectuals of all other cities or towns to obey them? Or even if some intelligent and learned men who have not been selected by others give an opinion, is it necessary that the rest of the intelligentsia follow them?

Is it proper to suppress the feelings of the entire nation through the intimidating behavior of one group of people? If on the other hand, in learned discourses, a group of people reveals that the caliphate was not justified by religious or natural law, is it right to call them Rafizis?

You say that the Holy Prophet left the issue of the caliphate to the umma or to the "intelligentsia" of the umma, as you call it. Was the intelligentsia of the umma composed of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Abu Ubaida Jarra. Each proposed the name of the other, and then two of them acknowledged the third. That was all. Is it obligatory for all Muslims to follow them? "Minority," "majority," and "ijma" mean quite different things.

If a consultative meeting is held for the consideration of some particular problem, and a smaller number of people give one opinion, while the larger number gives another opinion, then it is said that one is the opinion of the minority. The opinion of the larger number is called the opinion of the majority, and if all of them (without a single exception) give a unanimous opinion, it is called ijma.

Was an ijma reached in the Saqifa or later in the mosque, or after that in the city of Medina? If, however, in deference to your wishes, we take away the rights of the general umma and say that the opinion of the intelligentsia and the Prophet's companions was sufficient for ijma, I ask whether there was an ijma in which all intelligentsia and the Prophet's distinguished companions participated? Did the small group at the Saqifa unanimously agree in its opinion?

The reply must be in the negative. The author of Mawaqif has himself admitted that there was no ijma during the caliphate of Abu Bakr, and there was certainly no unanimity of opinion among the learned people in Medina, either. Sa'd Ibn Ubaida Ansari, his descendants, distinguished companions of the Prophet, all the Bani Hashim, their friends, and 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, – all opposed Abu Bakr for six months.

These people never did take the oath of fealty to him. In Medina, the seat of prophethood, no ijma was reached in which the intellectuals and the companions supported Abu Bakr as Caliph. Your own great historians, like Imam Fakhru'd-Din Razi, Jalalu'd-Din Suyuti, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali, Tabari, Bukhari, and Muslim, recorded that ijma never occurred in Medina.

The Bani Hashim, the Bani Umayya, and the companions in general – except the three people mentioned above – were not present in the Saqifa to cast their vote. Moreover, many strongly opposed the decision. In fact, some prominent companions, who rejected the allegiance at the Saqifa, went to the

mosque and protested to Abu Bakr. Of the Muhajirs were Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr Ghifari, Miqdad Ibn Aswad Kindi, Ammar al-Yasir, Buraida Aslami, and Khalid Ibn Sa'id Ibn As Amawi.

Of the Ansars were Abu'l-Hathama ibn Tihan, Khuzaima Ibn Thabit Dhu'sh-Shahadatain, Abu Ayyub Ansari, Ubai Ibn Ka'b, Sahl Ibn Hunaif, Uthman Ibn Hunaif, who remonstrated with Abu Bakr inside the mosque. I have given only this brief outline of events. No ijma of any kind was reached. The ijma of the intellectuals and the prominent companions of Medina is a flagrant lie.

Based on your own sources, I will give you a list of names of some of those who opposed the caliphate. Ibn Hajar Asqalani and Baladhuri, each in his Ta'rikh, Muhammad Ibn Khawind Shah in his Rauzatu's-Safa, Ibn Abdu'l-Birr in his Isti'ab, and others say that Sa'd Ibn Ubaida and a part of Khazrajis and a group of Quraish did not swear the oath of fealty to Abu Bakr.

Moreover, eighteen people who were prominent and distinguished companions of the Holy Prophet did not take the oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr. They were Shi'as of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib. The names of those eighteen people are as follows:

1. Salman al-Farsi
2. Abu Dharr Ghifari
3. Miqdad Ibn Aswad al-Kindi
4. Ammar al-Yasir
5. Khalid Ibn Sa'id ibn al-As
6. Buraida Aslami
7. Ubai Ibn Ka'b
8. Khuzaima Ibn Thabit Dhu'sh-Shahadatain
9. Abu'l-Hathama Ibn Tihan
10. Sahl Ibn Hunaif
11. Uthman Ibn Hunaif Dhu'sh-Shahadatain
12. Abu Ayub Ansari
13. Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari
14. Hudhaifa ibn Yaman

15. Sa'd Ibn Ubaida

16. Qais Ibn Sa'd

17. Abdullah Ibn Abbas

18. Zaid Ibn Arqam

And Yaqubi writes in his Ta'rikh: "A group of Muhajirs and Ansars kept themselves aloof from allegiance to Abu Bakr and had were followers of Hazrat 'Ali. Among them were Abbas Ibn Abdu'l-Muttalib, Fazl Ibn Abbas, Zubair Ibnu'l-'Awwam Ibn As, Khalid Ibn Sa'id, Miqdad Ibn 'Umar, Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr Ghifari, Ammar Yasin, Bara'a Ibn Azib, and Ubai Ibn Ka'b."

Weren't these people the intellectuals of the umma? 'Ali, Abbas, the uncle of the Holy Prophet and other distinguished persons of the Bani Hashim – weren't these people wise and trustworthy? What kind of ijma was it, which was held without the consultation of these people? When Abu Bakr is selected secretly and other prominent companions are not informed, does this constitute ijma? Or is it political conspiracy?

Hadith al-Thaqalain and Hadith al-Safina

Moreover, the Bani Hashim, the Prophet's family, were not present at the Saqifa. The precious value of their judgement cannot be denied in view of the hadith narrated on earlier nights, and acknowledged by both sects.

The Holy Prophet said: "I leave with you two great things: the Book of Allah (The Holy Qur'an) and my Ahlul Bayt (members of the Holy family: 'Ali, Fatima, and their issue). If you cling to these two, never, never shall you go astray after me."

These people did not support the caliphate of Abu Bakr. In addition, there is another famous hadith known as hadith al-Safina (Hadith of the Ark), which I have mentioned on previous nights. The Prophet said: "My Ahlul Bayt is like the ark of Noah. He who boards it is saved, and he who turns away from it drowned."

This hadith indicates that, just as Noah's community was saved from the great flood by his ark, our Prophet's community will be saved from disasters by attachment to the members of the Prophet's Holy family.

Ibn Hajar in his Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa, page 50, commenting on verse IV, quotes two hadith from Ibn Sa'd about the obligation to follow the Holy Ahlul Bayt of the Holy Prophet. In one hadith the Prophet said: "I and my Ahlul Bayt are a tree of Paradise whose branches are in the earth; so one who seeks the path towards Allah should attach himself to them."

In a second hadith the Prophet said: "Among my umma in every age there are just people from my Ahlul Bayt who purge the impurities brought into religion by the wrong-doers and who wash away the false claims of the transgressors and the commentaries of ignorant people. Be it known to you that your Imams are certainly those who will guide you to Allah; so you should be careful about those you take to be your guides." The substance of hadith of this kind is that the Prophet said to his community: "Unless you follow my Ahlul Bayt, enemies will lead you astray."

The people who could influence ijma, the allegiance, and the appointment of the caliphs, were opposed to the procedure you have described. So what sort of ijma was that? The notable companions, intellectuals, and the progeny of the Prophet were in Medina at the time of the Saqifa. So there is no doubt that the matter was not decided by a majority vote, not to mention ijma.

Ibn Abdu'l-Birr Qartabi, a learned man of your sect, in his Isti'ab, Ibn Hajar in his Isaba, and other ulama' write that Sa'd Ibn Ubaida, who was a claimant to the caliphate, categorically refused to take the oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr and 'Umar.

He did not want to set off a commotion, so he set out for Syria. According to a report in Rauzatu's-Safa, on the instigation of a prominent man he was murdered. According to historians, the man who committed the crime was Khalid Ibn Walid. After killing Malik Ibn Buwaira and marrying his wife, during the early days of Abu Bakr's caliphate, he was the object of 'Umar's wrath. When 'Umar became Caliph, Khalid, attempting to earn his favor, killed Sa'd Ibn Ubaida.

Hafiz: Since there was danger of a disturbance, and they could not have access to the whole umma, they necessarily had to depend on those few people who were present in the Saqifa where the oath of allegiance was taken. Later the umma consented to it.

Well-Wisher: If they had no access to the distinguished companions of the Prophet, and the intellectuals of the nation who were outside Medina, please tell us honestly: if there had been no plotting in this case, why didn't they invite those present in Medina to the meeting at the Saqifa? Wasn't it necessary for them to take counsel with Abbas, 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, and the Bani Hashim? Was the opinion of 'Umar and Abu Ubaida Ibn Jarra sufficient for the whole Islamic world?

Your argument based on ijma, whether it is general or specific, is untenable. The intellectuals and the prominent companions did not participate in it, they opposed it. As I said: "ijma" means that not a single person disagrees with others. In this "ijma," you have admitted the intelligentsia in general did not take part. Imam Fakhru'd-Din Razi in his Nihayatu'l-Usul says that there was no ijma or consensus in the caliphate of Abu Bakr and 'Umar until after the murder of Sa'd Ibn Ubaida.

I fail to understand how you can call this imaginary ijma a proof for the rightfulness of the caliphate. Your second claim, that Abu Bakr was older than 'Ali and was therefore better qualified for the caliphate, is weaker than the first argument.

If age were a condition for the caliphate, there were many men older than Abu Bakr and 'Umar. Certainly Abu Qahafa, Abu Bakr's father was older than his son, and was alive at the time. Why wasn't he appointed caliph?

Hafiz: Abu Bakr's age, coupled with his ability, made him the appropriate choice. When there was an old, experienced loved one of the Prophet present in the nation, an inexperienced youth could not be entrusted with leadership.

Well-Wisher: If that were true, then the target of your objection is the Prophet himself. When he left for his Tabuk expedition, the hypocrites secretly planned to revolt in Medina in his absence. Therefore, he appointed an experienced man in his place in order to control the situation in Medina and to foil the hypocrites' plans. I ask you to tell us who the Prophet left in his place in Medina as his successor and caliph.

Hafiz: It is well known that he made 'Ali his caliph and successor.

Well-Wisher: Weren't Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and other older companions in Medina at that time? Yes. And yet the Prophet made a young man, 'Ali, his Caliph and successor. For the recitation of some of the verses of the Chapter Al-Bara'a (The Immunity), of the Holy Qur'an to the people of Mecca, one would perhaps think, an experienced man should have been appropriate. But the Holy Prophet called the older Abu Bakr back from his half-completed journey and commanded the younger 'Ali to perform this important task.

The Prophet said that Allah had told him that the one to convey the Holy Qur'an should be him, (the Holy Prophet) or someone who was of him. Similarly, for the guidance of the people of Yemen, why did the Holy Prophet send the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali instead of the more experienced Abu Bakr, 'Umar, or others who were present there? On many other similar occasions the Holy Prophet, in the presence of Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and others, selected 'Ali to perform momentous tasks.

It follows that your insistence on chronological maturity is baseless. The essential condition for the caliphate is merit. It has just occurred to me that the strongest proof for the rejection of the caliphate of these people is the opposition to the so-called ijma by 'Ali, who, according to the Prophet, was the distinguisher between right and wrong. Your notable ulama' have narrated a number of hadith in this regard.

Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in his Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, Chapter 16 quoting from Kitabu's-Sabi'in Fi Faza'il al-Amiru'l-Mu'minin, Imamu'l-Haram Abu Ja'far Ahmad Ibn Abdullah Shafi'i, in hadith XII related from Firdaus of Dailami of the seventy hadith, Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani Shafi'i in Mawaddatu'l-Qurba, Mawadda – VI, Hafiz in his Amali, Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in Kifayatu't-Talib, Chapter 44, relate, with slight difference in wording, on the authority of Ibn Abbas, Abi Laila Ghifari, and Abu Dharr Ghifari that the Holy Prophet said (the last phrase being the same in every narration):

"Soon after my departure from this world, there will arise a disturbance. When it happens, you should follow 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib since he will be the first person to see me and clasp hands with me on the Day of Judgement. He is exalted in rank and he is the distinguisher between right and wrong."

When the Prophet died, a great disturbance arose. The Muhajirs and Ansars wanted to have the caliph from their party. According to the instruction of the Prophet, the umma should have brought in 'Ali so that he might separate truth from falsehood.

Hafiz: This hadith has a single line of narration and is therefore unreliable.

Well-Wisher: I have already replied to your objection concerning a single narration. The Sunni ulama' regard such hadith as valid arguments, so you cannot reject it on that ground. Apart from that, it is not the only hadith on this point.

There are many such reports related by your own ulama' which point to the same meaning, some of which I referred to on previous nights. In view of our time constraints, I will confine myself to mentioning here only the names of some of the authors.

One of these reports is narrated by Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in his Matalibu's-Su'ul, Tabari in his Kabir, Baihaqi in his Sunan, Nuru'd-Din Maliki in his Fusulu'l-Muhimma, Hakim in his Mustadrak, Hafiz Abu Na'im in his Hilya, Ibn Asakir in his Ta'rikh, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha, Tabrani in his Ausat, Muhibu'd-Din in his Riyaz, Hamwaini in his Fara'id, Suyuti in his Durr al-Mansur, from Ibn Abbas, Salman, Abu Dharr and Hudhaifa - all report that the Holy Prophet, pointing with his hand to 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, said:

"Verily, this 'Ali is the first person who declared his faith in me and the first who will shake hands with me on the Day of Judgement. He is Siddiq al-Akbar (the greatest speaker of truth) and the Faruq of this umma (The Discernment of this Community). He will distinguish between right and wrong."

Hadith "Ali is with the truth and the truth is with 'Ali"

Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji in Chapter 44 of his Kifayatu't-Talib narrates the same hadith with the addition of these words: "And he is the ruler over the faithful and he is my gate for the faithful to pass through; and he is my caliph (successor) after me." Ganji Shafi'i says that Muhaddith al-Sham (a traditionist of Syria) has three hundred hadith in praise of 'Ali. It has also been recorded by Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-Su'ul, Khatib Khawarizmi in Manaqib, Sam'ani in Faza'ilu's-Sahaba.

Ibn Sabbagh Maliki in Fusulu'l-Muhimma, Khatib Baghdadi in Ta'rikh al-Baghdad, Volume XIV, page 21, Hafiz Mardawaih in Manaqib, Dailami in Firdaus, Ibn Qutayba in Imamate wa's-Siyasa, Volume I, page 111, Ganji Shafi'i in Kifayatu't-Talib, Imam Ahmad in Musnad and many other members of your ulama' have narrated that the Holy Prophet said "Ali is with the truth and the truth is with 'Ali wherever he turns." In the same books, there is another hadith also reported by Sheikh Sulayman Qanduzi Hanafi, in

Chapter 20 of Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, from Hamwaini that the Holy Prophet said: "Ali is with the truth and the truth is with 'Ali."

Hafiz Abi Nu'aim Ahmad Ibn Abdullah Ispahani in his Hilyatu'l-Auliya, Volume I, page 63, narrates that the Prophet said: "O party of Ansar! Shall I guide you towards a person that if you adhere to him, you will never go astray?" All of them, said: 'Yes, O Prophet of Allah,' The Holy Prophet said: 'That person is 'Ali. Love him as you love me, and respect him as you respect me; what I have told you was Allah's command related to me by Gabriel."

The general objective of these hadith is to indicate the Prophet's preference regarding his successor. The Prophet ordered his umma to turn to 'Ali after him and to follow him. In light of such hadith, tell us what 'Ali's opposition to Abu Bakr means to you. It is of course very sad and surprising that so much haste was made on the Saqifa day. Every sensible person who knows what happened that day is greatly disappointed. If there was no plotting, why didn't they wait (at least for a few hours) so that 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, the Bani Hashim, and Abbas could express their views on the caliphate?

Hafiz: There was no conspiracy. Since they feared a disturbance, they were quick to decide the matter of the caliphate for the safety of Islam.

Well-Wisher: Do you mean that Abu Ubaida Jarra, a former grave-digger of Mecca, and others had more concern for the safety of Islam than Abbas, the Prophet's respected uncle, and 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib? Do you mean that if they had waited for a short time, or if Abu Bakr and 'Umar, keeping the people engaged, had sent Abu Ubaida to inform Abbas and 'Ali of the serious situation that Islam would have perished? Please be fair.

If they had invited the appropriate people to the Saqifa, their position would have been more secure. There would be no such differences in Islam as exist today. After 1335 years, we Muslim brothers would not be confronting each other as we are tonight but would be united in opposing our common enemy. Much of the foundation of the flawed edifice of Islam was laid on that day. It was due to the haste of those three people to accomplish their secret designs.

Nawab: Respected sir, please tell us why they rushed ahead. Why didn't they inform even the people in the mosque or in the house of the Prophet?

Well-Wisher: The reasons are not far to seek. They rushed forward because they knew that if they waited for all the Muslims to come, or at least for the notable people of Usama Ibn Zaid's army, the prominent companions of the Prophet present in Medina, or the Bani Hashim that the name of 'Ali, among others, would have been proposed. If the names of 'Ali and Abbas had been proposed, Abu Bakr's and 'Umar's political possibilities would have been much reduced.

So they hurried with their plans so that, while the Bani Hashim and the prominent companions were busy conducting the Prophet's funeral rites, they succeeded in appointing Abu Bakr Caliph based on the votes

of two people! They played that game, and here tonight you good people are giving it the name of "ijma!" Even your own great ulama', like Tabari, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, and others have written that 'Umar said: "The caliphate of Abu Bakr was abruptly established. May Allah help us!"

As for your other claim, which you advance on the authority of Caliph 'Umar, that prophethood and sovereignty cannot be combined in one family, it is also rejected according to the Holy Qur'an:

"Or do they envy the people for what Allah has given them of His grace? But indeed We have given to Abraham's children the Book and the wisdom, and We have given them a good Kingdom." (4:54)

This hadith, ascribed to Caliph 'Umar, is concocted. The Prophet never said a word in contradiction to the injunctions of the Holy Qur'an. Moreover, the caliphate cannot be separate from prophethood because the true caliph is the embodiment of God's law acting in the world.

To consider the caliphate merely a political office separable from prophethood is precisely the mistake made by Abu Bakr and 'Umar. If Moses' brother Aaron could be excluded from Moses' caliphate, 'Ali also could be deprived of the Prophet's caliphate.

And since prophethood and caliphate, according to the Qur'an was combined in Moses and Aaron, it was undoubtedly combined in Muhammad and 'Ali. Your "hadith" was fabricated by the Umayyads. If prophethood and the caliphate could not be combined in one family, then why in the Majlis al-Shura (consultative assembly) did Caliph 'Umar nominate 'Ali for the caliphate?

After all, you also accept him as your fourth caliph! It is an interesting contradiction that, based on 'Umar's hadith, you reject the combining of prophethood and the caliphate, but when 'Umar himself sanctioned this situation a few years later, you support it!

Can you oppose and support the same proposition? You say that prophethood and sovereignty are not combined in one family, though the Holy Prophet made it compulsory for his umma to follow his progeny. He said that to be hostile to them was to go astray.

He said on a number of occasions, "I leave behind me two weighty things: the Book of Allah (The Holy Qur'an) and my Ahlul Bayt. If you are attached to these two, never, never shall you go astray after me." This authentic hadith has been acknowledged by both sects. I have mentioned it on previous nights with its sources.

Hadith of the Ark – Hadith of Saqifa

During the great flood whoever took refuge in Noah's ark was saved. Whoever turned away from it was drowned, including Noah's son. The Holy Prophet also identified his progeny with Noah's Ark, meaning that the people of his umma in the hour of their trial should attach themselves to his descendants.

Therefore, according to these clear injunctions, the umma, in all its differences, should have sought the benefit of the Prophet's Ahlul Bayt. 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, according to Prophet, was the most learned and virtuous person among them. Why didn't they inform him so that they could consult with him? But no. Politicians grabbed power and deprived 'Ali of his permanent right.

Sheikh: On what grounds do you say that they should have followed 'Ali and that the opinion and ijma of the companions should have been ignored?

Well-Wisher: I never said that the opinion of the companions and their ijma should not be respected. One difference between you and me is that as soon as you hear the name of a companion, even though he be a hypocrite, like Abu Huraira, whom Caliph 'Umar beat and called a liar, you bow before him in reverence. I respect only companions who complied with the conditions of companionship with the Holy Prophet. Moreover, I have demonstrated that there was no ijma at Saqifa.

If you can refute my argument, now is the time to do so. I will bow down before the consensus of this gathering. If you can point out from your own books that in the Saqifa, the whole umma, or the intelligent people of the nation gathered and agreed that Abu Bakr should be Caliph, we will readily accept it. And if, with the exception of two people ('Umar and Abu Ubaida) and a few people of the Aus clan, no other person took the oath of allegiance, you should admit that we Shi'as are rightly guided.

We leave it to informed opinion to decide whether three companions were justified in holding the reins of the whole umma. Two paid allegiance to the third, and later they threatened others with the sword, fire, and disgrace, compelling them to accept their will.

Should ijma be accepted because of precedent?

Sheikh: We do not know whether there was negligence on their part because we were not there on that day. At this distance in time we cannot appreciate the pressures they were under. Today, with the situation an established fact, it does not matter if the ijma was completed in gradual steps. We should not object. We should bow down before those people and follow the way they have shown us.

Well-Wisher: What a fine argument! Do you want us to think Islam is groundless? If two or three people design a plan and gain the support of others, is it the duty of all Muslims to follow them? Is that the meaning of the religion of the Prophet of Islam? The Holy Qur'an says:

"Therefore give good news to my servants, those who listen to the word and follow the best of it."
(39: 17-18)

Islam is based on facts and reason, not on blind following, certainly not on following Abu Ubaida, the grave digger. The Prophet showed us the way. He said that when the umma was divided, we should follow one who is guided. You ask us why it is obligatory for us to follow 'Ali. We reply that the obligation is based upon the verses of the Holy Qur'an and hadith recorded in your own books.

Holy Prophet's hadith urging the believers to follow 'Ali

There are many hadith making it imperative on the umma to follow 'Ali. One of them is narrated by Ammar al-Yasir, which your following ulama' have recorded in their books: Hafiz Abi Nu'aim Ispahani in Hilya; Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-Su'ul; Baladhuri in Ta'rikh; Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, Chapter 43, from Hamwaini; Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani Shafi'i in Mawaddatu'l-Qurba, Mawadda V; Dailami in Firdaus. They narrate a lengthy, detailed hadith which cannot be related here in full. It may be stated briefly that when people asked Abu Ayyub why he had gone to 'Ali and had not sworn allegiance to Abu Bakr, he replied that one day he was sitting with the Prophet when Ammar al-Yasir came in and asked the Prophet a question.

In the course of his conversation, the Prophet said: "O Ammar! If all the people go one way and 'Ali alone goes the other way, you should follow 'Ali. O Ammar! 'Ali will not allow you to diverge from the path of guidance and will not lead you to destruction; O Ammar! Obedience to 'Ali is obedience to me, and obedience to me is obedience to Allah."

In light of these injunctions, and in light of 'Ali's opposition to Abu Bakr, shouldn't people have followed 'Ali? Even if the Bani Hashim, Bani Umayya, distinguished companions, the intelligentsia of the nation, the Muhajirs, and Ansars had not been with him (and they were with him), people should have followed 'Ali.

Hafiz: During our discussion, you have said two strange things. First you have repeatedly called Abu Ubaida a "grave digger." Can you prove that this was the profession of this gentleman? Second, you said that 'Ali, the Bani Hashim, and the companions did not pay allegiance to Abu Bakr, they opposed him. But all the historians and traditionists have written that 'Ali, the Bani Hashim, and the companions of the Prophet did take the oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr.

Well-Wisher: It is not we alone who claim that Abu Ubaida was a grave digger. It is in your own books. You may refer to Al-Bidayya wa'n-Nihaya, Volume V, pages 266-267 compiled by Ibn Kathir Shami, who says that since Abu Ubaida used to dig the graves of the Meccans, Abbas sent a man in search of Abu Talha, the grave digger of Medina, and another man in search of Abu Ubaida, so that both of them might dig the Prophet's grave.

Forced allegiance by 'Ali and Bani Hashim after six months

You say that 'Ali, the Bani Hashim, and the Prophet's companions took the oaths of allegiance to Abu Bakr. You have read the words "paid allegiance," but you have not understood to whom and how they paid allegiance. All your learned traditionists and great historians have written that 'Ali and the Bani Hashim paid allegiance (outwardly), but that was done after six months, and then only under extreme duress.

Hafiz: It is not proper for a noble man like you to use the words that the common Shi'as people use: that 'Ali was dragged out of his house and was threatened with death if he did not swear allegiance. The fact is that in the first few days of the caliphate, he willingly and cheerfully accepted the caliphate of Abu Bakr.

Well-Wisher: 'Ali and the Bani Hashim did not take the oath of allegiance immediately. Your historians have written that 'Ali offered his allegiance after the demise of Hazrat Fatima. Bukhari in his Sahih, Volume III, Chapter of Ghazawa Khaibar, page 37, and Muslim Ibn Hujjaj, in his Sahih, Volume V, page 154, report that 'Ali offered his allegiance after Fatima's death. Some of your ulama' believe that Fatima died 75 days after the Prophet's death.

Ibn Qutayba also holds the same view, but most of your historians claim that she died six months after the Prophet died. It follows, therefore, that 'Ali's allegiance came some time after 3 to 6 months of the Prophet's death. Mas'udi in his Muruju's-sahab, Volume I, page 414, says "None of the Bani Hashim swore their allegiance to Abu Bakr until the death of Bibi Fatima.

Ibrahim Ibn Sa'd Saqafi narrates from Zuhri that 'Ali did not pay allegiance until six months after the Prophet's death, and the people did not have the courage to pressure him except after the death of Bibi Fatima. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha relates the same fact.

In any case, your own ulama' insist that 'Ali's allegiance was not immediate but came only after some time had passed and then only when circumstances forced him to do so. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, in his Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha, Volume II, page 18, narrates from Zuhri, from A'ysha, who said: "Ali did not offer allegiance to Abu Bakr for six months, and no one of the Bani Hashim offered allegiance until 'Ali did."

Ahmad Ibn A'sam al-Kufi Shafi'i in Futuh, and Abu Nasr Hamidi, in Jam'a Bainu's-Sahihain report from Nafiy, quoting from Zuhri, who said: "Ali did not swear allegiance until six months after the Prophet's death."

'Ali dragged from his home and his house set on fire

Hafiz: Where have our ulama' said that 'Ali was dragged from his house and house set on fire, as is commonly believed by Shi'as? They narrate it with great emotion in their religious gatherings. They also excite the emotions of people by saying that Fatima was tortured and consequently suffered a miscarriage.

Well-Wisher: Respected audience: you revile the Shi'as, attempting to cover the guilt of your predecessors. You say that these hadith have been concocted by Shi'as. The truth is that on the order of Abu Bakr, 'Umar and others went to 'Ali's house, threatened him with a sword, dragged him to the mosque and forced him to swear allegiance to Abu Bakr. These facts have been recorded by your own ulama'. If you wish, I will relate them. We do not say anything on our own authority. We say only what

you say.

Hafiz: Yes, please do. We are prepared to listen.

Twelve arguments in support of the fact that ‘Ali was taken to the mosque at the point of a sword

Well-Wisher:

(1) Abu Ja'far Baladhuri Ahmad Ibn Yahya Ibn Jabir Baghdadi, one of your reliable traditionists and historians, writes in his History that when Abu Bakr called ‘Ali to swear allegiance, ‘Ali refused. Abu Bakr sent ‘Umar who went with a torch to set fire to ‘Ali's house. Fatima came to the door and said: "O son of Khattab! Have you come to set my house on fire?" He said: "Yes, this is more effective than anything your father did."

(2) Izzu'd-Din Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali, and Muhammad Ibn Jarir Tabari, narrate that ‘Umar went to the door of ‘Ali's house with Usayd Ibn Khuza'i, Salama Ibn Aslam and a group of men. ‘Umar then called out, "Come out! Or else I'll set your house on fire!"

(3) Ibn Khaziba reports in his Kitab al-Gharrar from Zaid Ibn Aslam, who said: "I was one of those who went with ‘Umar with torches to Fatima's door. When ‘Ali and his men refused to offer allegiance, ‘Umar said to Fatima, "Let whoever is inside come out. Otherwise, I will set the house on fire along with whoever is inside." ‘Ali, Hasan, Husain, Fatima, and a party of the Prophet's companions, and the Bani Hashim were inside. Fatima said: "Would you set my house on fire along with me and my sons?" He said: "Yes, by Allah, if they do not come out and pay allegiance to the caliph of the Prophet."

(4) Ibn Abd Rabbih, one of your famous ulama', writes in his Iqdu'l-Farid, Part III, page 63, that ‘Ali and Abbas were sitting in Fatima's house. Abu Bakr told ‘Umar: "Go and bring these people. If they refuse to come, fight them." So ‘Umar came to Fatima's house with torches. Fatima came to the door of the house and said: "Have you come to burn our house?" He said: "Yes..." and so on.

(5) Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali in his Shahre Nahju'l-Balagha, Volume I, page 134, quoting from Jauhari's Kitab al-Saqifa, writes in detail about the affair of the Saqifa al-Bani Sa'ad. "The Bani Hashim and ‘Ali were assembled in ‘Ali's house. Zubair was also with them since he considered himself one of the Bani Hashim. ‘Ali used to say, 'Zubair was always with us until his sons were grown up.

They turned him against us.' ‘Umar went to Fatima's house with a group of men. Usayd and Salma were also with him. ‘Umar asked them to come out and swear allegiance. They refused. Zubair drew his sword and came out. ‘Umar said: 'Get hold of this dog.' Salma Ibn Aslam snatched the sword and threw it against the wall. Then they dragged ‘Ali to Abu Bakr.

Other Bani Hashim also followed him and were waiting to see what ‘Ali would do. ‘Ali was saying that he

was the servant of Allah and the brother of the Holy Prophet. Nobody listened to him.

They took him to Abu Bakr, who asked him to take the oath of allegiance to him. 'Ali said: "I am the most deserving person for this position, and I will not pay allegiance to you. It is incumbent on you to pay allegiance to me. You took this right from the Ansar based on your relationship with the Prophet.

I also, on the same ground, protest against you. So be just. If you fear Allah, accept my right, as the Ansar did yours. Otherwise, you should acknowledge that you are intentionally oppressing me.' 'Umar said: 'We will not leave you until you swear allegiance.'

'Ali said: 'You have conspired well together. Today you support him, so that tomorrow he may return the caliphate to you. I swear by Allah that I will not comply with your request and will not take the oath of allegiance (to Abu Bakr). He should pay allegiance to me.'

Then he turned his face toward the people and said: 'O Muhajirs! Fear Allah. Do not take away the right of authority of Muhammad's family. That right has been ordained by Allah. Do not remove the rightful person from his place.

By Allah, we Ahlul Bayt have greater authority in this matter than you have. There is a man among you who has the knowledge of the Book of Allah (The Qur'an), the Sunna of the Prophet, and the laws of our Religion. I swear by Allah that we possess all these things. So do not follow yourselves lest you should stray from the truth.'" 'Ali returned home without offering allegiance and secluded himself in his house until Fatima died. Thereafter, he was forced to offer allegiance.

(6) Abu Muhammad Abdullah Ibn Muslim Ibn Qutayba Ibn 'Umar Al-Bahili Dinawari, who was one of your ulama' and an official Qazi of the city of Dinawar, writes in his famous Ta'rikhu'l-Khulafate Raghabin wa Daulate Bani Umayya, known as Al-Imama wa's-Siyasa, Volume I, page 13: "When Abu Bakr learned that a group hostile to him had assembled in 'Ali's house, he sent 'Umar to them.

When 'Umar shouted to 'Ali to come out and to swear allegiance to Abu Bakr, they all refused to come out. 'Umar collected wood and said 'I swear by Allah, Who has my life in His control, either you will come out, or I will set the house with all those in it on fire.'

People said: 'O Abu Hafsa! Fatima is also present in the house.' He said: 'Let her be there. I will set fire to the house.' So all of them came out and offered allegiance, except 'Ali, who said: 'I have taken a vow that until I have compiled the Qur'an, I will neither go out of the house nor will I put on full dress.'

'Umar did not accept this, but the plaintive lamentation of Fatima and the snubbing by others, forced him to go back to Abu Bakr. 'Umar urged him to force 'Ali to swear allegiance. Abu Bakr sent Qanfaz several times to summon 'Ali, but he was always disappointed.

At last 'Umar, with a group of people went to the door of Fatima's house. When Fatima heard their voices, she cried out 'O my father, Prophet of Allah! What tortures we are subjected to by the son of

Khattab and the son of Abi Quhafa!

'When the people heard Fatima's lamentation, some went back with their hearts broken, but 'Umar remained there with some others until finally they dragged 'Ali from the house. They took 'Ali to Abu Bakr, and told him to swear allegiance to him. 'Ali said: 'If I do not swear allegiance what will you do to me?' They said: 'We swear by Allah that we will break your neck.' 'Ali said: 'Will you kill the servant of Allah and the brother of His Prophet?' 'Umar said: 'You are not the brother of the Prophet of Allah.'

While all this was going on, Abu Bakr kept silent. 'Umar then asked Abu Bakr whether he ('Umar) was not following Abu Bakr's orders in this matter. Abu Bakr said that so long as Fatima was alive he would not force 'Ali to swear allegiance to him. 'Ali then managed to reach the grave of the Prophet, where, wailing and crying, he told the Prophet what Aaron had told his brother, Moses, as recorded in the Holy Qur'an:

***'Son of my mother! Surely the people reckoned me weak and had well nigh slain me.'* (7: 150)**

Fatima told Abu Bakr and 'Umar that she cursed them both in every prayer

After narrating this affair in detail, Abu Muhammad Abdullah Ibn Qutayba says that 'Ali did not swear allegiance and returned home. Later Abu Bakr and 'Umar went to Fatima's house to placate her and to seek her pardon. She said: "Allah be my witness that you two have offended me. In every prayer I curse you and will continue cursing you until I see my father and complain against you."

(7) Ahmad Ibn Abdu'l-Aziz is one of your ulama'. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid writes about him in the following words: "He was a man of learning, a traditionist, a great literary figure." He writes in his Kitab al-Saqifa and Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali also quotes from him in his Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha, Volume I, page 9, on the authority of Abi'l-Aswad, who said: "A group of the companions and prominent Muhajirin expressed their indignation at Abu Bakr's caliphate and asked why they were not consulted."

Also 'Ali and Zubair expressed their anger, refused to swear allegiance, and retired to Fatima's house. Fatima cried aloud and made solemn entreaties, but to no effect. They took away 'Ali's and Zubair's swords and hurled them against the wall, breaking them. Then they dragged them to the mosque to force them to swear allegiance."

(8) Jauhari reports from Salma Ibn Abdu'r-Rahman that when Abu Bakr heard that 'Ali, Zubair, and a party of the Bani Hashim were assembled in Fatima's house, he sent 'Umar for them. 'Umar went to the door of Fatima's house and shouted, "Come out, otherwise, I swear I will set your house on fire!"

(9) Jauhari, according to Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha, Volume II, page 19, narrates on the authority of Sha'bi: "When Abu Bakr heard about the gathering of the Bani Hashim in 'Ali's house, he

said to 'Umar: 'Both you and Khalid go and bring 'Ali and Zubair to me so that they can take the oath of allegiance.' So 'Umar entered Fatima's house and Khalid stayed outside. 'Umar said to Zubair 'What is this sword?' He replied, 'I have acquired it for allegiance to 'Ali.'

'Umar snatched the sword and hurled it at the stone inside the house and broke it. Then he brought him out to Khalid. He came back into the house, where there were many people, including Miqdad, and all the Bani Hashim. Addressing 'Ali, he said: 'Get up! I'm taking you to Abu Bakr. You must pay allegiance to him.'

'Ali refused. 'Umar dragged him to Khalid. Khalid and 'Umar forced him along the road which was packed to capacity with men who witnessed this scene. When Fatima saw 'Umar's behavior, she, along with many women of the Bani Hashim (who had come to console her), came out. They were lamenting and wailing with high-pitched cries. Fatima went to the mosque where she said to Abu Bakr: 'How soon have you sacked the Ahlul Bayt of the Prophet of Allah.

I swear by Allah, I will not talk with 'Umar until I see Allah.' Fatima showed her extreme disapproval of Abu Bakr and did not speak to him for the rest of her life." (See Sahih Bukhari, Part V and VII).

(10) Abu Walid Muhibu'd-Din Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ash-Shahna Al-Hanafi (died 815 A.H.), one of your leading ulama' writes in his *Rauzatu'l-Manazir Fi Khabaru'l-Awa'il wa'l-Awakhir*, in connection with the Saqifa affair: "Umar came to 'Ali's house prepared to set it on fire with all its inmates. 'Umar said: 'Enter into what the community has entered.'"

(11) Tabari, in his *Ta'rikh* Volume II, page 443, reports from Ziyad Ibn Kalbi that "Talha, Zubair, and some of the Muhajirin were at 'Ali's house. 'Umar Ibn Khattab went there and demanded that they come out. If they did not, he said, he would set the house on fire."

(12) Ibn Shahna, in *Hashiyya al-Kamil* of Ibn Athir, Volume XI, page 112, writes in connection with the Saqifa that: "Some of the Prophet's companions, and the Bani Hashim, Zubair, Atba Ibn Abi Lahab, Khalid Ibn Sa'id Ibn As, Miqdad Ibn Aswad Kindi, Salman al-Farsi, Abu Dharr Ghifari, Ammar Ibn Yasir, Bara'a Ibn Azib, and Ubai Ibn Ka'b refused to swear allegiance to Abu Bakr. They assembled in 'Ali's house. 'Umar Ibn Khattab went there intending to burn down the house. Fatima protested to him. 'Umar said: 'Enter where all others have entered.'"

These are but a sample of the many historical facts recorded by your own historians. This affair was so commonly known that the poets of old mentioned it. One of your poets, Hafiz Ibrahim of Egypt, says in a poem in praise of 'Umar: "No other person but Abu Hafsa (father of 'Umar) could have the courage of addressing the chief of the Adnan Clan ('Ali) and his comrades, saying: 'If you fail to pay allegiance, I will set your house on fire and will not leave any inmate of the house alive, even Fatima herself.'"

Hafiz: These narrations show only that they brought torches to frighten and disperse the opponents of the caliphate. It is a concocted Shi'as version to say that 'Ali's house was set on fire, and that Fatima

miscarried as a result.

Narrations about Fatima's miscarriage

Well-Wisher: You should read Kitab al-Isbatu'l-Wasiyya, compiled by Abi'l-Hasan 'Ali Ibn Husain Mas'udi, author of Muruju'dh-Dhahab. He wrote in great detail about the events of that day: "They surrounded 'Ali and burned the door of his house.

They dragged him out of the house and pressed the best of the women, Fatima, between the door and the wall so forcefully that Muhsin, her unborn son, died of miscarriage." The Shi'as have not concocted these things. What occurred has been preserved in the pages of history. The miscarriage is a fact.

You may also refer to Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha, Volume III, page 351. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid wrote that he told his teacher, Abu Ja'far Naqib, that when the Prophet was told that Hubbar Ibn Aswad had attacked his daughter Zainab's litter with a lance, because of which Zainab suffered a miscarriage, the Prophet allowed him to be put to death. Abu Ja'far said: 'Had the Prophet of Allah been alive, he would have surely ordered the death penalty for him also who had frightened Fatima so much that her child, Muhsin, died in miscarriage.'

Hafiz: I don't understand what useful purpose it serves to narrate such stories. This kind of thing leads to mutual discord.

Well-Wisher: You object to my relating these facts. But I do so to reject the attacks of malicious authors who mislead our uninformed brothers, calling Shi'as infidels and saying that these facts were the fabrications of the Shi'as.

We do not say anything about 'Ali beyond what the Prophet said about him. We told you on previous nights that we regard 'Ali as a devoted servant of Allah, a divinely appointed vicegerent and successor to the Prophet. You claim that it is of no use to relate these facts.

If you wouldn't bring up these points, we would not discuss them. If you hadn't said tonight that these are Shi'as beliefs with no substance to them, I would not have been obliged to tell the audience that these are the beliefs of unbiased Sunni ulama'.

Nawab: Respected Sir, we believe that Husain, the martyr, was rightly guided and that he was murdered unjustly by the officers of the Bani Umayya. But there are some people, particularly among our young people, who say that the Battle of Karbala was strictly a military, and not a religious, event. It is said that Husain Ibn 'Ali proceeded to Kufa in quest of power, and it is the duty of every government to curb such dangers. Accordingly, Yazid resisted this threat.

They requested the revered Imam to pay unconditional allegiance to Caliph Yazid, to whom obedience was obligatory. They wanted him to go to Syria to live there with the Caliph honorably or to go back to

his native place. But he did not follow their advice, and consequently he was killed.

They conclude that any mourning for such a worldly man, who was killed because of his love of power, is not only meaningless, but is an innovation. Do you have a reply to this point? How do you disprove the idea that the Battle of Karbala was not the culmination of a political struggle?

Imam Husain was never desirous of political power

Well-Wisher: Every good or bad action is based on our knowledge of Allah. The objectors should first recognize Allah, and then they should acknowledge the divine book, the Qur'an. From that acknowledgement it follows that we recognize that whatever is in that book is praise. Anyone who believes that Husain Ibn 'Ali was motivated by worldly goals denies the truth of the Holy Qur'an. Allah Almighty has given evidence of Husain's purity in the Holy Qur'an. He says:

"Allah desires only to keep away uncleanness from you, O people of the house! And to purify you with a thorough purifying." (33:33)

Most of your ulama', like Muslim, Tirmidhi Tha'labi, Sijistani, Abu Nu'aim Isfahani, Abu Bakr Shirazi, Suyuti, Hamwaini, Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Zamakhshari, Baidhawi, Ibn Athir, and others have held that this verse was revealed in praise of the Holy five, the Ahlul Bayt (people of the House): Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husain. This verse is the greatest proof for the infallibility and purity of these Holy people. The greatest impurity is love for worldly power.

There are many hadith from the Prophet and the Imams condemning aspiration for worldly power and the fulfillment of our carnal desires. The Prophet said, "Love and friendship with the world is the root of all evil." Abu Abdullah Husain had no love for worldly power. He certainly did not risk his life and the lives of his family in order to attain transitory rule in this world.

If Imam Husain's stand against Yazid were merely for worldly power, the Prophet would not have ordered people to help him. Your own ulama' confirm this point. Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in his Yanabiu'l-Mawadda from the histories of Bukhari, Baghawi, and Ibnu's-Sikkin from Zakhari'u'l-Uqba of Imamu'l-Haram Shafi'i, and Sirat al-Mulla narrate from Anas Ibn Harith Ibn Bayya, who said that he heard the Holy Prophet say: "Verily, my son Husain will be killed on the soil of Karbala. Every one of you who is present at that time must help him."

The report continues: "Anas Ibn Harith reached Karbala and, in obedience to the command of the Prophet, was martyred along with Imam Husain." It follows, therefore, that at Karbala Imam Husain stood for the cause of truth and not for love of this world.

Imam Husain's undertaking the journey with a small group, including his women and small children, is another indication that he left his home not for the purpose of gaining rule. If that had been his intention, he would have gone to Yemen, where he had widespread support.

Yemen would have been the logical base for launching military operations. In fact his friends repeatedly encouraged him to go to Yemen, but they were not aware of his purpose. But Imam Husain knew that there was no means of attaining apparent success.

His journey, begun with 84 people, including women and children, aimed at a basic good. The Holy tree – la ilaha ill'allah (there is no god except Allah) – was grown by his grandfather, nourished with his blood and the blood of the martyrs of Badr, Uhud, and Hunain.

The tree was entrusted to an excellent gardener, 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, who was held back by threats of murder and arson. The result was that the spring of Tawhid (oneness of Allah) and prophethood had taken on an autumnal change. Gradually the administration of the garden fell into the hands of the malicious Bani Umayya.

Since the caliphate of Uthman Ibn Affan, the Bani Umayya controlled the administration of the empire. Abu Sufyan, old and blind, but his appetite for power as keen as ever, cried out to the Umayyad Court: "O Bani Umayya! Keep the caliphate in your own family. Paradise and hell are myths. O Bani Umayya! Take hold of the caliphate like a ball. I swear that by which I swear, that I always wished such rule for you. Take care of it so that your descendants may be its heirs."

These unbelievers ejected the rightful gardeners from the garden. The life-water was stopped and the Holy tree shrivelled until the reign of Yazid, when it appeared to be destined to die. Imam Husain undertook the journey to Karbala to water the garden of Prophethood and to strengthen the Holy tree of la ilaha ill'Allah. Some people ask why Imam Husain did not raise the flag of opposition in Medina.

They do not understand that if he had remained in Medina, his objective would have remained unclear. Imam Husain went to Mecca in the month of Rajab and addressed thousands of people, telling them that Yazid was uprooting the tree of tawhid.

He said that Yazid, who claimed to be the Caliph of the Muslims, was destroying the foundation of Islam. Addicted to wine and gambling, Yazid amused himself with dogs and monkeys. Imam Husain considered the sacrifice of his life necessary for the preservation of Islam.

Imam Husain refused advice to abandon his mission

Imam Husain's friends and relatives tried to dissuade him from going to Kufa, saying that the Kufans who had asked him to come were notoriously unreliable. Many people flocked to the Bani Umayya and received money and political favors in return for their support.

Therefore, according to many of his supporters, Imam Husain had no chance to subdue them. They asked him to abandon the journey. They urged him to go to Yemen where he had many followers, and where he could live in peace.

But Husain could not explain the reality of his situation. However, he satisfied each of them with a brief reply. He told close companions and relatives, like his brother, Muhammad Ibn Hanafiyya: "You are saying the correct thing. I also know that I shall not achieve any apparent domination, but I am not going for worldly conquest. I am going in order to be killed. I wish that through the strength of my suffering tyranny, I may root out the very foundation of oppression and cruelty. I saw my grandfather, the Prophet, in a dream telling me: 'Make a journey to Iraq. Allah Almighty wants to see you murdered.'"

Muhammad Ibn Hanafiyya and Ibn Abbas said: "If this is so, why are you taking women with you?" He replied: "My grandfather said that Allah wants to see them captives. So, according to the command of the Holy Prophet, I am taking them with me."

The captivity of the women would be the conclusive part of his martyrdom. They would demonstrate to the world the Umayyad cruelty to the Prophet's descendants. Bibi Zainab, the daughter of 'Ali and Fatima, made an eloquent protest in Yazid's crowded court, where hundreds of people, including the nobility, the great men of the Bani Umayya, and foreign ambassadors celebrated their victory.

The fourth Imam, Zainu'l-Abidin 'Ali Ibn Husain, also made an eloquent appeal for justice from the pulpit of the Umayyad mosque, in Yazid's presence. After extolling the merits and attributes of Allah, Zainu'l-Abidin said: "O people! We, the descendants of Muhammad, have been endowed by Allah with six qualities and have been made superior to the whole creation by being granted seven virtues. We have been given knowledge, forbearance, valor, beautiful appearance, eloquence, bravery, and are loved by the believers.

We are superior to every man in that the Prophet Muhammad is from us; the Siddiq 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib is from us; Ja'far al-Tayyar is from us; Hamza is from us, two grandsons of the Prophet, Hasan and Husain, are from us; and the Mahdi (the guided one) of this People (Imam al-Hujjat Ibn Hasan) is from us. One who does not know me should know about my family and family status; I am the son of the most exalted and virtuous Prophet of Allah, Muhammad Mustafa!"

Then from the same pulpit from which Mu'awiya and Yazid had cursed 'Ali, the Imam praised his illustrious grandfather, 'Ali, before Yazid and the chiefs of the Bani Umayyad. Many Syrians had never before heard 'Ali's qualities and virtues.

The Imam said: "I am the son of the man who fought in the presence of the Holy Prophet; who fought the infidels at Badr and Hunain; who never for a moment lost faith in Allah. I am the son of the most pious of the believers, the heir of the prophets, the slayer of the unbelievers, the ruler of the Muslims, the grace of the worshipers, the crown of those who weep in awe of Allah, the most patient of the patient, the best of the performers of prayer.

I am the son of the man who was helped by Gabriel and Michael. I am the son of the man who was the protector of the honor of the Muslims and the slayer of the disbelievers. I am the son of the man who fought Holy war against the enemy, who was the pride of the Quraish, the foremost of those who

accepted the message of Allah and His Prophet, the first of those who embraced Islam, the tongue of the wisdom of Allah, the helper of the religion of Allah, the guardian of the commandments of Allah, the garden of Allah's wisdom, the repository of His knowledge.

I am the son of the chief of the patient ones, the breaker of barriers, whose heart was more steadfast, whose resolution more firm, whose disposition steadier than anyone's. He was a fierce lion on the battlefield, who cut down the enemy with his sword and scattered them as a violent storm scatters straw.

He was the bravest among the people of the Hijaz, the most valiant among the Iraqis, the purest Muslim, he who swore allegiance at Aqaba, the hero of Badr and Hunain, the courageous man on the occasion of allegiance under the tree, the unique sacrificer during the Holy Prophet's migration, the chief of the Arab world, the guardian of the Holy Ka'ba, the father of two grandsons of the Holy Prophet.

These are the virtues of my grandfather, 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib. I am also the son of Khadija al-Kubra; I am the son of Fatima Zahra; I am the son of one who was murdered by a blow to the back of the neck; I am the son of one who left this world thirsty; I am the son of one who was deprived of water while water was allowed to the rest of creation. I am the son of one whose body was neither bathed nor shrouded; I am the son of one whose sacred head was raised on the point of the sword; I am the son of one whose women were affronted on the soil of Karbala and taken captive.

I am the son of one whose women were brought to Syria as captives." Then the Holy Imam wept with a loud cry, and continued: "I am.... I am...." that is, he went on narrating the virtues of his forefathers and the victimization of his Holy father and the Ahlul Bayt. As a result of his address, people wept. After the martyrdom of Imam Husain, the first majlis (assembly for mourning) for the brutal sufferings of Imam Husain was held in this central mosque of the Umayyads.

Imam Zainu'l-Abidin, after narrating 'Ali's virtues in the presence of the enemies, gave such a moving account of the sufferings of his revered father that agonized weeping rose from the Syrians in the presence of Yazid. He became frightened and left the mosque.

It was from this mosque, due to the Imam's address, that people rose against Yazid. Because of popular outcry, Yazid was forced to curse Ubaidullah Ibn Marjana for his vicious deed. Eventually, the castle of the Bani Umayya's tyranny was destroyed. Today we do not find in all of Syria a single tomb of the Bani Umayya.

To return to your question, Imam Husain frequently foretold his martyrdom. He once spoke in Mecca, on Tarwia day (8th day of Dhu'l-Hijja, 60 A.H.), saying: "Death is attached to every member of the progeny of Adam as a necklace is attached to a young woman. I am as eager to meet my ancestors as Jacob was to meet Joseph. The place where I shall fall has already been selected for me, and I must go to that place. I see wild leopards killing me, tearing apart my body, between Nawawi's and Karbala."

Imam Husain knew that he would not reach Kufa, the capital of Syria. He knew that he would be killed

by men who were like ferocious beasts, cutting his body to pieces. He undertook the journey for the purpose of martyrdom and not for political reasons.

Along the way he told people of his impending death. He told his companions and relatives that one instance was sufficient to prove the worthlessness of this world. He said that after the beheading of the Prophet John, the head was presented to an adulteress. He said that his own head would soon be taken to the drunkard, Yazid.

Consider the matter for a moment. Hurr Ibn Yazid Riyahi with a cavalry of 1,000 soldiers obstructed Husain's way. Kufa was only thirty miles away. Hur had been appointed by Ubaidullah Ibn Ziyad to detain Imam Husain. Hur would neither let him proceed to Kufa, nor leave his company without further orders. Why did the Imam surrender himself to Hur? If Husain had sought political power, he certainly would never have been stopped by Hur, who had not more than 1,000 soldiers.

The Imam had 1,300 soldiers. Having defeated them, the Imam could have reached Kufa, where he had widespread support. From there, being reinforced, he could have confronted the enemy and gained domination. But he accepted Hur's order, stopped there in the desert surrounded by the enemy. After four days enemy reinforcements arrived there, and the Prophet's son was forced to endure cruel suffering.

The best evidence in support of my view is the Imam's address on the night before The Day of Ashura. Until that night 1,300 soldiers were ready to fight for him. Husain gathered the people together and told them: "Those who have come here for worldly gain should know that tomorrow whoever remains on this soil will be killed. The enemy is after me alone; I lift the binding force of allegiance from your necks. It is night, and you can depart in the darkness."

Many accepted his proposal and departed. Only 42 people remained, 18 Bani Hashim and 24 companions. After midnight, 30 enemy soldiers moved toward the Imam's camp for a night attack, but when they heard Husain reciting the Holy Qur'an, they were filled with emotion and joined the Imam. These were the 72 people who sacrificed their lives on the Day of Ashura. Most of them were pious people, and many were reciters of the Holy Qur'an.

Husain's noble sacrifices are acknowledged today by friend and foe alike. Even those alien to our religion are impressed by his heroism. In the French *Da'iratu'l-Ma'arif*, there is a lengthy article entitled "Three Martyrs" written by a learned British woman. Her theme is that in all of history there have been three martyrs who, by sacrificing their lives, have been most influential in advancing the cause of truth. The first was Socrates, and the second was Jesus (the writer was a Christian).

We Muslims, of course, believe that Jesus was not crucified. The Holy Qur'an clearly says:

"And they did not kill him nor did they crucify him, but it appeared to them so (like Jesus) and most surely those who differ therein are only in doubt about it. They have no knowledge

concerning it, but only follow conjecture. They did not kill him for certain. Nay! Allah took him up to Himself. " (4: 157-158)

The third martyr she writes, was Husain, the grandson of Muhammad. She writes: "When we take stock of historical events and assess the circumstances under which these three persons offered their lives, we acknowledge that the sacrifices of Husain excelled those two. The fact was that Socrates and Christ offered only their own lives for sacrifice in the way of God, but Husain left his home for a distant desert land to be surrounded by the enemy.

He and his entire family were martyred for the cause of truth. He sent his friends and relations to confront the enemy and to sacrifice their lives for the religion of Allah. This was in fact harder than giving up his own life."

The most glaring example of the tyranny suffered by Husain was the brutal murder of his six-month old son. He brought the baby in his hands asking for water for him (which was in abundance), but the ruthless enemy, instead of giving him water, killed the child with an arrow.

The enemy's barbarism proves that Imam Husain was a victim of tyranny. His incredible forbearance completely ruined the power of the Bani Umayya and condemned them before the world. It was due to his, and his respected Ahlul Bayt's, sacrifices that the religion of Muhammad received new life.

Nawab Sahib: We are really much indebted to you. We have been very impressed by your explanation of the facts concerning Imam Husain. Until now, we have followed other people and have been deprived of the blessings of ziarat (pilgrimage to the Holy tomb of the Imam).

We were told that to visit Imam Husain's shrine was bidat "innovation." Of course, what a good innovation it is, since it inspires man and helps him understand the truth about the descendants of the Prophet.

Real meaning of bidat (innovation)

Well-Wisher: The word "bidat," "innovation," has its origin in the sect of the Sunni ulama' and of the Nasibis and Kharijis, who were confirmed enemies of 'Ali. They have called Ziarat "innovation" without considering the fact that bidat refers to something concerning the Prophet or his Ahlul Bayt, which has not been enjoined by Allah.

However, concerning the question of visiting Husain's tomb, there are many hadith in the books of your own ulama'. I confine myself to one famous hadith recorded in all books of maqatil and collections of hadith.

"One day the Prophet was in A'ysha's apartment when Husain came in. The Prophet took him in his arms, kissed him and smelt him. A'ysha asked: 'May my father's and mother's lives be sacrificed to you!

How much you love Husain!' The Prophet said, 'Don't you know that this child is a part of my liver and my flower?' After that the Prophet began to weep. A'ysha asked the cause of his weeping. The Prophet replied that he kissed the places where the Bani Umayya would wound Husain. A'ysha asked if they would kill him.

He said, 'Yes, he will be murdered. They will never have my support (in the hereafter). Blessed is he who goes on a pilgrimage to his tomb after his martyrdom.' A'ysha asked the Prophet what would be the reward for the pilgrim.

The Prophet said, 'It will be equal to one Hajj of mine.' A'ysha said, 'One Hajj of yours!' He said, 'Nay, two,' When A'ysha again expressed astonishment, he said 'Nay, four Hajj.' The more astonished she became the higher was the reward, until at last he said, 'A'ysha! If a person goes on a pilgrimage to Husain's tomb, Allah will give him the reward equivalent to 90 Hajj and 90 Umra performed by me.' Then A'ysha fell silent."

Now I ask you, is such a pilgrimage an innovation?

Effects of visiting shrines of the Holy Imams

There are other benefits to be gained from visiting the tombs of the Imams. The inner precincts of the shrine, called the haram, remain open for visitors day and night. The haram and the mosques near it are usually found packed to capacity with pilgrims and worshipers.

Those accustomed to offering no more than the obligatory prayers often make special devotional efforts while visiting Holy shrines. They invoke Allah sincerely and recite the Qur'an. Is such devotion an innovation?

Nawab: Of course we have no one to blame but ourselves if we have not examined these matters more closely. A few years ago I went to Baghdad to visit the tombs of Imam A'zam Abu Hanifa and Abdu'l-Qadir Jilani. One day I went to visit nearby Kazimain (the burial place of the seventh Imam, Musa Ibn Ja'far Al-Kazim and the ninth Imam, Muhammad Ibn 'Ali At-Taqi).

When I returned, my companions were harsh in their criticism of me. I'm surprised that a visit to the tombs of Imam A'zam in Mu'azam, Sheikh Abdu'l-Qadir in Baghdad, of Khwaja Nizamu'd-Din in India, of Sheikh Akbar Muhyi'd-din Ibn Arabi in Egypt may be considered worth rewarding.

Every year many people from among the Sunnis visit these places although the Prophet never recommended it. How can it be that a visit to the tomb of the great martyr, the grandson of the Prophet, which the Prophet recommended, be considered bidat? I firmly resolve that, Allah willing, I will go this year to visit the tomb of the beloved grandson of the Prophet, Husain. I will ask Allah to forgive me for my past faults.

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