

“(O Ahle-Bait (a.s.)) whoever emulates you his destination is paradise, while whoever opposes you then he is doomed to hell. Whoever denies your status is a disbeliever and whoever wages a war against you is a polytheist. Whoever rejects you will be hurled to the lowest levels of hell” (Ziarat Jameah Kabeera narrated from Hazrat Ali ibne Mohammed an Naqi (a.s.))

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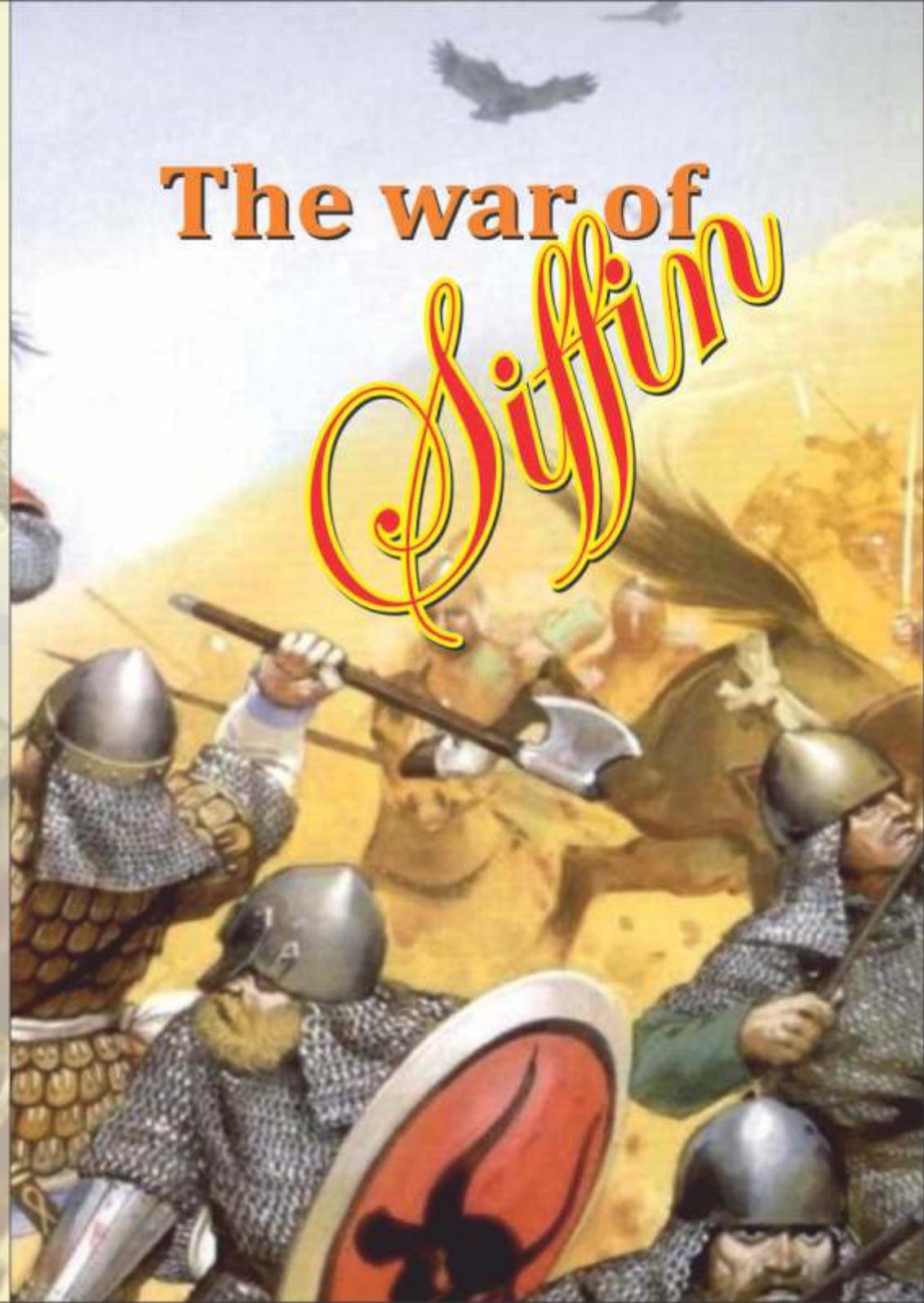
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The war of Dishin



The War Of Siffin

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2 armies

110 days

90 clashes

25,000 martyred from the army of Hazrat Ali (a.s.)

45,000 muslims killed from fighting for Mu'awiyah

80 from Battle of Badr martyred in army of I. Ali (a.s.)

TO SEEK Qisas (compensation) for the blood of

1 person

NO

It was a war of a rebellious governor against his Caliph.

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In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful And

By the remembrance of His Last Proof (a.t.f.s.)

Preface

In 1965, a Bohri Alawi Muslim with pure intention went for the Search of Truth about the Imamate of the Imams after Imam Jafar-e-Sadiq (a.s.). In his sincere efforts he was helped by an Alim-e-Rabbani Maulana Maulana Sayed Gulam Hasan Askari Saheb. By the grace of Allah, he came to the conclusion that after Imam-e-Sadiq (a.s.), Imam Moosa Kazim (a.s.) is the RIGHT and DIVINELY appointed Imam. By 1970, there were about six Bohra families who accepted the Shia Ithna-Ashari Faith. In 1971, a Jamaat – ‘Bohra Shia Ithna Ashari Jamat’ was formed and registered with the Charity Commissioner to take care about the new families.

Since then its members have tried to spread the truth through various platforms and media. The first book printed by the Jamaat was ‘From Darkness towards Light - (A True story of an Ismaili Mustali Bohra accepting Shia faith).

In the month of Shabaan 1433 AH, the Jamaat had the opportunity of publishing a booklet about Ghaibat of Imam Mahdi (a.t.f.s.).

The book in your hand is continuation of endeavor of the Jamaat to spread the correct belief of the true Ghadeeri Islam. The book dwells into the causes and the consequences of the important event of Islam i.e. The War of Siffin.

We sincerely hope that the youths of our society acquire lessons from this historic event and apply them in their lives.

May Allah accept our endeavors

Bohra Shia Ithna Ashari Jamat

The War Of Siffin

This book is a compilation of historical events quoted from reliable books of history.

This compilation is a selection mainly of events mentioned in the BIOGRAPHY OF IMAM ‘ALĪ IBN ABĪ-TĀLIB, Translation of SIRAT AMIR AL-MU’MININ By: MUFTI JA’FAR HUSAYN TRANSLATED BY: SAYYID TĀHIR BILGRAMI Revised by Badr Shahin Publisher: Ansariyan Publications – Qum and a few sermons from Nahjul Balagha apart from other reliable sources.

Chapter 1

Mu'awiyah the self-imposed ruler

Syria was the cradle of the Umayyad power and the capital of Mu'awiyah ibn Abi-Sufyan. He was appointed as Governor of the region by the second caliph. As a result of the length of his presence in the region he had superimposed himself and was ruling from Damascus like an autocratic king. When Amir al-Mu'minin Ali ibn Abi Taleb (a.s.) assumed the office of the caliph, he wanted to bring about a total change in the administration. Hence, he put all the governors under notice of change. Qays ibn Sa'd was sent as the governor to Egypt, 'Uqiabaydullah ibn 'Abbas as Governor to Yemen, and 'Uthman ibn Hunayf as Governor to al-Basrah. They took charge of the provinces without any problems. The Imam (a.s.) sent 'Imarah ibn Shihab towards al-Kūfah and Sahl ibn Hunayf to Syria.

While on his way to al-Kūfah, when 'Imarah stopped at Zabalāh, Talhah ibn Khuwaylid al-Asadi stopped him and threatened to kill him if he did not return back.

When Sahl ibn Hunayf reached the valley of Taboo on his way to Syria, a unit of men appointed by Mu'awiyah stopped him and asked his purpose of visit to Syria. When told, they blatantly refuted his position and said that the people of Syria would not accept anyone as their ruler except Mu'awiyah. They too warned him to return or risk being killed by them. Due to the sheer number of his opponents Sahl too was forced to return back.

Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) knew from the outset that Mu'awiyah would not give up his the position easily. He also knew that one day the flames of battle would rise between the Syrians and people of al-

Kūfah. But he did not want to precipitate matters and wished to make all possible efforts for a peaceful settlement. Therefore, he sent al-Hajjaj ibn Ghaziyah al-Ansari with a letter to Mu'awiyah and asked him to come with a delegation of Syrians to al-Madinah to owe his allegiance to the Imam (a.s.).

Rebellion of Mu'awiyah

Mu'awiyah read the letter but did not give it any importance and asked al-Hajjaj to return back. He later sent Qabisah al-'Absi to Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) with a note that only stated:

“From Mu'awiyah ibn Abi-Sufyan to Hazrat Ali ibn Abi-Talib.”

The Imam (a.s.) asked the meaning of the note. Qabisah attempted to advise the Imam that in Damascus there were more than 50,000 high ranking elite crying over the bloodied cloak of 'Uthman. Their beards are wet with tears and the sounds of wailing are emanating from the place. They had taken an oath that til they do not color their swords with the blood of the killers of 'Uthman, they would not rest.

When Khalid ibn Zufar al-'Abasei heard this he commented that 'Uthman's cloak is not Yūsuf's cloth nor their wailing the cries and mournings of Ya'qūb (a.s.).”

When Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) saw this attitude of Mu'awiyah, he decided to go to Damascus to admonish him. Before he even commenced the journey, the news of the mischief of Talhah and al-Zubayr reached him. Instead of going to Syria he had to first go to al-Basrah and crush the rebellion of the owners of the camel.

When he returned to al-Kūfah after that campaign, he decided to send another messenger to Mu'awiyah. The deposed governor of Yemen, Jarir ibn 'Abdullah al-Bujali offered his services for the task and said that his long-standing relationship with Mu'awiyah will help

him in convincing Mu'awiyah for the *bay'ah*.

Malik al-Ashtar opposed this idea and said that the person was secretly a friend of the Syrians. He expressed his fear that instead of resolving the matter, he might harm the interests of the Imam (a.s.). Nevertheless, the Imam (a.s.) allowed Jarir to go with a letter to Syria. The contents were

“The Muhajirūn and Ansar have owed their allegiance to me. You do not have any justification to refuse allegiance to me. You must adopt the same attitude as was done by the people of al-Madinah.

As far as the matter for the qisas of 'Uthman is concerned, you can discuss the subject with me after owing your allegiance to me. I shall decide about it in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah.”

When Mu'awiyah read the letter he replied to Jarir: “You ask Hazrat Ali (a.s.) to give the territory of Syria to me, then I shall do the *bay'ah*.”

He asked Jarir to wait there for a few days so that he would discuss the matter with the people of Syria and take their opinion. He consulted his brother 'Utbah ibn Abi-Sufyan who opined that he should seek the wisdom of 'Amr ibn al-'As. Mu'awiyah agreed and wrote a letter to Amr ibn al-'As. The letter stated: “You must have learned what treatment Hazrat Ali (a.s.) has given to Talhah, al-Zubayr and Umm al-Mu'minin. Now he is turning towards me. He has sent Jarir ibn 'Abdullah al-Bujali to me seeking my *bay'ah*. I will not take any steps without consulting you. Therefore, come immediately to me.”

Mu'awiyah seeks support of Amr ibn Aas

'Amr read the letter and realised that Mu'awiyah did not need any advice about the *bay'ah* because the consequence of owing his

allegiance would mean the loss of the Governorate of Syria and at any cost he would not like to give up the post. The intention was create an opportunity to fight against 'Hazrat Ali (a.s.).

'Amr may have decided his stand but still took the opinion of his two sons 'Abdullah and Muhammad. 'Abdullah said that he had no chance of becoming the caliph, it would be better for him to sit quietly at home and do not compromise his faith for a little worldly benefit. Contrary to this, Muhammad opined that he should not miss such a golden opportunity. He said that such opportunities do not come every day. He added that he was not an unknown person in Arabia and that his opinion had weight. As a new establishment was taking shape and his opinion would be of great help in the process. He insisted that when decisions are made about the caliphate, his being away from action was unimaginable.

After hearing both the sons' opinions, 'Amr said:

“O 'Abdullah what you have said is beneficial for my Hereafter and my faith too will remain firm. O Muhammad. What you have suggested is best for me from the worldly point of view and not for the Hereafter.”

Amr asked his slave Wardan about his opinion. He said, “You are on such a cross-road where there is the world on one side and the hereafter on the other. The world is with Mu'awiyah and the Hereafter with Hazrat Ali (a.s.). Sometimes you bend towards the world and at other times think of the Hereafter. It would be better if you sit quietly at home and not side with anyone. But I have a feeling that there is a turmoil going on in your mind and you will, in the end, opt for the world and prefer Mu'awiyah over Hazrat 'Ali (a.s.)”

Hearing this 'Amr said, “Only Allah will appreciate the vision of Wardan. He has exposed the hidden fact.”

'Amr ibn al-'As was very keen for the post of governorate of Egypt and felt there would not be a better opportunity to fulfill this long-standing wish.

He therefore, decided to visit Mu'awiyah with his two sons and Wardan.

Mu'awiyah put before him 3 issues that were troubling him:

First - Muhammad ibn Abi-Hudhayfah has escaped from the jail with his men. Mu'awiyah feared danger from him and his men.

Second - Caesar of Rome is planning to attack Syria to annex this territory.

Third - Jarir ibn 'Abdullah al-Bujali has brought a message from Hazrat 'Ali (a.s.) that I must owe my allegiance to him or prepare for battle."

'Amr's solution and reply was:

"If Ibn Abi-Hudhayfah has escaped, you must not have any fear from him. Send some riders to chase him. If he were held, it would be fine. Even otherwise, he cannot cause any harm to you."

"To relieve the possibility of attack by Caesar, release all the Romans in captivity with you. And send to him some slave girls and handicrafts of gold and silver as gifts along with an offer for peace. He would not turn down this gesture."

"However, the problem of 'Ali ibn Abi-Talib (a.s.) is different. The world knows that he is an experienced general. He is capable of the position that he is holding. There is no comparison between him and you."

Mu'awiyah replied, "I do not deny his capability. But he has given air to mischief and encouraged the killers of 'Uthman in their cruel deed. Therefore it is our duty to claim *qisas* from him. I have called you to discuss about the matter of claiming the *qisas*"

Intentions of Mu'awiyah

'Amr realized that Mu'awiyah was not coming out honestly with him and retorted, "You have called me to gather people under your flag, but not being honest with me. Who will trust you that you want to fight a war for avenging the blood of 'Uthman? The world knows that during the siege 'Uthman had pleaded you for help. But you did not pay any heed to his call. Even I moved away to Palestine leaving him to the mercy of the rebels. If you really want me to cooperate with you, then you must talk openly to me. We know each other very well. The truth is that Hazrat 'Ali's services to Islam, his superiority in learning, his precedence in accepting the Faith and Migration are such that I do not have the courage to fight with him. It will be the work of a person with great courage."

Mu'awiyah knew 'Amr would be looking for a huge compensation for his cooperation. When asked, 'Amr said: "Until you rule, the state of Egypt must be under me."

When Mu'awiyah heard this claim, he was stunned. The price asked was far more than he expected. However, he was in no position to turn down his demand nor did he wish to accept it. He stared at 'Amr and said, "I can make a false promise, but I do not want to take you up the garden path." 'Amr, "Try to cheat me. I have the means of handling every trick." Mu'awiyah said: "I suggest that you reconsider your demand. If you remain insistent, people would say that to grab the emirate of Egypt you have taken the step."

'Amr replied, "What people will say does not bother me. No excuses from you will work with me. If you agree to the demand I have made, I shall support you wholeheartedly. Otherwise, you do what suits you." Saying this 'Amr got up as if to leave.

When 'Utbah ibn Abi-Sufyan heard about this conversation, he told

Mu'awiyah: "We are not willing to buy 'Amr by parting with Egypt."

Mu'awiyah said, "I have not made any decision as yet. Tonight I shall think over it." He spent the night in deep thought and decided that to make use of the cunning and shrewdness of 'Amr he will have to promise parting away Egypt to him. Therefore, he called 'Amr and finalized the deal with him. He wrote out a formal agreement and handed over to him. Taking the document, 'Amr came back to his residence happily and mentioned about it to a cousin of his. The cousin knit his brows and said, "I wonder what face you will show to the Quraysh? How will you spend an honorable life with your tribe when you are already infamous for your habit of selling your faith?" 'Amr said, "If I was with Hazrat 'Ali (a.s.), the four walls of my house would be sufficient for me. Now I am with Mu'awiyah and cannot sit content with the four walls of my house. "His cousin said, "Mu'awiyah has certainly bought your faith. You are after him for worldly gains."

When Mu'awiyah heard of this talk, he was very upset. He ordered 'Amr's cousin to be arrested so that he would not be able to misguide others. When he heard about the plans for his arrest, he quietly fled to al-Kūfah to meet Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.). Through him, the news of 'Amr's agreement with Mu'awiyah was relayed.

Satanic Plan of 'Amr ibn al-'As

Once the agreement was in place, 'Amr offered Mu'awiyah a farsighted way forward. He suggested that it was better not to bring up the matter of the caliphate for the time being. Instead efforts be made to convince the people of Syria that the responsibility of the assassination of 'Uthman rested on Hazrat 'Ali (a.s.) and that he had encouraged people to commit the act. Thereafter he gave protection to the killers. When this propaganda would sink into the minds of the

people, a formal war could be declared against Hazrat Ali (a.s.). After the war, the question of authority would automatically be resolved.

However, to win the public opinion the support of some prominent persons would be needed. 'Abadah ibn Samit al-Ansari who was present in Syria and had great influence over the people would have to be approached. If they were able to influence his thinking, then every individual in Syria would be with Mu'awiyah.

Mu'awiyah appreciated this suggestion and sent out a messenger to call 'Abadah.

When 'Abadah came to Mu'awiyah, he and 'Amr were sitting shoulder to shoulder. Seeing 'Abadah, they stood up respectfully. 'Abadah went forward and sat between them. To gain his favor, Mu'awiyah showered him with praises. He then narrated the good qualities of 'Uthman. He said that he wanted that the blood of Uthman should not go waste and, therefore, they wanted his support for claiming *qisas* for his blood.

After they finished, 'Abadah asked them if they knew why he chose to sit between both of them. Mu'awiyah said that it was because he was superior to both of them and hence rightly sat in between both. Abadah said that was not the reason. He said that it was because during the ghazwah Tabūk, the Prophet (a.s.) was traveling when he saw both Mu'awiyah and 'Amr together talking, and he remarked:

"When you find them sitting together, separate them, because they will never be together for any virtuous work."

After hearing Mu'awiyah's reasons, 'Abadah in his wisdom decided that he was not willing to support their cause.

Next, Mu'awiyah, on the advice of 'Amr, posted Yazid ibn Asad, Busr

ibn Arta'ah, Sufyan ibn 'Umar, Makharaq ibn al-Harith, Hamzah ibn Malik, Habis ibn Sa'd and some elite of Yemen with instructions that when Shurahbil passed that way, they should give an impression that it was a chance meeting and try to create an impression on his mind that the responsibility for the assassination of 'Uthman rested on none other than Hazrat 'Ali ibn Abi-Talib (a.s.). Therefore, wherever he halted, they were repeating the story. When he entered the border of Damascus, Mu'awiyah sent the elites of the city to receive him. They too gave him an impression that Hazrat 'Ali (a.s.) was responsible for the killing of 'Uthman.

When he reached Mu'awiyah along with the reception group, he received him warmly and after exchange of pleasantries, he told him that Hazrat 'Ali (a.s.) was seeking his *bay'ah*. He said that although he was not against this in principle, but has reservations that he is the killer of 'Uthman. Shurahbil asked him about his decision in those circumstances. Mu'awiyah replied that he was willing to owe allegiance to Hazrat 'Ali (a.s.) if the people of Syria wanted it. But if they did not then he shall abide by their opinion. Mu'awiyah said that he had invited Shurahbil to seek his opinion. Shurahbil said that he wanted some more time to go round and gather information on the people's opinion about the killing of 'Uthman. Mu'awiyah agreed that it would be the right thing to do. He went round the city and every person he met, said that Hazrat 'Ali (a.s.) was responsible for the killing of 'Uthman. What else would they say? Their minds were either brainwashed or mouths were sealed due to the oppression of Mu'awiyah. Everywhere there were spies of Mu'awiyah. When Shurahbil returned, his emotions were charged. He told Mu'awiyah: "No one can deny that Ibn Abi-Talib has killed 'Uthman. If you owe your allegiance to him, we shall chase you away from Syria."

When Mu'awiyah saw that Shurahbil was totally under his spell, he

matched his tone with his and said that if his view was so strong, his own opinion too was that 'Uthman was killed for no fault of his and they should not owe allegiance to his killers. Their first duty, he said, should be to avenge the killing. However it was not possible without the support of public opinion. And this could only be possible if they could prove to them that Hazrat Ali (a.s.) was the killer of 'Uthman. Mu'awiyah stressed that no one had the kind of influence on the Syrians as he had. He asked Shurahbil to travel to all parts of Syria and build public opinion. Shurahbil was highly emotional and immediately agreed to take up the journey.

When the people of al-Kūfah heard that Mu'awiyah was creating doubts in the minds of the people and egging on to waging a war, they asked Hazrat Ali (a.s.) to make a pre-emptive attack on Syria. But the Imam (a.s.) said that until Jarir did not return with a decision for war or peace, it was not advisable to start war. It was already four months since Jarir reached Syria. Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) was repeatedly writing to him to get a final word and return urgently. But Mu'awiyah was delaying him with some excuse or another to gain time and prepare the people of Syria for going to war. When he was assured of the support of Shurahbil, and the events were shaping the way he wanted, he called Jarir and said: "Go to your Emir now and tell him that the people of Syria would not owe their allegiance to him."

Meanwhile, Shurahbil went from town to town, and village to village announcing that Hazrat Ali (a.s.) had killed 'Uthman and they should rise to seek *qisas* for his blood. He also stated that those who claimed *qisas*, Hazrat Ali (a.s.) attacked and killed them and occupied their cities and their properties. He told them that only Syria remained. He urged the people of Syria to join hands and fight with him for the *qisas*. He appealed to them to join under the flag of the emir of Syria.

Shurahbil was very influential in the territory. People gathered in large numbers and assembled to join the forces of Mu'awiyah.

In addition to the people of Syria, Banū-Umayyah and those who supported them too assembled in Damascus. The chief of these persons were Mughirah ibn Shu'bah, 'Abdullah ibn Sa'd, Marwan ibn al-Hakam, Sa'id ibn al-'As, 'Abdullah ibn 'Amir, al-Walid ibn 'Uqbah, 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Umar, Sa'id ibn 'Uthman, Abū-Hurayrah, Hudhayfah, Abū-Umamah al-Bahili and al-Nu'man ibn Bashir. The first to arrive among them was al-Nu'man ibn Bashir. He brought along the bloodied cloak of 'Uthman and the severed fingers of his wife, Na'ilah bint Farfasah. Mu'awiyah hung the cloak and the fingers over the pulpit of the Masjid of Damascus to arouse the feelings of the people. After the men assembled in Damascus, the accessories of war were arranged.

Chapter 2

War against Mu'awiyah

When Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) heard of this activity, he decided to advance his armies towards Syria. On a Friday, giving the Sermon from the pulpit, he said:

“O People. Move towards the enemies of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Go to meet the killers of Ansar and the Muhajirūn. Go to face those mean and impertinent people who had accepted Islam out of fear. Rise that they refrain from killing and destroying the Muslims.”

A person from the tribe of Fazarah, whose name was Arbad, stood up and said, “Do you want that, the way you took us to al-Basrah to kill our own brothers, we attack our brothers in Syria and kill them? By Allah. We are not ready to do this.” Malik al-Ashtar realised that he was an agent of Mu'awiyah and was trying to create a strife in the ranks of Hazrat Ali's army. He ordered the people to catch him but he fled. He was eventually caught in the neighborhood of al-Kunnasah. He was trampled under their feet so much that he died at the spot. Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) decided that his killer could not be identified and therefore ordered paying the blood money for his life from the *bayt al-mal*. The Imam (a.s.) was upset with this incident. Malik al-Ashtar assured the Imam that the people were firmly behind him and that he should not give any credence to the incident. He said that they were obedient to him and would fight for him until they died. Similarly, other people too came up with their assurances.

Movement of the army of Kufah

When all the fighters of al-Kūfah assembled under his flag, the Imam (a.s.) selected ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Amr al-Ansari as his representative and declaring al-Nukhaylah as the cantonment ordered Malik ibn Habib al-Yarbū’i to stay in al-Kūfah so that he could direct the late arrivals to go and join the army. The Imam (a.s.) left al-Kūfah with the army and camped at al-Nukhaylah. He sent letters to the functionaries in different provinces to mobilize men and materials and immediately report with updates. ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas from al-Basrah, Mikhnaf ibn Sulaym from Isfahan, Sa’id ibn Wahab from Hamdan and functionaries of other territories reached with their men and materials. Among them, there was a group who had participated in the Battle of Badr and also those who took part in the bay’at al-ridwan.

Hakim writes: “In the Battle of Siffin there were 80 veterans of the Battle of Badr with Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and 250 of those Companions who were present at the *bay’at al-ridwan*.”

The Valley of al-Nukhaylah was overflowing with armed men and as Amir al-Mu’minin was organizing them, information reached him that the Syrian army was moving towards the Iraqi borders. The Imam (a.s.) sent an advance guard of 8,000 men under Ziyad ibn al-Nadr al-Harithi and another of 4,000 men under Shurayh ibn al-Harith for patrolling the borders and to inspect the strength and dispositions of the enemy troops. He gave them strict instructions not to initiate fighting unless they received the Imam’s orders, or the enemy attacked.

For better management of the troops, Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) divided the army into seven groups. There was a commander for each of these groups.

On the fourth day of the dispatch of the advanced guards, i.e. 5th Shawwal 36H, he started with his huge army from the Valley of al-Nukhaylah. After crossing the Euphrates, they came outside the limits of al-Kūfah. On the banks of the River Tigris, near Sabat, there is the city of al-Mada’in. The people of al-Mada’in had not yet joined the army of Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.). He ordered al-Harith ibn ‘Abdullah al-A’war to tell the people of al-Mada’in that their strong young men must join the ‘Asr Prayer. When the men came, the Imam (a.s.) said, “I am surprised that you are keeping away from our army. The enemy forces are advancing towards us.” They said, “O Amir al-Mu’minin. We were awaiting your orders. We shall abide by whatever orders are given to us.” He asked ‘Adi Ibn Hatam and his son Zayd to recruit men from al-Mada’in. ‘Adi mobilized eight hundred men in a stay of three days and Zayd ibn ‘Adi recruited four hundred men. They joined the advancing army. From al-Mada’in, the Imam (a.s.) sent a contingent of three thousand men under Ma’qil ibn Qays ahead of the army and told him that the army was proceeding to al-Riqqah and he should go with the contingent to al-Mawsil which was a halting place for caravans those days and asked him to come to al-Riqqah via Nasibahin. Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) left al-Mada’in and halted at Bahurasir. This was the picnic spot of the kings of Persia where pleasant gardens grew and palaces for the kings were constructed in the past. The cruel hands of time had destroyed everything. In place of the palaces, there were mounds of rubble. When Hurayz ibn Sahm saw these ruins, he recited Ibn Ya’qūb al-Tamimi’s couplet: “Where there houses were, winds are blowing, It appears they were inhabited for a limited period.”

When the Imam (a.s.) heard this couplet, he said, instead of the couplet he should have recited the following Verse of the Holy Qur’an:

كَمْ تَرَكُوا مِنْ جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ۖ وَزُرُوعٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ ۗ وَنَعْمَةً كَانُوا
 فِيهَا مُكْهَبِينَ ۗ كَذَلِكَ ۖ وَآوَرْنَاهَا قَوْمًا آخَرِينَ ۗ فَمَا بَكَتْ
 عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَاءُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَا كَانُوا مُنظَرِينَ ۚ

“How many of the gardens and fountains have they left, and cornfields and noble places, and goodly things wherein they rejoiced. Thus (it was), and We gave them as a heritage to another people. So, the heaven and the earth did not weep for them, nor were they respited.”¹

From Bahurasir they arrived at al-Anbar. The non-Arab inhabitants, Banū-Khushnushak, started jumping and running when they saw the Imam (a.s.) with the army. The Imam (a.s.) asked the reason of their behaviour. They replied that it was their custom to welcome the rulers in that manner. The Imam (a.s.) said that the custom would benefit neither their ruler nor them. He asked them to stop that futile practice. After the customary welcome, the people offered supplies of horses, mules and fodder and wanted to arrange food for the men. The Imam (a.s.) did not agree to have food but accepted the horses and mules provided their value be adjusted against the tribute they paid. After spending two days at al-Anbar the army proceeded towards Hit and from there they went to Aqtar and halted there. They crossed the Euphrates and reached Ard al-Jaza’ir. Namr ibn Qasit along with the tribe of Banū-Taghlib gave a grand reception to the Imam (a.s.) and his army. When they proceeded from there, they reached near Qarqisiyah where they saw that the advance guards

¹Surah Dukhan (44): 25-29

under Ziyad ibn al-Nadr and Shurayh ibn Hani’ were arriving from different routes.

The Imam (a.s.) remarked, “It is a very interesting advance guard that is arriving after the main army.” Ziyad and Shurayh were apologetic and said, “when we started from al-Nukhaylah, we reached l’anat along the river bank. Upon reaching there we learnt that you had crossed over to Ard al-Jaza’ir. We feared that if our small contingent came across Mu’awiyah’s army, we would not be able to oppose with them and because of the river being between us it would not be possible to get immediate relief from you too. We thought of crossing over the river from l’anat but the people there removed the bridge and locked themselves up in the fort. We were therefore forced to retrace our steps and from Hit we have reached here.” The Imam (a.s.) considered their excuse admissible and proceeded further. When they reached near the town of al-Riqqah, they established camp near the Balaq Canal. Ma’qil ibn Qays, whom the Imam (a.s.) had sent with a contingent of 3,000 men from al-Mada’in, via Nasibahin, too reached al-Riqqah. Al-Riqqah is situated on the Eastern bank of the River Euphrates and the army had to cross over to the Western bank. But the population of al-Riqqah consisted of supporters of ‘Uthman, and Simak ibn Makhramah al-Asadi, who was staying there with 800 of his tribesmen, too was a supporter of the Syrians. These people had started from al-Kūfah to join Mu’awiyah and under instructions from him were trying to create hurdles in the way of the Imam’s movement. Therefore, they removed the bridge from the river and hid themselves in their homes. Despite this mischief, Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) did not want to have any conflict with them and, with his army, proceeded further along the bank of the river to cross it at the next bridge enroute. Malik al-Ashtar was very disturbed with this mischief of the people of Banū-Asad. When Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) went further, Malik challenged and

threatened Banū-Asad and warned them that if they did not erect the bridge by joining the boats, he would burn down the entire habitation. This threat was effective. The people came out of their homes and agreed to erect the bridge. Malik sent word to Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) that he must return back for the bridge was being erected. The Imam (a.s.) came back with his men and crossed to the western bank of the river

The coward Syrians attack the sleeping army

Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) once again sent Ziyad ibn al-Nadr and Shurayh Ibn Hani', with small contingents, as advance guards towards Syria. When they reached Sūr al-Rūm, they saw that Abul-A'war al-Salami camped with twenty five thousand Syrian troops. They immediately sent a letter with al-Harith ibn Hambahan to the Imam (a.s.) alerting about this. Upon getting this information Imam (a.s.) sent Malik al-Ashtar with 3,000 men and asked him to take command of the situation. He was however instructed not to commence fighting unless the enemy initiated it. In the event of a fight starting, he was instructed to be at the center of the formation, to keep Ziyad on the right flank and Shurayh on the left. He was also instructed not to go very close to the enemy formation that they may think that he was very keen to fight, nor should he be at such a long distance that they might think he was scared of the fight.

The Imam (a.s.) added that he would follow them with the rest of the army. Malik started immediately, and with the contingents of Ziyad and Shurayh, he halted at a reasonable distance from the Syrian force. Although both the armies were face to face, Malik took care not to give the impression that he had any immediate intention of hostilities. Abul-A'war too gave an impression that he did not want immediate clashes. At nightfall, Abul-A'war took advantage of the

darkness and made a surprise attack. Malik and his men warded the attack and forced the enemy to retreat.

This act of theirs meant that they had commenced the fight. At dawn, Malik al-Ashtar and Hashim ibn 'Utbah took a group of Mirqal cavaliers and footmen and advanced towards the enemy troops. For sometime intense fighting took place. Then the Syrian's famous warrior, 'Abdullah ibn al-Mundhir al-Tanūkhi, was killed along with some of his accompanying riders. Abul-A'war withdrew and stopped at a safe distance. Malik wanted to teach him a lesson for the breach of the norms of war that he had made. Therefore, he asked a youth of his tribe, Sinan ibn Malik al-Nakha'i, to go to Abul-A'war and challenge him for a man-to-man fight.

Sinan was perplexed and asked Malik: "Should I ask him for a fight with me or with you?" Malik replied, "If I order you, will you be ready to combat with him?" The youth replied, "By Allah. If you order me, I shall break their ranks, attack and kill him." Malik smiled and praised the youth's bravery and said, "You are not any less in bravery and status. But you are still a youth and he may not like to combat with a youth. You must go and challenge for a fight with me." Sinan got up and upon reaching near the camp of the enemy shouted, "I am a messenger, give me protection." The Syrians agreed to his demand. He went to Abul-A'war and conveyed Malik's message.

At first Abul-A'war remained thoughtful with bowed head. Then he said, "Is it the same Malik who attacked the house of 'Uthman and was involved in his assassination? He is a mischief monger and all the problems are because of him."

Sinan said, "Now listen to my reply to what you have said."

Abul-A'war said, "I am not willing to hear anything from you nor will I give any reply to the message you have brought."

When Sinan wanted to say something, the Syrians jumped at him and pushed him out of their camp. This challenge of Malik left such fear on the heart of al-A'war that in the darkness of the night he slinked away from there with his men and reached Afih where Mu'awiyah was camping with his army.

Mu'awiyah obstructs water supply

When Mu'awiyah heard about the arrival of the Iraqi army and the clashes, he told Abul-A'war and Sufyan ibn 'Umar that they should go forward and select a suitable battlefield and inform him of the selection. They selected Siffin which was situated on the western bank of Euphrates between al-Riqqah and Balus. They selected a strategically suitable place and established camp. Mu'awiyah reached the place along with his army. He ordered Abul-A'war to stand with ten thousand men at the river and prevent the Iraqis to draw water.

Malik al-Ashtar too kept advancing with his men. When they reached Siffin, they were taken aback seeing the huge army of the enemy and established camp at a distance from them. The following day, Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) too arrived with his army. He noted that the Syrians had established camp on the level ground and had blocked the approaches to the river. Whenever any Iraqis went for water, they were pushed back. He asked his men to look for some other bank to draw their requirement of water.

When there was no source of water in sight, the Imam (a.s.) sent word to Mu'awiyah with Sa'sa'ah ibn Sawhan that he did not wish to commence the fight before placing the facts before the enemy. He also requested him to allow his army to draw water as he did not want to wage a war for water. However, if he did not allow, then the Imam would have no choice but to fight.

When Mu'awiyah heard the message, he consulted his advisers. Al-

Walid ibn 'Uqbah said: "Deny them the water and let them die of thirst. May Allah kill them. They had given the same treatment to Amir al-Mu'minin 'Uthman."

'Abdullah ibn Abi-Sarh said: "Keep them away from the water the whole night. When they fail in getting supply of water, they will retreat. This retreat will be their defeat. Ban water for them. May Allah keep them thirsty till Doomsday."

At this, Sa'sa'ah ibn Sawhan was angry and he said: "May Allah deny quenching of your thirst. You evil drunkards. Allah's curse be on you and on the evil (al-Walid)"

'Amr ibn al-'As said, "O Mu'awiyah. You should know that Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and his companions, as far as there are shining swords in their hands, they will never remain thirsty. It is better if you give them the water. Otherwise they will force you to remove the vigil from the bank of the river."

Mu'awiyah said: "By Allah. Water shall not be given to them until they die. The same way that 'Uthman was forced to die thirsty."

Although the stoppage of water was advantageous to the Syrians because men cannot physically fight in a thirsty state, but from the point of view of morality it was a heinous act. Even some troops of the Syrian army spoke against this act. Therefore, one person from their army, Ma'ri ibn Aqbal al-Hamdani, expressed his displeasure over the ban and told Mu'awiyah, "O Emir. We have occupied the source of water. What would have happened if they had arrived here earlier and imposed a ban on us. In their army, there are slaves, workers, aged and weak persons. Denying water to such innocent persons is very cruel. Withdraw your orders and let them take the water."

Hearing him, Mu'awiyah shouted at the man. 'Amr ibn al-'As too said

a few harsh words to the man. The al-Hamdani, hearing these invectives, kept quiet and in the darkness of night he left Mu'awiyah's army and crossed over to the side of Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.). He expressed his feelings in the following couplets:

O son of Hind. What to say of your virtues.

When shame departs, what use is shame.

Do you want to stop the youth from water?

Those in whose hands are shining, swirling lances. In their necks hang shining swords.

You thought they are not men and are women.

Do you expect Hazrat Ali (a.s.) will remain thirsty near you.

And others will drink their fill?

The fight to gain control over water

The Euphrates was in the control of the Syrians and the Iraqis could not access it. On one side, there was pride and prejudice, and on the other, there was the spirit of peace that was controlling the emotions of the thirsty men. However, when they did not get water for one full day and night, the Iraqis could not control themselves any more. They approached of the Imam (a.s.) and said, "O Emir. How long could we see the Syrians quenching their thirst and keep us deprived of water?" The Imam (a.s.) replied, "The battle for water is inevitable. Rise and, at the strength of your swords, acquire water."

We find a sermon on this event in Nahjul Balagha wherein Ameerul Momeneen (a.s.) said:

"They are asking you morsels of battle. So either you remain in ignominy and the lowest position or drench your swords with blood and quench your thirst with

*water. Real death is in the life of subjugation while real life is in dying as subjugators. Beware, Mu'awiyah is leading a small group of insurgents and has kept them in dark about the true facts with the result that they have made their bosoms the targets of death.*¹

When permission was received from Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.), Malik al-Ashtar and al-Ash'ath ibn Qays announced to the men to prepare themselves to push the enemy away from the source of water on the riverbank. At this call, twelve thousand troops, with their swords in their hands and the bows on their shoulders, came forward. Malik al-Ashtar gave the standard in the hand of al-Harith ibn Hammam al-Nakha'i. Al-Ash'ath gave the flag of his tribe to Mu'awiyah ibn al-Harith. Both the commanders, leading their units rushed against the Syrians who were guarding the waterfront and asked them to move away from there.

The Syrians took up their spears and swords and stood up to prevent the Iraqis advancing. One of their cavaliers, Salih ibn Fayrūz, came forward to fight. Malik struck his chest with the spear and the man died instantly. Malik killed one after another – including Malik ibn Adham, Riyah ibn 'Atik, Ibrahim ibn Waddah al-Jamhi, Zamil ibn 'Ubayd al-Khuza'i, Ajlah ibn Mansūr al-Kindi and Muhammad ibn Rawdah al-Jamhi. Seeing these casualties others had no courage to come forward which prompted Malik to made a thrust on the enemy with his men. From the other side too the bows twanged and the arrows were flying. But the valiant Iraqis were not deterred. They kept moving forward. When swords started swinging over their heads, the Syrians started running for shelter. The Iraqis went further forward and occupied the source of water.

¹ Sermon no 50 of Nahjul Balagha

War ethics upheld – Imam (a.s.) permits water for enemies

When the water changed hands, Mu'awiyah thought they might give the same treatment to his men as he gave to the troops of Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.). His face reflected this worry when 'Amr ibn al-'As asked him, "What do you think? Will Hazrat Ali (a.s.) ban water for you and your men? The way he fought and took over the Euphrates, can you do the same?" Mu'awiyah retorted in anger, "Do not be sarcastic. Tell me if Hazrat Ali (a.s.) will really give us the same treatment that we gave him and his men? Or will he permit us to take our requirement of the water?" 'Amr said: "I have a strong feeling that what you did to him, he may not retaliate the same way. Because his purpose for coming here is not water but something else."

The Iraqi's were very angry with Mu'awiyah. As soon as they had control of the source of water, they declared that they would not give a drop of water to the enemy. When Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) heard this, he said, "If the people of Syria took that barbaric step, it is not fair for you to forget your own norms of faith and morality." He sent word to Mu'awiyah that although the control of the source of water was in the hands of his men, all will be free to draw water from there. After this declaration, the Syrians came freely to the river and took as much water as they wanted.

The troops of Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) established camp near the river and became busy with their duties. In the meantime, an arrow came from the side of the Syrians on which there was a note saying, "I am your well-wisher. I warn you that Mu'awiyah has decided to cause a break in the river so that the water gushes and submerges you." The arrow fell in the hands of one of the people of al-Kūfah. The note

traveled from hand to hand and in the end it reached Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.). The Imam (a.s.) immediately understood that it was a trick of Mu'awiyah. The purpose was to scare the Iraqis away from the source of water. Already there was panic amongst the Iraqis. They were fast gathering their belongings.

The Imam (a.s.) said, *"This is a trick to move you away from where you are. Do not leave your stations and remain steadfast."* Some of the men were convinced, and others shouted that Mu'awiyah's men have already reached the river with their implements and have already started breaching the embankment. They said that if they did not move away swiftly, they would all be washed away. The Imam (a.s.) assured them that it was not in the power of Mu'awiyah to divert the flow of the river. But there were many cowardly persons in the army. Once they moved, others followed suit. Despite best efforts to convince them, they did not pay heed. When Mu'awiyah saw the place vacant, he moved into the breach with his men. When the Iraqis saw the Syrians take their vacated place, they understood Mu'awiyah's cunning trick. Those who were insisting on vacating the position came shame-faced to the Imam (a.s.) and apologized for their behavior. Now, al-Ash'ath ibn Qays and Malik al-Ashtar went with their men and forced the Syrians away from the source of water.

An attempt to avoid war rejected by Mu'awiyah

The fight for control over Euphrates was over. Two days had gone by since the Iraqis got control of the water source. In these two days, there was no talk between the contesting parties. The morale of the Iraqis was very high and they were ready to fight. But Amir al-Mu'minin's silence was disturbing them. They started thinking whether the Imam (a.s.) was trying to avoid war or he had some doubts about going to war with the Syrians. When the Imam (a.s.)

learned about these doubts, he said that neither was he avoiding war nor did he have doubts about the need for fighting with Mu'awiyah. The real reason for the delay was that he hoped that during this interval better sense prevailed in the Syrians and he at least, would make all possible efforts to convince them of their faulty stand. Eventually on the first of Dhul-Hijjah 36 H, he asked Bishr ibn 'Amr al-Ansari, Sa'id ibn Qays al-Hamdani, and Shabath ibn Rabi' al-Tamimi to go to Mu'awiyah and explain to him that he should not break the Islamic unity and abstain from divisive action and peacefully owe his allegiance.

Bashir ibn 'Amr said that he had no hope that the person would give any cognizance to the suggestion. The Imam (a.s.) asked him to go and make his efforts. The three of them rose and went to Mu'awiyah. Bashir ibn 'Amr started the discussion. He said, "O son of Abū-Sufyan. This world does not side with anyone forever. It will not also be with you forever. You will have to die some day and have to go to the Presence of Allah. There your deeds will be accounted for. Then reward or retribution will be given on the basis of your deeds in this world. I ask you in the name of Allah to refrain from mischief and not to create dissensions in the Ummah with your negative attitude"

Mu'awiyah interrupted saying, "Why do you not give this advice to Hazrat Ali (a.s.)?"

Bashir said, "Where he stands, and where are you? He has precedence in embracing Islam and the nearest of kin to the Prophet (a.s.). He has all the superiority and felicity. There is none equal to him and deserving of the caliphate."

Mu'awiyah asked, "What does he want?"

Bashir said, "He wants you to recognize the Truth and be with it. This way you will be successful in this world and in the Hereafter as well.

Mu'awiyah said: "Do you want us to forego our claim of *qisas* for the son of 'Affan? By Allah! That shall never happen."

Then Shabath ibn Rab'i addressed Mu'awiyah and said, "O Mu'awiyah. We are aware that you are misguiding your people into believing that your purpose of war is to demand *qisas* for the death of 'Uthman. For this purpose you have sought the help of some misguided people.

The fact is you refrained from helping 'Uthman when he was seeking your help. You wanted him to be killed so that you can use it as an opportunity to usurp power for yourself.

Remember. There are some people in this world who wish for certain things but Allah gives them no success. There are also people who succeed much more than their own expectations. But for you, in success or in failure, there is no virtue. If you fail in your efforts, there will be none more shamed than you in Arabia. If you succeed in your schemes, your Hereafter will be only intense retribution. O Mu'awiyah. Fear Allah Give up your stubborn attitude and refrain from conceit. Do not challenge the one who is the true claimant of the caliphate."

Mu'awiyah was disturbed with the frank talk of Shabath. Instead of refuting what he said, he spoke angrily: "Get away from my presence and now only the sword will decide the matters between us."

After the return of the delegation, a group of Hafiz-e-Quran approached Mu'awiyah and asked him the reason for the mobilization of his army. When told that it was to demand *qisas* for the blood of 'Uthman from Ali (a.s.) as he had a hand in his death. They went to Imam Ali (a.s.) to seek his view on this. Imam Ali refuted that he had killed Uthman or had a hand in it. The reason he would not hand over the killers of Uthman as they proved their justification

for their act from the verses of the Qu'ran. Hence killing that has taken place under an interpretation (ta'wil) of the verses of the Qur'an does not call for *qisas*."

When Mu'awiyah was told of this he changed his line of argument and said, "What right has Hazrat Ali (a.s.) to become the caliph without even consulting us." H. Ali (a.s.) said in reply, "The Muhajir and Ansar who are the people of authority unanimously decided on the caliphate and all the Muslims abide by their decision." Mu'awiyah said, "Those Muhajirun and Ansar who are with us never owed their allegiance to him nor have agreed to his accession to the caliphate."

Thus he went on making similiar excuses and was not able to give any positive reason for denying to owe allegiance to Hazrat Ali (a.s.). He knew that if he did the *bay'ah* then he would not be able to blame Hazrat Ali (a.s.) for involvement in or supporting the killers of 'Uthman. He had only this weapon to justify his plan to fight a battle with Hazrat Ali (a.s.) for his ulterior motive of coming to power.

Abū-Umamah al-Bahili and Abul-Darda' made one final attempt to convince Mu'awiyah but he maintained his stand that if *qisas* is paid then he would be the first to owe allegiance to Ali.

They went to Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and repeated Mu'awiyah's words. The Imam (a.s.) understood that Mu'awiyah wanted to trick him by raising something that was impossible to be done. He took the two persons to the rows of his troops and asked, "Amongst you, who are the killers of 'Uthman?" The 20,000 men shouted in unison: "We have all killed 'Uthman."

Abū-Umamah and Abul-Darda' realized that for the blood of one person, the blood of 20,000 cannot be shed. Furthermore there was no justification of handing over anyone to Mu'awiyah for this purpose. Instead of going to Mu'awiyah they decided to retire to a

quiet coastal place and preferred not to support any of the two parties.

The war begins

Inspite of all the efforts by Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) to avoid a war and settle the matter through negotiations, Mu'awiyah knew that the final result of peace was *bay'ah* and that would be abject defeat for him. Therefore, he avoided all efforts at negotiations. He termed the efforts of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) to maintain peace as his weakness and started posing threats to him. At last, the hidden flames were ignited and the preliminary clashes commenced.

From the Syrians, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Khalid ibn al-Walid, Abul-A'war al-Salami, Habib ibn Muslim al-Fihri, Ibn Dhil-Kila' al-Himyari, 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Umar, Shurahbil ibn Simt al-Kindi and Hamzah ibn Malik came to the battlefield in turns. Similarly from Hazrat Ali's army Malik al-Ashtar, Hijr ibn 'Adi, Shabath ibn Rab'i, Khalid ibn Mu'ammarr, Ziyad ibn al-Nadr al-Harithi, Ziyad ibn Khasfah al-Taymi, Sa'id ibn Qays al-Hamdani, Ma'qil ibn Qays al-Riyahi and Qays ibn Sa'd al-Ansari came out in turns to face their opponents. Although they were all men of valor, but Malik al-Ashtar was a warrior of such caliber that big champions used to be scared of facing him.

During the first few days of the battle of Siffin, Sahn ibn Abil-Ghayrar came out of Mu'awiyah's army and challenged one-to-one combat. He was a well-known fighter from the Syrian army and had a huge and imposing physique. He used to frighten people away just with his physical appearance. Malik al-Ashtar decided to match strength with him. People tried to stop him. But he did not listen to them and challenged the giant. The person was proud of his strength and prowess. He jumped on his steed, came forward, and attacked Malik. Malik avoided his strike and gave him such a blow that he fell flat

from his horse and died at the spot. One person from the Syrian troops saw Sahn dying and resolved that he would kill Malik al-Ashtar. Therefore, he challenged Malik for a combat. Malik attacked him with his sword and he fell down near the hoofs of his horse. Malik was about to kill him when the Syrians rushed in a crowd and carried him away alive.

Thus, the month of Dhul-Hijjah was spent in these clashes. Everyday they had a couple of combats but fullscale fighting had not yet commenced.

Another attempt for peace

When Muharram 37H commenced, respecting the sanctity of the month, fighting was stopped. Taking advantage of the halt to fighting, Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) again tried for peace and sent a few representatives across to the enemy. 'Adi ibn Hatam, Yazid ibn Qays, Shabath ibn Rab'i and Ziyad ibn Khasfah were sent to Mu'awiyah to prepare him for peace.

'Adi ibn Hatam started the talks and told Mu'awiyah, "We have come to you with a message of peace. You know that Hazrat Ali (a.s.) has the leadership of the Muslims in his hands. There is none equal to him in superiority and precedence in embracing the Faith. Except you, and your companions, all the Islamic territories have accepted him as the caliph. Give up your stubbornness and change your attitude. Otherwise you might fall into troubles as did the owners of the camel."

Mu'awiyah said, "You want to frighten me. I am the son of Harb. I cannot be cowed down by such threats. By Allah! You are one of the persons who instigated the killing of 'Uthman. I am certain you will be killed for that crime."

Yazid ibn Qays said, "We are the messengers. Our duty was to give the message which we have done. Now, whatever you say, we shall communicate to Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.). However, we shall make efforts to convince you and invite you not to create schisms in the Ummah. As far as the superiority of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) is concerned, it is neither hidden from you nor from us. There is no question of equating you with him. Therefore, fear Allah and abstain from warlike activities against him. By Allah. We have not found anyone better than him in piety, superiority and capability."

Mu'awiyah said, "You people have invited me to attach myself to the majority. I must tell you that the majority is with me. As far as obeying your Emir is concerned, it is beyond me. The reason is that he assassinated 'Uthman, created rifts in the majority (the Ummah) and gave refuge to the killers. I have no doubt that the killers of 'Uthman are present in his army. He must hand them over to us so that we kill them as the retaliation for the blood of 'Uthman. Then we shall obey him and abstain from fighting as well."

"In the end when they found that the talks were not reaching anywhere, they stood up and started back for their camp. They may have gone half the distance when Mu'awiyah sent a messenger to call Ziyad ibn Khasfah and told him that he had summoned him for a special purpose. He said, "You know it pretty well that Hazrat Ali (a.s.) got 'Uthman assassinated and is giving shelter to the killers. If you agree you and your tribe can cooperate with me in claiming the *qisas*. With Allah's witness I swear that if I succeed, I shall give you the governorate of al-Kūfah or al-Basrah." When Mu'awiyah finished talking, he looked expectantly at Ziyad, who said:

"With Allah's help I have proof and conviction that I cannot bear to become supporter of the criminals."

Hearing this reply, Mu'awiyah put down his head and told 'Amr ibn

al-'As, "May Allah destroy them. Their heart beats and movements of the lips are all similar."

The governor seeks allegiance from the ruler

The failure of these embassies gave one impression that the Imam (a.s.) wanted to settle the matters through negotiations, but Mu'awiyah wanted to get his way through war. To remove this impression, Mu'awiyah sent Habib ibn Maslamah al-Fahri, Shurahbil ibn Simt al-Kindi and Ma'an ibn Yazid al-Aslami to Hazrat Ali (a.s.). When they came to the Imam (a.s.), Habib ibn Maslamah said, "O 'Ali. 'Uthman was the caliph, pious and follower of the Qur'anic precepts. But your people did not let him live and killed him for no fault of his. Hand over his killers so that we kill them in *qisas*. Hand over the caliphate to the Shūra and stay away. Then we shall select a caliph with unanimity."

When the Imam (a.s.) heard his style of speaking, he said: "Who are you to ask me to demit the caliphate? You do not qualify to talk such things."

Habib stood up uneasily and said, "When we are face to face, you will see how I behave." The Imam (a.s.) said, "Even if you attack with a large army of men, I would consider you as nothing. Go and do what you wish to do." Shurahbil said, "I too wish to say the same that my companion has said. Will I get the same reply that was given to him?" The Imam (a.s.) said, "The reply I gave him, suited only him. But a different reply can be given to you."

Then Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) related the events from the Annunciation of the Prophet (a.s.), the periods of the First and the Second caliphs and then he said,

"When 'Uthman became the caliph he committed such

acts that people did not like them. They criticized him and tried to correct him. But when no result was achieved from their efforts, they surrounded and killed him. Then people gathered and came to me. And wanted to owe their allegiance to me. I thought it advisable to refuse. Therefore, in very clear terms rejected their offer. But they insisted that other than me they would not do bay'ah with anyone else. They expressed the fear that if I did not accept their bay'ah people will get divided and peace in the realm will shatter. I felt that in that event Islam would face a major crisis.

In those circumstances I had to agree to their bay'ah. Later, Talhah and al-Zubayr, became disobedient and rebellious, although they had happily swore their allegiance to me. Thereafter Mu'awiyah brought out the banner of rebellion against me, although he neither has any precedence over me in faith nor does he have any status in Islam. He is a freed son of a freed father. His father, and he, has always been the enemies of Allah and His Prophet (s.a.w.a.). If they embraced Islam, it was out of fear of defeat. I am surprised you have moved away from the Ahl al-Bayt and got attached to Mu'awiyah and did all that he asked you to. You should, in fact, have been with the Prophet's Household and none else. I invite you to follow Allah's Book and the Sunnah of the Prophet (a.s.) and to do jihad against the evil."

Shurahbil listened but it did not effect him and said, "Do you believe that 'Uthman was killed mercilessly as an oppressed person?"

The Imam (a.s.) replied, “I neither term him as an oppressed person nor an oppressor himself.” At this Shurahbil and Ma’an ibn Yazid got angry and said, “One who has the belief that ‘Uthman was not assassinated as an oppressed person, we have nothing to do with him.” Saying this, they got up and left. The Imam (a.s.) was not expecting them to be impressed. However, he tried to convince them. When he saw them departing, the Imam (a.s.) recited the following verse:

فَأَنَّكَ لَا تَسْمِعُ الْبُوتَى وَلَا تَسْمِعُ الضَّمَّ الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾
 وَمَا أَنْتَ بِهَادٍ الْعُمَى عَنْ ضَلَالَتِهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ تَسْمِعُ إِلَّا مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِالآيَاتِنَا
 فَهُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

“For surely you cannot make the dead to hear and you cannot make the deaf to hear the call, when they turn back, nor can you lead away the blind out of their error. You cannot make to hear anyone but those who believe in Our communications so they shall submit.”¹

After this, the Imam (a.s.) turned his attention towards his companions and said:

“Let it not happen that their efforts at deviation and waywardness surpass your efforts, while your efforts are for Truth and in obedience of Allah.”

War Begins again

When the month of Muharram was over and the crescent of Safar was sighted on the horizon, Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) who had exhausted exploring all the avenues for possible peace, sent Marsad ibn al-Harith to the other side where he announced to the Army of Syria:

“O people of Syria. Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) conveys to you, ‘I had given you respite to think and turn towards the Right Path. I had made it clear to you through Allah’s Book and invited you to follow it. But you have not abstained from your mischief and stubbornness nor responded to the voice of the Truth. Now I have terminated all negotiations and Allah, certainly, does not befriend the unfaithful.”

As soon as this announcement was made, preparations started for the war. They light fires and beacons. The Iraqis and the Syrians occupied their own entrenchments. Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) gave special attention to the orderly arrangement of his men. In the cavalry division he appointed ‘Ammar ibn Yasir as the commander and for the footmen, ‘Abdullah ibn Badil al-Khuza’i.

Malik al-Ashtar was given the command of the riders from al-Kufah and Sahl ibn Hunayf was in charge of the riders from al-Basrah. Qays ibn Sa’d was given the command of the footmen from al-Basrah. The right flank was under al-Ash’ath ibn Qays and the left flank was commanded by ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas. The footmen of the right flank were put under Sulayman ibn Sarad and of the left flank under al-Harith ibn Marw al-‘Abdi. The men from every tribe were under a chief from the same tribe. The standard of war was given to Hashim ibn ‘Utbah Mirqal. The Imam (a.s.) addressing the men said: “Till they

¹ Surah Rum (30): 52-53

do not attack, you should not attack them. You are, By Allah's Grace, fighting for a cause. By leaving it upon them to start the fight will be another proof of your being on the side of the right. Beware. When the enemies start running away, do not kill anyone who has shown his back. Do not attack the injured and the maimed. Do not attack women even if they shout invectives against you."

Mu'awiyah appointed 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Umar as the commander of his right flank and Habbah ibn Maslamah for the left flank. 'Amr ibn al-'As was the commander for his cavalry, and for footmen it was Muslim ibn 'Uqbah. For the men from different cities and areas, persons from the same places were in command. The standard of war was given to 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Khalid ibn al-Walid.

On Wednesday, the first of Safar, early in the morning, men in both the armies stood in formation with enthusiasm. War commenced. The Iraqi unit was under Malik al-Ashtar and the Syrian unit under Habib ibn Maslamah. Both the armies gauged each other's strengths and weaknesses and then attacked flailing their swords. The entire day the swords were clashing. And until the dusk, the fighting continued. When it turned dark, both the armies returned to their respective camps.

The next day Hashim ibn Mirqal took groups of cavaliers and footmen and entered the arena. From the other side, Abul-A'war al-Salami came with a large number of cavalry and footmen from the Syrian army. Both the sides flailed their swords and attacked each other with intensity. Swords kept clashing and spears piercing the chests.

On the third day, 'Amr put a black flag on a spear and came out with a unit of men. People started whispering when they saw the black flag. Some said it is the same piece of cloth that the Prophet (a.s.) had given to 'Amr attaching to the wooden staff of the standard and gave him the honor of being the standard bearer. When Amir al-

Mu'minin (a.s.) heard this, he said the truth about the cloth is that "the Prophet (a.s.) took the flag in his hands and said, 'who amongst you will lift the standard and justify the honor (by his deeds)' 'Amr ibn al-'As said, 'O Allah's Messenger. What are the conditions that will qualify one for the honor' The Prophet (a.s.) said, 'Taking the Standard he will not run away from fighting the infidels and will not fight with the Muslims'

But Amr had done the contrary.

"During the lifetime of the Prophet (a.s.) he took the flag and ran away from the battle with infidels. And this day he has come with the flag to fight against the Muslims."

The intention of 'Amr ibn al-'As was to impress the people that during the time of the Prophet (a.s.) he had the honor of being given the standard and was now coming to the battlefield with the same standard. But Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.), before any misunderstanding spread, clarified the position and proved that only getting the standard from the hands of the Prophet (a.s.) is not the proof of one's superiority until the person fulfills the requirements of that honor in totality. Therefore, if any minds were confused seeing the standard, they were removed. The men did not give it any importance.

When 'Amr came into the battleground, Ziyad ibn al-Nadr came out with cavalry and 'Ammar ibn Yasir with footmen among whom were Muhajirun, Ansar and the warrior in the Battle of Badr. 'Ammar went decimating the rows of the enemy troops and told his companions: "O People of Iraq. Do you want to see the person (Mu'awiyah) who is an enemy of Allah and His Prophet (a.s.) and fought battles with them, gave air to rebellion against the Muslims and sided with the polytheists. When he saw that Allah had given strength to Islam and

gave control to the Prophet (a.s.), he came to him and embraced Islam. We know that he had embraced Islam out of fear and not true faith and belief. When Allah took away His Prophet (a.s.) from the world then, By Allah, he became the enemy of the Muslims and friend of the infidels. Therefore, remain steadfast in fighting him and battle with him. He wants to extinguish Allah's radiance and strengthen the enemies of Allah."

Then taking his companions, 'Ammar, attacked with such intensity that the Syrians lost their footing and 'Amr, who had come proudly waving his black flag, left his position and disappeared in the back rows.

Ziyad ibn al-Nadr, with his men, attacked the Syrian horsemen. One rider advanced to combat with him. Ziyad asked who he was. He said that he was Mu'awiyah ibn 'Amr al-'Aqili. Hearing his name, Ziyad was hesitant to attack him because he was his mother's son. Their mother was a woman, Hind, from the tribe of Zubayd. He thought it not proper to fight and withdrew taking permission from Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.).

On the fourth day, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah came with his men to the arena. From the other side, 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Umar came with a large patrol. Both arranged rows of men opposite one another. 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Umar challenged Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah for a combat. Hearing this, he advanced swiftly. Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) asked who it was? They said that it was Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah fighting with 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Umar. The Imam's paternal emotions arose. He put his foot in the stirrup of his steed and moved near Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah. He dismounted, gave the reins to his son, went near Ibn 'Umar. When he saw the Imam (a.s.) instead of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah, the color of his face turned white. He said that he would not fight with him and fled to the back rows.

Hazrat Ali (a.s.) returned, and when he came near his horse, Ibn al-Hanafiyyah said, "O Baba. Why did you stop me from fighting? If you had allowed me, I would have not returned without killing him." The Imam (a.s.) said, "I expect the same from you. But I was not fully sure if you would kill him. That is the reason I had to go myself." Muhammad said, "Baba. I had no courage to stop you. Otherwise I would not allow you to go to fight with that accursed person."

On the fifth day 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas went with his men to the arena. From the other side, al-Walid ibn 'Uqbah came with his horsemen and footmen. When he saw Ibn 'Abbas he shouted invectives at Banū-'Abd al-Muttalib. He told Ibn 'Abbas:

"O Ibn 'Abbas. You have done injustice. You have killed your Imam ('Uthman) and failed in fulfilling your vows."

Ibn 'Abbas asked him to stop making false accusations and fight with him. But he had no courage to come forward. He shouted invectives for sometime and then sat quietly. Ibn 'Abbas attacked the Syrians along with his men and the fight went on until the time of Zuhr Prayer.

The same day, Samarah ibn Abrahah al-Himyari, along with a group of the reciters of the Holy Qur'an, left the ranks of the Syrian army and joined the army of Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.). Mu'awiyah was very upset with this because it was a proof of the unfairness of his stand.

On the sixth day, from the Iraqi side Qays ibn Sa'd al-Ansari and from the Syrian army Ibn Dhul-Kila' al-Himyari came to the arena and the fight continued until midday.

On the seventh day, Malik al-Ashtar from Amir al-Mu'minin's army and from the other side Habib ibn Maslamah stood opposite each other in the arena. Hijr al-Sharr al-Kindi from the Syrian forces came astride a horse and challenged for a combat. The person who came in

response too had the same name, Hijr ibn 'Adi who was known as Hijr al-Khayr. Both attacked each other. But suddenly one person from the Syrian army, Khuzaymah ibn Thabit al-Asadi jumped in the arena and broke the spear of Hijr al-Khayr. Seeing this, the Iraqi troops killed Khuzaymah al-Asadi and Hijr al-Sharr escaped saving his life. After some time he once again came to the arena shouting for combat. Al-Hakam ibn Azhar came forward to fight with him.

The fight went on for some time and eventually al-Hakam was killed. Seeing al-Hakam fall, Ibn Ummi-Rafa'ah alim al-Himyari angrily attacked Hijr al-Sharr and killed him. When Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) saw this, he thanked Allah that the killer of al-Hakam ibn Azhar was killed.

An Iraqi soldier Abū-Ayyūb attacked the Syrians and came out of their rows when he noticed a Syrian was returning after attacking the Iraqis. When they came near both raised their swords and attacked each other. Abū-Ayyūb hit the Syrian's neck with such intensity that the sword cut through it and the head was severed but it remained on the body. People thought that the attack went futile. But when the horse moved, the head fell to the ground. When the Iraqis saw this, they shouted slogans and praised the swordsmanship of Abū-Ayyūb. When he returned Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.), recited the following couplet:

Our ancestors have taught us swordsmanship,
And we shall teach this to our sons."

Imam (a.s.) proposes peace again

In the midst of this gory conflict, it was always the desire of the Imam (a.s.) to bring it to an end as soon as possible and in some way to establish peace. Although seeing the stubbornness of Mu'awiyah

there was little chance of peace without a major conflict, nevertheless the Imam (a.s.) took a copy of the Holy Qur'an and addressed his troops, "Who is there amongst you who will take this Book to the Syrians and invite them to accept the verdict of the Holy Qur'an?"

One youth offered to go. The Imam (a.s.) announced once again, but none other than the youth came forward. Then he gave the Book to the youth and sent him forward. The youth reached the rows of the enemy troops and said, "O people. Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) invites you to follow the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. Come, let us resolve our conflicts on its verdict and avoid the unnecessary bloodshed." But none paid any heed to what he said. He met the same end as did Muslim al-Mujashi'i during the Battle of the Camel. Some Syrians surrounded the youth and killed him.

Muawiyah avoids challenge of one on one fight

Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) thought that the war of attrition would continue and the blood of Muslims will continue to be shed. Therefore, to bring the battle to an end, he announced that he was challenging Mu'awiyah for a one-to-one combat. He stood between the two armies and shouted in a high pitch, "Where is Mu'awiyah?" When Mu'awiyah heard this, he asked his men to ask what the Imam (a.s.) wanted to say? The Imam (a.s.) added, "Ask him to come in front of me. I want to talk to him." Mu'awiyah took 'Amr Aas with him and came in the front. Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) said, "*O Mu'awiyah. You are shedding the blood of people unnecessarily. Come let us both fight each other and the one who wins shall be deemed to have won the battle and occupy the seat of the caliphate.*" 'Amr said, "Hazrat Ali (a.s.) has said the truth. Both of you are the nucleus of the conflict. You may fight and come to a decision

yourself.” Mu’awiyah told ‘Amr: “You are not being just. You know it pretty well that whoever has fought him has always been killed.”

Cowardness of Amr Al Aas

‘Amr said, “I do not want that you avoid combat and fall in the estimation of the people. “Mu’awiyah said, “Do you think that you will tempt me to lose my life? Do you wish that I get killed and you become the ruler?” Saying this, Mu’awiyah turned back and slowly went towards the last row of his troops. Mu’awiyah was already angry at the impertinence of ‘Amr. To cool his temper ‘Amr said, “If you do not want to fight with Hazrat Ali (a.s.), I shall do that. Therefore, he decided to go for the combat. At one point of time he went to the arena and challenged Hazrat Ali (a.s.) for a combat. The Imam (a.s.) spurred his horse and came fast to the arena. When he raised his sword, ‘Amr Aas purposely fell down from his horse and put his legs up. Thus, his private parts were exposed. When the Imam (a.s.) saw this contemptible act of ‘Amr, he turned away his face. ‘Amr got up dusting his cloak and ran towards his people. When Mu’awiyah heard about this episode, he chided ‘Amr: “O ‘Amr. Thanks to Allah your life was saved because of your private parts.”

One commander of the Syrian army, Abrahah ibn Sabbah al-Himyari also was affected with the destruction of the war and said that the best way to stop the unnecessary bloodshed was to have a man-to-man combat between Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and Mu’awiyah. He addressed his tribesmen saying, “O people of Yemen! For how long we should expose ourselves to the swords and arrows? Do something to stop this war. Insist on Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and Mu’awiyah that they fight themselves and bring about a conclusion. Whoever comes out the winner between the two, we shall join with him.” When Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) heard this, he said, “By Allah. For me nothing could

be more welcome than both the armies uniting and Mu’awiyah and me fight to come to a final decision.” When Mu’awiyah heard about the suggestion of Abrahah, he was scared. He told his sycophants, “It seems Abrahah has lost the balance of his mind.” The people said, “That is not true. He is wise and intelligent, brave and valor. You do not have the courage to fight face-to-face with Hazrat Ali (a.s.)” Mu’awiyah kept quiet but ‘Urwah ibn Dawūd got angry. He said, “If the emir does not want to fight with Hazrat Ali (a.s.), I shall combat with him.” He then stood between the two armies and shouted his challenge to Hazrat Ali (a.s.) for personal combat. The Imam (a.s.) came forward to punish the impertinent challenger. Some people asked him not to fight with that impertinent person and ask someone else to fight. But the Imam (a.s.) personally went and with one strike of his sword, the person’s body was cut vertically into two. The people who witnessed this shivered down their spine. Seeing ‘Urwah killed, a cousin of his attacked the Imam (a.s.) in anger. He avoided his attack and hit him with his spear. The spear was stuck in the person’s chest and he fell dead.

When Mu’awiyah saw two of his men die like this, he was in a state of utter confusion. He asked, “Who among you will fight with the killer of ‘Urwah and his cousin or kill him at any opportunity?” al-Walid ibn ‘Uqbah said, “It would be better if you yourself go and personally fight with him.” He replied, “He has already challenged me. But what use this army that I have to go and fight in place of my fighting men? I need not go personally to fight.” ‘Uqbah ibn Abi-Sufyan said, “Your decision is right. Even if he challenges, you should not go to fight.” When after repeated calls by Mu’awiyah no one responded to fight with the Imam (a.s.), he asked Busr ibn Arta’ah if he would go and fight with Hazrat Ali (a.s.). Busr said, “It would be better if you yourself fight with him. But if you insist, I shall go to fight.” A close relative of Busr told him, “If Mu’awiyah dies, he will

have some successor for his kingdom. Why do you want to get killed?" He said, "I have given my word and I must go for the fight now."

When the person heard this, he recited the following couplets to Busr:

"If you were of his caliber, you should certainly fight with him; otherwise, remember the tiger eats away the sheep.

O Busr. It seems you are ignorant of Hazrat Ali's exploits of valor or on purpose you pretend ignorance."

Busr said, "I shall have to die one day. Why should I die the death of a coward. I shall certainly combat with him." Therefore, he proceeded towards the arena. Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) holding the hand of Malik al-Ashtar was going round in search of a promontory when Busr, in full armor, came near him and challenged him for a combat.

The Imam (a.s.) coolly went near him, pierced his spear in the armor and pushed him down. When Busr saw that he would be killed, he exposed his private parts in emulation of 'Amr Aas. Ali (a.s.) turned his face way. Malik al-Ashtar recognized him and said, "O Ali (a.s.). This is the enemy of Allah, Busr ibn Artah." The Imam said, "Allah's curse on him. After he has done the shameful act, let him go." Busr got up swiftly, hiding his private parts, ran away. Mu'awiyah, knowing of his misadventure, told him, "You need not be ashamed. 'Amr ibn al-'As too saved his life the same way."

Mu'awiyah sends his slave with his armour and horse to field to deceive

Mu'awiyah rarely came out in the field because he was scared that if the Imam (a.s.) came face to face, it will be difficult to save his life. Whenever he came out, he ensured that Ali (a.s.) was not near. Once

when he came out and attacked the right flank the Imam (a.s.) chanced to be in that area. When he saw Mu'awiyah, knowing that he might escape seeing him, he exchanged his armor and the horse with another person and came out of the row. Mu'awiyah advanced with the intention of attacking but when he recognized the Imam (a.s.), he turned his horse back, spurred it and ran away. Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) chased him for sometime, but Mu'awiyah disappeared in the maze of his troops.

Mu'awiyah used to send his slave Harith in his disguise to the arena to give an impression that he was actively participating in the proceedings of the war. Therefore, when he used to be out in Mu'awiyah's armor and guise, people used to think that it was Mu'awiyah himself. Mu'awiyah had warned him that his life was precious and at any cost he should not take the risk of fighting with Hazrat Ali (a.s.). At that time 'Amr told the slave that Mu'awiyah did not want him to fight Hazrat Ali (a.s.) to deny him the singular honor of matching his strength with the champion of the Quraysh. He added that if he was Qarashi, Mu'awiyah would willingly have allowed him to go and fight.

Al-Harith was angered when 'Amr said this and vowed that he would not miss the opportunity of fighting with Hazrat Ali (a.s.). Therefore, he went forward and challenged the Imam (a.s.) to combat with him. The Imam (a.s.) was advancing with a troop of men. He heard the challenge of Harith and put his hand on the scabbard of his sword. Without giving him any respite, he struck the slave such a blow that he was cut into two pieces. When Mu'awiyah learnt about the killing of Harith, he was very sad and chided 'Amr Aas that because of his tempting him the slave lost his life. Now people also knew that Mu'awiyah, in his cowardice, used to send Harith in his own disguise to the front.

On one hand Mu'awiyah's practice was that he sent others to the front disguised as himself. On the other hand, Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.), used to enter the arena in the guise of 'Abbas ibn Rabi'ah and others, to ensure that the enemy fighters did not get scared and ran away without combating. Therefore, once 'Abbas Ibn Rabi'ah himself came out to the arena, with full armor, riding on a horse. Qarazah ibn Adham invited him for a combat. 'Abbas said that he would dismount from the horse and asked the opponent to dismount as well so that there is no chance for either of them to run away. They both dismounted and the fight started. Both were trying hard to overwhelm the adversary, but neither succeeded. For a moment, 'Abbas noticed that the armor of Qaraz was loose at one place.

Cleverly, he pierced the tip of his sword at that point and sliced the armor apart. Then he attacked with such dexterity that Qaraz fell to the ground face down with his sword piercing the ribs of the Syrian. As soon as he fell, he was dead. The Iraqis loudly shouted the slogan of "allahu-akbar". When Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) heard this slogan, he asked whose valor the men were praising? The people said it was 'Abbas ibn Rabi'ah. Ali (a.s.) was angry and he asked 'Abbas that he was asked not to leave his post He said, "O Amir al-Mu'minin. How could I resist the call to combat when it was addressed to me?" The Imam (a.s.) said, "Fighting the enemy was not as essential as is the obedience of the commands of the Imam (a.s.)." Then he added, "O Allah. Bless 'Abbas for his good deed. I have forgiven him, You too forgive him."

When Mu'awiyah learned about the killing of Qaraz, he was very angry and asked his men if there was someone amongst them who could kill 'Abbas. At this, two swordsmen of the tribe of Lakhm rose and challenged 'Abbas for a fight. When he heard the challenge, his blood boiled. But he dare not leave his post without the permission

of the Imam (a.s.). He asked the challengers to wait for a while so that he will take the permission of his leader for the fight. He then went to the presence of the Imam (a.s.) and sought his permission. The Imam (a.s.) said, "By Allah. Mu'awiyah wants not a single soul of Banū-Hashim to remain alive on the face of the earth. He wants all those beacons of knowledge and learning and the world sunk in the morass of ignorance. Notwithstanding all this, Allah will keep His radiant for all time." Then he asked 'Abbas to remove his armor and give to him. The Imam (a.s.) wore his armor and rode on his steed to the theatre of the battle. Seeing him the two swordsmen from the Lakhm thought that it was 'Abbas because the Imam (a.s.) was using his armor and the horse. They asked, "Have you taken your Emir's permission to fight with us?" The Imam (a.s.) recited this verse in reply:

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلُمُوا ۖ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

"Permission to fight is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and most surely Allah is well able to assist them."¹

One of them came forward and attacked with his sword. The Imam (a.s.) evaded his attack and struck him so hard that the person was divided into two. The other, in a rage of anger, rushed to attack Imam. The Imam (a.s.) killed him as well. He returned the armor and the horse back to 'Abbas and asked him to inform him whenever he was challenged for a fight.

Night before the big fight

Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) felt that the arrogance of the Syrians was

¹ Surah Hajj (22) : 39

increasing by the day. As long as their evil designs were not crushed with full force, the battle of attrition would go on for very long. Just before sunset, the Imam (a.s.) addressed a sermon to his men:

“See. You will have to battle with the enemy tomorrow. Therefore, spend tonight in prayer and supplication. Recite the Holy Qur’an and pray for Allah’s succor Pray to Allah for patience and steadfastness. Clash with the enemy with full vigor and sense. Then you will be really on the Straight Path.”

Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) was busy the whole night in preparation for the battle and arranging the rows of his men. He organized the right and the left flanks. And the men too checked their arms. They sharpened their swords and put the tips of the spears to order. By dawn, they were all ready to attack the enemy.

With this announcement of Hazrat Ali (a.s.), Mu’awiyah was really scared. He ordered the commanders to arrange their formations and to report to him thereafter. Therefore, Abul-A’war al-Salami with the contingent from Hims, Ibn ‘Amr al-Salami with men from Jordan, Zafar ibn al-Harith with the contingent from Qinnasrin and al-Dahhak ibn Qays al-Fahri with the fighters from Damascus reported to Mu’awiyah. Then contingent after contingent were arriving and in no time, a crowd of Syrians were occupying the horizon. They assured the Emir of Syria to fight with bravery and valor.

The army of Kufah and Syria in the battlefield

At dawn, both the armies had their flanks fully organized. The Imam (a.s.) gave the command of the right flank to ‘Abdullah ibn Badil. The left flank was given to ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas. The Imam (a.s.) stayed at the heart of the formation. He took the sword in his hand, sat on the horse and spurred it on and in no time reached the rows of the

enemy formations and ordered ‘Abdullah ibn Badil to attack. Ibn Badil wearing double armor, having two swords hanging from his girdle, took the right flank of the army and attacked the left flank of the enemy army and destroyed row after row. With this heavy onslaught, the right wing of the Syrian Army was totally dislodged. When Ibn Badil saw the right flank of the enemy getting defeated, he attacked the heart of their formation where Mu’awiyah was stationed with all his protection. Although around him there were five units of men like a steel wall, they were scared of the army advancing towards them. They left their positions and moved backwards. As a result, the heart of the formation went backwards. Then the right flank of the Syrians reorganized after the first defeat and along with the men in the heart of the formation attacked the right flank of the Iraqis. This attack was so severe that it uprooted the feet of the troops. They ran helter-skelter for shelter. With Ibn Badil only three to four hundred men remained steadfast. They stood back to back with each other and like a wall impregnated with lead they fought the enemy. Ibn Badil, with this limited force, moved towards the tent of Mu’awiyah. From that side the bows started twanging. And there was a barrage of arrows. But these valiant were not deterred with the intense attack. They kept moving cutting across the hordes of enemy troops. In the end, they were surrounded by the enemy on all the sides.

When Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) saw his right flank getting dislodged, he realised the gravity of the situation. He asked Sahl ibn Hunayf to go ahead and help the right flank. But the Syrian cavalry pushed him back. Now, with the disorganization of the right flank, the heart of the formation where the Imam (a.s.) was located was badly exposed to the enemy onslaught. When the Imam (a.s.) saw this predicament of the heart of the formation, he moved towards the left flank of the army. He was neither wearing the armor nor had a helmet on his

head. He only had a spear in his hand. Imam al-Hasan, Imam al-Husayn (a.s.) and Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah were shielding him. The arrows were flying on all the sides. The shining swords, the vibrating spears and the flying arrows could not stop his movement. At that time one freed slave of Banū-Umayyah, Ahmar, came up. He was known as an expert swordsman. The Imam (a.s.) wanted to attack him but one of his slaves, Kaysan, rushed towards Ahmar. He fought with him for sometime but was martyred. Now Ahmar wanted to attack Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.). Before he could attack, the Imam (a.s.) lunged forward, put his hand under the armor of the slave and pulled him off the horse with force. He hit him to the ground with such force that his bones shattered and he died at the spot.

Without the least concern for the huge numbers of the enemies and the danger lurking around him, the Imam (a.s.) moved fast forward. Sensing the increasing onslaught of the enemy, Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) said, "Baba. Would it not be better if you stayed with the heart of our formation instead of rushing on in their direction?" The Imam (a.s.) said: "Son! By Allah! Your father does not care whether he is moving towards death or death is moving towards him."

When the Imam (a.s.) reached near the right flank, he saw the fluttering flags and inquired whose flags they were. He was told that the flags belonged to the tribe of Rabi'ah. The Imam (a.s.) commented that the flags belonged to the party of Allah. The party whose feet did not shake in adversity and despite the hardships of the battle they remained steadfast. Seeing the Imam (a.s.) amidst the people of the tribe of Rabi'ah, Hudayn said, "O people! Even if one of us survived and the Imam (a.s.) suffered the slightest hurt, we will be shamed in entire Arabia." Then they stood up and continued to attack the enemy formations with spirit and gusto.

After the right flank and the heart of the formation were disturbed,

the Imam (a.s.) was in the left flank. He saw Malik al-Ashtar coming towards him. When he came near, the Imam said, "O Malik. You give a call to those who have left their positions and tell them that if the days of the transient life are over, the flight will not save them from death." Malik went forward and announced, "O people. I am Malik al-Ashtar. Where are you running away leaving the field of operation? The enemy is fighting you only because he is against the faith. He wants to obliterate the Sunnah and bring back the days of ignorance. He wants you to revert to the beliefs that you had abandoned with vision and guidance. Prepare to give your life for the faith. Remember, flight will bring you shame in this world and retribution in the Hereafter."

At this call of Malik, the tribe of Mudhhiij returned and said that they would do whatever they were asked to. Malik said that they had shamed themselves by running away and must make amends for that and give him support to hold his head high before Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.). In the company of Malik they moved towards the left flank, which had almost disintegrated with the onslaught of the enemy. Although everyone was shaken up in the left flank, the tribe of Hamdan remained steadfast in their positions. They were the last to leave and 800 of their men fought with great bravery. When one hundred and eighty of their men were martyred and eleven standard-bearers too perished one after another, their feet too shook. Among those standard-bearers were Kurayb ibn Shurayh, Shurahbil ibn Shurayh, Murthid ibn Shurayh, Hubayrah ibn Shurayh, Huraym ibn Shurayh and Samir ibn Shurayh. These were six brothers who valiantly held their standard and fought till their last breath. Then the other standard-bearers who sacrificed their lives were Sufyan ibn Zayd, 'Abd ibn Zayd and Kurayb ibn Zayd. These three brothers too laid down their lives fighting for the cause of the faith. After them, 'Umayrah ibn Bashshar and al-Harith ibn Bashshar were

the standard-bearers and both brothers were martyred.

The art of motivation of Janabe Malik-e-Ashtar

After them when Wahab ibn Kurayb took hold of the standard, one of their tribesmen said, "Under this standard many have perished. You must take this standard and move away from the arena and save the lives of your tribesmen and your own life. Otherwise, none of us will live to see another day." He felt that with this deminishing unit, the onslaught of the Syrians could not possibly be stopped. They said that if they got a group who pledged that they would die fighting, and not leave the arena at any cost, they too would join such a group. Malik al-Ashtar heard their talk. He said, "Come! We will all make a pledge that we shall not leave the arena until we are killed or we rout the enemy." After making the pledge they joined the group of men with Malik. He arranged the flank afresh and a new spirit came about in the men.

Malik was busy fighting when he saw men carry an injured trooper. They informed him that the person was Ziyad ibn al-Nadr al-Harithi who was in the division of 'Abdullah ibn Badil. When the enemies surrounded Ibn Badil, he raised the standard but was severely injured. Then they saw another injured person brought by men. They said that it was Yazid ibn Qays who had raised the standard after Ziyad ibn al-Nadr. Malik said, "By Allah. This is their patience and courage and a proof of their valor. People who run away from the battle to save their lives, instead of giving their lives fighting are cowards." Saying this he moved forward and breaking the enemy rows he reached the place where 'Abdullah ibn Badil was lying semi conscious with his companions having suffered many severe injuries. When Ibn Badil and his companions saw their own men, their hopes and courage revived they and started towards the camps of

Mu'awiyah. Malik tried to stop them in vain. The Syrian troops tried to obstruct them, but they advanced like a flood. Whoever came in front of them were killed. They almost reached the entrance to the tent of Mu'awiyah.

When Mu'awiyah saw them he told his men that if they were unable to stop them with swords, lances and arrows, they must throw stones at them to prevent their coming any closer. Therefore, stones started raining at them. With the injuries from the stones, Ibn Badil and his men were very tired. The Syrians tried to come closer to them and finish them with the swords. But these men got up to fight. However, they could not contain the increasing onslaught of the enemies 'Abdullah Ibn Badil and some of his men were martyred while some ran away. The Syrians tried to chase those who were escaping. But Malik sent one group under Jamhan al-Ju'fi who fought with the Syrians and chased them away. The survivors joined the contingent of Malik al-Ashtar.

Malik al-Ashtar attacked from the other direction and under his banner were Banū-Madhhij and Hamdan. The joint attack scattered the Syrians. They went after the group that had formed a circle to protect the camp of Mu'awiyah. When only one protective circle, of the five, remained, Mu'awiyah put his feet in the stirrup of his horse and planned to escape, but for some reason gathered some courage and gave up the idea of flight.

At that moment, men of the tribe of Rabi'ah came. From the side of the Syrians, al-Himyari of the al-Himyari tribe and 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Umar with four thousand Reciters of the Holy Qur'an from Syria made a severe attack. When Ziyad ibn Khasfah felt that the Syrians were dominating the fighters from the tribe of Rabi'ah, he told the people from the tribe of 'Abd al-Qays that Dhul-Kila' and 'Ubaydullah Ibn 'Umar were decimating the men from the tribe of Rabi'ah. He

asked them to reach them and help them, or else all of them would perish. The men of the tribe of 'Abd al-Qays took up arms and spurring their horses fast came to the help of Rabi'ah. With the coming in of 'Abd al-Qays, the morale of the men of Rabi'ah got a boost and they fought with added vigor. Dhul-Kila' and 'Ubaydullah ibn 'Umar were also fighting with great vigor. But with this new onslaught, their morale took a nose-dive. The tribe of Himyar too was crestfallen. In this battle, from the army of Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.), Abū-Shuja' al-Himyari addressed the tribe of Himyar, "O group of Himyar. May Allah put you to shame and blacken your faces. What has happened to you that in support of the traitorous rebel you came to fight with Hazrat Ali (a.s.). You thought that Mu'awiyah is better than Hazrat Ali (a.s.)" Then he addressed Dhul-Kila' and said, "O Dhul-Kila'. We believed that you had faith. Do you truly believe that Mu'awiyah is superior than Hazrat Ali (a.s.)?"

Dhul-Kila replied, "I do not consider Mu'awiyah superior to Hazrat Ali (a.s.) but I have to fight alongside him for the *qisas* of 'Uthman's blood. I do not want that 'Uthman's blood goes waste."

Janabe Ammar-e-Yasir (r.a.) – the standard of truthfulness in the army of Kufah

Although Dhul-Kila' acknowledged Hazrat Ali's superiority but the crazy idea for *qisas* deprived him from thinking sensibly in spite of hearing the Prophet's tradition about the depravity and mischief of the Umayyads. During the battle he heard a tradition from 'Amr ibn al-'As, that the killer of 'Ammar would be from a rebellious group. Because of this tradition, he was confused and wanted to know the stand of 'Ammar about the battle. He was therefore searching for Abū-Nūh al-Himyari a person from Imam Ali's army who was from his tribe, to inquire about 'Ammar.

When he eventually met Abū-Nūh, he narrated the hadith and asked him if it was true. Abu-Nuh replied, "By Allah. 'Ammar ibn Yasir is in our army. He is determined to kill each and every person of the Syrian forces." He asked Abū-Nūh, "Can you take out a little time and come with me to the tent of 'Amr ibn al-'As and tell him that 'Ammar is in your army. Perhaps the fight could possibly stop because of this." Abū-Nūh said, "I can certainly go. But I have doubt that I might become victim of your treachery and deceit." Dhul-Kila' said, "In the name of Allah and the Prophet (a.s.). I promise that no harm will come to you. You just tell 'Amr that 'Ammar ibn Yasir is in your army."

Both of them proceeded to the tent of 'Amr. When he saw a stranger with Dhul-Kila', he asked, "Who is this person? To me he looks like Abū-Turabi." Abū-Nūh said, "My face radiates the felicity of the Prophet (a.s.) and the friends of the Prophet (a.s.) and your face reflects the images of Abū-Jahl and Pharaoh." At this Abul-A'war al-Salami put his hand on the scabbard of his sword and said, "This person is abusing us on our face. We shall teach him a lesson." Dhul-Kila' said, "He is my cousin and I have given him my protection. I have brought him here to tell you about 'Ammar." 'Amr ibn al-'As asked, "Is 'Ammar there in Hazrat Ali's army?" Abū-Nūh said, "Why are you asking about him?" 'Amr said, "I have heard the Prophet (a.s.) say, 'Ammar will be killed by a rebellious group" Abū-Nūh said, "By Allah. 'Ammar is in our army and he will destroy you and your army." When Dhul-Kila' was convinced about the presence of 'Ammar and the veracity of the tradition, he said, "You are that rebel group." 'Amr said, "So what if he is in Hazrat Ali's army. In the end he will come to our side."

This reply was only to appease Dhul-Kila'. Allah alone knows if this statement of 'Amr convinced Dhul-Kila' or not. But he continued to be

with the forces of Syria. ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar al-‘Anzi from the Syrian Army, hearing about the incident, also advised Dhul-Kila’ to move away from the ‘rebellious group’. But he did not heed the advice. Perhaps, he might have convinced his heart that ‘Ammar would ultimately join their group.

However, ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar al-‘Anzi left Mu’awiyah’s army and joined the forces of Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.). At that time, he composed a few couplets. A couple of them are mentioned here:

“After this Tradition, I shall not fight against ‘Ammar until the Trumpet (of the Resurrection Day) is blown I have left Ibn al-‘As and his rebel group. O friend. I cannot help leaving them.”

When Mu’awiyah heard of this event, he was very angry on ‘Amr ibn al-‘As. ‘Amr said, “I had only recounted the Prophet’s tradition. It is not my responsibility if someone goes away.”

Dhul-Kila’ kept looking for ‘Ammar and in the battlefield he was killed fighting with Farad Khandaf al-Bakri of the tribe of Bakr ibn Wa’il.

With the killing of Dhul-Kila’, the al-Himyari’s desire for revenge increased further. They joined with ‘Ubaydullah ibn ‘Umar. Meanwhile ‘Ubaydullah tried a ploy by sending a message to Imam al-Hasan (a.s) telling him that the Quraysh had received many hardships from Hazrat Ali (a.s.). And they might accept him as the Emir. He asks him to support them to remove him from the caliphate and take over the reins of Caliphate with their support. Hearing this, Imam al-Hasan (a.s.) looked at Ibn ‘Umar with contempt and said, “O ‘Ubaydullah. You will be killed sooner rather than later. Satan has tempted you to this state. Is it possible that I take part in a conspiracy against Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.)? You have given an example of your evil nature by making such a suggestion to me.” When Ibn ‘Umar heard this, he went away with a crestfallen face.

Now Ibn ‘Umar organized his forces and attacked at the rear of the right flank of Hazrat Ali’s army. The fighters of the tribe of Rabi’ah were alert in that flank. They raised their swords and penetrated into the enemy forces. From noon until sunset, severe fighting took place. The Iraqis fought with such bravery and intensity that the flank of the Syrian army was scattered. But in the darkness of night they all reassembled. The tribe of Rabi’ah again attacked and scattered them. Only a thousand men remained under the Syrian flag and came forward for a last ditch effort. All night fighting continued and dead bodies continued to be piled. In this fighting, the times for prayer came and passed by. Instead of the prayers, they just recited the “Takbir”. When the dawn arrived, the adhan was sounded in the Imam’s army. Hazrat Ali (a.s.) hearing the adhan said:

“Blessed be those who say but the truth, and welcome to the prayer.”

In this fight ‘Ubaydullah ibn ‘Umar was killed at the hands of either Hani’ ibn al-Khattab or Muhriz ibn Sahsah or Jabir ibn al-Hanafi. The Syrians offered 10,000 dirhams for handing over the cadaver of Ibn ‘Umar. But the Imam (a.s.) turned down this offer and said:

“These are the remains of a dead dog and it is not legitimate to sell it.”

In the end his two wives, Bahriyyah bint Hani’ and Asma’ bint ‘Utarid, came to claim his body. At that moment Ziyad ibn Khasfah came out of his tent and Bahriyyah bint Hani’ requested him to help her take away the body. He got it loaded on a mule and the two widows took it. The body was hanging on the mule in such a manner that his hands and feet were touching the ground.

After the killing of Dhul-Kila’ and ‘Ubaydullah, Mu’awiyah was under a spell of fear. He told ‘Amr ibn al-‘As, “Allah knows what the Iraqis

are planning to do now.” ‘Amr said, “You have already seen the attacks of the tribe of Rabi’ah. If they gather around Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and attack, the Syrians would not be able to hold on against them. “Mu’awiyah said, “Instead of giving me courage, you are frightening me.” ‘Amr said, “I am telling you what I am foreseeing.”

When Mu’awiyah saw no hope of success, he sent word to Khalid ibn Mu’ammār who was commanding the forces of the tribe of Rabi’ah that if he withdrew from the conflict, he would give him the governorate of Khorasan after the war was over. He promised that he would be in that position for life. Therefore, when the forces of Rabi’ah were advancing with ferocity, he pulled them back.

Overwhelmed with greed, Khalid turned his face away from the Hereafter. But even the world was not in his fate. When Mu’awiyah sent him the edict for appointment as the governor of Khorasan, he died while traveling to take charge of the position.

During the heat of the fighting, a swordsman of the Syrian army, Kurayb ibn Sabbah al-Himyari came to the arena and challenged for a combat. From the troops of Iraq Murtada ibn Waddah al-Zubaydi came to fight with him. But he was defeated and martyred. Kurayb once again challenged for a fight. Now al-Harith ibn Jahah came to fight with him. He too was martyred. When he challenged the third time, ‘Ayid ibn Masrūq al-Hamdani came to the arena. He was also killed.

After martyring the three persons, pride went to the head of Kurayb. He piled the dead, one over the other, and sitting over them threw a conceited challenge once again. Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) saw this demonstration of conceit and he thought it better to go himself to combat with the person instead of sending anyone else. Reaching near him the Imam (a.s.) said, “O Kurayb. Remember! The son of Hind, the cannibal who chewed the human liver, will consign you to

the flames of the Hell. I invite you to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet (a.s.).” He replied, “We have been hearing such talk since long. You have seen my prowess at the use of the sword. If you have the courage, fight with me.”

The Imam’s visage changed. He went forward and attacked Kurayb. The blow was so fierce that Kurayb fell to the ground, rolled, and died. After killing him, the Imam (a.s.) asked for another combatant from the Syrian army. Al-Harith ibn Duwahah al-Himyari came to the arena. Imam (a.s.) killed him. He challenged for another combatant. This time Muta’ ibn al-Muttalib al-’Absi came to fight. The Imam (a.s.) dispatched him to the gates of hell as well. He then spoke to the Syrian troops, “If you had not started the fight, we would not have followed suit. Then he recited the following verse:

الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرْمَتُ قِصَاصٌ ۗ فَمَنْ اعْتَدَىٰ
عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِبِشْلِ مَا اعْتَدَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا
أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٩٧﴾

“The Sacred month for the sacred month and all sacred things are under the law of retaliation; whoever then acts aggressively against you, inflict injury on him according to the injury he has inflicted on you and be careful of your duty to Allah and know that Allah is with those who guard against evil.”¹

When we consider about this incident, a picture of rights and justice comes before us. There is hardly a better example in the history of warfare. After killing three swordsmen the Imam (a.s.) held back his

¹ Surah Baqarah (2) : 194

hand. Generally, in such circumstances, when a warrior has achieved so much success, he goes overboard and challenges the opponents with conceit and pride as if he is invincible in the manner Kurayb behaved earlier. After settling the score with the Syrians, the Imam (a.s.) could have continued asking for more combatants. But he never let the norms of right and justice escape his attention. He killed the same number of opponents as the lives he lost from his group.

The rebel group martyrs Janabe Ammar-e-Yasir (r.a.)

With so much happening around Imam Ali (a.s.) ‘Ammar ibn Yasir could not have remained a silent spectator. He was a well-known warrior. He had participated in Badr, Uhud, Khandaq and other campaigns. Although his limbs had started shaking on account of old age, had wrinkles on his face, his back was bent and had already seen ninety-three summers, but he was as active as a youth could be. He was tall and had a wheatish visage, a wide chest and large eyes. Ever since he got the news about his impending martyrdom from the Prophet (a.s.), he was keenly looking forward to the day. Seeing the rebels of Syria, he remembered the Prophet’s saying that a rebellious group would martyr him. He came to the presence of the Imam (a.s.), with the sword in his shaky hand, to seek permission for jihad. The Imam (a.s.) looked at him and said, *“Wait. May Allah be kind on you.”*

When ‘Ammar felt that the Imam (a.s.) was hesitant in allowing him to go for jihad, he said, *“The Prophet (a.s.) has already given me the tiding of martyrdom. Now I am in the twilight of my life. I see the opportunity of martyrdom in front of me. Please give me your consent.”* When the Imam (a.s.) saw ‘Ammar’s determination, he reluctantly allowed him to go and do jihad. ‘Ammar wore the armor, took his arms, mounted his horse and spurred it on to the arena. He

lifted his head towards the sky and said:

“O Allah. You are aware that if I know you want me to jump into the sea, I would do that. O Allah. You are aware that if I know you want me to keep the tip of the sword on my chest and bend so much that it pierces through my body, I would not hesitate to do it. I do not consider any act more worthy of your pleasure than doing jihad with the hypocrites. If I had known that any other act would bring more pleasure to you, I would not have hesitated doing that too.”

Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) prepared a group of men to fight under ‘Ammar. The standard was given to Hashim ibn ‘Utbah Mirqal. The Imam (a.s.) told him smiling, *“O Hashim. For how long you will keep breaking the bread. Rise and do jihad with the traitors.”*

After taking the Standard in his hand, Hashim looked at Mu’awiyah’s army and pointing towards one unit of troops, he asked who they were. He was told that they were the people from the tribe of Dhul-Kila’. He pointed towards another unit of men and inquired about them. He was told that they were a mix of the Quraysh and people of al-Madinah. Then he turned in the other direction and asked who the people around the dome shaped tent were? He was told that was Mu’awiyah and the men guarding him. He asked that even in the rear of the tent there were some people. He was told they were ‘Amr, his sons and retainers. When the armies were ready, ‘Ammar ibn Yasir addressed them and said, *“O valiant. Rise and fight with those mischief mongers who have started the war on the pretext of seeking retaliation for the blood of ‘Uthman. To hoodwink the people they say that ‘Uthman was killed as an oppressed person and that they are claiming the *qisas*. This was just a ploy to start the war. They took hold of this excuse and tricked people into mobilizing for the battle. The purpose for this war for them was to grab power. They were not interested in faith nor do they care for truth. They want to enjoy*

worldly material benefits and luxuries”

After this talk by ‘Ammar, Hashim waved the standard and both of them started together towards the rows of the enemy formation. Whichever side ‘Ammar went, the Companions followed surrounding him.

When Mu’awiyah saw this crowd moving towards his formations, he sent fresh troops under the command of Abul-A’war al-Salami. ‘Ammar saw ‘Amr al-’As in the Syrian army. He told him, “Shame on you. For the governorate of Egypt, you have sold your faith. But this is nothing new. You had always rebelled against Islam.” ‘Amr said, “We are avenging the blood of ‘Uthman.” ‘Ammar retorted, “You have not taken this step to please Allah. I had fought against you earlier on three occasions as a part of the Prophet’s army. The aim with which you participated in the earlier battles, you have the same even now. O ‘Amr. Have you forgotten the Prophet (a.s.) saying, ‘O ‘Ammar. You will be martyred by a rebel group. You will be calling them towards the Heaven and they will invite you towards Hell’. Look at me and recognize me. I am ‘Ammar.” ‘Amr was spell bounded.

When both the armies were ready, they advanced against each other. The flames of battle started rising. In the melee, ‘Ammar and Hashim were separated from each other. Despite his old age and shaky hands, ‘Ammar was fencing his sword and kept moving forward killing the enemy troops. After sometime he noticed that Hashim was standing in front of him He said, “Hashim. Why are you standing here. Move forward and fight with the enemy. Today, the doors of the Heaven are open and it is under the shadow of swords and spears. Even if they push up to the oasis of Bahrain, we shall have the conviction that we are on the side of the truth and they are the supporters of evil.” Hashim waved his sword, like a lightening, and attacked the rows of enemy men. Swords were waving over and

severing the heads and the spears were entering the chests of the enemies. Cadaver after cadaver was falling.

When ‘Amr al-’As saw this he said, “If this person with the black flag kept fighting like this, he will finish the entire population of Arabia.” With the continued onslaughts of Hashim and ‘Ammar, three of the five rows of the enemy troops were scattered. When they were about to attack the fourth row, the Syrian army woke up to the reality. From their units, the tribes of Azd and Bahilah attacked the men from Hamdan with intensity. They were forced to climb up a hillock to take shelter. But Bahilah and al-Azd chased and forced them down the hillock. Now the youths of Hamdan made a concerted attack and killed 3,000 enemy men. The remainder of the enemy units was forced to withdraw. ‘Ammar ibn Yasir, with his men, moved forward and reached near the groups that were guarding Mu’awiyah.

When Mu’awiyah saw him advancing, he asked his men to push him back. Among those was ‘Amr’s son ‘Abdullah. He had one sword in hand and another hanging on his girdle. When ‘Ammar turned in the direction of ‘Abdullah, ‘Amr shouted, “O My son.” Mu’awiyah asked him to be courageous and not to worry. ‘Amr said, “This is my son. If it was your son, Yazid, I would have seen how patient you would be.” Alas, with the shouts of ‘Amr, some Syrians went forward and brought back ‘Abdullah. ‘Ammar ibn Yasir kept on attacking but in the end he was injured by a Syrian. His strength had totally drained from his aging body. One of his slaves gave him a mix of milk and water. He drank a little of it and said:

“Every word of Allah and his Prophet (a.s.) is true. I shall meet my friends today. I shall meet Muhammad Mustafa (a.s.) and his Companions. The Prophet (a.s.) had said that my last food in the world would be milk mixed with water.”

With milk, his feeble body got some energy. He again rose to

continue the fighting. In his heart was the spirit of fighting and laying down his life for the Truth. At every step, he saw the coming of martyrdom. One person from the rebel group, Abul-Ghawiyah al-Fazari, hit him with a spear and Ibn Jawn al-Saksaki came forward and cut away his head.

When Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) heard of the martyrdom of 'Ammar, he was very sad and tears dropped from his eyes. He went to the body and recited the following couplets:

O Death. Come and give me tranquility and comfort

You have finished my friends, you will not spare me.

It seems you know each of my friends

As if someone is pointing them out to you.

Then the Imam (a.s.) said, "We are Allah's and to Him do we return. One who is not saddened with 'Ammar's death is not conversant with the norms of Islam." Then the funeral prayer was offered and 'Ammar was buried at the same place in the clothes that he was wearing.

Muawiyah blames Imam Ali (a.s.) for the martyrdom of Janabe Ammar-e-Yasir (r.a.)

The martyrdom of Ammar created doubts in the minds of the Syrians and one aspect of their attitude, rebelliousness, became evident in light of the saying of the Prophet of Islam (a.s.):

"He will be killed by a rebellious group that will be astray from the Right Path. 'Ammar's last meal will be milk mixed with water."

On the basis of this tradition, Dhul-Kila' al-Himyari was emotionally disturbed but 'Amr al-'As convinced him saying that ultimately

'Ammar would be in their group. If Dhul-Kila' was alive, he would have asked 'Amr as to what happened to his claim. He might have also exposed the treachery of 'Amr in this matter. He might have also moved away from the rebel group with the men of his tribe after the martyrdom of 'Ammar. Therefore, 'Amr made the following observation on the killing of 'Ammar:

"I do not know if I am more happy with the killing of 'Ammar or that of Dhul-Kila'. By Allah, if Dhul-Kila' lived after the killing of 'Ammar, he would have moved to Hazrat Ali's side with the Syrians."

Khuzaymah ibn Thabit al-Ansari too was in doubt before 'Ammar was martyred. When 'Ammar was martyred all his doubts were cleared. He was martyred fighting against the Syrian forces.

'Abdullah, the son of 'Amr ibn al-'As, too had some doubt and told his father, "Today we have killed a person whose face the Prophet (a.s.) cleaned of the dust with his own hands and said:

"O son of Sumayyah. People are lifting one brick each and you are lifting two at a time for the sake of felicity and reward. You will be killed by a rebel group."

Ibn al-'As informed Mu'awiyah about this. Mu'awiyah, to dispel the fears of 'Abdullah and other men said:

"Have we killed him? Killing has been done by the one who has brought him here." When Mu'awiyah said this, every Syrian was heard saying, "'Ammar's killer is one who has brought him here."

When Hazrat Ali (a.s.) heard this interpretation, he said, "Then Hamzah's killer was the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) because he had brought him to the Battle of Uhud.

Hashim ibn 'Utbah was still in the battlefield. When he saw his men stopping for respite he chided them saying, "Those of you who want

Allah's pleasure and Blessings in the Hereafter, should move forward to clash with the enemy." The contingent now moved and advanced with their lances poised towards the enemy troops.

A youth from the tribe of Ghassan came out of the Syrian army and recited the following couplet:

I have heard this saddening news

That Hazrat Ali has killed son of 'Affan

Then using invectives against Hazrat Ali (a.s.) he came forward with the intention of attacking. Hashim understood that the youth was misguided and was under a misapprehension and totally ignorant of the circumstances of the assassination of 'Uthman. Fulfilling the duty of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, he told him, "O young man. Reconsider your opinion and fear Allah. Tomorrow you will be accountable before Allah." The youth said, "Fighting with you, and killing your people, I consider my religious duty because you neither pray nor your Emir prays. And it was your Emir who, with the cooperation of your people, killed 'Uthman."

Hashim said, "Uthman was killed by the Prophet's Companions, their sons, their followers, and the reciters of the Qur'an. These people know the Shari'ah and have a vision of the Faith. I am sure you don't know anything about the faith nor do you know what is good or bad for the Ummah. Leave it to those who have the knowledge. When you say that our Emir does not pray, the world knows that he was the first in the world to offer prayers with the Prophet (a.s.). On the face of the Earth there is none who has a better understanding of the matters of faith and the follower of the Shari'ah than him. He had the special privilege and honor of the nearness to the Prophet (a.s.) that none else had. You have blamed us for not offering prayers. Did you not see that our men spread the prayer mats in the nights, offered

prayer and recited the Holy Qur'an? You have been misguided by evil persons and are mistaking vice for virtue and virtue for vice. You are blindly following their ill advice and going astray."

When the youth heard this, curtains of darkness were raised from his mind and he said, "You seem straightforward and virtuous to me. If I repent, will my repentance be accepted by Allah?" Hashim replied, "It is Allah who accepts repentance and forgives mistakes." The youth is convinced and decides to abstain from fighting and return back. A Syrian told him that he was being misled by the Iraqi. The youth said, "Misleading is one thing and the attraction of the truth is something else. By advising me to refrain from vice, he has proved his kindness and concern"

Hashim was standing in the battlefield when a patrol of the Syrian troops from the tribe of Tanūkh came forward. Hashim went with his men and attacked them. 9 or 10 Tanūkhis were killed by Hashim. During the same fight, Harith ibn al-Mundhir al-Tanūkhi stabbed his spear in the stomach of Hashim. He fell on the ground. The advance of his troops stopped and the men were disheartened. When Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) saw the men losing heart, he sent word with a person to Hashim that he must take the standard in his hand and move forward. Hashim showed him the wound in his stomach and blood was coming out copiously. Hashim was in the pangs of death and soon breathed his last. With Hashim a group of memorizers of the Qur'an from the tribe of Aslam too were martyred. When the messenger returned and conveyed the information about the martyrdom of Hashim, the Imam (a.s.) came to the mortal remains of the martyrs and recited the following couplets:

May Allah Bless this al-Aslami group who were radiant of face and died fighting along with Hashim

In that group were Burayd, 'Abdullah and Malik's sons 'Urwah and

Munqidh. They were those who were counted in the nobility of the Arabs.

Anecdotes of war and warriors

At that moment Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) noticed a group under the Syrian flag. He was informed that they were the people from the tribe of Ghassan. He ordered that until they were attacked, they would not budge from their place. He turned toward his men and said, "Who amongst you are those who can fight with courage and an eye on the blessings of the Hereafter?"

At this call, a group of men came forward. He called Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah to take the group with him slowly towards the enemy force and await his orders. He then asked Malik al-Ashtar to go with another group to the aid of Muhammad and ordered them to attack. Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah and Malik al-Ashtar's groups jointly attacked the enemy formation. When they attacked the people of Ghassan with sheer ferocity, their feet were uprooted. They left their station, suffering lots of casualties, and withdrew from the battlefield.

In the heat of this battle, one thousand Iraqis were cut away from their formations and were surrounded on all sides by the enemy. This encirclement was so severe that the men were rendered helpless. When Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) saw this predicament, he asked his companions to volunteer to go to the rescue of their men. 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn al-Harith al-Ju'fi said that he would obey the Imam's orders. Imam blessed him and asked him to break the encirclement of the Syrians and help them out of the situation. He asked him to tell the men to shout the Takbir from there, which will be reciprocated from his end too. Then they should make a concerted attack on the encirclers. 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Ju'fi put on the armor, mounted his horse

and, went near the encircling hordes of the enemy, advanced hitting their chests with his lance he reached the encircled Iraqis. When the men saw him, their morale revived. They asked, "How is Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.)?" He replied that he was well and that he had asked them to raise the slogan of Takbir and start attacking and he with his companions will raise the same slogans from his end. The attack was so severe that there was panic in the enemy ranks. Seven hundred enemy men were killed in the battle. The encirclement broke and the Iraqis returned to their base. Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) praised 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Ju'fi for his valor.

Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) was standing near his formation of men when a chief of the Syrians came to the arena wearing armor of chain and shouted, "Abul-Hasan. Where are you?" The Imam (a.s.) came in front of him and the man said, "O son of Abū-Talib. You have precedence in accepting Islam over all other men. You have participated in all the ghazawat with great distinction. Stop this bloodshed. We shall leave Iraq for you and you leave the territory of Syria for us." The Imam (a.s.) said:

"O Person. I have given a serious thought to this matter. For me there is no other alternative than war. Or else I shall have to deny the things that Allah has revealed to His Prophet (a.s.). Allah does not like His friends to contravene His Commands on the earth and we sit quiet without exhorting people to virtue and warning them against vice. I feel better facing the hardships of war than going to Hell with manacled hands and feet."

Imam Ali (a.s.) delivered the following Khutba on one of the days of Siffin about ways of fighting:

O' Muslims! Let fear of Allah be the norm of your life.

Cover yourselves with peace of mind and clinch your teeth. Complete your armour and shake your swords in their sheathes before taking them out. Have your eyes on the enemy. Use your spears on both sides and strike (the enemy) with swords. Keep in mind that you are before Allah and in the company of the Prophet's cousin. Repeat your attacks and feel ashamed of running away, because it is a shame for posterity and (cause of awarding you) fire on the Day of Judgement. Give your lives (to Allah) willingly and walk towards death with ease. Beware of this great majority, and the pitched tent and aim at its centre because Satan is hiding in its corner. He has extended his hand for assault and has kept back his foot for running away. Keep on enduring till the light of Truth dawns upon you.

While ye have the upper hand, and Allah is with you, and never will He depreciate your deeds^{1,2}

Swords were clashing in the battlefield and different fighting groups were engaging with one another. Ali (a.s.) ordered every unit of his army to attack some sections of the enemy formation. As a result, he entire army entered the arena at the same time. At every nook and corner of the place the flames of fighting were rising. Al-Qa'qa' ibn 'Amr says that it appeared as if lightning was striking, mountains were clashing and the Earth was in the throes of a flood. Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) seemed submerged in the rows of the enemy troops and emerged after some time when his head and face was red and the sword was soaked in blood. In this fierce battle, the standard-

bearers could not stand steadfast and the rows of men were scattered. While fighting when 'Adi ibn Hatam came near the place he had left the Imam (a.s.) and did not find him he was told that the Imam (a.s) had gone in the direction where the fighting was the fiercest. Adi went there and finding Imam (a.s.) there said: "O Amir al-Mu'minin. If you are living, every hardship is small for us. I have trampled the dead under my feet to reach you. Today, none of our chiefs is alive nor theirs."

Sa'id ibn Qays al-Hamdani sent word to the Imam (a.s.) from his battlefield, "O Amir al-Mu'minin. We have at this moment acquired ascendancy over the enemy. If any of the units needs our assistance, we are ready to provide it. "The Imam (a.s.) told the tribes of Rabi'ah and Hamdan that they were like the spears and the armors for him. He exhorted them to vanquish the enemy and push them out of the arena. At this call, twelve thousand troops got ready for the onslaught. The Imam (a.s.) wore the Prophet's black turban on his head and climbed on the Prophet's own horse, Rih. The right flank was entrusted to Malik al-Ashtar and the left to Ibn 'Abbas. He himself was at the heart of the formation. Thus they attacked the enemy, with the valiant youths of Rabi'ah and Hamdan, and in no time there were piles of enemy cadavers in the arena. While fighting, the Imam (a.s.) reached near the tent of Mu'awiyah and said:

"I shall hit my sword on those enemies and will not spare Mu'awiyah who has bulging eyes and a fat tummy."

When Mu'awiyah saw this state of affairs he started preparing to escape from the battlefield. But the Syrian troops reassembled and he abandoned the idea of escape. The Syrians made a concerted attack, but the youths of Hamdan and Rabi'ah kept advancing and decimating the enemy fighters. Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) praised their valor and said:

¹ Surah Muhammad (47) :35

² Sermon no 65 of Nahjul Balagha

“Leading them along was the man of honor Sa’id ibn Qays. The upholders of honor and righteous persons protect honor and prestige.”

Laylat al-Harir

This was Thursday the ninth day of the war. When the dusk was near, and the sun was about to set, the terrible night arrived that is infamous in the annals of history as *laylat al-harir*. Everywhere there was like hell. With the clanging of swords and the twanging of the bows, the hearts were getting scared. There was a cacophony of slogans and the clapping of hoofs of the horses on the ground that were shattering the drums of the ears of the people. Everywhere there were either soldiers lying dead or severely injured.

Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) sometimes remained in the heart of the formation or moved to the left and the right flanks. It appeared that in the arena of the battle he was everywhere. Wherever he saw the enemy gaining ascendancy, he moved to that place. He attacked with such intensity that row after rows of the enemy troops were obliterated. On that night, five hundred and twenty-three times the Imam (a.s.) was heard calling the Takbir (his call whenever he would kill one of the enemies). In the morning when the count of the enemies killed during the night was taken, it was exactly five hundred and twenty-three. There is another narration that says that in that night more than nine hundred Syrians were killed by the Imam (a.s.).

At dusk, the war had entered its last phase. Amir al-Mu’minin’s forces under the command of Malik al-Ashtar and Ibn ‘Abbas still continued to fight with intensity. The Imam (a.s.) was at the heart of the formation and on all the four sides, the flames of war were rising. Malik al-Ashtar, on the right flank, advanced with the left flank in his close proximity. Whenever he brought down his sword, it appeared

as if it was raining. Whenever he raised it, its brightness would blind the eyes momentarily. Malik handed over the standard to Hayyan ibn Hawzah al-Nakha’i and took the troops to attack the Syrians. Some men slowed down their advance and he told them, “This is not the wont of men that they keep milking the sheep and sit with one hand over the other. Move forward with vigor like men.”

Energy came back in the lazy limbs. The Syrians could not bear these incessant attacks and withdrew backwards. When Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) felt that the victory was nigh, he sent another troop to support Malik and Ibn ‘Abbas. They jointly finished whatever resistance was left in the enemy. On one hand the Syrian army was getting decimated, on the other the voice of Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) was reverberating, “Yes. You are near the destination of victory. The enemy is in his last throes. Do not rest on your oars before finishing him.”

Chapter 3

Lies and Hypocrisy - Raising of Holy Quran on sword

This was a very difficult period for Mu'awiyah. Iraqis were advancing with determination. There was no hope left that the Syrians would be able to resist them. There was darkness in the eyes of Mu'awiyah. And on his head were the dark clouds of failure and ignominy. He looked at 'Amr ibn al-'As with dismay. He said, "There is no need to worry. I have already a plan ready for such a situation." Mu'awiyah asked, "What is the plan?" Ibn al-'As said, "Raising the Holy Qur'an on the lances we shall make it the arbiter in the dispute. The result will be that a group of the Iraqis will become our supporters and try to stop the war. The other group will insist on continuing the conflict. Thus creating a rift in their ranks we shall succeed in postponing the war." Mu'awiyah already had the intelligence from his detectives that al-Ash'ath ibn Qays wanted the war to stop before any result was achieved. He was heard openly telling the men of his tribe:

"You have already seen the yesterday. How terrible and destructive a battle it was. By Allah, if we fight again tomorrow destruction of the Arab pride and honor is certain."

Now Mu'awiyah matched al-Ash'ath ibn Qays word for word and said that if the war prolonged, the people of Persia would attack the Arabs and the Romans would attack Syria and will trample our pride and honor under their feet. Therefore, Ibn al-'As's strategy must immediately be put to test and make the Holy Qur'an the arbiter by raising it on the lances. Therefore, from the first rows of the Syrian

army five persons raised the Giant Book of the Holy Qur'an of Damascus on their lances. Besides this, as many copies as were available too were raised on the lances. Some persons wrapped pieces of cloth on bricks and raised them on lances. When the copies of the Holy Qur'an were raised, al-Ash'ath ibn Qays who had joined the conspiracy with Mu'awiyah, came to Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) and said that the Syrians had made the Holy Qur'an the arbiter and the people are not ready to accept any verdict other than what the Holy Book gives. He asked his permission to negotiate with Mu'awiyah. Ali (a.s.) said, "Talk with him and see."

Al-Ash'ath went to Mu'awiyah and asked, "Why the Qur'an was raised on the lances?" He said, "We want the Holy Book to be the arbiter in this dispute." Since they were both conspiring, al-Ash'ath readily agreed that it was a good proposal. He returned and told (a.s.) what transpired between him and Mu'awiyah and he himself stood between the rows of the two armies and stressed on accepting the Book as the arbiter in the dispute. The Iraqis, on the temptation by Mu'awiyah's agents, started insisting that they will abide by the verdict of the Holy Qur'an. When Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) saw a web of deceit being weaved with the Holy Book in the front, he said:

"O creatures of Allah. Continue to follow the path of Truth and Virtue that you were following. Continue to fight with your enemy. Whether it is Mu'awiyah or 'Amr, Ibn Abi-Mu'it or Habib ibn Maslamah, Ibn Abi-Sarh or al-Dahhak. These people are neither persons of faith nor those who follow the Holy Book. I know them more than you do. During both childhood and youth, I had been with them. They were evil in their childhood and remained so in their youth. By Allah! They have raised the Holy Qur'an to cover their evil deceit."

Hazrat Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) is forced to stop war

Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) tried his best to convince the Iraqis. But al-Ash'ath ibn Qays, and his cohorts, who were hand in gloves with Mu'awiyah, became rebellious. Mus'ir ibn Fadki al-Tamimi and Zayd ibn Husayn al-ta'i came forward with 20,000 men and told the Imam (a.s.), "O Hazrat Ali (a.s.), if you refuse to accept the Holy Qur'an as the arbiter, we shall fight with you. You should immediately order cessation of hostilities and send a message to Malik to return forthwith from the arena." When the Imam (a.s.) felt that the mischief had taken root, and the people are bent on rebellion, he sent word to Malik al-Ashtar through Yazid ibn Hani' to come to him immediately. Malik was surprised at this message and said, "The enemy will surrender any moment. I shall come to him with the tidings of victory." Yazid returned and conveyed what Malik had said. The men started shouting and said that he had quietly asked Malik to continue fighting. The Imam (a.s.) said, "Whatever I have said was communicated in your presence. Where was the opportunity to convey anything in secret?" They asked him to send Yazid once again and order Malik to withdraw immediately. If there is any delay in Malik returning, the swords that are hitting the Syrians will turn against you.

The Imam (a.s.) sent Yazid once again. He told Malik that if the life of Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) was dear to him, he must immediately return to him. Malik, with a saddened heart, returned to the Imam (a.s.) and was very unhappy seeing the confusion around him. But the steps that had been withdrawn could not be advanced again. Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) knew that if the cessation of hostilities was not ordered, his men would rebel. He very unwillingly accepted the proposal of the arbitration.

After the cessation of hostilities, 'Amr advised Mu'awiyah to kill all the enemy men under detention. Amr ibn Aws al-Awdi heard this and sent word to Mu'awiyah that he was his nephew and should not be killed. Men from his tribe, Banū-Awd too recommended that he be released. Mu'awiyah called him and asked him to prove it. The youth said, "Is not the consort of the Prophet (a.s.), Ummu-Habibah bint Abū-Sufyan your sister?" Mu'awiyah said, "Yes. She is my sister." The youth said, "I am her son." Mu'awiyah said, "No one but you would have known that. You have said the truth." 'Amr ibn Aws was released. At that time, the Syrians who were in captivity with the Iraqis were released. Mu'awiyah told 'Amr ibn al-'As, "If I had acted on your suggestion, then no one of these captives would have returned alive." He went ahead and released all the Iraqi captives.

The two armies camped in Siffin for one hundred and ten days and ninety clashes took place. From Amir al-Mu'minin's army twenty-five thousand persons were martyred of whom eighty were participants in the Battle of Badr and sixty-three from the event of bay'at al-ridwan. From Mu'awiyah's army forty-five thousand men were killed.

This entire saga was because of the greed of Mu'awiyah and 'Amr ibn al-'As for power. Mu'awiyah was ruling the province of Syria since the times of 'Umar and 'Amr too was the governor of Egypt for some time. Mu'awiyah wanted to save his position at any cost and 'Amr wanted once again to get hold of the control of Egypt. It is the nature of power mongers that once they taste power they try to hang on to it at any cost. Therefore, to keep himself in power he concocted the story of 'Uthman's *qisas* and misguided the people to put them in the conflagration of war. 'Amr Ibn al-'As played all the tricks in his repertoire to get the governorate of Egypt for himself. Despite knowing the truth very well, he chose falsehood. He told Mu'awiyah:

"By Allah! Although I am with you in fighting for the retaliation for

the blood of ‘Uthman, but the fact is you are fighting with the person whose superiority and precedence (in Islam) and his nearness to the Prophet (a.s.) is well known to you. But we are only the seekers of this world.”

Mu’awiyah’s claim for Uthman’s qisas was baseless

Mu’awiyah made the retaliation for the blood of ‘Uthman the excuse for achieving his end. He gave an impression to the people that the murder of ‘Uthman had made him restless and he would not take rest until he achieved the fulfillment of the *qisas*. This, despite the fact that during the days he was besieged, ‘Uthman appealed to Mu’awiyah for help, which fell on his deaf ear. He, however, had a small troop and asked the men to remain outside the ramparts of al-Madinah and not take any action whatsoever. The purpose was to give an impression to others that he tried to help ‘Uthman with armed men but before it could reach him, he was assassinated. He knew the murder of ‘Uthman was in his best interests and that he will have an excuse to get the power in his own hands. Therefore, he promised the governorate of Egypt to ‘Amr and made him a strong cohort. He started blaming Hazrat Ali (a.s.) for the killing of ‘Uthman and started claiming *qisas*. He knew it pretty well that the circle of the killers of ‘Uthman extended from Hijaz, Egypt and Iraq who came to al-Madinah, besieged him and scaling the walls of his house assassinated him. From the huge crowd of his besiegers it was difficult to identify the real perpetrators of his murder. Those who were present at his house at the time of the killing too were unable to identify any one culprit.

In such a situation terming any one person as the killer and claiming the *qisas* from him was impossible. There was no justification for

doing a thing like that. There is no justification for putting to death thousands of persons to claim the *qisas* for one life. Therefore, the Holy Qur’an says the following about the Law of *qisas*:

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ط وَ مَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلُومًا
فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لَوَلِيِّهِ سُلْطٰنًا فَلَا يُسْرِفُ فِي الْقَتْلِ ط إِنَّهُ كَانَ مَنْصُورًا ﴿١٧﴾

“And do not kill any one whom Allah has forbidden, except for a just cause, and whoever is slain unjustly, We have indeed given to his heir authority, so let him not exceed the just limits in slaying; surely he is aided.”¹

Mu’awiyah was ‘Uthman’s cousin, but Uthman had his own sons, hence Mu’awiyah was not ‘Uthman’s wali. Therefore his claim for *qisas* was not justified, because it is only the right of the successors of the killed person or the government of the day. Mu’awiyah was neither the successor of ‘Uthman nor was he the caliph of the Muslims. He was just an ordinary citizen like anyone else as per Islamic laws. At the most, he was the functionary appointed to govern a province by the caliph. It was required of him to first accept Hazrat Ali (a.s.) as the caliph, and respecting his rights he could have appealed to him to issue orders for *qisas* of ‘Uthman. Hazrat Ali (a.s.), therefore, had written to him first to owe allegiance to him as the caliph and then talk about the *qisas* for ‘Uthman’s blood so that a decision could be made about the claim in light of the Sunnah. This is the correct and Islamic process to be followed which Imam Ali (a.s.) indeed abided to.

In fact, the claim for *qisas* was a deception of Mu’awiyah to refuse

¹ Surah Bani Israel (17) : 33

allegiance to Hazrat Ali (a.s.). The purpose clearly was to put pressure on Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and obtain from him the approval for continuing with the governorate of Syria. He told in clear terms to Jarir ibn 'Abdullah al-Bujali that if he continued as the ruler of Syria he would enter the *bay'ah* of Hazrat Ali (a.s.). Therefore, no doubt should remain that the refusal for *bay'ah* was to use it as leverage for remaining in his position as governor and the claim for the *qisas* was just a subterfuge. If the emirate of Syria were assured, he would have stopped talking about *qisas*. If he was interested in the *qisas*, he would have helped Umm al-Mu'minin 'A'ishah, Talhah and al-Zubayr who rose in the name of retaliation for the blood of 'Uthman. He did not send any help to them. In fact, he expressed satisfaction at the death of Talhah and al-Zubayr because he knew that these two persons tempted the killers to commit the assassination. His strategy was that Talhah, al-Zubayr and Hazrat Ali (a.s.) fought for supremacy, and the party that was eliminated in the fight was one headache less for him.

He also thought that the survivor of that conflict would become so weak that managing him would not be difficult. Mu'awiyah was thus preparing ground to fulfill his ambition for power. If he was serious about *qisas*, after the martyrdom of Hazrat Ali (a.s.), when Mu'awiyah was controlling the entire realm, he could at least have tried to locate the killers of 'Uthman to give a semblance of his interest in claiming the *qisas*. Once 'Uthman's daughter, 'A'ishah, tried to draw the attention of Mu'awiyah towards the matter of her father's *qisas* but he avoided the issue. Ibn 'Abd-Rabbih al-Andalusi wrote in al-'Iqd al-Farid that after the Year of Congregation, when Mu'awiyah came to al-Madinah, 'Uthman's daughter 'A'ishah, visited him. When she saw Mu'awiyah, she started crying and wailing and complained to him that he had forgotten about the *qisas* for the blood of her father. Mu'awiyah said that those people are now

subjugated to him and were have promised amnesty. If he acted against them, they will carry rancor against him and will start mischief again.

Mu'awiyah gathered a big crowd around him, and in the name of *qisas*, started a conflict but he knew that the result of the conflict will be either rise or fall, either the crown or the head would roll. But he did not leave any stratagem, fair or foul, to win the war. Therefore, as soon as he set foot on Siffin, the first step was to capture the source of water on the bank of Euphrates and he tried to justify denying access to water for the group of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) by saying that they too kept 'Uthman without water for many days before killing him. In fact Mu'awiyah should not have banned water for Hazrat Ali (a.s.), and his men as a retaliation for keeping 'Uthman without access to water because it was Hazrat Ali (a.s.) who arranged to send water to 'Uthman when he was besieged in his own house. On the contrary, when Amir al-Mu'minin's men captured the source of water, he allowed free access to Mu'awiyah's men to draw water.

But the Imam (a.s.) said that an evil act could not be replied with an evil act. Similarly, the martyrdom of 'Ammar exposed the rebellious attitude of Mu'awiyah but he immediately put forth an excuse that the killer, of 'Ammar, is Hazrat Ali (a.s.) because he brought him to the battlefield. This statement is such a blatant denial of the fact that it cannot be put even in the genre of an excuse. It is unfortunate that the people of Syria were being carried away with the falsehoods of Mu'awiyah. If they had some sense of understanding, the scenario would have been different. They blindly remained attached to the rebel group. If the excuse made by Mu'awiyah that Hazrat Ali (a.s.) was responsible for the killing of 'Ammar because he brought him to the battlefield, then, by the same logic, Mu'awiyah was responsible for the killing of thousands of Syrians who were brought to the war

by him. The undeniable fact was that 'Ammar was killed by "the rebel group" and that was "Mu'awiyah's Group".

In spite of all these deceptions when Mu'awiyah saw defeat staring in his face, he made such a treacherous move that the situation completely reversed. He sent his men to raise the Holy Qur'an on the lances and start shouting slogans for making the Book the arbiter to solve the dispute. He also infiltrated the Iraqi army to instigate the men to stop fighting and force Hazrat Ali (a.s.) to accept the proposal. The ignorant men did not understand the treachery of Mu'awiyah - if the Holy Book was to be made the arbiter for the dispute, he should have come up with the proposal before the war commenced. When he saw defeat in front of him, he concocted this excuse.

The reason for the success of Mu'awiyah in all his treacherous acts was that the Syrians were blindly committed to him. Al-Mas'ūdi writes:

"They were submissive to Mu'awiyah to such an extent that while going to Siffin he made them offer the Friday Congregational Prayer on Wednesday."

The reason for the people of Syria remaining ignorant of the norms of faith and the Arab culture was that the territory was under the sway of outsiders for too long. During the period of 'Umar, the territory came under his control. Then he made the mistake of imposing the sons of Abū-Sufyan, Yazid and Mu'awiyah, on the people.

Yazid died after a short while but Mu'awiyah had a long stretch of rule who with his cunningness, entrenched himself and developed vested interest in the province. How could he inculcate the Islamic norms of do's and don'ts in the people when he was himself not bothered about them?

Moreover, he had his political agenda in mind but he knew if the

people got aware of it, he would not be able to rule the way he wanted. He therefore kept the people ignorant of the status of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and the Ahl al-Bayt. In fact he poisoned the people's minds against them to the extent that during the battle of Siffin a Syrian is reported to have told the Iraqi army that they were fighting Hazrat Ali (a.s.) because Hazrat Ali (a.s.) never offered prayers nor the men in his army habituated of praying regularly.

The poor soul was repeating like a parrot what Mu'awiyah and his cohorts had brainwashed him with. But when Hashim ibn 'Utbah talked to him, the haze in his mind was cleared and he withdrew himself from fighting. Besides this nasty propaganda, Mu'awiyah opened the coffers of the state to create a breed of sycophants who promoted his foul plans.

There were also people in Hazrat Ali's army, who had joined him because of some compulsions, but their hearts were not with him. Persons like, al-Ash'ath ibn Qays and Khalid ibn Mu'ammār, had sold their souls to Mu'awiyah. They got their opportunity to misguide people when the issue of making the Qur'an the arbiter for solution of the dispute was raised. Although Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) made it clear to al-Ash'ath that the demand was a trick of Mu'awiyah, he remained adamant and shouted, "O people. Force Hazrat Ali (a.s.) to accept the arbiter and stop the killing of men." It is surprising that when the Imam's forces were on the verge of victory, al-Ash'ath develops sympathy for the dying. If his heart was so much concerned with the deaths, he should have raised his voice before the war commenced. He could have done this to stop the war of attrition when the scale was showing both the parties equal in their gains and losses. But his raising the voice when Mu'awiyah was staring in the face of defeat definitely proves his complicity with the enemy.

Muawiyah's killing of Janabe Ammar-e-Yasser (r.a.) was termed as *khata' ijthadi*

There is no doubt that this trick of Mu'awiyah was an act of rebellion against the rightful caliph, but when the act of Talhah and al-Zubayr was dismissed as *khata' ijthadi*, Mu'awiyah's evil design too is called a *khata' ijthadi*. It is surprising that when the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) terms this act as rebellion, by calling it an 'error in interpretation' and according to them the perpetrator deserve rewards in the Hereafter (sic!!!).

Are these ardent supporters of Mu'awiyah were oblivious of the Prophet's saying: "Ammar will be killed by a Rebel Group. 'Ammar will be inviting them towards Allah and they will call him towards the Hell."¹

Some people have even termed the assassination of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) as a *khata' ijthadi*. Ibn Hazm and his group consider the act of 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljim as *khata' ijthadi*. Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani writes: "Ibn Hazm has stated that the imams have not denied that Ibn Muljim did ijthad, and he had his justification and that he was right in killing Hazrat Ali (a.s.)"²

As a matter of fact, the Prophet (a.s.) had said about Ibn Muljim: "He is the wicked man of the Ummah." Similarly this group terms the killing of 'Ammar ibn Yasir by Abul-Ghawiyah al-Fazari as error in interpretation, despite the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) saying that the killer of 'Ammar and the one who took away his fighting gear would go to the Hell. The killers of 'Uthman, on the contrary, are termed by Ibn Hazm, and the men of his ilk, as traitors, cruel and heretic. They do not

consider their act as *khata' ijthadi*?

Just imagine the man of ijthad, Mu'awiyah, gives expensive gifts to the Caesar of Rome to make an alliance with him to fight against one who had the *bay'ah* of the Companions of the Prophet (a.s.) both Muhajirūn and Ansar. Was this ijthad that he was hobnobbing with an infidel to fight against the caliph of the day?

The great Urdu poet, Mirza Ghalib Dehlavi too has composed a very interesting couplet on this phenomenon:

It is a funny ijthad that an enemy of the Faith

Comes to fight with Hazrat Ali, and they call it an error.

¹ Sahīh al-Bukhārī, Vol 2, Page 92

² Talkhīs al-Hubbayr, Page 348

Chapter 4

The process of Arbitration and rise of Khawarij

The rules of arbitration are spelled out

When an agreement was reached that there will be an arbitration, the reciters of the Holy Qur'an from Iraq and Syria decided that there will be two referees. One will be nominated by the people of Syria and the other by the Iraqis. Both the referees will give the verdict in the light of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (a.s.).

Their verdict will have to be acceptable by both the parties. The Syrians nominated 'Amr ibn al-'As and from Iraq, al-Ash'ath ibn Qays, Mus'ir ibn Fadki, Yazid ibn Husayn etc. nominated Abū-Mūsa al-Ash'ari as the referee. He was resident in Syria. When Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) heard the name of Abū-Mūsa, he said:

"I have no confidence on the opinion and the discretion of Abū-Mūsa. I want to give the authority for arbitration to 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas."

The persons who suggested the name of Abū-Mūsa said that he, Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and Ibn 'Abbas were the same and it would mean that he was himself the referee in the matter concerning him. They said that they want a referee who is independent and impartial. The Imam (a.s.) said that in that event why did they not object to the nomination of 'Amr ibn al-'As. They said that they were concerned only about the referee from their side and not about the Syrian nominee.

The Imam (a.s.) said that if they object to the name of Ibn 'Abbas, he suggests Malik al-Ashtar, instead. They said that he was the person who gave wind to the fire of war and how could he allow the arbitration to succeed. He will look for further opportunity for conflict. The Imam (a.s.) then said, "If you insist on having Abū-Mūsa as the referee, I leave the matter to you." al-Ahnaf ibn Qays said, "O People! If you do not like Ibn 'Abbas and Malik al-Ashtar, you may nominate me as the referee. I am well aware of 'Amr's cunning ways and he will not be successful in tricking me. If you do not want me, select someone else. But do not select Abū-Mūsa. Instead of setting right the matters, he will complicate them further."

It was a part of the conspiracy that Abū-Mūsa's name was pushed forward. They adamantly held to their suggestion and Abū-Mūsa al-Ash'ari was nominated as the referee.

After the selection of the referees, when 'Abdullah ibn Rafi' started writing down the terms of reference, he wrote the following words as a preamble to the document. "Amir al-Mu'minin Hazrat Ali and Mu'awiyah ibn Abi-Sufyan has decided that..." 'Amr ibn al-'As objected to the word "Amir al-Mu'minin" and said that he might be the Emir of others but not theirs. He therefore asked the word to be deleted from the document. Only his name and the father's name are entered. Al-Ahnaf ibn Qays told the Imam (a.s.) that he should not agree to the deletion of the word "Amir al-Mu'minin" even if it caused renewal of the conflict. He added that if this word was deleted today, the Emirate would not ever come back to him. Al-Ash'ath ibn Qays and his supporters were insisting that the word be deleted. In utter unconcern, the Imam (a.s.) was sitting quietly in his place and seeing the reflection of the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyah in the events of the day. After a few moments of silence he said, "When I drafted the agreement of the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyah, I wrote the

word “*rasūlullah* (Allah’s Messenger)” in the preamble when the representative of the Quraysh Suhayl, said that they did not recognize him as Allah’s Messenger and wanted me to delete the word and to enter “Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah” instead. I was hesitant to score away the word “*rasūlullah*”. But the Prophet (a.s.) said:

Write what he wants. One day you too will face a similar situation and you will be helpless.”¹

At this ‘Amr said angrily that he considered them infidel like those people. The Imam (a.s.) replied:

“O son of al-Nabighah. When were you not the friend of the transgressors and the enemy of the Muslims? You are like the mother who bore you.”²

Ibn al-‘As said, “After today, we shall never sit together nor see each other’s face

“The Imam (a.s.) replied, “I too wish this. May Allah keep my company free of persons like you.”

When the word “Amir al-Mu’minin” was struck off and the writing of the document was re-commenced, the Imam (a.s.) was asked if he considered Mu’awiyah and the people of Syria as Muslims?

He said: “I do not accept Mu’awiyah and his companions as Muslims and mu’min. But Mu’awiyah is free to write what he wants about himself and his men, admit whatever he wishes to admit and suggest whatever name he wants to.”

At last, the agreement was drafted that had the following terms:

(1) It will be binding on the referees on both sides that their

¹ Al-Sīrah al-Halabiyah, Vol 3, Page 33

² Tārīkh al-Tabarī, Vol 4, Page 37

decision will be based on the Qur’an. If they are unable to arrive at a decision through the Book, they will access the Traditions of the Prophet (a.s.) that are acceptable to both.

- (2) The decision made by the referees shall be binding on both the parties, provided the decision is based on the Qur’an and the Sunnah.
- (3) The referees to give their verdict by the month Ramadan of the current year (this was being decided in the month Safar). If they felt the need to extend the duration, they could mutually agree to do so.
- (4) If the referees required evidences for arriving at a decision, they will be arranged.
- (5) There will be no hostility until the referees come to a final conclusion about the dispute. Both the parties will ensure safety of the lives and properties of the referees. There will be no restriction on the movement of the parties to the dispute.
- (6) If, before the verdict, any of the two referees died, his party can nominate another referee in his place.
- (7) The verdict will be announced at a place that lies between Iraq and Syria.

Most of the terms of this agreement were administrative and the basic requirement was that the verdict of the referees had to be in accordance to the Qur’an and the Sunnah and that they had no right to arrive at any decision on their personal intuition and thinking.

The reaction of Khawarij against the proposed Arbitration

The armies of Iraq and Syria were still in Siffin while the terms of

reference for the arbitration were being decided, when a whispering campaign was started against it. When al-Ash'ath ibn Qays went to the different tribes and read to them the terms of reference, the feelings against the arbitration were aroused. The same people, who were strongly talking in favor of arbitration to stop unnecessary bloodshed, started speaking against it. When the tribe of Banū-Anza heard the terms of reference, two brothers from the tribe, Ju'd and Ma'dan, raised the slogan of "There is no referee but Allah", took swords in their hands, came in the open and died fighting with others. When Banū-Murad heard about the terms, Salih ibn Shafiq said, "There is no arbitrator but Allah, even if it is not acceptable to the hypocrites."

When the terms were read to Banū-Rasib, they opposed the arbitration saying, "In Allah's Faith, men cannot be made the arbiters."

The majority of the opponents of the arbitration were from Banū-Tamim. When the terms were read to them, 'Urwah ibn Adiyah al-Tamimi said to al-Ash'ath:

"Have you appointed men as arbitrators in the matters of Faith? O al-Ash'ath. If this was to happen, then why our men were killed in the battle?"

Then he took his sword and attacked al-Ash'ath. Al-Ash'ath was astride his horse and the sword hit the rear of the horse without any injury to him.

Because of the cessation of the hostility and the controversy of arbitration, the unity of the Iraqis was disturbed. When Muhriz ibn Khunays saw the circumstances getting worse, he came in the presence of the Imam (a.s.) and said, "O Amir al-Mu'minin. Is there no way of canceling the agreement? I have a doubt that it might give

rise to a great mischief and you will have much difficulty because of that." The Imam (a.s.) said: "Can I breach an agreement after signing it? It is not permissible in any condition."

When Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.), did not like to access arms after laying them down in terms of the agreement, the germs of rebellion arose from within. A third group was being formed and people started joining it. This group was of those who wanted to fight those who were insisting on imposing 'the arbitration'. The slogan that two youths, 'Urwah and al-'Adiyah, had shouted in their emotional outburst, became the slogan of the new group. When both the armies returned, and Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) proceeded with his army towards al-Kūfah, the faces of men were glum and the eyes reflected anger. Some were shocked that the battle was abandoned when it was almost won. Others were angry as to why the arbitration was agreed. When they reached near al-Kūfah, a big chunk of 12,000 men refused to enter the bounds of the city and stayed at Harawra, a place outside al-Kūfah. They formed a permanent front with the slogan of "There is no referee but Allah." This group was known as Khawarij or Harūriyyah. They selected Shabath ibn Rab'i as their chief and 'Abdullah ibn al-Kawwa al-Yashkuri as their Imam.

Despite their headstrong behavior, Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) did not take any action against them. He knew that punitive action against the stubborn people would make them more stubborn. Only soft treatment and logic could bring such persons to the right path. Therefore, he tried to convince them through argument and advice. He decided to go personally to them and discuss the matter at length. He sent Ibn 'Abbas in advance with clear instructions not to approach the main topic until he himself reached. His fear was that the Khawarij might not accept 'Abbas's arguments and make up their minds not to talk any further on the subject.

When ‘Abbas reached the midst of the Khawarij, they did broach the subject of the arbitration. They said the punishment in the Shari’ah for adultery was a hundred lashes and for theft cutting off the right hand. This is the command of Allah and none has the right to change this Law. Then how is it legitimate to appoint two persons to arbitrate in the matter of faith? Ibn ‘Abbas could not control himself and said that Allah observes about the persons who hunt while wearing Ihram:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْتُلُوا الصَّيْدَ وَأَنْتُمْ حُرُمٌ ۗ وَمَنْ قَتَلَهُ مِنْكُمْ
مُتَعَبِدًا فَأَجْرَاءٌ مِّثْلُ مَا قَتَلَ مِنَ النَّعَمِ يَحْكُمُ بِهِ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنْكُمْ

“O you who believe. Do not kill game while you are on pilgrimage, and whoever among you shall kill it intentionally, the compensation (of it) is the like of what he killed, from the cattle, as two just persons among you shall judge.”¹

The Khawarij said that on the massacre of Muslims *qiyas* (conjecture) cannot be done and, then, who is ‘Amr ibn al-’As? Until yesterday, we were considering him as an unjust (unreliable) person and fighting with him. How could he be just today? They said that two persons have been named the arbitrators in the matters of Allah, but when Mu’awiyah and his men rebelled, Allah’s Command was to kill them or seek their repentance. Instead of doing either of the two things, you have made a truce with them. After the revelation of the verse of Bara’ah, there is no question of truce with the aggressors until they agreed to pay the jizyah.

¹ Surah Maeda (5) : 95

Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) defeats the arguments of Khawarij

At that time Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) arrived and finding Ibn ‘Abbas busy in conversation, he said, “I had asked you not to start any argument.”

Then he turned towards the Khawarij and said, “Why have you rebelled against us?” They said, “We differ in the matter of the arbitration.” Hazrat Ali (a.s.) said,

“You will remember that when the Syrians raised the Holy Qur’an on their spears, I had told you all that those men neither had anything to do with faith nor with the Book. To save themselves from the ignominy of defeat they were taking shelter behind the Qur’an. But you said that you are satisfied with the verdict of the Qur’an and forced me to stop the battle although I did not like the idea. When I had to accept the arbitration because of your adamancy, I imposed a condition on the arbiters that their verdict has to be only on the basis of the Qur’an and the Sunnah. If they gave a verdict against these conditions, it will be turned down.”

The Khawarij said, “All this is true, but you should not have agreed with us and rejected the proposal of the arbitration. We do accept that supporting the arbitration we committed infidelity. But we are now repentant about our stand. As we have accepted an act of infidelity, you too should accept that you committed infidelity and express repentance. Then we shall enter your *bay’ah* and obey you.” The Imam (a.s.) said, “How I have become an infidel by accepting the arbitration, when Allah himself has permitted appointment of

arbitrators. Therefore, about the differences between husband and wife He says:

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهِ وَحَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا

“And if you fear a breach between the two, then appoint judge from his people and a judge from her people.”¹

Then, are the differences in the Ummah less important than the differences between individuals?”

They said, “You must have made the Qur’an the Arbitrator instead of nominating men to resolve the issue.”

The Imam said:

“We did make the Qur’an the arbiter and not the men. But since the Qur’an is between the two of its bindings, and cannot speak, men have to interpret it.”

When the Khawarij could not reply to this, they said, “Because of ‘Amr ibn al-‘As objecting, you had struck off the word “Amir al-Mu’minin” from the document. This meant that you have demoted the position of Emir and caliph.”

The Imam (a.s.) said, “At the time of the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyah, the Prophet of Islam (a.s.) had struck off the word “*rasūlullah*” from the document of agreement. Does it mean that he was announcing that he was forsaking the prophethood? My action was in complete emulation of what the Prophet (a.s.) did at the time of that treaty. He had also told me, ‘O Hazrat Ali. You will be faced with a similar situation one day, and you will also have to do what I am doing now.’

“The Khawarij said, “Why did you keep quiet and give them a long rope?” The Imam (a.s.) replied, “*I wanted people to know the truth and the ignorant become aware and those who know become firm in their knowledge and thus a way for amity between the Muslims was paved.*” The Khawarij kept quiet at this point.

Then the Imam (a.s.) said, “*May Allah be kind on you. Get up and come back to your homes.*” The Khawarij were momentarily impressed with the Imam’s argument and offered the zuhr Prayer in congregation behind him and entered the city.

These people returned to al-Kūfah, but their minds were not fully convinced. When they were asked about the change of their attitude, they said that their stand was the same as it was before. When they were asked about their decision to return to al-Kūfah they said that when Imam (a.s.) pointed out that they themselves were championing the arbitration, they admitted that they had committed an act of infidelity by doing that, but they had expressed their repentance for the act and added that if he too accepted his act as infidelity and expressed penitence, they would start following him. They said that the Imam (a.s.) had accepted their stand and had asked them to wait for six months for the preparations for war against the Syrians. The Khawarij lied to cover their shame. Ibn al-Athir writes: “Whatever the Khawarij had said in their false sense of pride was all shame.”

Although this statement of the Khawarij was false, it became the talk of the town, going from mouth to mouth and people started gossiping that the Imam (a.s.) had expressed repentance for his sin of acceding to the arbitration and had decided to attack Syria before the verdict of the arbiters was out. To give boost to the mischief, al-Ash’ath ibn Qays told the Imam (a.s.), “O Amir al-Mu’minin. People are saying that you consider the arbitration as deviation and

¹ Surah Nisa (4) : 35

insistence on it infidelity.” The Imam (a.s.) felt it necessary to refute this. He went to the pulpit and told before a crowd that the person who says that I have recanted from the agreement for the arbitration is a liar. At this declaration of the Imam, the Khawarij were furious. Their lie was exposed. As a protest, they started shouting the slogan of “There is no referee but Allah” Then this slogan was heard from every corner of the mosque. One person addressed the Imam (a.s.) and recited the following verse:

وَلَقَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۖ لَئِنْ أَشْرَكْتَ لَيَحْبَطَنَّ
عَمَلُكَ وَتَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

“And certainly, it has been revealed to you and to those before you: Surely if you associate with Allah, your work would certainly come to naught and you would certainly be of the losers.”¹

The mischief of Khawarij

Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.) recited the following verse in reply:

فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَا يَسْتَخِفُّكَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ لَا يُوْقِنُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

“Therefore be patient; surely the promise of Allah is true and let not those who have no certainty hold you in light estimation.”²

As the time for the verdict by the referees drew near, the mischief of the Khawarij too increased. Their faces showed that they were

¹ Surah Zumar (39) : 65

² Surah Rum (30) : 60

beyond any reform and wanted to be subdued only through the sword. When the time for the departure of Abū-Mūsa came near, they tried to create an excuse for fighting and two of their representatives, Zar’ah ibn Burūj al-ta’i and Hurqūs ibn Zuhayr al-Asadi came to the Imam (a.s.) and raised the slogan of “There is no referee but Allah.” Then, Hurqūs, in an impertinent tone said, “You have committed a sin and you must do penitence for that. You must abstain from the arbitration, go to Syria and fight with the enemy.” The Imam (a.s.) said, “When you wanted to stop the battle I insisted to carry on with it. But you were adamant for stopping the battle that we were about to win. Now there is an agreement for arbitration, and we are bound by the agreement, as Allah has said:

وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ إِذَا عَاهَدْتُمْ وَلَا تَنْقُضُوا الْأَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيدِهَا
وَقَدْ جَعَلْتُمْ اللَّهَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٩١﴾

“And fulfill the Covenant of Allāh when you have covenanted, and break not the oaths after you have confirmed them, and indeed you have appointed Allāh your surety. Verily, Allāh knows what you do.”¹

Hurqūs said that agreement was sinful and against the Shari’ah. There is no justification for following it. The Imam (a.s.) said that the agreement for the arbitration was no sin, but was the result of the weakness and futility of their thinking. He said he had warned them against the arbitration, but they did not agree and stopped fighting. Zur’ah ibn Burj said, “O Hazrat Ali. If you do not withdraw from the agreement of the arbitration, then, to please Allah, we shall fight with you.”

¹ Surah Nahl (16) : 91

The Imam (a.s.) replied:

“May harm come to you. You ill-fated person. I am seeing with my eye that you have been killed and the desert wind is piling sand over you.”

The Khawarij turned the mosque into a center for intrigue and mischief. Whenever the Imam (a.s.) stood up to deliver sermons, they raised noises from all directions. When Amir al-Mu’minin was delivering his sermon shouts and slogans were raised from all sides. The Imam (a.s.) said:

“Allahu-akbar. Your slogan is the word of Truth, but your intentions are wrong. As long as you remain with us, three of your rights are our responsibility: We shall not stop you from taking Allah’s name in the mosque, if you participate with us in Jihad you will not be deprived of the booty and we shall not battle with you until you start the fight.”

At this point one Khariji, Yazid ibn ‘Asim al-Muharibi stood up disturbed and said, “O ‘Ali. Why are you frightening us with death? We are sure we shall soon rain the swords on you. We cannot bear with calumny in the matters of the faith. If we do that we shall be inviting the wrath of Allah.”

Khawarij mobilizes army to fight with Imam Ali (a.s)

Instead of taking a lesson from the patience and equanimity of Amir al-Mu’minin (a.s.), the Khawarij were bent on insolence and mischief and increased their nefarious activities against him. Therefore, in the house of ‘Abdullah ibn Wahab al-Rasibi they met and chalked out their plan for the future. He suggested that they must leave the city and go to a distant place so that they could plan to fight against the

innovations of the cruel people of this city. Hurqūs ibn Zuhayr endorsed this suggestion. Hamzah ibn Sinan said they should select someone from amongst them as the *wali al-amr* (Supreme Leader) because it is essential for us to have a leader and guide.

There was general agreement on this suggestion and Yazid ibn Husayn al-ta’i was asked to become their leader. But he refused to accept the responsibility. The names of Hurqūs ibn Zuhayr, Hamzah ibn Sinan and Shurayh ibn Awfa al-‘Absi were proposed, but all three of them expressed their inability to accept the position. In the end, ‘Abdullah ibn Wahab was asked to take charge as the leader of the group. He said, “If I become emir, it is not for worldly honor. If I do not accept it, it will not be out of fear of death. If appointment as emir is essential, I cannot evade myself from the responsibility.”

After this selection, they assembled at the house of Shurayh ibn Awfa for further discussions. ‘Abdullah ibn Wahab said that when they leave al-Kūfah, they must proceed to a place where they would be able to enforce Allah’s Commands without any let or hindrance. Shurayh said that al-Mada’in would be a suitable place for their purpose. He said that they would force out the inhabitants of that place and occupy it. The people who subscribe to the same creed as them too would be asked to come to al-Mada’in. Yazid ibn Husayn said that if they went to al-Mada’in with the idea of evicting the inhabitants, they would certainly resist with force. Therefore, he suggested going to Nahrawan instead of al-Mada’in.

After general agreement on this suggestion, it was decided that instead of going as a large group, they would go in twos and threes so that unnecessary attention of others was not attracted and no one tries to prevent them from going. Therefore, as planned, they started moving away from al-Kūfah to Nahrawan. They deputed ‘Abdullah ibn Sa’d al-‘Absi to al-Basrah to apprise the like-minded persons there

about their move to Nahrawan and to motivate them to join them there. The men in al-Basrah agreed and promised to proceed to Nahrawan at the earliest.

Among those who moved to Nahrawan was 'Adi ibn Hatam's son, Turfah. On reaching Sib, he joined the group of Yazid ibn Husayn. When 'Adi learned of his sons' escape from al-Kūfah, he was much worried and went in his search to al-Mada'in. But there he found none of the Khawarij. Then he thought of returning to al-Kūfah. When he arrived at Sabat, he chanced to meet 'Abdullah ibn Wahab, who wanted to cross the river at 'Aqūl to reach Nahrawan. Finding 'Adi alone, 'Abdullah ibn Wahab wanted to kill him. But 'Amr ibn Malik al-Mabhani and Bishr ibn Yazid al-Bawlani intervened to save him. 'Adi asked the governor of al-Mada'in, Sa'd ibn Mas'ūd to intercept the group of the Khawarij. Sa'd left his nephew, al-Mukhtar ibn Abi-'Ubayd in charge at al-Mada'in and preceded in search of the Khawarij. 'Abdullah ibn Wahab had only thirty horsemen with him. He got suspicious, and changing his route headed towards Baghdad.

However Sa'd chased and caught up with him at the place of Karkh around sunset. The groups fought for sometime and then Sa'id's men decided to let them go as Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) had asked them not to start any fight by themselves. They wanted to seek Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) opinion whether to chase them or allow them to go away. It was night and fighting could be done only at sunrise. They slept near the place where the Khawarij were sleeping. 'Abdullah ibn Wahab took advantage of the darkness of the night and they quietly crossed the river and reached Jawkhi and from there they moved to Nahrawan. The other Khawarij were camping near the bridge of Nahrawan waiting for 'Abdullah ibn Wahab and his men. They were thinking of appointing Hurqūs ibn Zuhayr or Yazid ibn Husayn as their emir when 'Abdullah ibn Wahab arrived. From al-Kūfah, al-Qa'qa' ibn

Qays al-ta'i, 'Abdullah ibn Hakim, Salim ibn Rabi'ah al-'Absi and some more people were planning to join the group of Khawarij, but the people at their homes stopped them from going. Salim ibn Rabi'ah was called by Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) and hence prevented from going.

From al-Basrah, five hundred Khawarij, in the leadership of Mus'ir ibn Fadki al-Tamimi proceeded to Nahrawan. When the governor of al-Basrah, Ibn 'Abbas, knew about this, he deputed Abul-Aswad al-Du'ali in their pursuit to convince them to come back. When Abul-Aswad reached near the Khawarij, it was already night. The Khawarij gave him an impression that they intended to halt at Jasr for the night. Abul-Aswad too camped there for the night. But the Khawarij escaped in the darkness of the night and reached Nahrawan. The Khawarij from al-Kūfah, al-Basrah and the environs assembled in Nahrawan and made it the epicenter of mischief and rebellion.

Because of this congregation of the Khawarij, some sincere companions of Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) wanted to renew their *bay'ah* with the Imam (a.s.). Therefore, they came to the presence of the Imam (a.s.) and said, "We owe our *bay'ah* to you on the agreement that whoever is your friend, we shall befriend him and those who are your enemies, we shall be inimical to them." The Imam (a.s.) took *bay'ah* from them, and told Rabi'ah ibn Abi-Shaddad al-Khash'ami, who was with the Imam (a.s.) in the battles of Jamal and Siffin, "You too owe *bay'ah* in the light of the Qur'an and the Sunnah." He said, I shall owe *bay'ah* to you in the light of the Sunnah of Abū-Bakr and 'Umar." The Imam (a.s.) asked him, "Do you not accept the Book and the Sunnah of the prophet (s.a.w.a.)? If the Sunnah of Abū-Bakr and 'Umar is against the Book and the Prophet's Sunnah then there is no reason for making the condition."

Again, the Imam (a.s.) looked at him with changed demeanor and

said: “By Allah. I am visualizing the scene with my eyes that you have gone out with the Khawarij and the horses are trampling you under their hooves.”

It is true that practical behavior is a reflection of the state of the mind. The Khawarij were the victims of their own mental upheaval. They not only accepted the arbitration but they also forced Amir al-Mu'minin to accept it. But when he agreed for the arbitration, they came up with the slogan of “There is no referee but Allah”. The Khawarij had based their slogan on the Qur'anic verse “The judgment is only Allah’s.”

They formed the idea that the state is for Allah and that the *bay'ah* too is for Allah and there is no other ruler than Allah. Thus, this slogan became the forerunner a new concept of governance. The Khawarij, under the shadow of this Verse, started saying that they wanted to establish the divinely commissioned government or the Divine Rule. They did not realize that the divinely commissioned government does not go away with the concept of the Emirate. The norms of the divinely commissioned government are propagated and implemented by the just Amir and his representatives with none having the right of refuting. Therefore, giving meaning to the verse, “The judgment is only Allah’s” that the state and the rule cannot be of anyone else than Allah and that for the religious and worldly organizations there is no need for an Emir is not right. This verse is about Prophet Jacob and the full text is as follows:

وَقَالَ يَبْنَى لَا تَدْخُلُوا مِنْ بَابٍ وَاحِدٍ وَادْخُلُوا مِنْ أَبْوَابٍ
 مُتَفَرِّقَةٍ ۖ وَمَا أَعْنَى عَنْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۗ ط إِنَّ الْحُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ
 عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ ۚ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ ۝

“And he said: O my sons. Do not (all) enter by one gate and enter by different gates and I cannot avail you aught against Allah; judgment is only Allah's; on Him do I rely, and on Him let those who are reliant rely.”¹

In this verse, the event is mentioned when Prophet Jacob (a.s.) sent his sons to Egypt he told them, “You must enter through different doors so that you save yourselves from evil eyes. It is not necessary that if you use different doors you will certainly remain safe, because only Allah’s Order is supreme. Whatever He decides to happen, that happens. But even then, you must exercise care.” This is the purport of the verse. But the Khawarij saw neither the occasion about which the Verse was revealed nor did they consider its full meaning. They attached the meaning to a part of the Verse that there cannot be any Emir in the world and it is only on Allah’s Orders (Hukm) that the world must run. Refuting this wrong notion of the Khawarij, Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) remarked, “It is right to say, that no doubt, it is Allah’s prerogative to ‘Order’ for things to happen but their intent in applying the Verse is wrong. They say that the rule too is Allah’s.

However, for people it is necessary to have a Hakim or Ruler”. Therefore, this concept of the Khawarij only remained a concept and it could not be implemented at any time in human history. Even the Khawarij could not implement this impracticable concept when they had the opportunities and kept on choosing Emirs to govern them. It is an established fact that from the political and administrative point of view it is essential to have the head of state, whether the state is run by an individual or a group of persons. If there is no governance the state cannot be organized properly. If the slogan of the Khawarij was on the basis of honesty and good intentions, they could have

¹ Surah Yusuf (12) : 67

said that appointment of “Hukm” is justified, as the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) did in the matter of Banū-Qurayzah appointing Sa’d ibn Mu’adh as the arbitrator, but when the enemy was trying to cheat through the institution of the arbitration it was not desirable. If they did this, their protests could have been justifiable. But instead they made arbitration an excuse to create mischief and disorder and under the guise of Divine Government, they intended to bring back the tribal anarchy that prevailed in the Days of Ignorance in Arabia.

The Divine Government is based on the norms and commands of the Shari’ah that have been constituted in the light of the Divine Revelations by the Prophet (a.s.) and have to be implemented by a just and fair ruler.

A Look At The Khawarij

The germs of Kharijism had already formed during the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and were latently growing and spreading. These people, in the garb of Islam, created intrigue against the Creed. They took part in the destructive activities with great gusto. Their impertinence was of such order that they did not abstain even from attacking the justice and fairness of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.). After the battle of Hunayn, the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) distributed the booty at the Valley of al-Ju’ranah and, as an incentive to the new Muslims he gave them more share from his *khums*, a person of that group, Dhul-Khuwaysirah al-Tamimi, said in an impertinent tone to the Prophet (a.s.) that he should be just and fair. The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) replied, “If I do not do justice, then who else will do it?” ‘Umar too was angry at the person and said, “O Prophet of Allah (a.s.). Should we not kill this person?” The Prophet (a.s.) said:

“Leave him. There are many like him. If some of you compare their prayers with your prayers, and your

fasting with their fasting, you will find yourself far behind them. They will escape from the Faith as the arrow pierces through the game.”¹

Outwardly such people were sticklers for the norms of the Religion and regular in prayers, fasting and the recitation of the Holy Qur’an. But they were unaware of the Spirit of Islam and the Reality of the faith. Therefore, the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.a.) had said about them:

“My Ummah will be divided into two groups. And another group will spring from one of the two. The people of this group will shave their heads, clip their moustaches and will wear their loincloth half way to the knees. They will recite the Qur’an, but the Qur’an will not go beyond their throats. They will be killed by the person who is most dear to me and Allah.”²

Their outward appearance, their prayers and the large calluses on their foreheads would attract people and beguile them; their prayers were so intense that even the Sahabah used to be impressed. Therefore, once the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) saw Dhul-Khuwaysirah in prostration. The Prophet (a.s.) finished his prayer and Dhul-Khuwaysirah was still in his prostration. The Prophet (a.s.) turned to Abū-Bakr and said, “You go and kill Dhul-Khuwaysirah” Abū-Bakr saw him praying with great dedication and did not like to kill him and returned. Then the Prophet (a.s.) asked ‘Umar to execute him. He too saw him offering prayer and returned and said that he is a pious person and he could not kill him. In the end the Prophet (a.s.) deputed Hazrat Ali (a.s.), but by that time Dhul-Khuwaysirah had already left from there. The Imam (a.s.) returned and reported to the

¹ Sahīh al-Bukhārī, Vol 4, Page 134

² Tārīkh Baghdād, Vol 1, Page 160

Prophet (a.s.) that he had gone away. The Prophet (s.a.w.a.) said that if he was killed today the mischief could have been nipped in the bud. He is a member of that group who will get out of the faith in a manner the arrow escapes from the bow.

The Khawarij were the nomads of Arabia who naturally had all the traits of the Bedouin. By instinct, they were agitators and liked to fight and kill. After the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), they were pushed into many wars. Thus, they were always so involved in fighting that when there were no battles to fight, they would fight amongst themselves. These warlike activities did not give them time to study the niceties of the faith and the effects of the moral values promoted by it. After the conquest of Iraq, when the foundation for the cities of al-Kūfah and al-Basrah were laid with the purpose of guarding the boundaries of the realm, these rough Bedouin people were settled in these places. They settled down for better prospects but despite coming to live in the cities, they continued with their old diehard traits.

When Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) wanted an army to fight against the enemy, these people, who were veterans of many a battle, rose on the call of the Imam (a.s.). Their willingness was not on the basis of principle or for upholding the Truth. Their motivation was only their instinct and craving for fighting and material gains.

Among the Khawarij mostly there were men from Banū-Tamim. 'Abdullah ibn Abaz, 'Urwah ibn al-'Adiyah, Mustaradd ibn Sa'd, Abū-Bilal Mirdas ibn al-'Adiyah, Mus'ir ibn Fadki etc all belonged to the tribe of Banū-Tamim. Before the advent of Islam, the Banū-Tamim were fire worshippers and because of penury and hardships they used to bury their daughters alive. Qays ibn 'Asim al-Tamimi had told the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) after embracing Islam, "O Allah's Messenger (s.a.w.a.). During the days of ignorance I have buried eight of my daughters alive." Even after accepting Islam their wild instinct

remained latent in their psyche and came out from time to time when the occasion demanded.

Turmah has rightly said about the habits of Banū-Tamim: "Banū-Tamim cannot forget the ways of depravity the same way that a bird cannot forget its way. They will go astray even if they come to the righteous path."

When Banū-Tamim came to al-Madinah as a delegation, and went to the presence of the Prophet (a.s.) to embrace Islam, one of them shouted, "O Muhammad (s.a.w.a.), come out." Because of this way of addressing, the following verse was revealed concerning Banū-Tamim:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْنِئُونَ دُونَكَ مِنْ وَرَاءِ الْحُجُرَاتِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ①

"As for those who call out to you from behind the private chambers, surely most of them do not understand."¹

After the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), a majority of them recanted the faith. The infamous claimant of prophethood, Sujah bint al-Harith, was from this tribe. He created rifts amongst the Muslims and encouraged mischief. It can therefore be said about Banū-Tamim that in their hearts Islam was not etched and their intrinsic hypocrisy came out either in the form of apostasy or rebellion. It was their instinct of mischief that made them rise against Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.).

Some people call the Khawarij Shi'ah of Imam Ali (a.s.) to create an impression that the Shi'ah had converted the victory of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) into failure and then forsook him and later on they came to

¹ Surah Hujaraat (49) : 4

fight with him. They present this episode as his political ineptitude. No doubt, these people were in the army of Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.), but calling them the Shi'ah of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and blaming Shi'ism is not correct. In the army of the Imam (a.s.), there were men of various sects and tribes that professed diverse ideologies. Certainly there was a group who believed in his Imamate. He being the Vicegerent of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.), they considered it their duty to obey him and his disobedience as Haram. These people never changed sides nor left him under any circumstances. There was yet another large group that considered his caliphate as the result of the support of the majority the way they had accepted the earlier caliph. They accepted him as the fourth in the lineage of the caliphs. They were attached to others before Hazrat Ali (a.s.) became the caliph.

After he assumed the caliphate they left Mu'awiyah and came to his side. From them was one group, who when they felt that Hazrat Ali (a.s.) would not approve of their ways, found an excuse and veered away from the Imam (a.s.). These people were never sincere with Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) and were not the true Shi'ah of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) that they broke away from him. These people were not interested in the caliphate of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and came to him out of compulsion and left him in the same way. Some were interested in seeing al-Zubayr as the caliph and others were in favor of Talhah. When they saw that neither al-Zubayr nor Talhah were in sight of getting the caliphate, they came towards Hazrat Ali (a.s.). An army that had such elements, it was the sagacity of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) that kept them together for such a long time. The result was that when victory was almost in sight, they joined hands with the enemy and almost turned the tables.

Chapter 5

Arbitration

The Verdict Of The Referees

The Agreement of the arbitration was executed on 13 Safar 37 H and during Sha'ban 37 H both the referees, Abū-Mūsa al-Ash'ari and 'Amr ibn al-'As met at the place of al-Adhruh lying between Ma'an and Wadi-Mūsa. As agreed earlier, four hundred men from each of the two groups also reached that solace. The chief of the Syrian delegation was Abul-A'war al-Salami and the Iraqi team was led by 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas and Shurayh ibn Hani'.

Ibn 'Abbas was leading the prayers and Shurayh was leading the delegation. He carried a message from Imam Ali (a.s.) for Ibn al-'As. When he met 'Amr ibn al-'As he conveyed to him that Imam Ali advised him that the best person is one who moves away from the path of vice towards virtue. He exhorted him not to close his eyes to the truth and make compromises for the sake of power. He warned him that whatever he acquires in the world is bound to go away from him one day. He added that the day was not far away when he will be on the deathbed, regretting his actions and wishing that he had not cooperated with the unjust and had not given the wrong verdict by accepting bribes.

When 'Amr heard this message, he said, "Have I ever heeded to the instructions of Ali or acted upon his suggestion or even given any weight to his advise?"

Shurayh said, "O son of al-Nabighah. If you did not consider Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) worthy of advising you, then how is it that Abū-Bakr

and ‘Umar would not do anything important without taking his advice? Certainly, they were better persons than you. ‘Amr haughtily replied, “A person of my status does not like to talk with you.” Shurayh rejoined, “This pride and conceit in you is because of your descent from al-‘As ibn Wa’il or it is because of the infamy of your mother?” Saying this he stood up and walked away from him.

Before this meeting, Mu’awiyah wrote to ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar, ‘Abdullah ibn al-Zubayr, Abū-Jahm ibn Hudhayfah and ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn ‘Abd-Yaghūth that although they did not take part in the battle of Siffin, but they must attend the meeting at al-Adhruh as delegates from him. Therefore, the persons reached the venue before the proceeds of the meeting commenced. Besides them, there were ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi-Bakr, Sa’d ibn Abi-Waqqas and Mughirah ibn Shu’bah. Mughirah met Abū-Mūsa and ‘Amr separately before the meeting commenced, took their opinion and returned to Mu’awiyah in Damascus.

Mu’awiyah asked Mughirah that he must have studied the circumstances and might have made his own assessment as to whose favor the verdict would go. He said, “I had met Abū-Mūsa and ‘Amr separately and I feel from Abū-Mūsa’s talk that he wants to remove Hazrat Ali (a.s.) from the caliphate and hand it over to such a person who have kept away from fighting. His ideal is that only those persons will be beneficial for the people who had not sided with any of the two contending groups nor their hands were red with the blood of the Muslims. I think his leaning is more towards ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar and you know the bent of mind of ‘Amr ibn al-‘As. His point of view is diametrically opposite to that of Abū-Mūsa. He thinks that remaining neutral at the time of war is not justified. He himself wants to be the caliph or promote his son, ‘Abdullah, to the position. He considers none else capable of holding the position than himself or

his son.” Mu’awiyah was worried when he heard this. When ‘Amr met up with Mu’awiyah he removed all doubts from his mind..

Before declaring the verdict, the referees had to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution. Therefore, they sat at a predetermined place and the discussion started. ‘Amr ibn al-‘As told Abū-Mūsa, “What is your opinion about ‘Uthman? Was he killed as an oppressed person?” Abū-Mūsa said, “Yes. He was assassinated as an oppressed person and his killing cannot be justified.” ‘Amr said, “Mu’awiyah is his successor and inheritor, and the Qur’an says:

وَمَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلُومًا فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لَوْلِيَّهِ سُلْطٰنًا فَلَا يَسْرِفُ فِي
الْقَتْلِ ۗ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مَنصُورًا ﴿٣٧﴾

“And whoever is slain unjustly, We have indeed given to his heir authority, so let him not exceed the just limits in slaying; surely he is aided.”¹

‘Amr added, “Besides this, the superior pedigree that Mu’awiyah has is not hidden from you. He was a Companion of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the writer in the Court of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) and the brother of Umm al-Mu’minin Ummu- Habibah. We should keep these points in mind when we arrive at a decision about the verdict. You also know the benefit that would accrue if he gets the position, that cannot be expected from anyone else.”

After hearing ‘Amr, Abū-Mūsa said, “When you say that Mu’awiyah is ‘Uthman’s ‘wali’, it is not tenable with the sons of the deceased being alive. ‘Uthman’s ‘wali’ is his son ‘Amr. Moreover, how is it possible for us to overlook the early Muhajirūn and nominate a person as

¹ Surah Bani Israel (17) : 33

caliph who neither has precedence in acceptance of Islam nor he has any apparent superiority in him to qualify for the position. As regards his pedigree - if we make that the yardstick for the selection of the caliph, we must look at the progeny of Abrahah ibn Sabbah because he is from the descendants of the kings who were ruling the entire East and the West of the world. As far as the questions of benefits are concerned, I cannot take bribes and sell myself. In my opinion, the most suitable person for the caliphate is 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar. We can perpetuate the name of 'Umar by offering him the caliphate."

'Amr said, "In that case, my son 'Abdullah could be an ideal candidate too. He is a man of learning and piety and has also been a companion of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.). He had the privilege of Migrating when the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) ordered movement of the Muslims to al-Madinah." Abū-Mūsa said, "But his hands are red with the blood of Muslims. He had participated with you in unnecessary battles. I still think that 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar is the best candidate because he has kept away from conflicts and internecine wars." 'Amr said, "Power can be vested in a person who not only takes care of himself, but has concern for the needs of others as well."

Abū-Mūsa said, "The Muslims have entrusted this matter to us after a bloody war. We shall have to address the issue with due diligence and care, lest some new problem crops up." 'Amr asked, "Then, tell me what we shall do?" Abū-Mūsa said, "I have one idea in my mind. We shall depose both Mu'awiyah and Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and leave the choice to the Muslims to decide on the most suitable candidate to be their caliph through a Shūrah." 'Amr replied, "This suggestion is not bad. I agree with it." Therefore, both the referees decided to announce this to the delegates.

Amr-e-Aas tricks Abu Musa

When both the referees separated after the meeting, Ibn 'Abbas warned Abū-Mūsa, "O Abū-Mūsa. I feel 'Amr will not abide with the decision you have mutually arrived with him. He is a very cunning person and he will certainly trick you. Therefore, when the time for the announcement comes, you must ask him to talk first and then you must make your announcement. If you do not take this caution, remember, he will trick you in such a manner that you will not be in a position to show your face to anyone." Abū-Mūsa was confident that there was no chance of trickery or deceit. The following day when the referees and all the observers from Iraq and Syria assembled in the Masjid, 'Amr told Abū-Mūsa to make the first announcement.

Throughout these negotiations, 'Amr was giving precedence to Abū-Mūsa under the pretext of his age. Abū-Mūsa due to his simplicity was getting carried away. He neglected the advice of Ibn 'Abbas and very humbly got up and went to the podium. He first delivered a sermon praising Allah and the Prophet (s.a.w.a.). Then he addressed the crowd in these words, "In view of the welfare of the Ummah we have decided, after much deliberation, that we both shall depose Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and Mu'awiyah and hand over the matter of the selection of the caliph to the Shūrah. Therefore, I remove both Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and Mu'awiyah from the positions they are holding. Now you can select anyone to be the head of the realm."

This announcement came as a shock to the Iraqis. But they kept quiet with great patience to hear the same announcement reiterated by 'Amr ibn al-'As. 'Amr stood at the podium and uttered some words of praise for Allah and said, "You have heard whatever Abū-Mūsa has said. He is the referee nominated by Hazrat Ali (a.s.). He has removed Hazrat Ali (a.s.) from his position. I too remove him in a similar manner. But I retain Mu'awiyah because he is the wali of 'Uthman

and is seeking *qisas* for his blood. He is deserving of being the successor of 'Uthman." At this statement, the Syrians started shouting slogans of joy and the Iraqis were dumb-founded and looked at each other in surprise. They shouted at this treacherous announcement and wanted to know why this had happened. Abū-Mūsa, was numbed with surprise at the deceit of 'Amr ibn al-'As. He told 'Amr, "May Allah take away the capabilities from you. You have cheated me. You are like the dog which shivers and keeps its tongue out, whether you hit it or leave it." 'Amr forgot all the good manners and respect for the old man that he was showing a while ago. He said: "You are like the ass on which books have been loaded."

Shurayh ibn Hani' could not control himself at this act of treachery and deceit and going forward he whipped 'Amr ibn al-'As. People intervened and separated them. Shurayh used to say after this event:

"I never repented for anything more than the regret of not using my sword instead of my whip."

'Abbas too very angrily told Abū-Mūsa, "You have seen the result of not heeding my advice. Only such things can be expected from you. It is the fault of those persons who, despite your incapability, nominated you for such an important task."

'Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi-Bakr said: "It would have been better for Abū-Mūsa if he died before that day."

Similarly other persons too expressed their surprise and displeasure at the simplicity and vulnerability of Abū-Mūsa. But the arrow had been shot and going into the details of why and how was meaningless. The Syrians moved towards Damascus singing and dancing in procession. They congratulated Mu'awiyah for the honor of caliphate that came his way. The Iraqis trudged towards al-Kūfah sad and crestfallen. Abū-Mūsa too hid his shamed face and

proceeded towards al-Madinah.

Verdict was not according to Quran

Abū-Mūsa and 'Amr had mutually agreed that their verdict would be according to the Qur'an and, if they were not able to arrive at a conclusive decision through the Book, then they would access the Sunnah of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.). But none of them availed the Qur'an nor the Sunnah.

On what basis or verse of the Qur'an or the Tradition of the Prophet (a.s.), did 'Amr suggest the name of his son, 'Abdullah, to be nominated as the caliph? Abū-Mūsa similarly proposed the name of 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar that had no Quranic injunction to support it. They were both making proposals contrary to their agreed terms. Moreover, as the early Muhajirūn were alive, they could not come up with the names of much younger prospects to take over the caliphate. Moreover, the two names suggested by both of them did not have any superiority of piety and learning as well. The son of Ibn al-'As is the person who, at first, warns his father not to go near Mu'awiyah because of his greed for the world. Then he himself joins the ranks of Mu'awiyah's men and fights with Hazrat Ali (a.s.) in the battle of Siffin. 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar was the person who his own father, 'Umar, considered incapable of becoming the caliph because he was unaware of the basic procedure and requirements for divorce. Even when he constituted the Shūra of six persons, he did not include the name of his son in the list.

Therefore under no logical argument could they justify their choices nor did they have the right to decide to depose Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) from the caliphate and hand it over to Mu'awiyah.

The arbitration had nothing to say about qisas for blood of Uthman

The people who supported Mu'awiyah, had come to him for the purpose of seeking *qisas* for 'Uthman's blood. They participated in the war because Mu'awiyah had drilled it into their minds that the responsibility for the assassination of 'Uthman was on Hazrat Ali (a.s.). They did not participate in the war to put Mu'awiyah on the seat of the caliphate.

Ironically, both these referees totally forgot about the *qisas* and made the caliphate the topic of discussion. The caliphate was neither in dispute nor had anything to do with the arbitration. Their discussion should have been about the assassins of 'Uthman and whether Mu'awiyah was entitled to claim retaliation for the blood of 'Uthman or was it the right and duty of the center. When the minutes of this meeting are studied in detail, not a single reference was made of the suspected assassins of 'Uthman nor did they bother to mention about the *qisas*. 'Amr mentioned once that 'Uthman was assassinated in oppressive circumstances and that Mu'awiyah was his wali and the claimant for *qisas*. But this discussion too ended with the mention about the caliphate and justification of Mu'awiyah's qualification for the caliphate. Ibn Hajar al-Makki, and the historians of his ilk, tried their best to prove that Mu'awiyah's heart was free of the greed for the caliphate. They have stressed that he was not fighting for the caliphate and his battle was only for seeking the retaliation for the blood of 'Uthman.

Therefore, he writes: "The belief of al-sunnah wal-jama'ah is that the wars fought between Mu'awiyah and Hazrat Ali (a.s.) were not because Mu'awiyah was fighting with Hazrat Ali (a.s.) for the caliphate. For the caliphate the consensus (majority decision) was

already there."¹

If Ibn Hajar meant that Mu'awiyah had no dispute with Hazrat Ali (a.s.) about the caliphate, then it is only a shallow claim that had no proof. If he had accepted the caliphate of Hazrat Ali (a.s.), then there was no reason for him to have refused his allegiance to him. Denying extending one's hand for *bay'ah* is certainly tantamount to denying acceptance of his caliphate. If he claims that Mu'awiyah was not aiming at elevating himself to the caliphate, the events of those days prove quite the contrary. If he was not aiming at the caliphate, how could he fulfill his promise of giving the governorate of Egypt to 'Amr ibn al-As? Furthermore, on what basis did Mu'awiyah offer the governorate of al-Basrah or al-Kūfah to Ziyad ibn Khasfah, a commander of Hazrat Ali's army as a bribe? On what basis did he offer Khorasan to Khalid ibn Mu'ammār and Iraq to Qayl ibn Sa'd? All these were the prerogative of the caliph, and it is blatantly obvious that Mu'awiyah was angling for that position. All these promises could have only been met after assuming the seat of Caliphate. It can therefore be safely concluded that these conflicts were the precursor of the ambition to establish the Umayyad hegemony.

It was decided by both the referees that both Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and Mu'awiyah must be deposed from their positions. But 'Amr's treachery contravened the understanding and on one hand he announced that he upheld the removal of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and on the other hand declared that Mu'awiyah was not deposed from his position. Islamic history therefore witnessed the most ridiculous situation whereby the seat of caliphate was overturned by treachery.

Those who could not defeat Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s) in the battlefield,

¹ Al-Sawā'iq al-Muhriqah, Page 216

scored a point in stealth and treachery. They turned their faces from the truth and honesty and became an instrument to comply with Mu`awiyah's demands.

In the view of the scholars of the Ahl al-Sunnah, when there is one caliph in position, there cannot be *bay'ah* for the selection of another person in his place. In fact, there are several traditions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) in this regard that states: "When a situation arise that there is *bay'ah* for two caliphs, kill the latter claimant."

Abu Musa Ashari – the greedy and foolish arbitrater

The conduct of Abū-Mūsā at the arbitration cannot be expected of a person with even an average intelligence. At first he places Hazrat Ali (a.s.) and Mu'awiyah at the same level and then makes a ridiculous suggestion to depose both from their respective positions. This meant that both were claimants for the caliphate and that he had been entrusted the duty to make a decision about that. However there was no question of deposing Mu'awiyah as he was neither a caliph nor the candidate for the position. Amir al-Mu'minin's caliphate was having the consensus of the people of Hijaz, Egypt, Yemen, Khorasan and his selection was also backed by the Senior Companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

Treating them at par in the matter of the caliphate was on its own a ridiculous thought process. If this was not the result of the Umayyad conspiracy, then what was it? Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) knew this and therefore he was opposing the nomination of Abū-Mūsā as the referee. He had also experienced his actions during the Battle of the Camel as well. This responsibility too goes to the weak shoulders of the persons who insisted on his selection although they knew that Abū-Mūsā carried hatred against the Imam (a.s.) in his heart.

Abū-Mūsā also knew that in the event of Hazrat Ali (a.s.) succeeding, he would not get any benefits from him. However, success of Mu'awiyah would bring him some position of importance in some way or another. Indeed, when Mu'awiyah came to power, Abū-Mūsā was addressed with the appellation, "Peace be upon you, O Allah's Trustee." When he came to Syrai to meet Mu'awiyah, he realised that Abu-Musa had come to get the gratification for his services. When he was out of sight, Mu'awiyah told his courtiers: "This reverend old man has come with the intention of being offered governorship to some province. But, by Allah. I shall not give him any position."¹

Because of the lopsided decision on the arbitration, the differences remained as they were. In fact, it gave rise to a second front against the Imam (a.s.) in the shape of the Khawarij. Now the Imam had on one side Syria to deal with and on the other the mischief of the Khawarij.

Imam Ali ibne Abi Talib (a.s.) delivered the following sermon about the two arbitrators:

"Your party had decided to select two persons, and so we took their pledge that they would act according to the Qur'an and would not commit excess, that their tongues should be with it and that their hearts should follow it. But they deviated from it, abandoned what was right although they had it before their eyes. Wrong-doing was their desire, and going astray was their behaviour. Although we had settled with them to decide with justice. to act according to the light and without the interference of their evil views and wrong

¹ Tārīkh al-Tabarī, Vol 4, Page 245

*judgement. Now that they have abandoned the course of right and have come out with just the opposite of what was settled, we have strong ground (to reject their verdict)."*¹

The verdict of the referees was not a surprise for `Ali (a.s). He knew that the referees would do everything to protect the interests of Mu`awiyah. Although the Khawarij were forcing the Imam (a.s) to declare a war before the decision about the arbitration, he patiently awaited the outcome. The referees bypassed their terms of reference and, instead of limiting their work to the inquiry about the killing of `Uthman, they pronounced their verdict about the caliphate. Further, they neither referred to the Holy Qur'an nor the Traditions of the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) for their deliberations and decisions. In these circumstances Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s) had to decide to renew the fight with the Syrians. For the Imam (a.s), they were only two alternatives—either to bow down his head to the forces of evil or to attack Syria once again. His duty demanded that he should adopt the second alternative.

He (a.s.) decided to fight the Syrians again, an army of 70,000 men was mobilized. While the army went out of the city to fight the Syrians, the Khawarij engaged them into the battle of Naharwan. After the victory of Naharwan, his armymen made excuses to move further to fight the Syrians. Instead of moving towards war against the Syrians, they preferred to go back and the army dispersed. The Syrians took best opportunity by attacking and conquering Egypt. They then tried to capture Basrah which was saved. They changed their strategies and started terrorizing the people by attacking various smaller suburbs and remote hamlets. These guerillas warfare reached as far as Mecca and Medina. Lack of brave soldiers and

presence of hypocrites and lazy people did not allow mobilizing an army to fight them. It was during these circumstances that Ameerul Momeneen Imam Ali Ibne Abi Talib (a.s.) was assassinated and martyred by a Khawarij Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljim. May Allah curse him.

¹ Sermon no 176 of Nahjul Balagah

Conclusion

The arbitration was a stepping stone for the crimes perpetrated on Islam, Muslims and especially the holy household of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). The first heinous transgression after the arbitration was the assassination of Ameerul Momeneen Ali Ibne Abi Talib (a.s.). The oppression reached to its peak in Karbala. Till today, we can see the after effects of the foolishness and disobedience of followers towards their leader which became the cause of people being devoid of the just and divine rule in the world.

The Battle of Siffin leads us to the root cause of deviation i.e. non-recognition of Divinely appointed Imam. Imam Ali (a.s.) was the Imam of the time and belief in his Imamate and Wilayat was essential. Mo'awiyah and his army are condemned as they refuse to recognize him as Imam and usurped his right to Caliphate. They disobeyed the order of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) - "When oath of allegiance has been taken for two caliphs, kill the one for whom the oath was taken later"¹

The battle of Siffin also helps us to recognize people who were with Imam but did not value him. The army of Hazrat Imam Ali (a.s.) was divided into two viz Shias of Imam Ali (a.s.) - who considered him to be an Imam of the time appointed by Allah. They loved and obeyed him (a.s.) and were ready to sacrifice their lives for him. The second group were those who were in his army but considered him to be like any other worldly ruler – the ruler who can make mistakes, the one who can be disobeyed, the one whose rule can be overthrown etc. The Khawarij faction was a subset of this second group.

¹ Saheeh Muslim, Kitabal Ijarah, Arabic - Book 34 tradition 4905, English – Book 20, tradition 4568

We, the shias of Hazrat Ali ibne Abi Talib (a.s.) believe as mentioned in Ziarat Jameah Kabeera narrated from Hazrat Ali ibne Mohammed an Naqi (a.s.)

"(O Ahle-Bait (a.s.)) whoever emulates you his destination is paradise, while whoever opposes you then he is doomed to hell. Whoever denies your status is a disbeliever and whoever wages a war against you is a polytheist. Whoever rejects you will be hurled to the lowest levels of hell" (Ziarat Jameah Kabeera)

We, the shias of Ahle Bait (a.s.) believe in the tradition of Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) –

"O Ali (a.s.)! I swear to Allah, who sent me as a Prophet and who chose me from among all of His creatures, if any slave worships Allah for a thousand years, Allah will not accept it unless he believes in your Wilayat and the Wilayat of your sons. Furthermore, your Wilayat will not be accepted unless it is accompanied along with the hatred of your enemies and the enemies of your sons. This is what Angel Jibrael (a.s.) has told me. Let them choose to be believers or disbelievers. (Surah Kahf : 29)"¹

We conclude with the sentence from the sermon of Ghadeer

"O people, Allah perfected his religion with the Imamate of Ali. Those who will dispute his Imamate and that of my sons' Imamate which will continue till Quiyamat then all of their good deeds of the world and hereafter will come to naught and they will be doomed to hell forever."

¹ Virtue no. 9 of One hundred incredible virtues of Ali ibne Abi Talib and His Sons of Ibne Shazaan, Biharul Anwar Vol 27 page 199, Tradition no 66