

# The Commander of the Faithful

## Introduction

On divine instructions, Prophet Muhammad formally and publically appointed Imam Ali as his successor to lead the nation after him. That took place on the day of Ghadir Khumm. Reports state that there were some 120,000 people present on the day, and that the Prophet instructed them to pledge allegiance to Imam Ali as his successor and the leader of the Muslim nation after him. Also on that day, on instructions from the Almighty, the Prophet exclusively awarded Imam Ali the title *Amir al-Mo'mineen* or The Commander of the Faithful. The Prophet said no one has the right to this title other than Ali. Throughout his mission the Prophet used to state that the divinely-appointed successors after him are twelve in number. The first of these successors or imams is Imam Ali and the twelfth is Imam Mahdi. Prophet Muhammad used to say, "Ali is to me like Aron was to Moses". He also used to say "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate; so whoever wants to access the city, should do so through its gate." Imam Ali followed and implemented Prophet Muhammad's teachings and policies in every aspect of governance, morality and conduct. Editors.

[For a more detailed biography of Imam Ali, and to better appreciate the statements given below, it is strongly recommended to see endnote #1 in the endnotes section beginning on page 243.]

- ❖ After Allah's Messenger, the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib, peace be upon them, is the greatest sign of Almighty Allah, and he is matched by no other sign.
- ❖ The obligation of obedience to *amir al-mo'mineen* (Commander of the Faithful), Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib and his pure and chosen sons was revealed by Almighty Allah, and afterwards the Prophet, peace be upon him and his holy family, departed this world.

- ❖ The point that attracts attention in the holy verse [It is on this day that I perfected your religion for you, completed My Grace and Favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion]<sup>1</sup> is that Almighty Allah linked the completion of His favor and grace upon creation to the issue of *wilayah* [authority and leadership] of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, peace be upon him. Just as the realization of the perfection of the religion [of Islam] is linked to the *wilayah*, the completion of favor is also declared by Allah's Messenger, peace be upon him and his holy family. By [Allah's] favor it is meant all benefits and blessings – the manifest and the hidden – such as justice, equality, unity, brotherhood, knowledge, ethics, mental and spiritual tranquility, freedom, sense of security; in a nutshell, all kinds of comfort and happiness.
  
- ❖ The Islam of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali, peace be upon him, is the authentic Islam; in other words, it is the Islam in words and in practice, and it is not Islam in name only.
  
- ❖ It is due to his compassion upon creation that the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali, peace be upon him, gave his food – and so did his wife Lady Fatima and his young sons Hasan and Husayn, peace be upon them – to the captive, orphan, and pauper – on three consecutive days, and persevered with hunger as they did not have any food other than the bread they gave away to the needy on each day.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Holy Qur'an, 5:3

<sup>2</sup> Imam Ali, his wife *Sayyidah* Fatima, and their young sons Hasan and Husayn, peace be upon them, had vowed to fast for three days, and on each of those three days, when they were about to break their fast after dusk, a captive knocked on their door asking for food, when duly Imam Ali, as well as *Sayyidah* Fatima, Hasan and Husayn gave their portion of bread to the visitor, and were left with nothing to eat, but a drink of water. A similar event took place on the other two nights, when an orphan and a pauper received the

- ❖ If one were to be informed of one's time of death, and one was sure of the reliability of this information, most people would be sad about losing their lives, wealth and family. But when the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali, peace be upon him, was informed of his death by Allah's Messenger, peace be upon him and his holy family, he did not express sorrow or sadness, nor did he concern himself with anything; except one issue, and that was the soundness and perfection of his faith in his religion.
- ❖ The Prophet, peace be upon him and his holy family, informed the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali of the wronging and injustice that would befall him (after the Prophet's death). The Imam was of a great and strong character, both in terms of knowledge and understanding as well as physique, and under the influence of one's desire to respond, a strong individual would, normally, aim for revenge, and his desire as such would make him forget his religion, and he would be subject to the temptation of revenge. But we see *Amir al-Mo'mineen*, Imam Ali, peace be upon him, choose silence for the sake of the interest of his religion.

## Ghadir

- ❖ Ghadir is the embodiment of all the sacrifices of the Holy Messenger, peace be upon him and his holy family, and it is the depository for the teachings and etiquettes which Almighty Allah revealed to His Trusted Messenger.

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family's dinner, and they ended up fasting with nothing to eat for three days, but breaking their fast with water only. It was on this occasion that the Qur'anic surah Mankind was revealed in honour of Imam Ali, *Sayyidah* Fatima, and Imams Hasan and Husayn, peace be upon them, where this event is cited: [And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive] 76:8

- ❖ Ghadir is the garden of virtues, morality, merits and all the good traits – rather it is all the noble values.
  - ❖ All civilized and spiritual developments are completely indebted to Ghadir.
  - ❖ Ghadir is the most important factor for the preservation of Islam.
  - ❖ The denial of Ghadir is equal to the denial of all sublime Islamic values that have spread throughout the Muslim land.
  - ❖ The belief that does not scoop up from the fountainhead of Ghadir is of no value.
  - ❖ The essence and spirit of Ghadir means that the teachings of *Amir al- Mo'mineen*, peace be upon him, are fit for the prosperity of all humanity.
  - ❖ Eid al-Ghadir is not the day of *amir al-mo'mineen*, Imam Ali; rather it is the day of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him and his holy family. In fact it should be said that it is the day of Almighty Allah. Indeed, Almighty Allah revealed the rulings and obligatory duties one after another until they were sealed with the ruling on *wilayah*. This is because when the declaration of this commandment was made, Almighty Allah revealed the Qur'anic verse [It is on this day that I perfected your religion for you, completed My Grace and Favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion]<sup>1</sup>, and the people understood that after the Messenger they are obliged to follow and obey Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, and his pure and chosen sons, peace be upon them

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<sup>1</sup> The Holy Qur'an, 5:3

- ❖ Wherever there is a mention of favors and blessings in the Holy Qur'an, they were meant to be the blessings mankind receives in this world. Thus there is a direct link between the authority (*wilayah*) of *Amir al-Mo'mineen*, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, peace be upon him, and the attainment of worldly benefits and blessings.<sup>1</sup> One of the important and fundamental prerequisites that enable us to attain the social order of freedom and development based on the principles of justice, ethics, and the sovereignty of values and human moral values is to comply with whatever Allah's Messenger conveyed on the Day of Ghadir. In other words, to accept the authority (*wilayah*) of Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali, peace be upon him, in practice.
- ❖ Upholding and adhering to the authority (*wilayah*) of *amir al-mo'mineen*, Imam Ali, peace be upon him, has a natural/physical (*takwini*) effect; it brings about abundance in blessings and goodness upon the people – from the heavens and the earth.
- ❖ The glory and magnificence of Ghadir are being manifested ever more, and the light of the values of the sublime teachings that it embodies radiate day after day; [they are] the values that Imam Ali practiced [during his reign], which ensure a healthy balance between the spiritual, intellectual, material and moral requirements of mankind. Thus prosperity for all is achieved; individuals and groups, the rulers and the ruled.

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<sup>1</sup> In the Holy Qur'an, Almighty Allah declares [It is on this day that I perfected your religion for you, completed My Grace and Favour upon you], and this was the day when Prophet Muhammad, on specific divine instructions, publicly appointed Imam Ali, peace be upon him, to be his successor and the leader of the nation after him, and called upon the masses to adhere to the *wilayah* (authority) of *Amir al-Mo'mineen*. As the most learned about Islam after the Prophet, people would attain benefits and blessings under his leadership, just as they did during his brief reign of just over four years; hence the direct link cited by the author.

- ❖ The school of Ghadir has vast and deep principles to a degree that no one is able to encompass all of them or comprehend their essence, save what little can be acquired from its abundance.
- ❖ According to the Ghadir culture, the taking of the husk of a barley grain constitutes a sin, let alone killing people on grounds of suspicion. On the other hand, the Umayyad and the Abbasid used to persecute people on the mere suspicion of their love for Imam Ali, peace be upon him, and intellectual opponents used to be crushed for the slightest suspicion.
- ❖ Amongst the blessings of Ghadir is for us to be able to appreciate the compassion of Imam Ali and his chosen sons whom Allah's Messenger, peace be upon him and his holy family, appointed to succeed him. The divine mercy upon creation is manifested in them, and they are the embodiment of Allah's beautiful names.
- ❖ In order to know the nature and volume of responsibility Ghadir places upon our shoulders, we must first ask ourselves: how far has the contemporary world come to learn about Ghadir and explore its deep secrets? And, if the world is ignorant of Ghadir, who bears responsibility for that? And what is the nature of responsibility we must undertake vis-à-vis Ghadir towards Muslim communities?
- ❖ In general, the current generation does not have a clear and correct picture of Ghadir, and the responsibility for that falls upon our shoulders to begin with. If we had fulfilled our obligation in explaining and making clear the idea and teachings of Ghadir to the people, the situation would have been far better than it is now.
- ❖ It is our obligation to make clear to the world that Ghadir means the realization of wellbeing and expanding its scope, in order to attain progress and advancement in developing human societies. It also means equality between those who control the economy and wealth and the rest of the community, and to eliminate the culture of gangs and parasites.

## The Commander of the Faithful

- ❖ According to the culture of Ghadir, those in charge of the economy are the trustworthy ones in whose hands are the lifeline of civil society.
- ❖ Ghadir ... means the covenant between those in charge [i.e. the rulers] and Almighty Allah, who imposes upon them that they make the level of their lifestyle like that of the lowest of the individuals in society, and that they [the rulers] copy them in clothing, eating, housing, welfare, and suchlike.
- ❖ We emphasize on the grave responsibility that has been placed on our shoulders vis-à-vis Ghadir, and on the necessity of adhering to it throughout.
- ❖ One of the most important of responsibilities during the current time is the dissemination of the message and values of Ghadir, and to invite the people to benefit from this divine gift. Otherwise, there is not the slightest hope in lifting the tyranny of the despots from the oppressed in a bid to rescue humanity from this dire situation, and for humanity to reach the shore of security, welfare, justice, and freedom.
- ❖ When we talk about Ghadir, the talk is about the meanings it carries, which manifest the awesome spirit of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abu Talib, peace be upon them.
- ❖ We ask: whether there will ever be a just ruler who would follow the footsteps of Imam Ali, peace be upon him, who used to live at a lower level than even the poorest citizen in his country.

- ❖ If Ghadir only ruled the Ummah for the duration of thirty years of Imam Ali's life<sup>1</sup> after the Prophet, peace be upon him and his holy family, we would have enjoyed its blessings even today, and would not have witnessed all the ordeals and tribulations from that time until today, and until the reappearance of the saviour of humanity, the Awaited Imam Mahdi, may Allah hasten his reappearance.
- ❖ If Imam Ali, peace be upon him, had ruled and Ghadir had materialized, the people would have “eaten from above their heads and beneath their feet” – as the saying goes – in opulence and comfort until the day of resurrection.
- ❖ If Imam Ali, peace be upon him, had been allowed to rule as the Prophet had instructed, and Ghadir had materialized, there would not have been a single pauper, sick, or prisoner in the entire world today, nor would a single drop of blood have been shed unjustly, nor would a married couple engage in dispute, nor a bond of kinship be severed, ...

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<sup>1</sup> On instructions from the Almighty, Imam Ali was appointed by the Prophet as his successor to lead the nation after him. But Imam Ali was prevented from assuming the leadership of the nation by the leaders of the *coup d'état* that followed. After the twenty-five-year reign of the three rulers before him, for the first time in the history of the Muslim nation, Imam Ali assumed the office of leadership through unanimous allegiance from the nation, with the exception of a handful. The rule of Imam Ali lasted just over four years. Imam Ali was assassinated while praying in the Kufah mosque thirty years after the Prophet, peace be upon him and his holy family.

- ❖ The notions that are included in Ghadir are not found in the two Eids of Fitr and Adha or other Eids in Islam. Compare between all the Islamic Eids, including the Jum‘ah, and Eid al-Ghadir, and you would see that history confirms that it is greatest of all Eids.
- ❖ The battles that Imam Ali, peace be upon him, fought would not have taken place if Ghadir had materialized as wanted by Almighty Allah and His Messenger but the battles were imposed on the Imam, peace be upon him, by those who were enabled by the preceding ones and who were not pleased by the materialization of Ghadir. Thus we were made to witness – over the course of history – wars, destruction, oppression, corruption, and ravishment of sanctities, such that today we witness wars, explosions, killings, violence, in almost all parts of the world; one kills another, one wrongs another, abduction, genocide, and destruction everywhere. This is what our authority Lady Fatima al-Zahra’, peace be upon her, warned against when she said, “then milk it (i.e. the *coup d’état*, but you will get not what you wish for, rather) you would only get fresh blood (i.e. continuous bloodshed and turmoil) and bitter deadly poison.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On another occasion, the holy lady Fatima Zahra’, declares to them, “so carry this luggage which would be of perpetual shame ...” Bihar, vol.43 p159. The luggage they carried and passed on to their ilk is a system which delivers nothing but murder, torture, persecution, imprisonment, poverty, corruption and all forms of injustice. This is the perpetual shame the holy lady refers to. Today we have all of these in the Muslim countries. This is because the Muslims opted out of the teachings and instructions of Allah’s messenger when he appointed Imam Ali as his successor on the day of Ghadir. Today the Muslim countries rank amongst the worst in the world. They carry the shame of being the worst in human rights, corruption, poverty, freedom, politics, economics, and the list goes on. They will continue to be so until they revert back to the Prophet’s

- ❖ The world does not know the truth about Ghadir, because it has been ignored, and thus humanity has been deprived of benefiting from its values and rewards, and even some Muslims have not benefited from Imam Ali, peace be upon him, and have thus strayed from his teachings. What is then the responsibility of people like us who have some knowledge about the greatness of Ghadir and have recognised the loss and damage done to humanity as a result of concealment of Ghadir?

In other words, how can we revive the Ghadir?

## **After Allah's Messenger**

- ❖ The Commander of the Faithful (*Amir al-Mo'mineen*), Imam Ali, peace be upon him, refused [to bow to tyranny and injustice and go against the teachings of Allah and His Messenger] and preferred for the leadership [that was bestowed upon him by the prophet] to slip through his fingers, and lose out on the world and let everyone turn against him, but he would not let go of his values and principles.
- ❖ If Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, peace be upon them, had not been prevented from office, and was allowed to rule the nation right away for the thirty years he lived after Allah's Messenger, peace be upon him and his holy family, his government would have been a precise continuation of the government of the Prophet with one exception in that he was not a prophet; as the Prophet himself informed of that.

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Instructions, who said "I leave behind amongst you two momentous entities – the book of Allah and my progeny the Ahl al-Bayt – so long as you adhere to them both, you will never go astray." Editor

## His Government

- ❖ One of the attributes of Imam Ali, peace be upon him, especially during his reign as a ruler, was his compassion and sympathy with the people, and his compassion and sympathy with the poorest of the people manifested through his conduct.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ Imam Ali, peace be upon him, never built himself a building, nor did he ever live in a spacious palace, rather he persevered with all the difficulties and pains so that there would not be an individual in the remotest part of his country suffering from poverty – not being able to find one course of meal to allay his hunger.
- ❖ Assuming that there may be individuals in remote parts of his country who may go hungry, Imam Ali, peace be upon him, did not sleep on a full stomach, and he denied himself even the average food, clothing, housing, and other means of normal life.
- ❖ By his stated policy of “being satisfied with his two ragged pieces of cloth and two round pieces of bread”, Imam Ali, peace be upon him, wanted to realize two objectives:
  1. To distance all rumors from him, as an Islamic ruler, and deprive his foes – who stubbornly denied all his qualities and virtues – of the opportunity to condemn him to remind the Muslim rulers of their grave responsibility towards their people’s sufferings and poverty, and the necessity of establishing and upholding justice, sympathizing and sharing with their hardship and difficulties, and the endeavor to ensure and facilitate welfare, and a dignified life for them.

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<sup>1</sup> Imam Ali, peace be upon him and his holy family, used to say: “Shall I be satisfied I am called the Commander of the Faithful, and I do not share and sympathize with the people’s calamities or their adversities in life?”

of establishing and upholding justice, sympathizing and sharing with their hardship and difficulties, and the endeavor to ensure and facilitate welfare, and a dignified life for them.

- ❖ The mere probability of there being hungry individuals in the furthest points of the Islamic country is considered, in the dictionary of Imam Ali, peace be upon him, a responsibility of dire consequences. Thus he emphasizes on the rulers that it is necessary that they make their living style and level the same as that of the land's poorest possible, and to share with them life's hardships.
- ❖ Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali, peace be upon him, observed justice with citizens, by dividing the wealth of the state equally amongst the nation, but when it comes to himself, he was altruistic and ascetic with all worldly matters.
- ❖ In the field of economy and welfare security for the minorities, *Amir al- Mo'mineen*, Imam Ali, peace be upon him, would not abandon even one individual from amongst the people-of-the-book [Jews and Christians] who could not fend for himself, and the Imam would ensure to secure his means of living.
- ❖ Within less than five years of his reign, Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, peace be upon them, took the country to a state that even one poor person was not known to exist in the farthest limits of the capital, to the extent that the sighting of even a non-Muslim beggar was an abnormal phenomenon.
- ❖ During Imam Ali's reign, which was four years and a few months, one particular event took place, that history or other sources never reported something similar occurring again during his reign.

The report states: One day the Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him, was walking through the streets of Kufah when he saw someone begging. In astonishment, the Imam, peace be upon him, said “What is this?!!” An individual, who did not seem to know the reality of Islam, responded justifying by saying, “Oh he is a Christian... he is old and frail, and not able to earn a living, so he is begging!!” Perhaps the respondent thought that things would be different for the Commander of the Faithful, peace be upon him, if the beggar was a non- Muslim, while under Islamic Law it does not make any difference in this respect. Imam *Amir al-Mo'mineen*, peace be upon him, reproached his companions after seeing that Christian in that state, saying, “You used him until he grew old and frail, and now you deny him his right and abandon him!! Pay for his living expenses from *bayt al-mal* (i.e. the public treasury).”

- ❖ During his reign, Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, peace be upon them, brought equality before the Islamic judiciary between the supreme leader and the ordinary individual from the minorities.
- ❖ Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, peace be upon them, was the first to allow demonstrations against himself and give them their demands, even though the demand was false in itself [from the Islamic viewpoint].<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib, peace be upon them, gave all forms of freedoms to the people in an era when the entire world lived under the rule of despotism and authoritarianism. The Imam was the leader of the greatest state which is unparalleled even today from the viewpoint of strength and size; since the Imam used rule over the equivalent of fifty of today's countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Their demand was to be able to continue with *salat-al-taraweeh*, which was prohibited by Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his holy family.

- ❖ There may be a government in the world today which rules over a billion people such as China but it is not the most powerful. And there may be a government which rules a powerful country such as the USA but it does not rule over the greatest number of people. However, Imam Ali, peace be upon him, used to govern the greatest stretch of land, and the greatest number of people, while the Islamic government was the most powerful then. So the Imam did not lack any power, and it would have been for him to say “No” to the opposition; but he did not. He practically announced to the world that [there is no coercion in religion].<sup>1</sup>
  
- ❖ The Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali, peace be upon him, used to respond to those who sought to fight him by advising them and exhorting them as much as possible, and he used to endeavor to avoid combat and bloodshed; whether through individual counsel or group preaching. But if the other party opted for battle, Imam Ali, peace be upon him, would resort to defensive measures and no more. As soon as the enemy withdraws or is defeated, the Imam would desist from pursuing them, and he would not seek revenge from them. Indeed Imam Ali, peace be upon him, never pre-empted any battle with anyone, and this is evident in the history of the Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali, peace be upon him.
  
- ❖ Imam Ali, peace be upon him, never initiated any war pre-emptively – all his combats were imposed on him, the first of which became known as the battle of the Camel.

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<sup>1</sup> The Holy Qur’an, (2):256.

- ❖ In the battle of Siffeen, Imam Ali's opponents [amongst his own side] used to shout their slogans in the face of Imam Ali, the Commander of the Faithful and the leader of the Muslim nation, but despite that the Imam did not prevent his opponents from expressing their opinions!... Where do you find freedom such as this? Do you find such freedom even with those who zealously call for freedom in this day and age which is known as the era of freedoms?
- ❖ Those who revolted and fought against the Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali, peace be upon him, are the true hypocrites in reality, but the Imam's policy, which is that of the Prophet and of Islam, and their teachings in governance, is not to use the sword of threat and fear. Therefore, the opponents to the rule [of Imam Ali] are not called hypocrites, even though they are truly hypocrites. Thus, in order to manage the government, observe the principle of competing priorities, and show consideration for the state of the nation, and for the adversaries too, the Imam forbade that they be called hypocrites.
- ❖ As part of his justice and mercy to them, when the war ended in the cases of each of the battles of the Camel, Siffeen, and Nahrawan, the Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali, peace be upon him, did not pursue or prosecute those who instigated sedition, and campaigned and waged war against him, even though he became victorious over them and had control over them.
- ❖ Imam Ali, peace be upon him, did not keep even one captive from adversaries, he did not confiscate nor did he allow his companions to confiscate anything from their wealth and properties, even if it were cheap or worthless.
- ❖ During his reign, the Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali, peace be upon him, did not allow the welfare grants to those who waged war against him to be cut after they were defeated in the battlefield. Rather, the Imam, peace be upon him, even forbade anyone calling them hypocrites, even though they indeed were the most manifest examples of hypocrisy.
- ❖ As part of his compassion to creation, the Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali, peace be upon him, instructed, while on his deathbed, for some of the milk he was being treated with to be given to his assassin Ibn Muljam. The Imam also instructed that he should not be denied his right even as far as suitable food, drink, and clothing for him. Rather he asked for Ibn Muljam to be forgiven, saying "If I forgive, then forgiveness is closeness for me [to the Almighty] and for you it is a good deed, so forgive. Do you not like Allah to forgive you?"