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Department Of Persian



-.: ONLINE CLASS E-CONTENT :-.

Topic :- Ali ibn Abi Talib as a Caliph

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By

MD. IMTEYAZ ALAM

Assistant Professor (Guest), Department Of Persian

L. S. College, Muzaffarpur, Bihar

(Call + WhatsApp :- 9031203050) (Email :- imteyazjnu@gmail.com)

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Ali ibn Abi Talib as a Caliph

Ali was the fourth and the last caliph of Islam reign between 656 and 661 CE. One of the hardest periods in Muslim history, coinciding with the first Muslim civil war. He reigned over the Rashidun empire which extended from Central Asia in the east to North Africa in the west. He became known as a both just and fair ruler.



Selection as Caliph

Ali is credited as the first male to convert to Islam. After the assassination of the third Caliph, Uthman Ibn Affan, at the close of the Siege of Uthman, the selection of a new Caliph encountered difficulties. The rebels, comprising Muhajerin, Ansar, Egyptians, Kufans and Basntes, and the Kharijites, were divided between three candidates: Ali, Talhah and Al-Zubayr.

First they referred to Ali and asked him to accept the caliphate.

Also some Sahaba tried to persuade him to accept the office.

But he refused and answered: 'Leave me and seek someone else. We are facing a matter which has (several) faces and colors, which neither hearts can stand nor intelligence can accept.'

Clouds are hovering over the sky, and faces are not discernible. You should know that if I respond to you I would lead you as I know and would not care about whatever one may say or abuse. If you leave me then I am the same as you are. It is possible I would listen to and obey whomever you make in charge of your affairs. I am better for you as a counselor than as chief.'

Then rebels offered the caliphate to Talhah and Al-Zubayr and some other companions but they refused it too. Therefore, they threatened that, unless the people of Medina choose a caliph within one day, they

would be forced to take some drastic



In order to resolve the deadlock all of the Muslims gathered in Mosque of Prophet on 18 June 656CE. (25th Dhu al-Hijjah 35AH.) to choose the caliph.

Ali refused to accept caliphate by the fact that the people who pressed him hardest were the rebels, and he therefore declined at first. When the notable companions of Muhammad as well as people who live in Medina urged him, however, he finally agreed.

According to Abu Mekhnaf's narration, Talhah was the first prominent companion who gave his pledge but the other narrations claim they didn't do so or even somebody forced them to do so. However he and Al-Zubayr later claimed they did so reluctantly, but Ali refused this claim and said that they did so voluntarily.

While the overwhelming majority of people who lived in Medina as well as rebels gave their pledge, some major figures did not. Umayyads, kins of Uthman, escaped to Levant or remained in their houses and later refused Ali's legitimacy. Sa`ad ibn Abi Waqqas were absent and Abdullah ibn Umar abstained from offering his allegiance but both of them assured Ali that they wouldn't do anything against Ali.

Reign as Caliph

Domains of Rashidun empire under four caliphs. The divided phase relates to Ali caliphate.

Strongholds of Rashidun Caliphate

Vassal states of Rashidun Caliphate

Region under the control of Muawiyah I during civil war 656–661

Region under the control of Amr ibn al-As during civil war 658–661

At the beginning Ali told people that Muslim polity had come to be plagued by dissension and discord and he wanted to purge Islam of all evil from which it had come to suffer. Then warned all concerned that he would tolerate no sedition and all found guilty of subversive activities would be dealt with harshly. He advised people to behave as true Muslims.

But he soon found that he was helpless and the prisoner of the people who didn't obey him. The caliphate had come to him as the gift of the rebels and he didn't have enough force to control or punish them. When some people asked Ali to punish those who killed Uthman, Ali answered, "How do I have the power for it while those who assaulted him are in the height of their power."

They have superiority over us, not we over them." While A'isha, Talhah, Al-Zubayr and The Bani-Umayyah especially Muawiyah I wanted to take revenge for Uthman's death and punish the rioters who had killed him. However some historians believe that they use this issue to seek their political ambitions due to finding Ali's caliphate against their own benefit.



Soon after Ali became Caliph, he dismissed provincial governors who had been appointed by Uthman, and replaced them with trusted aides. He acted against the counsel of Mughrah ibn Shobah and Ibn Abbas, who had advised him to proceed cautiously.

Madelung says Ali was deeply convinced of his right and his religious mission, unwilling to compromise his principles for the sake of political expediency, ready to fight against overwhelming odds. Muawiyah, kinsman of Uthman and governor of Levant refused to submit to Ali's orders - the only governor to do this.

After the Battle of Bassorah, Ali transferred his capital from Medina to Kufa, the Muslim garrison city in Iraq. Kufa was in the middle of Islamic land and had strategic position.

Ali resumed the land which had been granted by Uthman and swore to resume whatever some elites had taken before him. He opposed the centralization of capital control over provincial revenues and favored an equal distribution of taxes and booty among the Muslims; in contrast to Umar he distributed the entire revenue of the divan among Muslims without keeping anything in reserve.

When asked to pay more money to elites he said "Do you command me that I should seek support by oppressing those over whom I have been placed? By Allah, I won't do so as long as the world goes on, and as long as one star leads another in the sky. Even if it were my property, I would have distributed it equally among them, then why not when the property is that of Allah."



Ali believed that people and governors have rights over each other and God created these rights so as to equate with one another. The greatest of these rights that Allah has made obligatory is the right of the ruler over the ruled and the right of the ruled over the ruler. If the ruled fulfill the rights of the ruler and the ruler fulfills their rights, then right attains the position of honor among them, the ways of religion become established, signs of justice become fixed and the sunnah gains currency.

He wrote directions for his officials which clearly show what form of regime he wanted to introduce. It was not to be a regime whose officers had an upper hand and were fattened on public money. It was to be a regime where the governed and the tax-payers were at premium. It was their convenience for which the State was to function.

It was a welfare-state working solely for the welfare of the people living under its rule, a regime where the rich cannot get richer while the poor are made poorer; a regime where canons of religion hold the balance between the governed and the ruler. He asked people not to speak with him as they spoke with cruel governors and be honest with him.[16]

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On the 19th of Ramadan, while Ali was praying in the mosque of Kufa, the Kharijite Abd-al-Rahman ibn Muljam assassinated him with a strike of his poison-coated sword. Ali, wounded by the poisonous sword, lived for two days and died on the 21st of Ramadan in the city of Kufa in 661 CE.



MD. IMTEYAZ ALAM, DEPARTMENT OF PERSIAN
L. S. COLLEGE, (B.R.A BIHAR UNIV) MUZAFFARPUR, 9031203050

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