

Naseeha Institute



Hazrat Ali's R.A Caliphate

FINAL TERM PROJECT

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Hazrat Ali's (RA) Role Immediately After the Prophet's (PBUH) Death: A Sunni Perspective

The passing of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in 11 AH (632 CE) marked a pivotal moment in Islamic history. Hazrat Ali ibn Abi Talib (RA), the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, played a crucial role during this time. Sunni scholars present his actions as motivated by deep faith, responsibility, and a commitment to preserving the unity of the Muslim community.

Role in the Prophet's Ghusl and Burial

Hazrat Ali (RA) led the Prophet's ritual washing and burial, a deeply honored responsibility carried out with great care and reverence. While many companions gathered to address the leadership vacuum, Ali (RA) remained focused on honoring the Prophet (PBUH), reflecting his spiritual devotion and family responsibilities.

Emotional State and Mourning

Hazrat Ali (RA) was deeply affected by the Prophet's death, expressing his grief through quiet mourning and dedication to the burial rites. His restraint from immediate political involvement demonstrated his focus on spiritual obligations rather than leadership disputes.

Absence from the Saqifah Meeting

While the Ansar and Muhajirun gathered at Saqifah Banu Sa'idah to select the next leader, Hazrat Ali (RA) remained occupied with the burial. Sunni scholars view his absence not as political opposition but as a natural result of his prioritization of the Prophet's funeral.

Delay in Pledge of Allegiance (Bay'ah) to Abu Bakr (RA)

Hazrat Ali (RA) delayed his pledge to Abu Bakr (RA) for several months, primarily due to personal grief and Fatimah's (RA) sorrow. Sunni tradition views this delay as emotional rather than political. After Fatimah's passing, Ali (RA) willingly pledged allegiance, reinforcing community unity and participating in state affairs thereafter.

Ali's Role in Abu Bakr's Caliphate

Bay'ah to Hazrat Abu Bakr (RA): Timing and Rationale

Timing of the Bay'ah

Hazrat Ali's (RA) formal pledge occurred approximately six months after Abu Bakr's appointment. Sunni scholars attribute the delay to mourning and the sensitive atmosphere, emphasizing that Ali (RA) did not challenge Abu Bakr's legitimacy or lead any opposition.

The Eventual Bay'ah and Reconciliation

When Ali (RA) eventually pledged allegiance, it was done publicly and with full acceptance, signaling his support for the Caliphate and prioritizing unity. His action served as an example of wise leadership, choosing stability over division.

Sunni Interpretations: Unity Over Dispute

Sunni scholars highlight Ali's (RA) decision as an act of wisdom, placing the unity of the ummah above personal or familial concerns. His actions reflected the harmony among the Companions despite early challenges.

Hazrat Ali's Political Stance during Abu Bakr's Khilafat

Public and Private Support for Abu Bakr (RA)

While Hazrat Ali (RA) may have privately held differing views, he never publicly opposed Abu Bakr's leadership. Instead, he maintained respect, offering moral support and refraining from any divisive actions.

Participation in the Shura (Consultative Council)

Ali (RA) actively participated in advisory councils, offering his wisdom on legal, religious, and administrative matters, demonstrating his constructive involvement in the governance of the Muslim state.

Avoidance of Conflict and Preservation of Ummah Unity

Ali (RA) consistently avoided discord, choosing not to contest leadership to protect the fragile unity of the ummah during a period of internal and external threats.

Statements on the Legitimacy of the Khulafa' Rashidun

In later years, Hazrat Ali (RA) expressed respect for Abu Bakr (RA), Umar (RA), and Uthman (RA), recognizing their just leadership. Sunni tradition views these statements as affirming the legitimacy of the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

Hazrat Ali's Involvement in Islamic State Affairs

His Role in the Ridda Wars (Wars of Apostasy)

Although Hazrat Ali (RA) did not directly lead military campaigns, he supported Abu Bakr's (RA) decisions during the Ridda Wars, lending moral and political strength to the caliphate.

Role in the Compilation and Preservation of the Qur'an

Hazrat Ali (RA), renowned for his knowledge of the Qur'an, supported the compilation effort led by Zayd ibn Thabit (RA). Sunni tradition emphasizes his cooperative role in preserving the Qur'an's text for the entire ummah, rejecting claims of holding a separate version.

Sunni View of Ali as a Key Companion, Not an Opposition Figure

Sunni scholars view Hazrat Ali (RA) as a loyal companion who, rather than opposing the leadership, contributed his wisdom, participated in consultations, and supported state stability, becoming a moral anchor among the Companions.

Fadak Dispute: Sunni Explanation

The Nature of Fadak: Inheritance or Sadaqah

Following the Prophet's (PBUH) death, Fatimah (RA) requested Fadak as inheritance. Abu Bakr (RA), citing the Prophet's teaching that prophets do not leave material inheritance but sadaqah, declined the request. Sunni scholars see this as a legal, not personal, decision.

The Hadith: "We Prophets Do Not Leave Inheritance..."

Abu Bakr (RA) based his ruling on an authentic hadith stating that prophets leave no inheritance. Sunni tradition acknowledges the pain this caused the Prophet's family but emphasizes the legal basis for the decision.

Hazrat Ali's Support for Fatimah, and Respect for Abu Bakr's Leadership

Hazrat Ali (RA) supported Fatimah (RA) in presenting her case but did not escalate the disagreement into political conflict. After the matter was closed, he continued to cooperate with Abu Bakr (RA), prioritizing unity over personal claims.

Defense of the Unity of the Ummah

Prioritizing Unity Over Personal Claims

Despite his qualifications for leadership, Hazrat Ali (RA) never allowed disputes to fracture the Muslim community. His delayed bay'ah was ultimately followed by full participation in state affairs, setting an example of prioritizing unity.

Sunni Scholars on His Patience, Wisdom, and Moral Leadership

Sunni scholars praise Ali's (RA) patience and moral clarity. His choice to support the existing leadership, while advising and contributing when needed, reflects his wisdom and ethical leadership.

Hazrat Ali's Later Statements about the First Three Caliphs

Hazrat Ali (RA) later acknowledged the sincere efforts and just leadership of Abu Bakr (RA), Umar (RA), and Uthman (RA). Sunni scholars see these statements as reinforcing the legitimacy and unity of the Khulafa' Rashidun.

Ali's Role in Uthman's Caliphate

The relationship between Hazrat Ali ibn Abi Talib (R.A.) and Hazrat Uthman ibn Affan (R.A.) during the third caliphate offers a profound example of loyalty, moral responsibility, and principled leadership amidst complex political developments. Both men were among the closest companions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), entrusted with significant responsibilities in the formative years of the Islamic state. Ali's role throughout Uthman's caliphate was not one of passive observer or open opposition, but of a deeply concerned counselor, mediator, and defender of justice who balanced loyalty to the Caliph with his commitment to Islamic ethics.

The Shura Council and the Election of Uthman

Following the assassination of Hazrat Umar ibn al-Khattab (R.A.) in 644 CE, a shura (consultative council) was appointed to select the next caliph. The six members of this council were Uthman, Ali, Talhah, Zubayr, Abdur Rahman ibn Awf, and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas. After extensive consultations and deliberations, Abdur Rahman ibn Awf withdrew and assumed the role of mediator, interviewing influential figures in Medina about their preferences.

Both Uthman and Ali were highly qualified. However, a significant difference emerged in their responses to Abdur Rahman's conditions. Uthman agreed to govern according to the Qur'an, Sunnah, and the precedents of Abu Bakr and Umar. Ali, on the other hand, while committed to the Qur'an and Sunnah, stated that where there was no clear precedent, he would exercise his own legal reasoning (ijtihad). This subtle but important difference in approach played a role in Abdur Rahman's decision to select Uthman.

Despite being passed over, Hazrat Ali pledged allegiance to Uthman, reaffirming his loyalty to the unity of the Muslim community and accepting the decision of the shura with grace.

Early Years of Cooperation

In the initial phase of Uthman's caliphate, Hazrat Ali played an active advisory role. His extensive knowledge of the Qur'an, his closeness to the Prophet (PBUH), and his deep sense of justice made him a natural consultant on legal and administrative matters. Uthman regularly sought Ali's counsel, particularly on complex legal issues and military strategies.

Their cooperation was notably evident during the project of standardizing the Qur'an. As the Muslim empire expanded into diverse linguistic regions, the potential for divergent Qur'anic recitations arose. Uthman appointed a committee led by Zayd ibn Thabit to compile an official version of the Qur'an, which was then distributed across the empire. Hazrat Ali fully supported this endeavor, recognizing its importance in preserving the unity and integrity of the Muslim ummah.

Growing Divergence on Governance

As Uthman's reign progressed, his increasing reliance on his Umayyad relatives for key administrative positions began to create unease. Unlike Umar, who had avoided appointing close family members, Uthman entrusted many significant provincial governorships to his kin, including Marwan ibn al-Hakam (his secretary), Walid ibn Uqbah (governor of Kufa), Abdullah ibn Saad ibn Abi Sarh (governor of Egypt), and Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan (governor of Syria).

While Hazrat Ali did not dispute Uthman's legal authority to appoint whomever he saw fit, he strongly advised caution. He warned that the concentration of power within the Umayyad family was eroding public confidence and creating resentment among both the general population and many of the senior companions of the Prophet (PBUH).

Ali's warnings extended to financial matters as well. He reminded Uthman that the wealth of the state was a trust for the entire Muslim community, not personal property to be distributed at will. In one instance, he is reported to have told Uthman, "You are the custodian of this wealth, not its owner." Despite these objections, Hazrat Ali remained within the framework of the state, offering counsel rather than open opposition, and maintaining his commitment to the principle of lawful governance.

Advocacy for the Disenfranchised

Ali's sense of justice made him particularly sensitive to the growing discontent among certain marginalized companions. Among these were Abu Dharr al-Ghifari and Ammar ibn Yasir, both early converts and close companions of the Prophet (PBUH).

Abu Dharr's public criticism of the growing wealth disparity and corruption, particularly his condemnation of luxurious living by some officials, led to his exile to Rabadhah. Ali visited him before his exile, expressing sorrow for his situation and admiration for his principled stand.

Similarly, Ammar ibn Yasir faced persecution for raising concerns about corruption. He was reportedly beaten under orders from Uthman's circle. Hazrat Ali defended Ammar, emphasizing that speaking the truth should not result in punishment, especially when such criticisms were rooted in Islamic principles of justice and accountability.

Widening Public Unrest

By the seventh year of Uthman's rule, discontent had spread widely, especially in key provinces like Kufa, Basra, and Egypt. Complaints against the Umayyad governors included arbitrary taxation, mismanagement of public funds, harsh treatment of dissenters, and disregard for the welfare of local populations.

Hazrat Ali repeatedly urged Uthman to address these grievances with urgency. He advised the dismissal of corrupt governors and called for reforms that would restore public trust. Unfortunately, Uthman, while sometimes receptive, often hesitated—largely due to personal loyalty to his relatives and the influence of Marwan ibn al-Hakam.

The failure to act decisively allowed opposition networks to organize. Delegates from these aggrieved regions began traveling to Medina, seeking direct intervention from the Caliph.

Ali's Mediation During Provincial Rebellions

When rebellion erupted, Hazrat Ali stepped forward as a mediator, attempting to bridge the gap between the aggrieved parties and the Caliph. He met with the Egyptian delegation that had come to Medina to demand the dismissal of their governor, Abdullah ibn Saad ibn Abi Sarh. Ali listened to their complaints and succeeded in persuading Uthman to remove the governor and appoint a replacement more acceptable to the Egyptian people. Uthman issued a letter formalizing this appointment, and Ali personally accompanied the delegation partway back to Egypt as a gesture of goodwill.

This successful mediation momentarily restored calm, but the peace was short-lived.

The Letter Incident and Breakdown of Trust

As the Egyptian delegation returned home, they intercepted a courier carrying a letter—allegedly sealed with Uthman's official mark—instructing the Egyptian authorities to execute the returning delegates. Enraged, they returned to Medina, accusing Uthman of betrayal.

Uthman swore that he had neither written nor authorized the letter. Many—including Hazrat Ali—suspected Marwan ibn al-Hakam of having acted independently to sabotage the reconciliation. Ali confronted Uthman, stating, “You have invited these people back upon yourself. I tried to extinguish the fire, but you insisted on fueling it.”

The rebels, now convinced of treachery, refused further negotiations and demanded Uthman's abdication.

Ali's Efforts During the Siege of Uthman

As Medina descended into crisis, Ali took an unwavering stand for justice and order. He rejected both the rebels' unlawful actions and calls from others for violent suppression of the dissenters. He continued counseling Uthman, urging him to dismiss corrupt advisors, including Marwan, and to publicly announce needed reforms. Yet Uthman remained indecisive, torn between personal loyalties and growing political pressure.

During the 40-day siege of Uthman's house, many companions distanced themselves. But Ali stayed in Medina, maintaining his commitment to protect the sanctity of lawful authority. He sent his sons, Hasan and Husayn, along with other loyal companions, to guard Uthman's residence, emphasizing that even in the face of political disagreements, mob justice was impermissible.

When the rebels cut off food and water supplies, Ali personally intervened to ensure that basic provisions reached Uthman, admonishing the rebels: "Even prisoners are given water. Will you deny it to the Caliph of the Muslims?"

Throughout the siege, Ali walked a delicate line—defending the life and office of Uthman while continuing to urge urgently needed reforms that might calm the growing storm. Unfortunately, both sides grew increasingly suspicious of Ali's balanced position, as neither extreme fully trusted him.

The Assassination and Aftermath

Despite Ali's tireless efforts, a faction of the rebels broke into Uthman's house and murdered him while he recited the Qur'an. Ali, heartbroken, remarked: "By Allah, I knew they would not stop until they killed him. I tried to prevent this, but I could not do more."

After the assassination, Ali immediately withdrew his sons to prevent further bloodshed and worked to restore calm in Medina. He oversaw Uthman's respectful burial and called for accountability, but the political chaos made proper investigation and justice nearly impossible.

Hazrat Ali's Caliphate

The Political Climate Following Uthman's Martyrdom

In 656 CE, the assassination of Hazrat Uthman ibn Affan (RA), the third Caliph of Islam, plunged the Muslim community into turmoil and uncertainty. His death was the culmination of growing discontent among various factions, especially from the provinces of Egypt, Kufa, and Basra, who felt marginalized under his rule. Rebels from these regions laid siege to Uthman's house in Medina, leading to his tragic death while he was reciting the Qur'an. The Muslim Ummah was left without a leader and in a state of political chaos.

The Call for Leadership and Hazrat Ali's Reluctance

In the immediate aftermath of Uthman's assassination, the people of Medina recognized the need for strong leadership to restore order. They turned to Hazrat Ali ibn Abi Talib (RA), the cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who was highly respected for his piety, knowledge, and integrity. Despite being seen as a unifying figure, Hazrat Ali (RA) initially hesitated to accept the caliphate. He feared that accepting leadership might imply his involvement in Uthman's death and was concerned about the legitimacy of assuming leadership under such contentious circumstances.

The Bay'ah (Pledge of Allegiance)

Despite his reservations, Hazrat Ali (RA) was urged by influential companions, including Talha ibn Ubaydullah (RA) and Zubair ibn al-Awwam (RA), to accept the caliphate to prevent further chaos. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, he agreed. On June 23, 656 CE, he publicly pledged allegiance as the fourth Caliph in Masjid al-Nabawi, Medina. The Ansar (helpers from Medina), the Muhajirun (early Meccan Muslims), and other residents pledged allegiance. However, some companions, including Aisha (RA), Talha (RA), and Zubair (RA), did not immediately pledge allegiance, leading to political tensions.

Change in Policies During Hazrat Ali's (RA) Caliphate

Administrative Overhaul and Dismissal of Governors

One of Hazrat Ali's (RA) first major actions as Caliph was an administrative overhaul. He dismissed several governors appointed during Hazrat Uthman's (RA) rule, especially those accused of corruption or favoritism. Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan (RA), the powerful governor of Syria, was ordered to step down but refused. Ali (RA) appointed leaders known for their piety, justice, and impartiality. Although this reflected his commitment to fairness, it triggered political resistance.

Emphasis on Justice and Equality

A defining feature of Hazrat Ali's (RA) caliphate was his strong focus on justice and social equality. Unlike previous rulers who sometimes favored certain tribes or families, Ali (RA) treated all Muslims equally regardless of status or lineage. He opposed nepotism and corruption, even denying special treatment to his own relatives. His commitment to equality reinforced his image as a just and moral leader, deeply rooted in Islamic principles.

Reformation of Public Treasury (Bayt al-Mal)

Hazrat Ali (RA) implemented significant reforms in managing the state treasury (Bayt al-Mal). He rejected wealth hoarding and ensured that funds were distributed promptly and fairly to the poor, widows, and other rightful recipients. This policy prevented the accumulation of wealth among the elite and reflected his view that the Caliph was a steward of public wealth, not its owner. Although this upset many privileged groups, it was seen as a return to true Islamic governance.

Change in Military and Strategic Policies

Ali (RA) shifted military priorities from external expansion to internal stability. Recognizing the fractured state of the Muslim community, he temporarily suspended frontier military campaigns to focus on resolving internal conflicts. His main challenge was maintaining the loyalty of various factions, especially in regions like Syria, where opposition to his rule was strong.

Approach to Political Opposition and Civil War

Hazrat Ali (RA) handled political opposition with restraint and compassion. When confronted by companions like Aisha (RA), Talha (RA), and Zubair (RA), he sought reconciliation over vengeance. After the Battle of the Camel, he treated his opponents respectfully, ensuring Aisha (RA) returned safely to Medina. His acceptance of arbitration after the Battle of Siffin with Muawiyah (RA) was a notable effort to avoid Muslim bloodshed, though it led to further complications. His approach demonstrated his deep commitment to unity and peace.

Return to Simplicity and Public Accountability

Ali (RA) modeled his leadership on the simplicity and humility of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Hazrat Umar (RA). He personally inspected markets, addressed grievances, and maintained direct contact with the public without guards or formalities. Living modestly and rejecting royal luxuries, his lifestyle reflected personal accountability. His letter to Malik al-Ashtar, governor of Egypt, remains a classic text on just and ethical leadership in Islamic history.

Policy Regarding the Killers of Uthman (RA)

One of the most sensitive challenges of Ali's (RA) caliphate was dealing with Uthman's (RA) assassins. He delayed immediate punishment, arguing that justice must follow due process and that hasty retribution could spark further bloodshed and tribal revenge. His priority was to restore order before addressing the issue. Though legally and ethically sound, this stance was politically risky and drew criticism from Muawiyah (RA) and others who demanded swift justice, escalating tensions.

Reasons for the Battle of Jamal

Background to the Battle of Jamal

The Battle of Jamal, fought in 656 CE near Basra, was the first major internal conflict in the Muslim community after the assassination of the third Caliph, Hazrat Uthman ibn Affan (RA). It is named after the camel ridden by Aisha (RA), the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) widow, who led one faction against Hazrat Ali (RA), the newly appointed Caliph. Key figures opposing Ali (RA) included Aisha (RA), Talha ibn Ubaydullah (RA), and Zubair ibn al-Awwam (RA), all esteemed companions.

Demand for Justice for Uthman's Murder

The primary cause of the conflict was the demand for justice for Uthman's assassination. Rebels had killed Uthman due to grievances over his governance, especially accusations of nepotism. Many companions, including Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan (RA), Uthman's cousin and governor of Syria, demanded swift punishment for the killers. However, Hazrat Ali (RA), while committed to justice, emphasized proper legal procedures over immediate revenge, fearing that hasty action could spark further violence. His cautious approach frustrated those demanding immediate retribution, causing political tensions to rise.

Political Rivalries and Personal Ambitions

Beyond justice for Uthman, political rivalries and personal ambitions fueled the conflict. Talha (RA) and Zubair (RA), initially supportive of Ali (RA), became dissatisfied with his leadership and policies. Their opposition was influenced by both personal grievances and tribal interests. While the call for justice was the public reason, underlying power struggles over control of the Islamic state played a significant role.

Discontent with Ali's Governance

Hazrat Ali's (RA) policies contributed to tensions. He dismissed several governors appointed during Uthman's rule, upsetting powerful elites who had benefited from the previous administration. His strict insistence on justice and equal treatment for all, regardless of status, made some companions uncomfortable. His cautious approach to punishing Uthman's assassins was seen by some as weakness, damaging his political standing and giving his opponents a pretext to challenge his leadership.

Aisha's Role and Motivation

Aisha (RA), deeply affected by Uthman's death, felt a moral responsibility to demand justice. After returning to Mecca, she was approached by those seeking action and eventually joined forces with Talha (RA) and Zubair (RA). Together, they gathered supporters in Basra to confront Ali (RA). While her intentions were rooted in justice, her participation in the armed conflict remains a tragic chapter, though she is still respected for her sincerity.

Tribal and Social Dynamics

Tribal loyalties also played a significant role in the conflict. Existing tribal rivalries and grievances were amplified by the unrest after Uthman's assassination, especially in Basra, a city with diverse tribal interests, making it a hotspot for rebellion.

Outbreak of Battle

Negotiations between Hazrat Ali (RA) and the rebel faction failed, mainly due to disagreements over immediate punishment for Uthman's killers. Despite Ali's (RA) efforts to prevent bloodshed, battle erupted. The fighting was intense, resulting in the deaths of Talha (RA) and Zubair (RA). The battle centered around Aisha's (RA) camel, which became a symbolic focal point. After the victory, Ali (RA)

ensured Aisha's safe return to Medina, demonstrating his commitment to unity and respect despite the conflict.

Battle of Jamal

Ayesha's Journey to Basra

Among those who took a public stance gathered in Makkah, where Ayesha (RA) had been performing Umrah, and decided to travel to Basra. Their intention was to mobilize support and demand the punishment of those involved in Uthman's assassination. Their goal was not rebellion against Ali's caliphate, but a call for justice. A large number of supporters joined them, and they began their march toward Basra, hoping to rally public sentiment in their favor.

The Incident of the Dogs of Hawab

During the journey, Ayesha's caravan stopped at a place called Hawab. As they camped, dogs began barking loudly, which reminded Ayesha (RA) of a prophecy of the Prophet ﷺ, who had once told his wives,

"What will be the condition when the dogs of Hawab bark at one of you?"

Musnad Ahmad (Hadith 24758)

Recognizing the possible warning in this event, Ayesha (RA) hesitated and considered turning back. However, some of her companions reassured her — even swearing falsely according to some reports — that this was not Hawab, convincing her to continue the journey.

Ali Gathers Support in Kufa

When Ali (RA) heard of the movement towards Basra, he acted swiftly. Realizing the potential danger of Muslim disunity and internal strife, he moved from Medina towards Kufa, which had become the political and military center of Iraq.

Narrated Abu Maryam `Abdullah bin Ziyad Al-Aasadi:

When Talha, AzZubair and `Aisha moved to Basra, `Ali sent `Ammar bin Yasir and Hasan bin `Ali who came to us at Kufa and ascended the pulpit. Al-Hasan bin `Ali was at the top of the pulpit and `Ammar was below Al-Hasan. We all gathered before him. I heard `Ammar saying, "`Aisha has moved to Al-Busra. By Allah! She is the wife of your Prophet in this world and in the Hereafter. But Allah has put you to test whether you obey Him (Allah) or her (`Aisha).

(Bukari 7100)

Ayesha's Entry into Basra

Meanwhile, Ayesha (RA), Talha, and Zubair reached Basra and confronted Uthman ibn Hunayf, the governor appointed by Ali (RA). After brief clashes, the governor was captured, but was eventually released. The residents of Basra, largely sympathetic to Ayesha's cause, welcomed her and her companions, strengthening their position and increasing their forces. Both sides now found themselves encamped near Basra, facing the possibility of open conflict.

Initial Negotiations for Peace

Despite the growing tensions, both camps were initially inclined towards peace. Negotiations between Ali (RA) and Ayesha's group began, with many prominent companions working to avoid war. They agreed in principle to arrest and punish the actual murderers of Uthman, and both armies were prepared to reconcile. For a moment, it appeared that a peaceful resolution was within reach, and both sides stood down to await final decisions.

The Sabotage and Sudden Outbreak of Battle

Unfortunately, not everyone desired peace. A group of rebels, many of whom were directly responsible for Uthman's murder, and others who wanted unrest in the state feared that peace would expose them and lead to their execution. Under the cover of night, these saboteurs launched a surprise attack on both camps, creating confusion and chaos. Each side believed that the other had betrayed the truce, and full-scale fighting broke out by morning. The situation spiraled into the first and one of the most tragic civil conflicts in early Islamic history.

The Meeting Between Ali and Zubair

Before the battle reached its peak, Ali (RA) privately met with Zubair ibn al-Awwam (RA). Ali reminded Zubair of a hadith of the Prophet ﷺ:

"You will fight Ali while you will be wrong, O Zubair."

Realizing his mistake and deeply moved by the reminder, Zubair decided to withdraw from the battlefield, refusing to fight any further. However, as he was leaving, he was followed and killed by Amr ibn Jurmuz while in prayer, making his death one of the bitter tragedies of the battle. When Amr returned to Ali for reward on this act Hazrat Ali declared him a jahannumi because Prophet said the killer of Zubair will be in fire and also he cried while looking at the sword of Zubair saying how many times this sword defended the Prophet.

The Death of Talha

Talha ibn Ubaydullah (RA) remained on the battlefield, but during the fighting, he was struck by an arrow. Most historical sources attribute the fatal shot to Marwan ibn al-Hakam, who bore a grudge against Talha, blaming him for his role in the events leading to Uthman's assassination. Fatally wounded, Talha was carried from the battlefield and later died from his injuries, adding another grievous loss among the companions.

Qais bin Hazim says: I saw Marwan bin Hakam, in the Battle of Jamal, when he shot an arrow at Hazrat Talha (may Allah be pleased with him) and it hit his knee. He continued to glorify Allah in the midst of this pain until he was martyred.

Mustadrak al hakim (5591)

The Central Battle Around Ayesha's Camel

As the battle raged, Ayesha's camel became the central symbol of her forces. Surrounded by fighters protecting her, the fiercest fighting occurred around the camel, with both sides sustaining heavy losses. The camel stood as a rallying point for her army. Ali (RA) realized that the only way to end the bloodshed was to neutralize the camel, which was the symbol keeping the battle alive. One of Ali's men, reportedly Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr (her brother), succeeded in bringing the camel down, effectively ending the main battle.

The End of the Battle and Ayesha's Return

With the camel neutralized and her forces defeated, Ayesha (RA) was taken to safety by Ali (RA), who treated her with the utmost respect and dignity. Ali personally ensured that she was unharmed and arranged for her safe return to Medina, accompanied by her brother and an armed escort. The battle came to a tragic end with the loss of nearly 10,000 lives, marking one of the darkest episodes of internal Muslim conflict.

Aftermath and Lessons of the Battle

Following the battle, Ali (RA) moved his capital to Kufa and focused on restoring order and governance. The Battle of the Camel left deep scars in the Muslim community. It was not a battle between good and evil but between sincere companions acting upon their ijtiḥad, driven by misunderstandings and manipulated by those who sought to destabilize the Ummah for personal gain. Though the majority opinion sides with Hazrat Ali as the one on Haq because of Numerus Ahadiths mentioning this, the scholars guide us to give utmost respect to Ayesha(RA, talha(RA) and Zubair(RA) as was done by Hazrat Ali(RA), he told his followers that Ayesha is their mother and no one should speak any ill thing about his mother and regarding Zubair and talha he said,

"I hope from Allah Almighty that I, Uthman ibn Affan, Talha, and Zubair (may Allah be pleased with them all) will be among those about whom Allah Almighty has stated in the Qur'an:

'And We will remove whatever is in their breasts of resentment, [so they will be] brothers, on thrones facing each other.'" (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayah 47)

(Musannaf ibn Shaiba 38976)

Despite the tragedy, the respect and honor between Ali (RA) and Ayesha (RA) remained, and both continued to be revered by Muslims. This battle serves as a painful reminder of how discord and mischief can lead to the gravest consequences even among the best of people.

Lessons for Muslims today

- Differences of opinion should be resolved through dialogue and patience.
- Both Parties respected each other but had the conflict in opinions, despite the gravest if disagreement one should always keep the respect intact
- Once Zubair (RA) realized he was wrong he immediately accepted his mistakes and returned from battlefield.
- Even the best among the Ummah can differ; respect for each other's ijtiḥad remains crucial.
- Avoid manipulation by divisive elements.

It was the 1st battle between muslims so Allah showed us through the rightly guidance of hazrat Ali of how to treat muslims in war. He didn't take any captives, didn't take any maal e ghanimat everyone who didn't fought wasn't fought everything that was left on battlefield by opposing party was returned to them.

Reasons of Battle of Siffin

After the Battle of the Camel

After the painful events of the Battle of the Camel (Jamal), Ali ibn Abi Talib (RA) focused on stabilizing the caliphate. He moved the capital to Kufa, which became his base of political and military operations. The majority of the Muslim lands, including Iraq, Yemen, Persia, and parts of Arabia, accepted his caliphate. However, the region of Sham (Greater Syria), governed by Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan (RA), refused to acknowledge Ali's rule.

Muawiya's Rejection of Ali's Caliphate

Muawiya (RA), who was Uthman's (RA) relative and governor of Syria, demanded that the killers of Uthman be punished before he would pledge allegiance (bay'ah) to Ali. He claimed that many of the murderers were among Ali's supporters or had influence in his camp, making justice impossible under his rule. Despite Ali's position as the legitimate caliph, Muawiya refused to recognize him, insisting that avenging Uthman was his primary concern. This marked the beginning of the political deadlock that led to the Battle of Siffin.

Ali's Governor Rejected by Muawiya

Ali (RA) had appointed Sahl ibn Hunayf as governor of Syria, but when Sahl reached there, Muawiya and the people of Sham refused to allow him entry or accept Ali's authority. This rejection symbolized Muawiya's open opposition to Ali's caliphate.

Gathering of Armies (Numbers of Men)

As tensions escalated, both sides began to mobilize their forces.

- **Ali's army:** From Kufa and neighboring regions, Ali gathered about **90,000 to 100,000 soldiers**.

- **Muawiya's army:** From Syria and its surrounding tribes, Muawiya assembled around **80,000 to 90,000 soldiers**.

The two armies eventually faced each other near the plains of **Siffin (modern-day Raqqa, Syria)** in 657 CE.

The Three Phases of Battle

- **Skirmishes and Negotiations (Rajab–Ramadan 37 AH / Jan–May 657 CE):**
Sporadic fighting broke out, interspersed with diplomacy. Ali (RA) sought to avoid bloodshed and sent letters to Mu'awiya inviting unity and reminding him of the Prophet's ﷺ close ties with both of them.
- **Full-scale Battle (Safar 37 AH / July 657 CE):**
The main clash occurred over three intense days (26–28 July). The battle raged fiercely, especially on the third night, known as the "Laylat al-Harir" (The Night of Clamor) due to the intensity of the fighting.
- **The Qur'an Raised on Spears:**
As Mu'awiya's army began to lose ground, Amr ibn al-As advised that they raise the Qur'an on spears, calling for divine judgment. This was a turning point. Hazrat Ali (RA) recognized it as a tactical ruse, but many in his army, especially devout but politically naïve tribesmen, insisted on halting the fight.

The Martyrdom of Ammar ibn Yasir (RA)

During the intense fighting, Ammar ibn Yasir (RA), a staunch supporter of Ali (RA), was killed. His death was extremely significant because of a hadith of the Prophet ﷺ:

"Woe to Ammar! The transgressing party (al-fi'atu al-baghiyah) will kill him."

Sahih al-Bukhari (2812)

When Ammar was martyred, many understood that this hadith was evidence that Ali's side was on the truth, and Muawiya's side was the aggressor.

Muawiya's Interpretation of the Hadith

Many companions on hazrat Muawiya's side like Abdullah ibn Amr and his father realized this and went to Hazrat Muawiya. Muawiya's camp, however, tried to reinterpret the hadith. They claimed:

"We did not kill Ammar; rather, those who brought him to the battlefield (Ali's army) are responsible for his death."

This interpretation was considered weak and rejected by most of the Sahabah and later scholars, who understood that the Prophet ﷺ directly referred to the fighting group as the transgressor, not simply the ones who "sent" Ammar. Ibn e kathir said that this is a very far-fetched interpretation. Even this interpretation when reached Hazrat Ali he said that if this is the case then Prophet killed Hamza ibn Abdul Muttalib because He(SAW) took him to uhd.

Advice of Amr ibn al-As: Raising the Qur'an on Spears

As Muawiya's forces were on the verge of defeat, Amr ibn al-As (RA), Muawiya's advisor, suggested a political maneuver. He advised the Syrian soldiers to raise copies of the Qur'an on their spears, calling for arbitration according to the Book of Allah.

This sudden call for arbitration caused hesitation and division in Ali's army. Many of his soldiers, particularly from the tribes, pressured Ali to accept arbitration to avoid further bloodshed. Even though Ali knew it is political maneuver he had to accept it due to the pressure.

The Duration of the Battle and Casualties

- **Duration:** The actual fighting lasted for about **three months** (negotiations, skirmishes, and final battle combined(which was about a week long)).
- **Casualties:** Estimates suggest that around **70,000 to 80,000 Muslims** were killed from both sides — a staggering loss for the Ummah.

The heavy casualties devastated many leading companions and highlighted the tragedy of civil war among Muslims.

The Lessons of Siffin

- The Battle of Siffin remains one of the most tragic chapters in Islamic history.
- Both Ali and Muawiya acted based on their ijtihad (independent reasoning), though most scholars regard Ali as the one upon truth. And unlike Zubair, Talha and Ayesha who accepted their ijtehaad to be wrong and regretted it Muawiya continued to remain firm on his stance which make his position controversial and problematic, however we still take his name with respect and rest this case between Ali and Muawiya with Allah.
- The event fulfilled many prophecies of the Prophet ﷺ regarding future fitna and trials within the Ummah.

Arbitration (Tahkim) after the battle of Siffin

(August 657 CE / Safar – Rabi al-Awwal 37 AH)

Context: Post-Battle Tensions

After the emotionally and physically draining Battle of Siffin, Hazrat Ali (RA) found his forces demoralized and fractured. The raising of the Qur'an by Mu'awiya's side — an intelligent tactical maneuver — effectively halted the battle, as many pious but politically inexperienced individuals within Ali's (RA) army could not fathom rejecting a call to "judge by Allah's Book."

Hazrat Ali (RA) reluctantly accepted arbitration, foreseeing its possible consequences. He is reported to have said:

"This is a deception, a ruse! I know it, and I warned you. But you forced it upon me."
(Tarikh al-Tabari, Volume 4)

The Agreement for Arbitration

The decision to arbitrate rather than continue battle was agreed upon in Safar 37 AH (July–August 657 CE). Each side was to nominate an impartial judge (hakam) to represent them in discussing how to resolve the conflict and to decide who would hold legitimate authority over the Muslim Ummah.

Nominees:

- Hazrat Ali (RA) was pressed by his army to appoint Abu Musa al-Ash'ari (RA), a respected companion known for his piety and neutrality. Ali initially wanted Abdullah ibn Abbas (RA) or Malik al-Ashtar, but his soldiers rejected these choices fearing partiality.
- Mu'awiya (RA) chose Amr ibn al-As (RA), a skilled negotiator and politician with immense experience.

Location & Timeline:

- The arbitration was to take place first at Dumat al-Jandal and later at Udhruh, a region between Syria and Hijaz, around Rabi al-Awwal 37 AH.

The Key Events of Arbitration

First Round at Dumat al-Jandal

The early discussions were reportedly cordial. Both parties emphasized ending the civil war and determining a fair conclusion. Abu Musa al-Ash'ari (RA), known for his softness and uprightness, suggested both Mu'awiya and Ali should step down, and a new caliph be chosen by the people.

Amr ibn al-As (RA), however, agreed only in theory, and asked Abu Musa to publicly declare it first. According to reports in Tarikh al-Tabari and Ibn Kathir, the following event occurred:

- Abu Musa said:
"I depose both Ali and Mu'awiya. Let the Ummah decide their leader."
- Amr ibn al-As then stood up and declared:
"I confirm the removal of Ali... but I confirm Mu'awiya as Caliph!"

This public deception deeply humiliated Abu Musa and infuriated Ali's (RA) supporters, validating his prior fears of trickery.

Hazrat Ali's Response

Upon learning about the outcome, Ali (RA) said:

"This is what I warned you about. This is the consequence of trusting diplomacy with those who seek power."

He now had to face growing internal dissent among his ranks, particularly from those who initially forced him to accept arbitration — they became the earliest Khawarij.

Sunni View of the Arbitration

From a Sunni scholarly lens, both Abu Musa and Amr ibn al-As were Sahaba (companions) and acted based on their ijtihad. Sunni Islam teaches that Sahaba are not free of error, but they are not to be maligned.

- **Imam al-Nawawi (RA):** "The Sahaba acted based on their sincere reasoning (ijtihad). Some were right, others mistaken, but all were rewarded."
- **Ibn Kathir (al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya):** writes that the arbitration failed not because of ill intent from both sides but due to the political complexity and human limitations in handling such a monumental crisis.

Sunni scholars maintain that Hazrat Ali (RA) remained the legitimate Caliph, and the arbitration did not lawfully transfer leadership to Mu'awiya.

Consequences of the Failed Arbitration

Erosion of Authority

The arbitration undermined Hazrat Ali's (RA) authority significantly. Not only had the battle failed to decisively end the conflict, but now, with arbitration appearing to give political weight to Mu'awiya's claims, many in the Islamic world were uncertain whom to follow.

Rise of the Khawarij

A radical group from within Ali's (RA) own army now accused him of blasphemy — not for losing the arbitration, but for agreeing to human judgment over divine law. These extremists would become the Khawarij, the subject of our next section.

Jang-e-Nahrawan (The Battle Against the Khawarij)

Background and Ideology of the Khawarij

The roots of the Khawarij trace back to the Battle of Siffin, when some supporters of Hazrat Ali (RA) rejected arbitration between him (RA) and Amir Mu'awiya (RA), claiming that "judgment belongs only to Allah." They declared:

"Judgment belongs to none but Allah."
— **Surah Yusuf (12:40)**

However, they misapplied this verse. Hazrat Ali (RA) rightly explained that this verse refers to divine legislation, not political arbitration. Their flawed interpretation led them to misuse religion, declaring major companions and leaders as disbelievers (takfir), and forming a separatist, extremist faction. Hazrat Ali (RA), with immense patience and wisdom, initially refrained from combat and invited them to correction through dialogue.

Hadith About the Khawarij

The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had warned the Ummah about the emergence of the Khawarij:

"They will recite the Quran, but it will not go past their throats. They will exit the religion as an arrow exits the bow."

— **Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 6930**

These hadiths clearly foretold a rigid, literalist group — exactly as the Khawarij turned out to be.

Initial Dialogue and Avoidance of Conflict

Hazrat Ali (RA), committed to unity and justice, refused to confront the Khawarij militarily at first. Instead, he sent prominent companions such as Abdullah ibn Abbas (RA) and Ziyad ibn Nadr (RA) to engage them through debate.

Ibn Abbas's (RA) Debate

Ibn Abbas (RA), renowned for his Qur'anic knowledge, debated the Khawarij at Harura. He clarified their misunderstanding of:

"The decision is only for Allah."

— **Surah Yusuf (12:40)**

He explained that arbitration does not contradict divine judgment. The Prophet (SAW) himself appointed judges and negotiators, as seen in the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah. Furthermore:

"If two groups of Muslims fight, make peace between them..."

— **Surah Al-Hujurat 49:9**

This verse legitimized peaceful arbitration. Ibn Abbas's (RA) scholarly approach led thousands of Khawarij to return to Ali's (RA) camp, demonstrating the power of knowledge over violence.

Three-Point Policy of Hazrat Ali (RA)

Hazrat Ali (RA) established a clear policy for dealing with the Khawarij:

- Do not initiate violence.
- Do not spread terror among civilians.

- Do not disrupt public peace.

He declared:

“We will not fight them until they fight us.”

— **Reported by al-Tabari and Ibn Kathir**

Final Attempts Before Battle

Despite these efforts, a hardline faction of the Khawarij rejected all dialogue and began murdering civilians, including:

- Abd Allah ibn Khabbab (RA), a companion of the Prophet (SAW).
- Pregnant women and other non-combatants.

These actions crossed all ethical and religious boundaries.

The Battle of Nahrawan

The decisive battle took place near Nahrawan, between Kufa and Baghdad. The engagement was brief but intense, resulting in a complete victory for Hazrat Ali's (RA) organized army. Most of the Khawarij were killed; only a few escaped. Hazrat Ali (RA), grieving, remarked:

“Woe unto them! They have been misled and have misled others.”

— **Al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah, Ibn Kathīr**

Political Aftermath

Moral Weight

Hazrat Ali (RA) was emotionally burdened by having to fight former companions led astray by extremism. Yet his leadership was praised for exhausting peaceful options before force.

Decline in Support

The battle weakened Ali's (RA) position in Kufa, as military morale declined and reluctance grew to engage in further conflict with Mu'āwiyah (RA).

Legitimization of Khilafah

The defeat of the Khawarij strengthened Ali's (RA) rightful caliphate in Sunni tradition while highlighting the dangers of ideological rebellion.

Theological Aftermath of Nahrawan

Defining Takfīr Boundaries

The Khawarij's misuse of takfīr—declaring Muslims disbelievers over political disagreements—was strongly rejected by Hazrat Ali (RA). His balanced stance became foundational in Sunni theology:

“A word of truth used for falsehood.”
— **Musnad Ahmad, 656**

Imam al-Tahawi stated:

“We do not declare any of the people of the Qibla to be disbelievers because of a sin, unless they make it lawful.”
— **Al-Aqidah al-Tahawiyyah**

Ibn Taymiyyah called the Khawarij:

“The worst of sects.”
— **Majmu' al-Fatawa**

He, like other Sunni scholars, emphasized obedience to legitimate rulers:

“O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.”
— **Surah An-Nisa (4:59)**

Preservation of Ijmā' and Unity (Jamā'ah)

Sunni scholars stressed preserving ijmā' and avoiding sectarian division:

“My Ummah will not agree upon misguidance.”
— **Sunan al-Tirmidhi: 2167**

Legal Rulings on Rebels (Ahkām al-Bughāh)

Drawing from:

“And if two parties among the believers fight, make peace between them...”
— **Surah Al-Hujurat 49:9**

Sunni jurisprudence ruled that rebels remain Muslims unless they deny clear tenets of belief. Mercy was shown to many Khawarij who surrendered.

Warning Against Literalism Without Understanding

The Khawarij's literal but shallow reading of the Qur'an prompted stern Prophetic warnings:

“They will recite the Qur’an, but it will not go beyond their throats...”
— **Sahih Muslim: 1066**

This formed the Sunni emphasis on deep, balanced tafsir guided by sound scholarship.

Hazrat Ali's (RA) Model as Theological Balance

Hazrat Ali (RA) became an exemplary model of justice (‘adl), knowledge (‘ilm), and patience (sabr). Sunni jurists like Imam Mālik, al-Shāfi‘ī, and al-Nawawī built upon his precedent: dialogue before combat, justice over emotion, and mercy over vengeance.

Moral and Political Lessons

Leadership Rooted in Justice

Hazrat Ali's (RA) restraint, dialogue, and sorrowful engagement reflect the Prophetic guidance:

“Help your brother, whether he is an oppressor or oppressed.”
— **Sahih al-Bukhari: 2444**

Wisdom Over Popularity

He prioritized truth over political pressure, demonstrating that leadership is grounded in moral clarity, not public approval.

Unity Over Conflict

The Qur’an commands:

“And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute and [thus] lose courage and your strength would depart...”
— **Surah Al-Anfal 8:46**

Hazrat Ali (RA) acted on this, striving for unity even amidst intense ideological division.

Dangers of Extremism

The Khawarij serve as a warning against zeal without knowledge. As the Prophet (SAW) warned:

“They will recite the Qur’an, but it will not go beyond their throats...”
— **Sahih Muslim: 1066**

Mercy in Conflict

Hazrat Ali (RA) spared many Khawarij who surrendered, upholding:

“And if the enemy inclines toward peace, then incline toward it [also] ...”

— **Surah Al-Anfal 8:61**

Legal and Ethical Precedents

Hazrat Ali's (RA) approach helped establish Sunni political thought: rebellion (bughāh) is a political offense, not automatic disbelief. His actions laid the foundation for structured legal responses to rebellion, as outlined by later Sunni jurists.

Martyrdom of Hazrat Ali (RA)

The Assassination Plot

Hazrat Ali (RA) was martyred by a Kharijite, Abd al-Rahman ibn Muljam, while leading Fajr prayer in Masjid al-Kufa in 661 CE. This attack was part of a wider Kharijite conspiracy to assassinate Ali (RA), Mu'awiyah (RA), and Amr ibn al-'As (RA).

On his deathbed, Hazrat Ali (RA) advised his sons:

“Fear Allah, and do not follow the world even if it runs after you. And do not grieve over what you have missed.”

— **Nahj al-Balaghah**

Legacy

The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had praised Ali (RA):

“O Ali, you are from me and I am from you.”

— **Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 3701; Sahih Muslim, Hadith 2404**

“You are to me as Harun was to Musa, except there is no prophet after me.”

— **Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 3706; Sahih Muslim, Hadith 2404**

Sunni scholars such as Imam al-Shafi'i, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ibn Kathir, and Ibn Taymiyyah extolled his virtue, knowledge, and justice. He is buried in Najaf, Iraq.

Political Consequences

His martyrdom led to a leadership crisis. Though people pledged allegiance to his son Hasan (RA), internal unrest and external pressure from Mu'awiyah (RA) followed.

Caliphate and Peace Treaty of Hasan ibn Ali (RA)

Bay'ah and Challenges

Despite rightful leadership, Hasan (RA) faced immense instability. In contrast, Mu'awiyah (RA) enjoyed strong political control over Syria and Egypt.

The Peace Treaty

Fulfilling the Prophet's (SAW) prophecy:

“This son of mine is a Sayyid (noble leader), and perhaps Allah will bring reconciliation through him between two great factions of my Ummah.”

— Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith 2704

Hasan (RA) signed a peace treaty with Mu'awiyah (RA) in 661 CE. Its terms included:

- Governance by the Qur'an and Sunnah.
- No retaliation against Hasan's (RA) supporters.
- Safety for the people of Iraq.
- Honor and protection for Hasan (RA).
- No appointment of successor by Mu'awiyah (RA).
- Ceasing public cursing of Ali (RA).
- Control of Kufa's treasury remained with Hasan (RA).

This prevented civil war and saved countless lives.

Validation of Hasan's (RA) Leadership

Ibn Kathir (Al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah) and al-Tabari (Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī) affirm that Hasan's (RA) six-month caliphate fulfilled:

“The Caliphate after me will last for thirty years, then there will be kingship.”

— Sunan Abu Dawud, Hadith 4646

Significance

Hasan's (RA) abdication is praised in Sunni tradition as an act of moral courage. He sacrificed political power for unity, exemplifying prophetic ethics. His decision is upheld as a shining example of leadership through selflessness, preserving the jama'ah and reinforcing the principle that unity outweighs personal or factional ambition.