

EXEMPLARY GOVERNANCE OF IMAM ALI (a.s)

Written by ramadan
Saturday, 20 June 2015 15:04 -

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*Jumuah lecture delivered by Mowlana Aftab Haider on Friday 1st May 2015 at Ahlul Bait (a.s)
Islamic Center, Ottery, Cape Town*

On the eve of the 13th of Rajab we anticipate the commemoration of the Milad of a great man of Islam, Ameer-ul-Mu'mineen, Imaam'ul'Muttaqeen, Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s). Fourteen centuries has passed since the birth of this great servant of Allah yet his achievements are still very relevant to our life today.

Even though conditions changed since his time, thinking patterns changed, civilizations evolved and we witnessed fundamental changes to society and technological advancement, yet we find that the ideals and message of Imam Ali (a.s) still very much alive and relevant to this day.

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Fourteen centuries ago Imam Ali (a.s) established a system of governance when he had the opportunity to rule the Islamic state as Khalif for a period of just under 5 years.

The challenges he faced during his khalifate were unique which were particularly in the form of internal challenges. He inherited a system and society filled with troubles. A society divided by classes of rich and poor, Arab and non-Arab, master and slave, in a very short period of time after the demise of our Holy Prophet (sawa).

These changes appeared and unfortunately a great 'backward' movement took place. Prophet Muhammad (sawa) fought against this jahilliyah trend but due to various reasons, very swiftly this state of ignorance and divisions of class returned.

Through all of this we find amazingly, that Imam Ali (a.s) was able to establish an exemplary governance. If one were to seek the meaning of governance in Islam and the principles of Quranic governance and ruling over people, we find a shining example in the governance of Imam Ali (a.s) of which the following points are extremely noteworthy:

1. Justice

Imam Ali (a.s) founded his governance on the basis of Justice without compromise. He became the 'voice of human justice'. He did not accept any suggestions or consider any proposal that would compromise his principles and stance on justice. He did not waiver in his stance for any political gain or worldly pursuit. Imam Ali (a.s) was reported to have said "If I will be rewarded the treasures of this world and whatever is in the seven heavens to oppress a small insect, to pull a small piece of grass from the mouth of an ant without justice, by GOD I swear, I will never do that". This attitude of non-compromise and unwavering stance for justice cost Imam Ali (a.s) dearly; created numerous enemies and finally earned him martyrdom.

2. Democracy

An important aspect of Imam Ali (a.s)'s governance was his democracy and respect for the people, his inclusion of the participation and support of the people. He frequently reminded his governors that the people are not slaves and that the rulership is a trust given by Allah. The thinking at that time was that to rule is a right or 'haqq', but in the logic of Imam Ali (a.s) it was a responsibility. The difference between the two is that with a right or 'haqq', one earns benefit, but with responsibility, one needs to perform and carry out that responsibility. We find in a well-known letter that Imam Ali (a.s) wrote to his governor of Egypt, Malik al Ashtar, that the Imam advises Malik to never create barriers between himself and the people, that time should be set aside daily which is dedicated towards engaging with them and to listen to the them.

3. Human Rights & Tolerance

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Another aspect of Imam Ali (a.s)'s governance was his outlook on Human Rights and his tolerant attitude. He reminded the Egyptian governor, Malik al Ashtar, that people are of two kinds; they are either your brother/sister in faith or your equal in humanity as fellow human beings.

Imam Ali (a.s)'s treatment of his opponents also displayed his exemplary tolerance. He explained that there were people who paid allegiance to him and there were those that did not. He instructed that for those that did not pay allegiance to be left alone, so long as they did not raise arms against him! Who can be more tolerant than Imam Ali (a.s). There was no indication of any form of dictatorship in Imam Ali (a.s)'s government.

Imam Ali (as) had many enemies - who in essence were worshippers of this worldly life. Among those enemies, Imam Ali (as) had a unique opponent; an enemy of Aql and intellect, an enemy of Islam but under the guise of Islam. This trend was present in Imam Ali (a.s)'s time, and is present today in our time. These opponents and enemies created disasters and tribulations, even going as far as entering the mosque of the Imam (a.s) to insult him in the middle of his sermon. Even then Imam Ali (a.s) instructed that they are to be left alone. It was only when they raised arms against him and created instability in society that he decided they were to be dealt with.

If one wanted to see mercy in action, there was nobody better (at that time) than Imam Ali (a.s). If one wanted to see firmness there was nobody better (at that time) than Imam Ali (a.s). When these 'Khawarij' took up arms against the Imam of that time (a.s), they were wiped out by the same Imam Ali (a.s).

Anti-corruption

Imam Ali (a.s) fought against corruption, and he frequently admonished his governors in the various letters he wrote them to not create compromising positions for themselves. He admonished them in the smallest of changes towards luxury during their period in the office of government. He challenged them and warned them against corruption to the smallest degree.

WORKER'S DAY

We turn our attention towards Workers Day today, and take an example from Imam Ali (a.s) in how he treated his workers and his concern for them. It is narrated that one day Imam Ali (a.s) went with one of his workers (Qambar) to the market to purchase a shirt for himself and the worker. Upon reaching the market there was only enough money to purchase one expensive shirt and one cheaper shirt.

Imam Ali (a.s) was Khalifa-tul-Muslimeen and head of the Islamic State, yet he insisted that his worker take the more expensive shirt while he takes the cheaper one. His worker asks why he did this as the Imam (a.s) was his master and he was just the worker. Imam Ali (a.s) replied by saying that his worker was younger than himself and that better clothing was more beneficial to his worker than himself who was much older.

WORLD CHANGES

We have seen in this week many changes in the Saudi government. We see how they are fighting over power. When Ibn Abbas (r.a) asked Imam Ali (a.s) what the value was of ruling over the people, Imam (a.s) said it was worth less than the worthless patched shoes he was wearing.

It is not without reason that fourteen centuries later, Kofi Annan said to the Arab leaders to look back at their own Arab history towards the governance of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s). It is not without any reason that a Christian, George Jordac, wrote one of his best works regarding Imam Ali (a.s) under the title; "Ali: The voice of Human Justice". Therein he compares Imam Ali (a.s) to the French Revolution, to the Charter of Human Rights, to the Bill of Anti-Corruption, to the issue of Justice and democratic rights of the people. George Jordac was so infatuated with the teachings of Imam Ali (a.s) that he claims to have read Nahjul Balagha two hundred times!

3 THINGS OF THE EARTHLY LIFE THAT LADY FATIMA (a.s) LOVES INTENSELY

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Lecture delivered by Moulana Aftab Haider
on the occasion of the birth celebration of Lady Fatima (a.s) on 9 April 2015
at the Ahlul Bait (as) Islamic Centre, Ottery, Cape Town.

Almighty ALLAH says in Surah Al-Kauthar: "Surely, We have given you Kauthar. Therefore pray to your Lord and sacrifice. Surely your enemy is the one who shall be without posterity."

We extend our congratulations on this very auspicious night of Milad of the Lady of Light, Fatima (a.s) the most beloved daughter of Prophet Muhammad (sawa).

This is a night of celebration and happiness of our Prophet Muhammad (sawa), because it is in this night that he received the best favour from Allah. And this favour from Allah was so great that even Allah Himself has mentioned it as such in the Noble Quran i.e. "Surely, We have given you Kauthar".

Usually when somebody gives you something and if the donor happens to be wealthy, he does not boast about it nor remind you of his favour, especially if

this person is sincerely generous and has a 'big heart'. This quality is touched upon in the Quran whereby we are reminded that we should not nullify our charity by way of reminding people of the charity that we gave or boasting about it. We are admonished against this practice.

But one finds those who have "small hearts" will follow up their charity with a reminder thereof

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and boast about their good deed, and this is the antithesis of those who are on a higher level who are referred to in the Quran as those, when giving charity say that "they seek no reward nor thanks", their reward is with their Lord.

But when one looks at this great favour granted to our Prophet (sawa) we find that Allah speaks of it with much pride. Allah insists by the royal term of "WE" that HE has indeed given His most beloved Servant (sawa), an Abundance of Good (Al-Kauthar) and in this verse of Surah Al-Kauthar Almighty Allah uses the term "We" twice for a double emphasis.

LADY FATIMA (a.s) IS THE MANIFESTATION OF LAYLATUL QADR

The hadith of Prophet Muhammad (sawa) indicate that Lady Fatima (as) is the manifestation of Lailatul Qadr (night of power). The common denominator between The Night of Power and Lady Fatima (a.s) is that we do not truly know what The Night of Power is, and similarly we do not fully comprehend or know who Lady Fatima (as) really

We find ourselves far removed from the "ma'rifat" of the status of Lady Fatima (a.s). This night of power is hidden between a few nights, likewise Lady Fatima (a.s) is also 'hidden' from us. Just as the night appears dark but is in fact filled with light, similarly the life of Fatima (a.s) appears dark as it is filled with injustice and oppression committed against her, yet still her light shines through. And still, we do not fully know that existential and spiritual aspect of Lady Fatima (a.s) who is the heart of the Noble Family, Ahlul-Bait (a.s). LADY FATIMA (a.s) REPRESENTS ALL GREAT HISTORICAL WOMEN IN QURAN IN THE EVENT OF MUBAHILAH

The incident of Mubahilah refers to the visit of the Christian delegation of Najran to Prophet Muhammad (sawa) to debate the status of His Prophethood and the status of Jesus, son of Mary (a.s). Though Prophet Muhammad (sawa) brought forth all his evidence to prove his Prophethood, the Christians still denied the validity of his arguments. At this point the following verse descended:

"Should anyone argue concerning him after the knowledge that has come to you, the say "Come, let us bring forth our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves; Then let us pray and invoke the curse of ALLAH on the liars." (Quran 3:61).

The next day Prophet Muhammad (sawa) presented himself for this "Mubahilah", and brought

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along with him in place of his sons, Hassan (a.s) and Hussain (a.s), in place of his women, he brought only one woman, his daughter Lady Fatima (a.s) and in place of his self (or men), he brought only Imam Ali (a.s).

Only these five pure souls were presented to the Christian delegation, to invoke the curse of Allah on the lying party, and when the delegation saw these five holy faces, they realised their imminent failure should they proceed further, and proclaimed that if these five raise their hands to make dua, if mountains moved from their position (by dua), they would not be surprised. They therefore forfeited the "Mubahilah" in favour of survival of their faith, for if they had to engage in this act of cursing they would certainly have witnessed the power of Ahlul-Bait (as) and would have perished.

An interesting point can be raised regarding the plural linguistic use of the word "women" in the verse of Mubahilah, whereby among the many women Prophet Muhammad (sawa) could have chosen, he brings along only his daughter Fatima (a.s). Furthermore, Allah in this verse, did not specifically state to bring women from Ahlul-Bait (a.s) or wives or daughters...it was mentioned in an all-inclusive and general sense. Yet we see that Prophet Muhammad's (sawa) wives are not brought for Mubahilah, nor his other apparent daughters, but only Fatima (a.s) is there.

But Lady Fatima (as) did not come in her individual capacity. Fatima (a.s) came as that truth and reality which represents not only a mother, not only a wife, not only a daughter, but as someone who represents the "woman of all the worlds".

There are approximately eleven great women mentioned in Quran (directly and indirectly) from a historical perspective, and the attributes of all those women on that day were represented by Lady Fatima (a.s). So she represents the spiritual essence of the following great women referred to in Quran:

1. Maryam (a.s),
2. Mother of Maryam (a.s), (wife of Imraan)
3. Aasiya (a.s) (wife of Pharaoh)
4. Khadija (a.s) (mother of Lady Fatima (a.s))
5. Haajar (a.s) (wife of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s))
6. Saarah (a.s) (wife of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s))
7. Queen Bilquees (wife of Prophet Sulayman (a.s)) 8. Zulaigha (wife of Aziz of Egypt)

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9. Wife of Musa (a.s) (daughter of Prophet Shuaib (a.s))

10. Mother of Musa (a.s)

11. Hawa (a.s) (wife of Prophet Adam (a.s))

And all other great women that might not have been mentioned in Quran.

EVERY MUSLIMS LINK TO LADY FATIMA (a.s) 5 TIMES A DAY

Lady Fatima (a.s) lived a short life, but flourished in every angle. She reached a stage whereby her Father, Prophet Muhammad (saws) mentioned that when she used to stand in ibaadat, a light used to shine from her forehead that illuminated the streets of Medina.

It is sufficient to say that a thikr that is connected and affiliated to Lady Fatima (as) is the best thikr of ALLAH. Imam Al-Saudiq (as) says there is no thikr better than the thikr of the tasbih of Lady Fatima (a.s) and if there were a better thikr, Prophet Muhammad (sawa) would have given it to her.

It is this thikr of reading Allahu Akbar (Allah is the Greatest) 34 times and Alhamdulillah (All Praise is due to Allah) 33 times and Subhanallah (Glory be to Allah) 33 times after EVERY salaah that connects every Muslim to Lady Fatima (a.s) five times a day.

LADY FATIMA (a.s)'s INSISTENCE ON HIJAB When it comes to hijab, chastity and purity, Lady Fatima (a.s) advises women that the best jewelry and ornamentation for you is that you should cover and protect yourself from non-mahram.

In the case of hijab, for her janazah Lady Fatima (a.s) requested she is placed in a coffin, so that even in death the shape of her body cannot be seen by strangers.

LADY FATIMA (a.s) IS THE FIRST DEFENDER OF THE IMAMATE OF IMAM ALI (a.s)

When someone asked Imam Ali (as) what he thinks about Fatima (as) as a wife he replied that she was the best companion to assist him in the obedience of Allah.

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That obedience of Allah was not just in rituals. If truth and justice required one to come out to speak in its favour and to resist against wrong-doing, Lady Fatima (a.s) practically showed women that they should not just sit at home. Fatima (a.s) with all her hijab, all her chastity and all her purity, came out of her house and entered the court of the Khalif and demanded her right to the land of Fadak and simultaneously defended her husband's right to the Imamate.

3 THINGS OF THIS EARTHLY LIFE THAT LADY FATIMA (a.s) LOVES INTENSELY

So what does the Lady with such great spirituality love about this world, if any?

We learn from Lady Fatima (a.s) herself when she was asked what she enjoys in this world, she replied in an interesting manner by saying "I love 3 things about YOUR world". Ponder for a moment, why does she says "your world" and not "our world?" It's because the reality of Fatima (a.s) is that she is a "Heavenly creation in Human Form"!! (Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (sawa)). In other words in reality Lady Fatima (a.s) is not from this world.

So she replied that there are 3 things she loves from this world:

1. Tilawat of the Book of Allah (Quran)

Tilawat of Quran is much more than mere recitation of Quran! Understand this! Tilawat of Quran involves absorbing the true meaning and essence of Quran. It is this aspect that she loves so much.

2. To look upon the Holy Face of her father, Prophet Muhammad (sawa). Mere gazing at the Nur of the Face of Prophet Muhammad (sawa) brought her intense joy.

3. To spend and give in the path of Allah. Her love for this aspect is captured in Surah Dahr when Almighty says "They feed others for the love of their Lord."

We finally send our congratulations to Imam Mahdi (a.s) on this very blessed occasion.

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