



# REVEALING THE TRUTH

## Saqifa; the debacle of Islamic Government

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# 1. Saqifa; the debacle of Islamic Government

## 1.1 Introduction

This article shall seek to unravel one of the most dramatic events in Islamic History, the event of Saqifa that ultimately led to a victorious Abu Bakr attaining the station of Khalifa following the death of the Prophet (s). This controversial episode goes to the heart of the Sunni / Shi'a schism and the difference in core theology has its origins in this sorry episode. We shall seek break down the event piece by piece to assist our readers in getting a true picture of what happened on the day in question. We shall seek to present the true facts, very different from that presented by the Sunni Ulema and writers who would seem to suggest that upon the death of the Prophet (s) the Ummah rushed to elect Abu Bakr as the Khalifa of the Prophet, all the Sahaba participated, all were happy and no difference of opinion. The romantic Sunni image is that this the perfect example of ijma of the Sahaba one where these great men happily voted in the esteemed figure of Abu Bakr, by doing so they ensured that there was a true transition of power. The episode actually begins from the point that Rasulullah (s) died, upon receiving news of the Prophet (saws)'s death the companions who were ordered by the Prophet (s) to join the expedition led by Usamah returned to Madinah. Three key figures Abu Bakr, Umar and Abu Ubaydah were participants in this aborted expedition, and Sunni Imam Khandlawi adds that when returning to Medina:

**"Usamah along with 'Umar and Abu 'Ubaidah (Radiallahu 'Anhum) returned to Madinah and went straight to the [residence of the] Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu 'alaihi was Sallam) who had passed away".**

 [Hayatus Sahaba, by Maulana Khandlawi, translated by Majid Ali Khan, Volume 1 p 541](#)

## 2. The Historical Facts

### 2.1 Hadhrath Umar denies the Prophet (saaws)'s death

Hadhrath Abu Bakr was not in Madinah but was at a town called Sunh, upon hearing news of the Prophet (saaws)'s demise he returned to Madinah by horse <sup>1</sup>. Meanwhile Hadhrath Umar was seeking to deny this information and was in fact threatening to kill people who said that the Prophet (saaws) was dead <sup>2</sup>:

 [1. Sahih al Bukhari, Volume 5 hadith number 733](#)

 [2. The history of al-Tabari, Volume 9 p 185 - 186](#)

**"Some of the hypocrites allege that the Messenger of God is dead. By God, he is not dead but has gone to his Lord as Moses b. Imran went and remained hidden from his people for forty days. Moses returned after it was said that he had died. By God, the Messenger of God will [also] return and will cut off the hands and feet of those who allege that he is dead".**

*The history of al-Tabari, Volume 9 p 184*

Hadhrath Umar was still threatening the inhabitants of Madinah by the time Hadhrath Abu Bakr arrived there. Hadhrath Abu Bakr went in to the house of Ummul Momineen Ayesha kissed the Prophet (saaws)'s forehead, interrupted Hadhrath Umar and said:

**"If anyone amongst you used to worship Muhummud (saws) then Muhummud is dead but (if any one of) you used to worship Allah then Allah is alive and shall never die. Allah (swt) said: -**

**'Muhummud is no more than an Apostle, and indeed (many) apostles have passed away before him...(till the end of the verse)...Allah will reward to those who are thankful'. (3:144)".**

 [1. Sahih al Bukhari, Volume 5 hadith number 733](#)

 [2. The history of al-Tabari, Volume 9 p 185 - 186](#)

### 2.2 Hadhrath Umar receives information that the Ansar have gathered at the Saqifa

*Numani* identifies the fact that Hadhrath Umar had personal receipt about a meeting the Ansar were involved in. This was not general information available to all the Sahaba; this was information given privately to Hadhrath Umar:

**"It is related by Omar that as they were seated in the Prophet's house a man cried out all of a sudden from outside: 'O son of Khattab (Omar) pray step out for a moment'. Omar told him to leave them alone and go away as they were busy in making arrangements for the burial of the Prophet. The man replied that an incident had occurred i.e., the Ansar were gathering in force in the Thaqifah Bani Sa'idah and, as the situation was grave, it was necessary that he (Omar) should go and look in to the matter lest the Ansar should do something which would lead to a war. On this Omar said to Abu Bakr, 'Let us go'.**

 [Al Faruq, by Allamah Shibli Numani, Vol 1 p 87](#)

The modern Sunni scholar *Dr Rahim* in his simplified analysis of history writes:

**"Being informed of the proceedings of the Ansars, Abu Bakr Umar and Abu Ubaidah hastened to the meeting place and were there just in time to interrupt the**

**finalization of the Ansars choice of Sa'd ibn Ubaidah to the successorship of the Prophet. Ali was at that time busy in preparing the coffin of the Prophet, and did not know anything about the meeting of the Ansars to elect a successor".**

 [A Short history of Islam, by Dr Rahim, page 57, printed Ishaquia Press, Karachi](#)

They set out to go to the Saqifa on the way we read that Abu Ubaydah joins them <sup>1</sup>. He did not leave with them from the Prophet (saaws)'s residence so we presume that he must have met them at a specific place. On route two companions whom Hadhrath Umar recounts as "pious fellows" <sup>2</sup> seek to discourage them from proceeding further. They reject the plea and make their way to the Saqifa.

 [1. The history of al Tabari, Volume 9 page 188, English translation by Ismail Poonawalla](#)

 [2. The history of al Tabari, Volume 9 page 192, English translation by Ismail Poonawalla](#)

## 2.3 Discussions at Saqifa

The meeting at Saqifa was a gathering of the Ansar, Hadhrath Abu Bakr, Hadhrath Umar and Abu Ubaydah were the only members of the Muhajireen who attended the meeting <sup>1</sup>. Upon arrival at the Saqifa one of the Ansar stood up and began to extol the virtues of the Ansar <sup>2</sup>. Upon hearing this:

 [1. The history of al Tabari, Volume 9 page 186, English translation by Ismail Poonawalla](#)

 [2. The history of al Tabari, Volume 9 page 193, English translation by Ismail Poonawalla](#)

**"Umar said: When I saw that they wanted to cut us from our root and wrest authority from us, I wanted to make a speech, which I had composed in my mind. As I used to treat Abu Bakr with gentle courtesy to some extent and considered him more sober and gentler than me I conferred with him about the speech. When I wanted to speak he said gently so I did not like to disobey him...He said 'Now then: O men of the Ansar, you deserve all the fine qualities that you have mentioned about yourselves, but the Quraysh, for they represent the best in lineage and standing. I am pleased to offer you one of these two men; render your oath of allegiance to any one of them you like. Thus saying he took hold of my hand and that of Abu Ubaydah b. al-Jarrah".**

 [The history of al Tabari, Volume 9 page 193, English translation by Ismail Poonawalla](#)

*Poonawalla*, the translator of this edition of *al-Tabari* then adds a further segment of the speech of Hadhrath Abu Bakr to the Ansar, under footnote 1343:

**"Baladhuri, Anساب 1, 582, cites the speech of Abu Bakr which shows how he argued against the Ansar. He states: "We are the first people to accept Islam. We are in the Center among the Muslims with respect to our position, and we are the noblest with respect to our lineage, and we are the nearest to the Messenger of God in relationship. You are our brethren in Islam and our partners in religion...The Arabs will not submit themselves except to this clan of Quraysh...You had not better compete with your Muhajirun brethren for what God has decreed for them".**

 [The history of al Tabari, Volume 9 page 193, footnote 1343, English translation by Ismail Poonawalla](#)

In extolling the virtues of the Muhajireen, Hadhrath Abu Bakr also said that they were:

**"the first on earth to worship Allah and were the patrons and the clan of the Prophet who tolerated and suffered with him and adversities and injuries inflicted upon them by their own folk who disbelieved them and all other people opposed them and alienated them".**

 [Tarikh al Tabari Vol 3, p 219 quoted from 'On the political system of the Islamic State' by Muhammad S. El-Awa, p 30](#)

*Halabi* further expands on Hadhrath Abu Bakr's words:

**"We are the relatives of the Apostle...and therefore we are the people who are entitled to the caliphate...It will be advisable to have the leadership among us and for you to be the Viziers".**

*Sirah, by al Halabi, Volume 3 page 357*

While Hadhrath Abu Bakr had put forward the names of Hadhrath Umar and Abu Ubaydah as his choice of successors, they declined, this is what their reply was, as is quoted by the Sunni historian *Yaqubi*:

**"By God we cannot give preference over you while you are the companion of the Messenger of God and the second of the two [in the cave at the time of the Hijrah]". Abu Ubaydah put his hand on Abu Bakr's hand and Umar did the same [in ratifying the bargain]. The Meccans who were with them did the same. Then Abu Ubaydah cried "O people of the Ansar, you were the first to help [the Prophet] so do not be the first to change and convert back to paganism". Next Abd al-Rahman b. A'waf stood up and said, 'O people of the Ansar, although you do not have among you [anyone] like Abu Bakr, Umar and Ali'. [Thereupon] Mundhir b. al-Aqram stood up saying, 'We do not deny the merits of those you have mentioned. Indeed there is among you a person with whom if he seeks authority, none will dispute [i.e. Ali]".**

*Tarikh, by al Yaqubi, Volume 2 page 113-114, quoted from History of Tabari, Volume 9 English translation by Ismail Poonawalla p 193 - 194*

What happens next is a proposed compromise by Hubab i.e. that there be two Khalifa, one from the Ansar the other from the Quraysh <sup>1</sup> Hadhrath Umar immediately rejected the proposal: *History of Tabari, English translation, Volume 9 p 194*

**"How preposterous! Two swords cannot be accommodated in one sheath. By God the Arabs will never accept your rule since their Prophet is not from you, but they will not reject the rule of one from whom is their Prophet. If anyone refuses our authority, we will [produce] a clear rebuttal and an evident proof. Who would dispute us with regard to Muhammad's authority and rule except the falsely guided one, or the erring one, or the one damned when we are his close associates and kinsfolk".**

*History of Tabari, English translation, p 194 see footnote 1347 quoted Tabari Vol 1 p 1841*

What we now present to you are Hadhrath Umar's own commentary of what went on following his rejection of Hubab's proposal, he is narrating this event to the people during his period as Khalifa:

**"Voices rose and clamorous speech waxed hotter. I feared [total] disagreement so I said to Abu Bakr, 'Stretch out your hand so that I may give you the oath of allegiance'. He did so and I gave [him] the oath of allegiance; the Muhajirun followed and then the Ansar. [In so doing] we jumped on Sa'd b. Ubadah so someone said that we had killed him. I said, '[May] God kill him! By God, nothing was mightier than the rendering of the oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr. We feared that if [we] left [without rendering the oath of allegiance], no agreement would be hammered out later. It was either to follow the Ansar in what we did not like, or else to oppose them, which would have led to disorder (fasad)".**

*History of Tabari, English translation, Volume 9 p 194*

What Hadhrath Umar seems to have forgotten when recollecting the event is the fact that not all those present in the Saqifa gave Bayya to Hadhrath Abu Bakr, and they were adamant that their loyalties lay with another man:

**"Umar stood up saying, "Who among you would be agreeable to leave Abu Bakr whom the Prophet gave precedence?" and he gave him the oath of allegiance. The people followed [Umar]. The Ansar said, or some of them said "We will not give the oath of allegiance [to anyone] except Ali".**

*History of Tabari, English translation, Volume 9 p 186*

### 3. Analysis of the events

This is the narrative now let us carefully analyze the events:

#### 3.1 Hadhrath Umar's behavior upon hearing that the Prophet (saaws) is deceased

We quoted the speech of Hadhrath Umar, it should be remembered that Hadhrath Abu Bakr had heard of the Prophet (saaws)'s death, the news had been sent out to the neighboring areas. Hadhrath Umar was in Madinah, so there was no doubt that he knew that the Prophet (saaws) was dead. Despite this *al Tabari* informs us that Hadhrath Umar was threatening to kill anyone who conveyed the Prophet (saaws)'s demise to anyone. Why, knowing that the Prophet (saaws) was dead was Hadhrath Umar seeking to deny the truth, to the extent that he even vowed in God's name that he (saaws) was alive? Why was he reporting to threats of amputation if the truth was made known?

*Tabari* states "**The Messenger of God died while Umar was present and Abu Bakr was in al-Sunh**" <sup>1</sup>. Sunh from where Hadhrath Abu Bakr received the tragic news was two miles from Madinah <sup>2</sup>, now if the information had reached the neighboring areas don't you think that the residents of Madinah had heard the news first? Having such love for the Prophet (saaws) it is probable that the companions had already see the Prophet (saaws)'s dead body with their own eyes? So what was Hadhrath Umar trying to suppress the news for? There was absolutely no doubt that the Holy Prophet (saaws) was dead as *Haykal* comments:

1. *History of Tabari, English translation, Volume 9 p 184*

 [2. Al Faruq, by Allamah Shibli Numani, translated by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Vol 1 p 83](#)

**"The women, however, were still beating their faces and crying at Muhammad's house, a sure sign that Muhammad had really died. Yet, here in the Mosque Umar was still proclaiming Muhammad had not died"**

 [The life of Muhammad, by H. Haykal, p 505 \(6th edition\)](#)

Hadhrath Umar under the view that the Prophet (saaws) was super-human and could never die? This was a considerable departure from his attitude just days early when the Prophet (saaws) had asked for writing materials. On this occasion the same Hadhrath Umar had equated the Prophet (saaws)'s position to that of an ordinary man suffering from pain, to the extent that Hadhrath Umar felt that his request should be refused because he was not in the right frame of mind? Why the sudden change in attitude?

What we find most interesting is that a few years earlier Hadhrath Umar was of the opinion that not only could the Prophet (saaws) die, he was dead. This occurred during the Battle of Uhud when Khalid bin Waleed mounted an onslaught on the Muslims, the enemy raised the battle cry that the Prophet (saaws) had been killed Hadhrath Umar was amongst those companions who had left the Prophet (saaws)'s side and sought refuge in the mountains. Hadhrath Anas b. Malik approached Hadhrath Umar b. Khattab who to quote *Shibli Numani*:

**"had thrown away his sword in despair, "What are you doing here?", he asked. Umar (Allah be pleased with him) replied, "What should we fight for now. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is no more living". Ibn Nadr said "It is no good to be living when he is no more", said Nadr; and saying this he dashed in to the enemy ranks and died fighting".**

 [Siratun Nabi, by Allamah Shibli Numani, English translation by M.Tayyib Bakhsh Budayuni, Volume 2 page 66-67 \(Kazi Publications, Lahore - First edition\)](#)

This event has also been recorded by *al Tabari*.

 [The History of al Tabari, Volume 7 page 122 - English translation by M.V. MacDonald \(State](#)

[University of New York Press](#)

Just compare the two different approaches, Hadhrath Umar had heard that the Prophet (saaws) was dead. Without inquiring in to the matter he abandoned fighting and took refuge in the mountains. What better time would there have been for Hadhrath Umar to had shown his affection for the Prophet (saaws) by urging the companions not to listen to rumor. Why did Hadhrath Umar not insist that the Prophet (saaws) could not die? Why did he not seek to console the dejected troops by asserting that if the Prophet (saaws) was indeed missing it was due to the fact that he was in communication with Allah (swt) as Musa (as) was when he descended to Mount Sinai? Why did Hadhrath Umar not insist that the companions ignore rumors of the Prophet (saaws)'s death and continue to fight? Rather than dropping his sword, what better time would there have been for Hadhrath Umar to hold aloft his sword and declare to the Muslims that 'the Prophet (saaws) cannot die let us continue the fight, I will kill anyone who says that the Prophet (saaws) is dead'. Yet we read that Hadhrath Umar chose to adopt a more relaxed attitude, he was quite content to listen to the rumor and accept it.

Now look at the completely different response upon the death of the Prophet (saaws), now Hadhrath Umar was holding his sword aloft threatening those who said that the Prophet (saaws) was dead. Alas if only that same vehemence had been adopted in Uhud.

Let us compare the two events:

3 Hijri	11 Hijri
Hadhrath Umar <b>hears</b> that the Prophet (saaws) has been killed, he has not seen evidence to that effect	Hadhrath Umar <b>knows</b> that the Holy Prophet (saaws) is deceased.
Relying on the <b>rumor</b> Hadhrath Umar drops his sword, stops fighting and flees for the mountain area.	Hadhrath Umar denies that the Prophet (saaws) is dead, knowing full well that his body is lying in Hadhrath Ayesha's chambers. He seeks to create an impression that it is a <b>rumor</b> .
Hadhrath Umar believes the <b>rumor</b> to the extent that he feels that there is longer a reason to fight when the Holy Prophet (saaws) is dead.	Hadhrath Umar holds aloft his sword and threatens to kill anyone who says that the Holy Prophet (saaws) is dead.

There was clearly more to it, something was happening and even the staunch Sunni scholar *Numani* admits that the actions of Hadhrath Umar in denying the death of the Prophet (saaws) and threatening to kill those who spread the news was because:

**"Omar may have deemed it politic to suppress the news as there was a large number of hypocrites in Madinah who were only waiting for the Prophet's death to ferment trouble".**

 [Al Faruq, by Allamah Shibli Numani, Vol 1 p 87](#)

If this is the case then Hadhrath Umar should have tried to suppress this information for as long as possible. He would have tried to convey these worries to Hadhrath Abu Bakr. But this did not happen on the contrary upon Hadhrath Abu Bakr confirming that the Prophet (saaws) was dead Hadhrath Umar's fear of a hypocrite conspiracy instantly vanished. It should have continued and in fact Hadhrath Umar should have continued to insist that the Prophet (saaws) was not dead. Upon Hadhrath Abu Bakr's confirmation of the news, was the fear of hypocrites not still just as prevalent? Would the threat from hypocrites have diminished by one sermon? Hadhrath Umar readily accepts Abu Bakr's words and sees no fear from hypocrites, a risk of a hypocrite conspiracy has been quelled by Hadhrath Abu Bakr confirming what was already known - that the Holy Prophet (saaws) was dead.

We should also ask *Numani* supporters the crucial question *'if there was a perceived threat from Hadhrath Umar of hypocrites in Madinah then would he not have viewed it as a priority to deal with them following Hadhrath Abu Bakr's inauguration at Saqifa?'* As a close personal adviser of the Khalifa surely Hadhrath Umar would have aired his concerns to Hadhrath Abu Bakr and suggested they be uprooted and be dealt with as a matter of urgency. Unfortunately *Numani's* hypothesis does not tally up with reality. Neither Hadhrath Abu Bakr nor Hadhrath Umar ever perceived any threats from the hypocrites. Had they feared the machinations of the hypocrites Hadhrath Abu Bakr would have dealt with them in the same determined way that he dealt with those who refused to pay Zakat to him and those who had turned apostate - he would have declared an all out war on them and annihilated them. This did not happen and so there exist no grounds to support *Numani's* conclusion.

The reality is Hadhrath Umar was merely seeking to stall time he was waiting for Hadhrath Abu Bakr to arrive from Sukh. Whilst some might view Hadhrath Umar's actions as the actions of a devastated distraught man, one will note how swiftly these feelings of distress evaporate upon Hadhrath Abu Bakr's inaugural speech, in which he quoted a Qur'anic verse that the Prophet (saaws) like other men could also die. With the recital of this verse Hadhrath Umar became convinced that the Prophet (saaws) was dead <sup>1</sup>. We should remind our readers the same Hadhrath Umar (saws) prevented the Prophet from writing a will on his deathbed by saying that the "Qur'an is sufficient for us", and yet he had no recollection of this verse. Upon hearing the verse the distress vanishes, Hadhrath Umar's obscure behavior changes. Normally the response of a distressed man would be to become traumatized by the tragic loss of a loved one and to develop symptoms of shock and horror at the devastating news. Hadhrath Umar reacted very differently his shock is temporary it completely evaporates within a matter seconds, he in fact makes such a remarkable recovery that he is well and confident enough to make a journey to the Saqifa, put the death behind him and debate about the Khilafath.

*The History of al Tabari, Vol 9 page 185, English translation by Ismail Poonawalla*

### 3.2 The Inside Informant - why the secrecy?

We learn how Hadhrath Umar receives exclusive information of the meeting at Saqifa. The man from the Ansar specifically calls Hadhrath Umar outside. Hadhrath Umar learns that the Ansar have gathered inside the Saqifa he calls Hadhrath Abu Bakr and the both set off in the direction of the meeting. The information is kept hidden from all the other companions. In this day and age one regularly learns of public outcry's when information is hidden from the public information which is in the public interest, which they might want I say it could for example be on an issue which concerns there future well being of the country's citizens. Now the question one must ask here is *'Was the issue of a secret meeting which could lead to civil strife' not in the public interest?'* Did the companions not have a right to know about it? What right did Hadhrath Umar have to keep the matter a secret? If the meeting was so crucial why could other prominent companions not also have been told invited to attend? Why was this information so 'top secret'?

### 3.3 The venue

One would have expected the forum for debating the issue of succession would be a grand one, but the reality is it took place at a place **"where Arabs would meet to scheme evil activities"**.<sup>1</sup>

*Ghiyathu'l lughat, by Ghiyath'd-Din, p 228 by Muhammad ibn Jalaladeen Rampuri Ghiyathu'din (Nawal Kishor Press, Lucknow, 1867)*

Why should an issue of such primary importance be discussed in a place such as this? Would you consider this to be an appropriate to discuss the selection of any post let alone that of the

Prophet (saaws)'s successor? Why this small secret venue? Would a better venue not had been the Prophet (saaws)'s Mosque - where all could attend and speak freely upon the matter? Why did the three Muhajireen not raise this option? They raise no objection to the venue and the issue is thawed out between the two parties.

### 3.4 The Parties

Those debating at Saqifa were the Ansar (vast bulk of the tribe) and what historians have incorrectly quoted the Muhajireen. The Sunni group *Idara Isha'at e diniyat (P) Ltd.* undoubtedly fully aware of the true facts seek to convince their readership that a free and frank debate involving all the companions occurred, they write:

**"After the demise of Rasulullah Sallallahu alahi wa sallam all the prominent Sahaba Radhiallahu anhum gathered at a place called the Saqifa Bani Saad".**

 [Aqaaidul Islam, by Idara Isha'at e diniyat, English translation by Moulana Zahier Ahmad Ragie, published by Idara Isha'at e diniyat, page 127](#)

What one should ask this group is 'why were only three prominent companions from the Muhajireen present at Saqifa? Were men such as Hadhrath Ali and the other members of Banu Hashim, Hadhrath Uthman, Talha, Zubair, Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas not prominent?

The modern day Sunni scholar *El Awa* manages to clarify this incorrect approach as follows:

**"To consider the Muhajirin as party is incorrect because those of the Muhajirin who attended the Saqifa meeting were Abu Bakr, Umar b. Al Khattab, and Abu 'Ubaida b. al-Jarrah. The Muhajirin had not delegated them any authority nor did they represent any specific political group connected with them".**

 [On the political system of the Islamic State, by Muhammad S. El Awa page 32 \(American Trust Publications, Indiana\)](#)

### 3.5 Arguments based on tribal affiliation

At Saqifa the central argument advanced by both sides was over tribal superiority. The entire event consisted of arguments over which side was better. The Saqifa managed to re-ignite the differences that The Holy Prophet (saaws) had throughout his mission sought to eliminate. He had declared that both tribes were brothers, it was a far cry from the famous sermon during the Final Pilgrimage when the Prophet (saaws) said all are equal in Allah (swt)'s eyes and that the closest to Allah (swt) are those who are pious. This sermon had been completely erased at Saqifa tribal rivalries that during the lifetime of the Prophet (saaws) had been subdued were rekindled. A 'them' and 'us' attitude was quite evident if one analyses the speeches given.

## 4. The issues raised at the Saqifa

Both sides advanced arguments based on their tribal links to the Prophet (saaws), the three Muhajireen won the day advancing the following arguments as proof of khilafat:

1. The Muhajireen being a tribe of the Quraysh were the Prophet (saaws)'s close family
2. The Muhajireen were the first to worship Allah (swt)
3. No one had experienced greater trials and tribulations than the Muhajireen
4. Failure to follow the Muhajireen is tantamount to going astray

To the casual observer these might all sound as quite legitimate strong proofs advanced at the Saqifa, but the reality is that if these criteria are applied having an overview of all the Companions then only one man and his tribe i.e. Hadhrath Ali (as) and Banu Hashim. Let us analyze each of these points:

### 4.1 The Muhajireen being a tribe of the Quraysh were his close family

The argument was that relationship to the Prophet (saaws) meant that khilafat was their right. In terms of closeness there was no tribe more closely related to the Prophet (saaws) than Bani Muttalib. They were the blood descendants of the Prophet (saaws), when the verse **"And warn your tribe of near kindred..."** (*The Qur'an 26: 214*) inviting the Prophet (saaws)'s close relatives to embrace Islam. Banu Muttalib were invited not the tribes of Hadhrath Abu Bakr, Hadhrath Umar or Abu Ubaydah.

Furthermore in terms of closeness no one was closer to the Prophet (saaws) than Imam Ali (as) as he was his first cousin, the Prophet (saaws) had declared him to be his brother, the husband of his daughter and the father of his grand children.

Hadhrath Abu Bakr seemed to suggest that the Quraysh had a right to succession, they were related to the Holy Prophet (saaws) and had hence inherited that right. Islamic Law does not stipulate inheritance for the distant relatives, it refers to the close / blood relatives. If the Quraysh were entitled to inherit on grounds of their distant relationship to the Holy Prophet (saaws) did Hadhrath Ali (as) not have a greater right?

### 4.2 The Muhajireen were the first to worship Allah (swt)

Again this is an incorrect argument. The Muhajireen are advancing that they were the first to embrace Islam at the hands of the Prophet (saaws) and hence worship Allah (swt). If worshipping Allah (swt) is the criterion of succession then again Ali (as) wins on this count. If there is any doubt on this point then listen to the words of Ali (as) as contained in *Tabari*:

**"I am the servant of God and the brother of his Messenger, and I am the most righteous one (al siddiq al-akbar). No one other than I can say this but a liar and an inventor of falsehoods, I performed prayer with the Messenger of God seven years before other men".**

 [The History of al-Tabari, Volume 6 p 81 - Muhammad at Mecca, translated by W. Montgomery & M.V McDonald](#)

### 4.3 The Muhajireen had to suffer persecution and alienation before anyone else

This is also an incorrect assertion. No one suffered greater trials and tribulations than the Banu Hashim. In terms of trials none is a greater test than jihad on the battlefield and Hadhrath Ali (as)'s unremitting bravery in all battles cannot be surpassed. He was at the forefront of every battle never fleeing the battlefield in Uhud he had sixty wounds and the battles of Khunduq and Khayber were both won at his hands.

We acknowledge that the Muhajireen experienced trials with the Prophet (saaws) but none suffered as much persecution than the tribe of Banu Hashim, it was this tribe, which had experienced greater trials and tribulations:

At the beginning of the Holy Prophet (saaws)'s mission the Quraysh conspired to place pressure on his family, this is what we find in *Tabari*:

**"the Quraysh gathered together to confer and decided to draw up a document in which they undertook not to marry women from Banu Hashim and the Banu al Muttalib, or to give them women in marriage, or to sell anything to them or buy anything from them. They drew up a written contract to that effect and solemnly pledged themselves to observe it. They then hung up the document in the interior of the Ka'bah to make it even more binding upon themselves. When Quraysh did this, The Banu Hashim and the Banu al-Muttalib joined with Abu Talib, went with him to his valley and gathered round him there; but Abu Lahab 'Abd al Uzza b. 'Abd al-Muttalib left the Banu Hashim and went to the Quraysh supporting them against Abu Talib. This state of affairs continued for two or three years, until the two clans were exhausted, since nothing reached any of them except what was secretly by those of the Quraysh who wished to maintain relations with them".**

 [The History of al-Tabari, Volume 6 p 106 - Muhammad at Mecca, translated by W. Montgomery & M.V McDonald](#)

Is there a greater trial than a complete ostracization that left the Prophet (saaws) and his family to the mercy of the Quraysh, where they had to experience famine? None of the Muhajireen suffered like this. Hadhrath Abu Bakr and Hadhrath Umar had embraced Islam but they were not punished in any way; the boycott did not effect them, they could go about their daily business, the untold sufferings lay squarely on the Prophet (saaws)'s relatives the tribes of Banu Hashim and Banu al-Muttalib.

### 4.4 Failure to follow the Muhajireen is tantamount to going astray and apostasy

We can find no argument either from the Qur'an or the Sunnah that failure to follow the Muhajireen leads to a person going astray. This argument was made without any concrete proof. The reality is even the Muhajireen could go astray if they failed to follow two sources which the Prophet (saaws) made clear at Arafat, if the companions followed them (whether they be Ansar or Muhajireen) they would never go astray, the two sources were the Qur'an and the Ahlul'bayt. We know that Imam Ali (as) was the leader of the Ahlul'bayt, guidance was at their door and at no one else's, why else would the Prophet (saaws) had said **"I am Warner and Ali is the guide, he (saaws) then turned to Ali and said "Ali people will be guided through you"**<sup>1</sup>. This argument also holds no water.

*Mustadrak, by al Hakim, Vol 3 hadith 129 & 130*

It is clear that the four arguments have no weighting whatsoever. If readers remain skeptical on this matter then we will quote the words of Imam Ali (as) himself who through his eloquent writing dismisses all four grounds. The extract of this letter is taken from the Sunni work *Iqd al*

*Fareed.* Imam Ali (as) wrote this letter during his period of reign. It was written as a detailed refutation to of the comments made by Mu'awiya in a letter to him. We have copied this letter from the book '*Letters of Hadrat Ali Mutaza (R.A.A.)*' compiled by the Sunni scholar *Muhammad Ayub Khan*:

**"I swear! I hope when Allah will award people will award people in accordance with their service and sanctity to Islam, Allah and His Messenger, the greatest share will be ours, the family of the Holy Prophet (SAW) because we, the family members of the Prophet (SAW) have been first to accept the faith and testify his Prophethood when he invited the people to accept the Faith and believe in Oneness of Allah. Thus in no time we got the exalted and respected position. None of the Arab inhabitants save us worshipped Allah.**

Observing this our people conspired to assassinate our Holy Prophet (SAW) and uproot us. Accordingly they hatched deep conspiracies and took many drastic steps (against us). They restrained our movements, withheld our economic activities, exposed us to constant fear and danger, posted spies and guards on us, compelled us to move towards desolate barren mountains, fanned the fore of battle against us and made written agreements between themselves that none should provide us means nor establish matrimonial relations, nor transact any business with us. Nobody should offer us shelter or protection unless we hand over the Messenger of Allah (SAW) to them for assassination and amputation. We could secure peace during the Hajj days only)

But Allah, the Almighty, bestowed on us the courage to protect and guard the Messenger of Allah (SAW) from the danger of those days, defend him, shoot arrows against enemies to save his honor and draw sword in his support. In this struggle the object of our faithfulness was to gain recompense from Allah only, and those of the infidels, the object was to help their families. It was clear that among Quraish those who had embraced Islam were safe from atrocities, which beset us, because some of them were protected (by their infidel allies) under the previous agreements and others belonged to the tribes, which were their protectors. Therefore, they remained safe from the destruction and killings we suffered. The major succor for us was the Will of Allah.

Then Allah ordained his Prophet (SAW) for migration and thereafter, allowed them to fight against the infidels. During the peak hours of the battles when people wanted to keep themselves safe and the enemy would throw challenge to combat, he (SAW) would advance his family members to meet them. Thus he (SAW) saved his companions from the swords and the spears of the enemy. Consequently Ubaida ibn Haris (RAA) fell martyr in the battle of Badr, Hamza (RAA) in the battle of Uhud, and Jafar and Zaid (RAA) in the battle of Mauta; and if you like I might name another person (meaning himself) who, like these martyrs many a time yearned to earn martyrdom while fighting along with the Prophet (SAW) (in battles). But the death hastened in the case of those martyrs and deferred in my case. Their adoption of virtue was due to Allah's Kindness and Favor. Thereafter, I neither heard of nor seen any one who excelled those persons whose names I have given to you. For sincerity and obedience to Allah and his Prophet (SAW) none could match them to face hardship in adversity or prosperity, in battles or other occasions of danger in the company of Holy Prophet (SAW) Mohajireen possess many other outstanding qualities and Allah will compensate for their noble deeds.

It is pity that time has so changed that now that man who is neither superior to me nor has any superiority (in Islam) over me, which none possesses except me is rising in opposition.

It is, therefore, not strange that any claimant may claim (for anything) not known

to me may claim for anything not known to me or not in my opinion, in the knowledge of Allah. In all circumstances we must praise Allah.

Then you have mentioned my bearing malice against the Caliphs, my late offering of oath of allegiance to them and revolt against them, I seek the refuge of Allah from revolt ( I definitely did not commit it). As regards my late approach for oath of allegiance and disapproval of their Caliphate, it is not for me to offer any apology to people because Allah has already made a decision (on Caliphate) at the time of the passing away of the Holy Prophet (SAW). (That is to say) when the Quraish claimed leadership for their group while the Ansar (local inhabitants of Madinah) for themselves, the latter handed over the Caliphate and government to the emigrants on yielding to their plea that Holy Prophet (SAW) belonged to them, therefore, they were more deserving for the leadership. Consequently when they (emigrants) established their right for Caliphate vis-à-vis Ansar on the basis of their relationship with the Holy Prophet (SAW) then one who would be nearer in relationship with the Prophet (SAW) would also be more deserving for that Caliphate. In the absence of this principle the Ansar were more rightful to the Caliphate on the basis of their majority. (Now) I fail to understand whether my companions (the emigrants) have been absolved to the charge of snatching my right or have done injustice to Ansar. But nay I have deduced that my right was snatched and I have abandoned my right in their favor for Allah's pleasure. May Allah forgive them".

 [Al Iqd al Fareed Vol 2, pg 234, by Ibn Rabbih taken from Letters of Hadrat Ali Murtaza \(RAA\), translated by Muhummud Ayub Khan page 14-20](#)

Ali (as) clarifies the matter clearly, he refutes all the grounds of superiority, which the three companions had advanced at the Saqifa and states that his right was usurped. The fact that this letter exists in the works of a recognized Sunni scholar immediately causes confusion amongst the Ahl'ul Sunnah who believe that the Prophet (saaws) did not appoint a successor. Its existence has perplexed the mind, and in order to dismiss it the translator of this letter *M. Ayub Khan* tries to ease the Sunni mind by providing the following commentary in the footnote of this letter:

**"There is a wide difference on this point between two important sects of Muslims. Sunnis say that Islam is a democratic system and there is no room for family succession or heirdom. Ansar gave up their claim for Caliphate as they agreed that Muhajireen (emigrants) deserved more for Caliphate as they were heralds of believers and first among Muslims. They also agreed that Hadrat Abu Bakr (RAA) apart from his services and sacrifices for Islam was the officially nominated one for the Caliphate by the Holy Prophet (SAW) himself. He was the only Muslim who led the prayers during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (SAW) himself even when in his presence. Had the relation with the Holy Prophet (SAW) been the criteria of Caliphate, Hadrat Usman (RAA) deserved more as he had married two daughters of the Holy Prophet (SAW) while Hadrat Ali (RAA) married only one daughter.**

Moreover, Holy Qur'an has categorically refused the family relation without the merit of Faith (Iman) and good deeds. In this respect example of father of Hadrat Ibrahim (s) son of Hadrat Nooh (as) wife of Hadrat Loot (as) and uncle of Holy Prophet (SAW) have been cited repeatedly.

**While Shias say that Islamic system is based on family succession and heirship. In this regard they present the claim of Hadrat Ali and his associates".**

*Al Iqd al Fareed Vol 2, pg 19, by Ibn Rabbih taken from Letters of Hadrat Ali Murtaza (RAA), translated by Muhummud Ayub Khan page 14-19*

## 5. Assessing Sunni justifications of Saqifa

### 5.1 Was the Saqifa the foundation stone of Islamic democracy?

We will refute *Khan's* points as follows. The contention that Sunni Islam believes in a democratic system of Caliphate has no bearing on reality. Democratic election never took place at the Saqifa, the whole Ummah did not vote on the issue. More importantly to describe the concept of khilafth as democratic if kufr, the famous Gettysburg address had described democracy as "The Government of the people, appointed by the people for the people". This is contrary to Islamic Sharia, which is based on the fact that sovereignty belongs to Allah (swt) not the people. If Khan is confusing democracy with the concept of shura (consultation) of the entire community, then this likewise did not occur Hadhrath Umar was not voted by the Muslim Ummah, Hadhrath Abu Bakr nominated him. Hadhrath Uthman was voted by a committee of six men not the Muslim public at large. Mu'awiya took the reigns by force not through election. Similarly the Banu Umayyay rule that followed had no democratic system of Caliphate rather we had what the late Wahabie scholar *Maudoodi* describes as 'Mulukiyat' (Kingdom) where there was hereditary succession. This same approach was applied by the Abbasides, the Seljuq's and the Ottoman's, so where is this democratic system that Khan advocates?

*Khan's* assertion that Hadhrath Abu Bakr was appointed Khalifa goes against the Sunni belief that the Prophet (saaws) did not appoint a successor and so again is groundless.

*Khan's* contention that if Caliphate was based on relationship then Uthman was more entitled, due to his being the Prophet (saaws)'s son in law twice over is a very weak argument. Imam Ali (as)'s relationship was not just based on an 'in law' relationship, he was the Prophet (saaws)'s cousin, the Prophet (saaws) declared him his brother and said that "**Ali is from me and I am from him**", something he never said to Hadhrath Uthman. In addition Hadhrath Uthman was not a member of the Ahlul'bayt (the household of the Prophet) while Imam Ali (as) was. Hadhrath Ali (as) was the closest relative of the Prophet (saaws).

We agree with *Khan's* statement that family relations are based on good deeds and faith. We do not believe every descendant of the Prophet is entitled to Caliphate we believe it was restricted to the 12 Khalifa's he had predicted would follow him, the 12 Khalifa's from the Ahlul'bayt (see later chapter). The criterion of faith and good deeds is not only the criterion of family relations. It is also the criterion upon which Allah (swt) appoints his Khalifa and we shall inshallah prove in the chapters to follow who comes within this criteria.

As for the comments of *Khan*: "**While Shias say that Islamic system is based on family succession and heirship. In this regard they present the claim of Hadrat Ali and his associates**" what can we say? Should we rely on the arguments advanced by Mr Khan a modern day writer that clearly have no grounding or those advance by Ali (as) and his associates who are the affected parties and have first hand experience on the matter?

Twenty-five years after the death of the Prophet (saaws) his grandson Hasan (as) repeated his father's arguments. In a letter to Mu'awiya he pointed out that the Quraysh had secured authority by advancing their relationship to the Prophet (saaws), but when the Ahlul'bayt advanced the same argument they were ostracized <sup>1</sup>.

1. *Maqatil*, by Abu-IoFaraj page 55-57, Cairo edition 1949

## 6. Some crucial observations

### 6.1 The hereditary system of Khilfath began at Saqifa

The true proponents of a hereditary system of succession are the Ahl'ul Sunnah themselves. Hadhrath Abu Bakr did not suggest that votes be cast amongst the attendants he argued that entitlement was based on Quraysh lineage it was their exclusive hereditary entitlement. The issue advanced by Hadhrath Abu Bakr has resulted in the leading scholars of Ahl'ul Sunnah embracing this as part of their faith, i.e. the Khalifa can only be someone of Quraysh descent. In his discussion that the khilafath is reserved for the Quraysh, *Ibn Khaldun* points to the discussion at Saqifa to support his hypothesis:

**"The condition of Qurashite origin is based upon the general consensus on this point that obtained in the men around Muhammad on the day of the Saqifah. On that day the Ansar intended to render the oath of allegiance to Sa'd b. Ubadah. They said "One amir from among us, and another from among you". But the Qurashites argued against them with Muhammad's statement, "The imams are from the Quraish".**

 [The Muqaddimah, by Ibn Khaldun, translated by Franz Rosenthal, Volume 1 page 597 \(Princeton University Press\)](#)

### 6.2 No mention of the Qur'an, Sunnah, ijma or qiyas at the Saqifa

In the eyes of the Wahabies **"The sources for the creed ('aqeedah) are: The Book of Allah, the authentic Sunnah of his Messenger sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam and the consensus (ijma) of the Pious Predecessors"**<sup>1</sup>. In addition to this, the four Ahl'ul Sunna Imams have added the principle of Qiyas (analogical reasoning). Curiously the debate at Saqifa was devoid of all four principles, why is that? We believe that everything is contained with Allah (swt)'s book. As it was Hadhrath Umar himself who had said just days earlier "the Qur'an is sufficient for us" then why did he not plead to the parties to turn to the Book of Allah (swt) and reach a conclusion in light of Allah (swt)'s commands?

 [General Precepts of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah, by Shaykh Naasir al-Aqil, English translation by Abu 'Aaliyah Surkheel ibn Anwar Sharif, page 13 \(Message of Islam First edition, 1999\)](#)

The Sunnah was also not used or suggested, comments on tribal superiority were given precedence, nothing else. Ijma (consensus of the companions) a pivotal part of Islamic jurisprudence in the eyes of the Ahl'ul Sunnah was not even entertained. Hadhrath Abu Bakr and Hadhrath Umar did not seek the counsel of the other companions as to whether / or not they should proceed to the Saqifa and discuss the issue of succession. Why did these two prominent companions take it upon themselves to go to the Saqifa? Why did they ignore the principle of ijma?

### 6.3 No reference to the virtues of the Shaykhain mentioned at the Saqifa

Both Parties put forward how they had aided the Prophet (saaws). The Muhajireen consisted of these three prominent Sahaba. We find in books of hadith that all three have many hadith in their praise. What better way to convince the other side would there have been than to advance the Prophet (saaws)'s own praises of them. This would have been the final word on the matter. There would have been no doubting the words of the Prophet (saaws) a hadith of superiority would have brought the dispute to a close. *Shah Ismail Shaheed* the Wahabie reformer from the Indian Subcontinent was indeed correct when he said:

**"Imamate is the Shadow of the Prophethood, the Imam's leadership is openly declared whereas history provides evidence of Saints that remained silent, the Imam announces whatever powers he possesses as Imam Ali did when he declared 'I am the Sidiq al Akbar (The Great Truthful One) and whoever declares this after me is a liar and I am the talking Qur'an'".**

*Munsub e Imamate by Shah Ismail Shaheed page 69*

So the Imam according to *Shah Ismail* must declare the merits he possesses openly, as Imam Ali had done. Bearing this in mind there are two crucial hadith attributed to the Holy Prophet (saaws) that would have been invaluable had they been advanced during the debate at Saqifa:

1. If the Iman of the Ummah were on one side and Abu Bakr's on the other side, Abu Bakr would have weighed heavier. What greater claim to superiority can there be than that Muslim with the greatest Iman greater than the Ummah put together.
2. If there had to be a Prophet after me it would have been Umar - Again Hadhrath Umar is given the rank of a Prophet (saaws) could anyone in the Ummah had been superior to a 'would be Prophet'.

What better opportunity could there have been than this one, by advancing these two hadith, would the matter not have been resolved forthwith? Who could supersede men who have such hadith in their favor? Unfortunately no such hadith were advanced at the Saqifa, if these hadith are indeed true do you not think that they would have been placed before the Ansar, rather than spurious claims of superiority based along tribal loyalties? One should also note that if these hadith are true then Hadhrath Abu Bakr had no right to be the first Khalifa when there exist a man who the Prophet (saaws) said would have been the Prophet (saaws) after him!

#### **6.4 Reference to Hadhrath Ali (as) at the Saqifa**

At two points the name Ali was mentioned by the Ansar. At one point as mentioned one Ansar admitted that none could debate about authority if Ali asked for it. We would ask the readers to carefully ponder over the words here. A man from the Ansar amidst the debate acknowledges that if Ali (as) was to enter the debate all pledge their allegiance to him. Why would he say such a thing, unless the khilafat was Ali (as)'s exclusive right? Later when the oaths were being rendered in the building some Ansar said they would only give it to Hadhrath Ali, clearly in their view he had a right in the matter.

Hadhrath Ali (as) was at the time to quote *Shahrastani*:

**"...occupied in carrying out what the Prophet had ordered him to do, that is, to prepare him for burial, perform the burial itself, and remain by his grave, without entering upon any dispute or argument".**

*Al Mihal al Nahal, by Allamah Muhiyuddin b. Abd'al Karim Shahrastani, page 19 - English translation by A.K.Kazi and J.G.Flynn (publishers Kegan Paul International, First Edition 1984)*

If Hadhrath Ali (as) was tending to the funeral rites and the Ansar were of the opinion that Hadhrath Ali (as) had a right in this matter, then why did Hadhrath Abu Bakr and Hadhrath Umar offer to invite him to the meeting? This was clearly a name the Ansar were happy with, he was mentioned so why not offer to suspend the proceedings and make him as the Khalifa, this would have been okay to the Ansar. Why the insistence to continue debating the matter when there existed a man from the Muhajireen who the Ansar had no opposition to? This is because the three Muhajireen had a clear objective in mind:

## 6.5 Their aim was to replace the Khalifa of Allah with the Khalifa of Man

Whilst the Ahl'ul Sunnah scholars proudly declare that the appointment of Abu Bakr was a model reflection of democracy in motion, the reality could not be much further, and what more honest an observation of Hadhrath Umar. He made this confession during his own Khilafath. This is what we find in Tabari, Ibne Abbas narrates:

**"While I was waiting in a station (manzil) in Mina, Abd-al Rahman bin Awf came to me saying came to me saying, "Today I saw a man who came to the Commander of the Faithful (i.e. Umar) and said I have heard so and so saying: If the Commander of the Faithful is dead I would give my oath of allegiance to so and so. The Commander of the Faithful said that he would get up among the people that evening and warn them against the group of the Faithful who want to usurp power".**

*The History of Tabari, Volume 9, The Last Years of the Prophet, translated by Ismail Poonawalla, p191-192*

*Tabari* then goes on to record the momentous speech given by Hadhrath Umar in a famous tradition:

**"It has reached me that someone of you said 'If the Commander of the Faithful is dead, I will give the oath of allegiance to so and so'. Let a man not deceive himself by saying that the oath of allegiance given to Abu Bakr was an event that happened without consultation (faltah). Admittedly it was so, but God averted it's evil".**

*The History of Tabari, Volume 9, The Last Years of the Prophet, translated by Ismail Poonawalla, p193*

*al Bukhari* also records Hadhrath Umar's sermon in similar wording, and this addition:

**"I have been informed that a speaker among you says, By Allah if 'Umar should die, I will give the pledge of allegiance to such and such person'. One should not deceive oneself by saying that the Pledge of allegiance given to 'Abu Bakr was given suddenly and it was successful. No doubt, it was like that, but Allah saved (the people) from its evil, and there is none among you who has the qualities of 'Abu Bakr. Remember that whoever gives the Pledge of allegiance to anybody among you without consulting the other Muslims, neither that person, nor the person to whom the Pledge of allegiance was given are to be supported, lest they both should be killed".**

 [Sahih al Bukhari, Arabic-English Volume 8 hadith number 817, page 540](#)

This speech itself nullifies any argument advanced by the majority school, i.e. that the coming to power of Abu Bakr was legitimate. There was no (shura) consultation, ijma the cornerstone of Sunni theology did not take place, Hadhrath Umar made it clear that it was 'evil' should the process be repeated again, the individuals concerned should be put to death. Whilst the majority school proclaim the legitimacy of Hadhrath 'Abu Bakr's khilafath, Hadhrath Umar not only rejected the validity of Hadhrath 'Abu Bakr's khilafath on the premise that no consultation had occurred, he was also negating his own khilafath for he was appointed by Hadhrath 'Abu Bakr - without consulting the companions. It is a reflection of the dedication to the institution of the apparent Khilafath of man that turns otherwise rational men to forsake the testimony of history and their own analysis of the key players themselves and rather to present the appointment of Hadhrath Abu Bakr in such terms as 'democratic', or a representation of the opinion of the Muslim majority (ijma). It is, of course, a baseless opinion, but one propagated in the form of such unrelenting dogma that one must at least admire the loyalty of the espousers of the institution if not their misplaced devotions.

The reason for making this speech is what needs to be gleaned. Hadhrath Umar had heard that upon his death people would pledge allegiance to "**so and so**". Who was this "**so and so**" that

Hadhrath Umar was referring to, that was the cause of this speech.

*Poonawalla* in his translation of this edition of *Tabari* writes in footnote 1308 relating to Hadhrath Umar's speech as follows:

**"According to Baladhuri, Ansab I, 581, this was Zubayr, and the person whom he wanted to hail as caliph was 'Ali. Ibn Abi al-Hadid, on the other hand reports that the person who said it, according to al-Jahiz, was Ammar b. Yasir or, according to ahl al hadith, Talha; but the person they wanted to hail as caliph was 'Ali. It was thus Ali's name that made 'Umar disturbed and caused him to deliver a fiery speech".**

 [The History of Tabari, Volume 9, The Last Years of the Prophet, translated by Ismail Poonawalla, p189, footnote 1308](#)

In these early days both Ammar bin Yasir and Zubayr were Shi'i.

So, the motive for the speech was to quash the rumors that the intention was to make Imam Ali the next Khalifa. This was merely a continuation of the policy that was implemented in the venets surrounding the Saqifa meeting. This was part of an unrelenting / systematic campaign to keep the khilafath out of the reach of the designated and rightful successor to the Holy Prophet and to instead formulate a counter, a perpetuation of the now entrenched Khalifa of Men, chosen by a handful of men to rule over men as opposed to the Khalifa of Allah chosen by Allah (swt) to serve Allah (swt) by guiding mankind.

Hadhrath Umar's attitude to the issue surfaces during his khilafat, in one of those brief interludes between the demands that statesmanship make on a man. Speaking with impunity now as the second Khalifa and the designated *'Commander of the Faithful'*, Hadhrath Umar stated the following, as recorded by *al Tabari* who documents the following conversation between Abdullah ibne Abbas and Hadhrath Umar. Abdullah ibne Abbas narrates that Hadhrath Umar asked:

**"..Ibn Abbas! What prevented 'Ali from coming with us?' I replied, 'I do not know'. He continued, 'Ibn Abbas your father is the paternal uncle of the Messenger of God. You are his cousin. What has prevented your people from putting you [in authority]?' I replied that I did not know. He continued 'But I do know, they do not like you being put in charge of them'. I said 'Why, when we are good to them?' Umar replied O God [grant] forgiveness. They do not like you to combine Prophethood and the caliphate among yourselves, lest it bring about self-aggrandizement and pride. You will perhaps say, 'Abu Bakr did this'. No indeed, but Abu Bakr did the most resolute thing he could. If he had made (the caliphate) yours, he would not have benefited you despite your close ties of relationship [to the Prophet]".**

 [The History of Tabari, Volume 14, English translation, by G. Rex Smith, p136-137](#)

Hadhrath Umar sought to justify the position that the people disliked the Prophethood and caliphate to run through the same family. This is an attitude that has been noted before.

*Al Tabari* records a further, more heated discussion between the two individuals; again the narrator is Abdullah ibne Abbas:

**"(Umar) said, "Do you know, Ibn Abbas, what kept your people from [being put] over (Quraysh) after Muhammad's death". I did not want to answer, so I said, "If I do not know then the Commander of the Faithful will tell me". Umar said, "They were unwilling for you to combine the Prophethood and the caliphate, lest you magnify yourselves among your own people and be proud. Quraysh made the choice for themselves; they were right and have been granted success". I said, Commander of the Faithful, if you permit me and not get angry with me, I shall speak". He**

allowed me to do so, so I said "As for you saying, Commander of the Faithful, that Quraysh have made their choice for themselves and that they were right and have been granted success, if Quraysh had made the same choice for themselves as God did for them, then right would be theirs, unrejected and unenvied. As for your saying that (Quraysh) were averse to the Prophethood and caliphate being ours, God has described one people as being averse and said, "This is because they were averse to what God revealed, so He made their works fruitless". 'Umar said, "Far from it indeed, Ibn Abbas. I used to hear things about you of which I was reluctant to inquire, lest they bring about your removal from your position with me". I said, "What are they Commander of the Faithful If they are right, they should not [be such as to] remove me from my position with you; if they are false, then someone like me will remove the falsehood from himself". 'Umar said, "I have you saying they have turned (the caliphate) away from you out of envy and injustice". I replied, "When you say out of injustice, Commander of the Faithful, it has already become clear to the ignorant and the thoughtful alike; when you say out of envy, Iblis was envious of Adam, and we are his offspring who are envied". 'Umar said, "Far from it! You hearts Bani Hashim, have refused [to show anything] other than unchanging envy and increasing spite and malice". I replied, "Take it easy Commander of the Faithful; do not deceive the hearts of a people from whom God has removed uncleanness, and whom He has purified completely, as being envious and malicious. The heart of the Messenger of God is one of the hearts of the Banu Hashim".

 [The History of Tabari, Volume 14, English translation, by G. Rex Smith, p137-138](#)

Both accounts indicate that the Quraysh resented the Banu Hashim and their approach to put in place and appoint Hadrath Abu Bakr was the correct one. Hadrath Ibn Abbas had quite rightly pointed out that it was not based on Allah (swt)'s selection. One however manages to get a better understanding of Hadrath Umar's thinking, his attitude that leadership should not continue in one family it was an indication that the aim was to ensure that Imam Ali did not attain the leadership over the Ummah, not that day not ever.

Interesting three ancient historical works record a letter by none other than Mu'awiya that points to the fact that Imam Ali's rights were indeed snatched. The letter was a response to one sent to him by Hadrath Muhammad bin 'Abu Bakr who criticized Mu'awiya's policy of opposition towards Imam 'Ali stating it was unjust to oppose a man so superior. He justified his position by referring to the acts of his predecessors:

**"We and your father used during the lifetime of the Prophet used to consider the right of Ibn Abi Talib binding upon us, and his excellence was well above ours. Despite this when Allah chose for the Prophet what he had in store for him...He took him to Himself. Then your father and his Faruq were the first to snatch it and oppose him, they both worked together on this...If it was injustice, then your father founded it and we are his partners. We followed his guidance and imitated his action".**

*Waq'at Siffin by Minqari p118-120 (Cairo edition 1962); Ansab al Ashraf by Baladhuri Volume 2 page 393-397 (Beirut edition 1974); Masudi Muruj ud Dhuhab Vol 3 page 197 - 201 (Beirut 1969 edition)*

## 7. Burial of the Prophet

### 7.1 The Saqifa meeting was given preference to the Prophet (saaws)'s funeral

This is an attested fact. These prominent men were debating over the Prophet (saaws) successor whilst his body was being laid to rest. Is this not truly amazing? Allah (swt) sent 124,000 Prophet's to guide mankind. Is there any evidence that when these Prophets' died; their companions failed to attend their funerals, and instead chose to participate in the selection of their immediate successors? If no such precedent exists then why did the Seal of Prophet (saaws)'s companions adopt this approach?

It is common for a person to become the subject of stern condemnation and ridicule of he fails to attend a friend or relatives funeral. It can lead to friendships ending and families becoming divided because we will all die one day and it is expected that those closely linked to the deceased will attend. Relatives frequently fly thousands of miles to reach a deceased loved one's funeral. Compare this to men who were close associates of the Holy Prophet (saaws). Rather than remain close to him and participate in his funeral they departed from the very room where his body was laid to rest, entered the debate at Saqifa, never looking back, never asking for proceedings to be delayed until after the funeral, they preferred the lengthy discussion of who will lead the Ummah than the funeral of the Leader of mankind. We would ask our readers to spare some time to these points. Lest there remain any doubt over the events as described by us we will quote the words of the Hanafi scholar, *Allamah Shibli Numani*:

**"It is apparently surprising that no sooner did the Prophet die than the struggle for Caliphate commenced and even the burial of the body of the Founder of Islam became a matter of secondary consideration in the quarrels that arose over the question of succession. Who can for a moment conceive the spectacle of the Prophet lying dead, while those who asserted their love and attachment towards him in his lifetime, without even waiting to look to his remains being suitably interred, were hurrying away to see that others did not secure the headship of the state for themselves!**

**It is still more surprising that this act is attributed to the persons (Abu Bakr and Omar) who are the brightest stars of the Islamic firmament and the unpleasantness of the act becomes still more poignant when it is remembered that those persons who were connected with the Prophet by ties of blood and kinsmanship ('Ali and the Banu Hashim) were naturally affected by his death and the sad bereavement prostrated them with grief, which, coupled with their anxiety to perform the last offices to the dead, hardly left the room for ulterior considerations".**

 [Al Faroog, by Allamah Shibli Numani, translated by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan Vol 1 p 85-86](#)

In the end what transpired at the Saqifa is astounding, even to the casual observer. Even *Shibli Numani*, a die-hard defender of the institution, has written of the event with much astonishment based upon his pre-suppositions of the character of those involved at the Saqifa. The contemporary Saqifi'ites par excellence are *Hizb ut-tahrir*, a political group dedicated since the 1950s to reviving the now dead institution of the khilafath of man in the presence of Allah's Khalifa in the form of the Twelfth Imam of the Shi'i. With this sole objective in mind this group have sought to underplay the political dissensions to the authority of the Khalifa of man as well as to rewrite history, this is what they state in their key document *'The Khilafah'*:

**"The Ijma'a of the Sahaba to establish a Khaleefah manifested itself emphatically when they delayed the burial of the Prophet (saw) (sic) after his death whilst engaged in appointing a successor to him, despite the fact that the burial of the dead person is fard, and that is haram upon those who are supposed to prepare for**

**his burial to engage themselves in anything else until they complete the burial. The Sahabah were obliged to engage themselves in preparing the burial of the Prophet (saw) (sic), instead some of them engaged themselves in appointing a Khaleefah rather than carrying out the burial, and some others kept silent on this engagement and participated in delaying the burial for two nights despite their ability to deny the delay and their ability to bury the Prophet (saw) (sic). So this was an Ijma'a to engage themselves in appointing a Khaleefah rather than to bury the dead. This could not be legitimate unless the appointment of a Khaleefah is more obligatory than the burial of the dead."**

*The Khilafah, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Al-Khilafah Publications, London, pp.3-4*

The point made is that the meeting at the Saqifa was haram, undoubtedly haram since the priority incumbent by the ordinances of Islam are to bury the dead as fast as possible. This is the Seal of all Prophets!

The second point made is that the Saqifa was a shameful meeting as it was occurring while the Seal of Prophets was being buried.

The third point is that the Holy Prophet would not leave the Muslims in such a dilemma - one that the authors would have us believe took the Muslims to the level of committing a sin - he left a successor.

The fourth point made is that what gave the companions the right to appoint a Khalifa when that was not their prerogative, and still more since the man who was Allah's Khalifa was duped and was not kept informed while he shouldered the burden of burying the Holy Prophet?

The excuse is that the opinion of the companion overrides the Qur'an and the Sunnah since Ijma'a (of a handful of Muhajirs) is given as the excuse. But Ijma'a came after the Qur'an and Muhammad (saws). And Ijma'a is a belief of the followers of the institution, and we the Shi'i who follow the family can here point out that the Qur'an and Sunnah override Ijma'a when the opinion of the companions overrides the Qur'an. It is clear that this concept was developed by the followers of the companions after analyzing history. At no point did the companions say that the Khilafath of Hadhrath 'Abu Bakr came about via ijma. On the contrary as we have stated earlier Hadhrath Umar had stated that it was a mistake, no consultation took place, meaning the ijma of the companions was not sought.

The Shi'i follow Allah, the Holy Prophet and the Khalifas of Allah.

The Shi'i were with Imam Ali when he buried the Holy Prophet. Some who were not involved in the burial as they were more distant and thus their absence would not be missed were defending the cause of the Khalifa of Allah by plotting how to take on the subversion of the Muhajir's, when the three Muhajirs interrupted their meeting and made Hadhrath Abu Bakr the Khalifa, in so doing not attending the funeral!

The Shi'i do not follow the companions when the companions humiliate the decorum that exists at the funeral of the Seal of prophets. What an insult. Terms are broken off between families, and understandably, when due respect is not shown at a funeral - this was the funeral of Hadhrath Muhammad (saaws) himself.

The group, a political party, finally ease the sense of outrage they have acknowledged as being due to the companions, by presenting the burial - its actual timing - as a fact - while 2 sets of traditions which contradict each other exist. We believe that the Holy prophet was buried on time. This group believes otherwise, and blatantly does so that Hadhrath Abu Bakr is made attendant at the burial if not in the actual funeral proceedings.

## 7.2 Was the burial delayed?

If for arguments sake we accept the contention that the desire was to hold up proceedings so that a Khalifa could be appointed would the better approach not have been to delay the funeral? It is alleged that this was done intentionally so that a Khalifa would be appointed but the true facts are that the meeting was a secret and the other companions had no idea that discussion over leadership was taking place. Had they known there would certainly have been more than just three Muhajireen attending the Saqifa. There was no reason for any type of delay the Prophet (saaws) was dead and in accordance with Islamic rites he was to be buried forthwith. There were no reasons to hold up proceedings. Why should the funeral of the Seal of Prophets be delayed for Hadhrath Abu Bakr to get there on time? It was Abu Bakr's job to get to the dead person of the Holy Prophet (saaws), and not the job of the deceased person of Hadhrath Muhammad (saws) to wait for Hadhrath Abu Bakr!

The reports that suddenly place Hadhrath Abu Bakr at the scene cannot be true. Hadhrath Muhammad (saaws) passed away on the Monday, the discussions at the Saqifa were from Sunday until Tuesday. Funerals are not held up for 2 days so that an associate can arrive there. The funeral goes ahead even sometimes if the next of kin cannot reach, as in Islam it is fard to bury the dead immediately. One does not conduct the funeral prayers and then lock the body up for 2 days so one man can arrive. The real facts are evident from the search for the gravedigger. There were two gravediggers during that period in time the Muhajireen 'Abu Ubayda and the Ansar 'Abu Talha Zayd bin Sahl. Al Abbas sent two men to find either of them, only 'Abu Talha was located<sup>1</sup>. Where was 'Abu Ubaydah? Had he been there do you not think that he would have insisted that as a prominent companion he undertake the task? Would he have not want to participate in this honor? Any man would have been proud to do this, would 'Abu Ubaydah had declined if he had been there? Would any man decline such an honor? We think not, clearly 'Abu Ubaydah was nowhere to be seen at the time of the burial he was with Hadhrath 'Abu Bakr and Hadhrath Umar at the Saqifa. Whilst *Ibn Ishaq* continues the narratives stating that discussion then took place as to the burial site and that Hadhrath 'Abu Bakr suggested the Prophet (saaws)'s burial place this does not tally up with the fact that 'Abdullah ibne Abbas had arranged for grave diggers. It is common sense you select an area and then bring a gravedigger not the other way round! The Prophet Muhammad (saws) is superior to Hadhrath Abu Bakr. Sunni Islam is suggesting that the person of Hadhrath Abu Bakr was superior to a Holy Prophet no longer in this Earthly domain. We would say that one hair from the Holy Prophet is superior to the life of Hadhrath Abu Bakr. They allege such impudence to Hadhrath Abu Bakr that he did not show even himself.

*Sirat by Ibn Hisham, page 1019-1020*

The Shi'i will not add insult to injury by suggesting, as this group does, that the funeral was delayed for a further 2 days (in a desert climate) just to provide Hadhrath Abu Bakr with some cursory dignity in the supposed capacity that he was at the funeral as well as at the Saqifa as the funeral got delayed for 2 days, when it is fard (obligatory) to bury the dead immediately. Hadhrath Abbas told the people to bury the Prophet (saaws) quickly as the body like any other would begin to smell<sup>1</sup>.

*Ansab al Ashraf, by Baladhuri, Volume 1 page 567*

The true facts can be assessed in the account narrated with a full isnad by Abdullah ibne Abbas. He states:

**"(The body of the) Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him, remained on the bier from Monday when the sun was declining, till Tuesday when the sun was declining. The people said funeral prayers over him when the body was on the bier close to (the site of) his grave. When they wanted to bury him, they moved it towards the site of his feet and then the body was placed inside and Al-Abbas Ibn Aal Muttalib, al Al Fadi Ibn Al Abbas, Qutham Al Abbas, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and Shuqran having entered the grave".**

 [Tabaqat by Ibn Sa'd, Volume 2 page 372 English translation by S.Moinul Haq, Kitab Bahavan](#)

[publishers](#)

Two facts emerge from this account:

1. The Prophet (saaws) body laid in state from Monday.
2. 2. The body was close to the burial "*site of the grave*" - this proves that a grave had already been dug on the Monday. Neither Hadhrath 'Abu Bakr, Umar or 'Abu Ubaydah were present they were at Saqifa. This tallies up with the failed attempt to locate the whereabouts of 'Abu Ubaydah when the time came to dig a grave. The decision to take 'Abu Ubaydah was indeed very shrewd thinking. Hadhrath Abu Bakr and Hadhrath Umar both wanted to attend the funeral and yet they also wanted to participate in the Saqifa discussions. The best way to achieve this would be to seek to delay the funeral prayers, what better way could there be to do it than take the gravedigger of Makka away from the locality. This might cause delay as a search would be conducted to find him, stalling enough time for them to wind up proceedings at Saqifa and then return triumphantly in time for 'Abu Ubaydah to dig the grave and for them to attend the funeral. This thinking of course did not materialize as discussions went on far longer than was expected and by that time the grave had been dug and the Prophet (saaws) had been buried.

As we said, a group that is based on a fundamental injustice- the khalifath of man - Hizb ut-tahrir bends history when rationality suggests they are preaching on a fundamentally false premise from the outset - to re-establish man's khilafat, and the historical evidences that the Holy Prophet was buried on time but without Hadhrath Abu Bakr present as he was at the Saqifa exist, and indeed are vouchsafed for by the scorn heaped upon him from the Holy Prophet's daughter Fatima (sa) for not attending her father's funeral.

If any doubt remains with regards to the non attendance of Abu Bakr, Umar and Abu Ubaydah at the funeral of the Prophet (s), then allow us cite the following Sunni commentaries of Saheeh al Bukharee:

1. Umdahthul Qaree Volume 11 page 167 Bab Rajm
2. Saheeh al Bukharee, Sharh Kirmanee, Volume 23 page 219
3. Irshad al Saree Volume 10 page 35

All three contain the proud admission of Umar:

**"By Allah, when matters that we were faced with following the death of the Prophet, namely his Ghusl, shrouding and funeral, we deemed the oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr to be of greater importance"**

Can there not be anything clearer than Umar's own admission? If Nasabi still wish to deny it, then allow us to round up the matter with a narration from Kanz al Ummal Volume 3 page 140, Bab Khala Fatha ma'al Amara:

**"Urwa narrates that Abu Bakr and Umar were not present at the time of burial, the Prophet (s) was buried before they had returned"**

Rather than feel ashamed at this fact, The Ahl'ul Sunnah Ulema feel proud at the actions of their leaders, Mull Ali Qari in Sharra Fiqa Akbar, p 175 (publishers Muhammad Saeed and son, Qur'an Muhall, Karachi ) as follows in his discussion on Imamate...

**"....the Sahaba viewed the appointment of the Imam as so important that they preferred it to attending the Prophet's funeral, because the Muslims need an Imam so that orders can be made on Jihad, and so that Islamic Laws can be implemented".**

## Some final points to ponder over

1. If a father dies then any decent respectable son will abandon all his normal duties to tend to his father's dead body. The respect afforded by Abu Bakr and Umar, did not even reach that of a deceased father, they left his body to indulge in political games.
2. If a man dies, a loyal friend will immediately abandon his normal duties and tend to his funeral rites. Abu Bakr and Umar didn't even afford respect to Rasulullah (s) that would have been afforded to a deceased close friend.
3. In Islamic culture / lands, if a traveller dies in a local area, local residents will immediately abandon what they were doing to ensure that the deceased traveller is washed, shrouded and buried. Abu Bakr and Umar did not even give Rasulullah (s) the respect that would be afforded a deceased traveller.
4. If a pious man's son in law dies, a respectable father in law shall immediately abandon everything so as to participate in the burial rites of his dead son in law. Rasulullah (s) was also the son in law of the Shaykhayn, when he (s) died, their daughters had become widows. Abu Bakr and Umar did not even give any consideration for their bereaved daughter's, and went missing from the funeral.
5. If the Imam of a Mosque dies, his congregation will automatically set aside their normal chores and prioritise tending to the funeral rites, Abu Bakr and Umar did not even afford the Prophet (s) respect on par with that of a Mosque Imam, by abandoning participation in the burial rites of the Prophet (s).
6. If someone dies in a local neighbourhood, his neighbours due to the fact that they live nearby will ensure they are visible and present in the burial rites, at all points up until he is laid to rest. Abu Bakr and Umar afforded the Prophet (s) less respect than would be given to a deceased neighbour.
7. If a teacher dies, his loyal students will leave all their daily chores to tend to the dead body, from washing through to the funeral. Abu Bakr and Umar did not even afford Rasulullah (s) the respect that students would afford their deceased teacher.
8. Would any Muslim be happy at the thought that upon his death, his best friends will choose not to attend, and his body will remain unburied for three days? How can a matter that no rational person would deem unpalatable be okay when it comes to the Prophet (s)?
9. The books of the Ahl'ul Sunnah attest to the fact that when Abu died, his funeral took place first and the baya to Umar occurred afterwards. Similarly when Umar died, he was buried first and the baya to Uthman took place afterwards. Why was the same approach applied that had been done in relation to the Prophet (s). Were Abu Bakr and Umar laid in state for three days, and not buried until the Khaleefa was appointed?
10. Hafsa and Ayesha had become widowed at the death of the Prophet. Would any reasonable women find it acceptable that her father failed to participate in her deceased husband's funeral? The Shaykhayn were so cold hearted that they did not even have any care for the feelings of their widowed daughters. Daughters are in a state of shock and distress and the father's are squabbling over leadership.
11. The Shari'ah is clear that the deceased needs to be buried as a matter of urgency, as such Abu Bakr and Umar also violated this Islamic edict, since the delay in burial was on account of them.

The Shi'i find the attempts of the followers of the institution to defend the institution to the

detriment of the Holy Prophet, the Seal of Prophets, as he is laid into the grave of the Last Prophet, frankly deplorable.

But then the Saqifa was a deplorable incident. Little wonder that *Ghazali* himself, passed his fatwa of censorship, deeming discussion of the events surrounding the death of the Holy Prophet and the event of the Saqifa one of the 4 that were banned and made haram (forbidden) to discuss because they had the potential to create hatred of the companions (*bughs as Sahaba*)<sup>1</sup>. Despite this, it was the outcome of the meeting at the Saqifa that decided the path of one group of Muslims, and set them apart from the original Muslims. The followers of the institution are thus most aptly called the Saqifi'ites.

*Al Sawaiq al Muhriqa by Ahmad ibn Hajar al Makki, page 223*

*Allamah Shahrastani*, as we noted in our article '*obedience to the Prophet (s)*', dispute between Muslims<sup>1</sup>. This was between those who took the side of the Holy Prophet (saaws) and those who took the side of Hadhrath Umar. Here at the Saqifa the dispute had transformed into a political animal, one that ruled Madina. The dispute had become formalized into an institution. The followers of the companions are the inheritors of the legacy of this institution. They are called most aptly the Saqifi'ites, because they follow what began there and what came from it. The institution of the khilafat of man was born illegitimately in a house of evil, and on top of this purely political creation would be draped the ordinances of a modified Islamic code centered on the institution of the companions, an institution joined at the hip to the institution of man's khilafath, since the companions created the khilafath. The first Saqifi'ites were 3: Hadhrath Abu Bakr, Hadhrath Umar and Hadhrath Abu Ubayda. It was this incident that would shape the future history of Islam, as *El Awa* comments:

1. *Al Mihal al Nahal*, by *Allamah Muhiyuddin b. Abd'al Karim Shahrastani*, page 18 - English translation "*Sects and Divisions*" by *A.K.Kazi and J.G.Flynn* (publishers *Kegan Paul International*, First Edition 1984)

 [Obedience to the Prophet \(saww\)](#)

**"The Saqifa meeting and the agreement of the Muslims which resulted in entrusting Abu Bakr with the leadership of the Islamic State was an event of profound magnitude. It was important not only in the political history of the Islamic State but also in terms of its ramifications in the overall history of Islam".**

 [On the political system of the Islamic State, by Muhammad S. El Awa page 34 \(American Trust Publications, Indiana\)](#)

This was a conspiracy, often called the greatest conspiracy in history, and did not arise in genius but in a manipulated historical accident, and has been shaking the world ever since owing to the significance of usurping the authority of the Khalifa of Allah.

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