

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - The Arbitration

Announcement

Thereafter Abu Musa Ashari took the stage to announce the decision. Abdullah b Abbas asked Abu Musa not to be the first in making the announcement. He advised him that he should let 'Amr b Al Aas speak first. Abu Musa did not pay any heed to the advice of Abdullah b Abbas, and announced the decision that both he and 'Amr b Al 'Aas had agreed that Ali as well as Muawiyah should be deposed and it should be for the community to elect whomsoever they lined as the Caliph. He observed that in accordance with this decision he deposed his candidate Ali. Thereafter Amr b Al Aas took the stage. He said that according to the terms of the arbitration agreement the umpires had to decide as to whom out of Ali and Muawiyah the sovereignty was to belong. He observed that as the umpire representing Ali had deposed him, Muawiyah was the only candidate left in the field and as such the sovereignty belonged to him.

There is some controversy as to what actually transpired between the umpires. According to the accounts that have come down to us, it is said that both the umpires had agreed between themselves that both Ali and Muawiyah should be deposed, and that 'Amr b Al Aas went back on the agreement, and betrayed Abu Musa Ashari. This does not appear to be a correct account of what actually happened. If both the umpires had originally agreed to the deposition of both Ali and Muawiyah, and 'Amr b Al 'Aas went back on such agreement, Abu Musa could have taken the stage and said that as 'Amr had violated his agreement with him his decision was of no effect. What appears to have happened is that when Abu Musa suggested that the matter should be referred to the community for the fresh election of the Caliph, 'Amr merely asked him to make an announcement to that effect. Abu Musa was not shrewd enough to realize the implication of such announcement. It is well known that when Abu Musa was the Governor of Kufa he had advised the people of Kufa to remain neutral in the dispute between Ali and Ayes in spite of the fact that he had taken the oath of allegiance to Ali, and was legally as well as morally bound to obey the command of Ali. Ali had to depose him. Ali had to accept nomination as an umpire under pressure. Although Ali did not have full confidence in Abu Musa, he still hoped that as Abu Musa was otherwise a pious Muslim he would act in a fair and impartial way according to the injunctions of Islam. Abu Musa was in fact so much obsessed with the idea of neutrality that he suggested the stepping aside of both Ali and Muawiyah and the election of the Caliph by the community afresh. Such suggestion was not within the four corners of the agreement according to which the umpires had to decide as to whom out of Ali and Muawiyah sovereignty was to belong. The accounts that come down to us provide that as soon Abu Musa made this suggestion, Amr b Al Aas jumped up and asked Abu Musa to announce that decision. Abu Musa considered that in asking him to make his announcement, Amr had agreed with him. Actually 'Amr had not made any agreement. He was shrewd enough to realize the implications of the suggestion of Abu Musa and wanted him to announce his suggestion. To be fair 'Amr did not violate any agreement with Abu Musa; he merely took advantage of the weakness in the stand of the umpire of Ali. The life story of Ali is a painful story of betrayals. To other betrayals one more betrayal was added as a consequence of the arbitration proceedings.

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