

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Life of Ali, General Review

Causes for the non success of Ali from the worldly point of view

The usual phenomenon of greatness is that men succeed in life, and because of such success they acquire greatness. The usual law is that greatness is a consequence of success. Nothing succeeds like success and nothing fails like failure. This means that if you succeed you become great, but if you fail, you are pushed aside and are forgotten. In case of Ali we come across an extraordinary exception to the law of success and greatness. Ali's greatness is of a different species. His greatness did not flow from any success in life. Such greatness was inherent in him; it preceded his encounter with the world, and it outlived his death, although he did not succeed in his worldly life as the word "Success" is understood in the conventional sense. As a matter of fact, Ali became more famous after death than when he was alive. We may next proceed to consider the causes which militated against the success of Ali in spite of his greatness. As a matter of fact the greatness of Ali was of such dimensions that he towered very high above the people around him. It was the case of Gulliver in the land of dwarfs. He was so high that he could not bend to meet the people, and the people were so low that they could not rise to meet him. As such a proper equation could not be established between Ali and the people around him, and that was the main cause why he was frequently betrayed, and why he did not succeed in the affairs of the world as the ordinary men succeed. Ali was very much in advance of his age, and the people of the age could not keep pace with him.

By the time Ali came to office, a generation had passed since the death of the Holy Prophet. During this period the Muslims had made large conquests. That had brought great wealth, and wealth had changed the life of the people. A capitalist class sprang up among the Muslims. Ali, a great Muslim of the old type wanted to enforce the austere discipline of original Islam. He himself led a very simple life, and aimed to follow in the steps of Umar. Ali, however, lacked the harshness of Umar and could not enforce the reforms he had in view. There was a gulf between Ali, and the capitalist class who wielded considerable influence. Ali was very parsimonious in the spending of public funds while, Muawiyah who himself led a luxurious life was very liberal in spending public funds. The capitalist class among the Muslims given to the worldly way of life preferred Muawiyah to Ali because of personal considerations. While Ali was more concerned with the Hereafter than this world, the people around him were more concerned with the world than the Hereafter. This difference in outlook could not be bridged, and that is why there are many betrayals in the camp of Ali. These betrayals weakened the position of Ali considerably. Ali was a man of strong principles, and he would not compromise with principles. The people opposed to him were masters of propaganda, and they did not hesitate to adopt any means fair or foul to gain their end. Ali lost the game because he would not abandon his principles at any cost.

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