

**Letter of Amir al Muminin to his A'amil:  
A Study of the Letter No. 45 of "Nahj al Balaghah"**

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*During the Zahiri Khilafah of Amir al Muminin, Ali ibn Abi Talib, the A'amil-governor of Basra was Usman bin Hanif. Khurasan & Kirman (Iran) were also under his domain. A renowned trader of Basra had invited eminent figures, including Usman bin Hanif, as guest of honour to a reception. When this news reached Amir al Muminin Ali, he called for an explanation from Usman bin Hanif. Although the A'amil-governor was a noble and honorable person but Ali's action fixed a perpetual precedent that in accountability all are equal. This action of Ali established a precedent that it is the duty of the 'Ruler' to be vigilant and keep a strict eye on his subordinates, in their affairs. Alas! It is the misfortune of the Ummah at large that their Power & Command is in the hands of hypocrites; they do not practice what they advise to others. They are the true examples of 'Bani Israel'. How can they keep an eye on others, while they are largely involved in dishonest activities?*

*During the time of Ali, facilities like E-mail, Telex, Fax and Mobile were beyond the reach of even human imagination. Despite that Amir al Muminin, Ali had established a Network of Communication on such a scientific manner that if any of his A'amil-Governor committed any error, he would get the news. Ali charged in the following letter to his A'amil:*

*"O Son of Hanif! I have heard that one of the richest of Basra invited you to a feast and you leapt towards it and participated in it".*

*If it was possible to borrow two more feet for you, you would borrow and run towards the function more swiftly. At some places a person may have to go under undue influence, to build social contacts, while at other place he goes according to his will.*

*Ali teaches simple living with high moral values, which has disappeared at present. He extended his disapproval in the following words:*

*"Varieties of foods and numerous dishes were served to you".*

*There was lavish food. It is common that the feast of the richest are always laid with many sumptuous dishes. One takes a morsel from one dish and another morsel from another kind of dish. These people do not have the heart to give even the left over food to the poor. It is even prevalent today that excess quantity of food is cooked for guests and the reason they provide is that it is necessary to do so for the sake of their honor, dignity and prestige. At least ten different kinds of dishes are always available in such feasts. Every guest eats three or four morsels from each dish, and the rest of the food is thrown away as trash. It is Isr'af and Tabzir in the lexicon of the Qur'an. This practice is Har'am. There are people who are often deprived of even a single morsel and go to sleep*

hungry. On the other hand dogs and cats enjoy these foods, which are thrown away in the trash can outside the places where such functions are arranged.

Today members of the judiciary, executive politicians and even clerics compel people their surrounded to invite them in their functions. They join the function as VIP and feel happy to impress masses. Ali says:

*"I never thought that you would accept the (invitation of the) feast of a person who turns out the poor and invites the rich".*

Amir al Muminin Ali taught his A'amil-Governor that a feast in which only the rich are invited, is a humiliation of the less fortunate class. He warned in clear terms, and showed his displeasure that being appointed A'amil-Governor by Ali how dare he become one of the guests in that feast. A message is communicated through this letter that one should not neglect the less fortunate class in any feast. Another point that is necessary to be mentioned is that the Muslim etiquettes of eating should not be ignored while eating. A Hadith says:

*"Eat with respect, as if you being a subordinate are sitting before your Lord".*

The Clerics consider it their religious duty to impose their ideas on such matters which are beyond their reach of intellect. It is quite within their limit to guide the people about the manners of eating according to the Sunnah. The etiquettes of eating are largely discussed in Sirah Literature, but it is unfortunate that Muslims at large ignore the Sunnah during eating. The gluttonous nature exhibited by the people attending a feast has to be remedied. It is necessary that Ulama should draw attention towards this forgotten Sunnah of eating.

*"Look at the morsels you take, leave out that about which you are in doubt and take that about which you are sure that it has been secured lawfully".*

The magnanimous Khalifah of the Muslims guides that it should be ascertained that the funds spend on such a feast is from the legal source. He further said:

*If you are doubtful with the source by which the feast has been arranged, do not attend or eat, but find out this important point first.*

If you know that the food has been prepared from illegal income, never eat it. As long as food prepared by illegal means remains in your body, it would assume the spirit of Shait'an. Qur'an says:

*"O people! Eat legal and pious food and the food prepared from lawful means, and do not tread the path of Shait'an".*

No one denies the eating of delicious rich food. Do eat, but it should be obtained by legal means. How can an illegal thing turn into a legal one by the mere recitation of 'Bismillah' over it? Never ever! If a morsel is swallowed up, Shait'an would take hold in the body. Taqwa should always be kept, in consumption of food, because foodstuff is like a seed, through which the body develops, either with a divine or evil influence. Shait'an is in every doubtful morsel. Therefore, anybody who eats such doubtful food would allow the entry of Shait'an in the body. What is even more shocking is, the Ulama also ignore the music being played such gatherings? This practice is not only apprehensible but is forbidden. Enjoying lavish food as a routine and quoting Ali is contradictory in approach.

Ali ibn Abi Talib says:

*“Remember that every follower has a leader whom he follows and from the effulgence of whose knowledge he takes light”.*

Examples have to be set from the upper strata of the society so that people may emulate them. It is the duty of the leading class to practically set example of high thinking and simple living, which caters towards progress and prosperity of the society.

The elitist of today with their amassed wealth seek to show their influence and public relation ship with the ruling Politicians, tycoons, top bureaucrats, Judges, top brass officers of the forces and clerics etc by inviting them to their functions which are resplendent, and are a personification of pomp and glory.

Amir al Muminin Ali says:

*“Realize that your Imam has pleased himself with two shabby pieces of cloth out of the (comfort of the) world and two loaves for his meal”.*

Two breads of barley with salty water, instead of curry, was the usual food of Ali, and after each forty days he took a small quantity of meat, as instructed by Rasulullah(S). ‘Saheb al Shariah’ considered unpleasant, the use of meat daily. Likewise Ali used to wear a simple dress, while we always run for imported clothes. He changed his clothes when no space was left for a patch.

Amir al Muminin Ali argued:

*“Certainly it is beyond your strength, you cannot do so but at least support me in piety, exertion, chastity and uprightness, because, by Allah, I have not treasured any gold out of your world nor amassed plentiful wealth nor collected any clothes other than the two shabby sheets”.*

*(Letter 45, “Nahj al Balaghah”, page 392, vol. II, Qum, Iran)*

Surely, Ali knew that his followers were not alike Syedna Salman al Farsi and Syedna Abizar al Ghiffari, who truly followed his each steps. He therefore he said in clear terms that it is beyond your power to spend your life like Ali. Just imagine, as Khalifah of the time, the entire Bait al Maal was in possession of Ali, but he did not construct a Qasar for his residence nor he showed any interest in lavish food receptions. But does it mean that you should never follow Ali? He said clearly, step forward and help me. Fear Allah and do not commit acts which are Har’am. Qan’at on your legal earning, don’t take money from illegal means, help people, don’t ask them to come again and again, as every person is busy at his place. It is Zulm on that person who has to visit the office of Establishment and ‘Holder of Authority’ instruct to come on such and such day’, and to keeps Taqwa- fear of Allah.

### **Conclusion & Talim:**

In the above mentioned letter there is a crystal clear direction of the Shariah to all the responsible and most concerned, that they maintain equality without making any class distinction among the people. The leaders residing in palatial bungalows under security should ponder this reality that Islam is not confined to deliver speeches from high pedestal alone; but it demands ‘Concrete Action’. The Talim of the above ‘Charge sheet’ & ‘Show cause Notice’ to the A’amil-Governor, issued by Amir al Muminin is this that

*A'amil (Administrative missionary of the Muslims, funded by Bait al Maal) should adopt the manners of piety, simplicity and equality. They should not spoil the money of the Ummah for their lust and luxury. It is a lesson to practice, in which the secret of society's welfare is hidden.*

*O Amir al Muminin! You ordered for 'Maruf' & forbidden from 'Munkir' Sal'aam upon you! Concept of Accountability of Qur'an established by you Sal'aam upon you! Corrupted never ignored by you, whosoever he may be O Allah! Grant us Tawfiq to eliminate Fas'aad-corruption wherever we find*

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