

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - Ali's Occupation of Basra

Occupation of Basra

After the three days of mourning were over, Ali entered the city of Basra and occupied it. He declared amnesty for the people of Basra, and asked them to assemble in the principal mosque of the city. When all the people had assembled, Ali addressed them. He said that his heart bled at the tragedy that had overtaken the people of Basra, for this they were themselves to blame. They had taken the oath of allegiance to him, but later they were misguided to repudiate such oath without cause. He observed that particular sanctity was attached to such oath, and could not be repudiated. He narrated at length the circumstances under which Othman had been killed, and how he had been elected as the Caliph. He added that Talha and Zubair were the first to offer allegiance to him, and they were the first to repudiate it. Thereafter he explained at length how the demand for the vengeance for the blood of Othman was merely a pretext for gaining some ulterior end. As regards Ayesha he said he had the greatest respect and regard for her. There were some minor points of difference between him and her but there was hardly any justification for making such petty differences the ground for an armed conflict. It was not worthy of a lady of her rank and status to take to arms when according to the injunctions of Islam, ladies were required to sit in their homes, and the Holy Prophet himself had warned his wives in that respect. He added that those who had led the revolt labor under some misunderstanding, and they were misguided in taking to arms. Because of such misguidance, the Muslim Ummah had suffered, and at this suffering and disaster none was more grieved than he. He said, at this moment Basra lies bleeding. My heart bleeds at the tragedy that has befallen your city." He observed that he had granted amnesty to the people of Basra, and was prepared to forgive and forget the past, provided the people of Basra assured him of their loyalty. The speech of Ali had its effect. The spokesmen of the people of Basra regretted all that had happened, and assured Ali of their loyalty. Thereafter all the people of Basra offered allegiance to Ali. 'Fatehah' was offered for the souls of the dead from both the sides. Someone asked him whether he regarded the people who had opposed him and had died, as martyrs. He said that he regarded all the Muslims to whatever side they belonged and had died as martyrs, for rightly or wrongly they were of the conviction that they were fighting for cause. Ali led the prayers, and after the prayers, mercy of Allah was craved for keeping the Muslims united. Ali made the necessary arrangements for the administration of Basra. He took hold of the Baitul Mal, and compensated the people who had lost their dear ones. He made arrangements for the treatment of the wounded. It was noticed that some people of Basra who were in the forefront in opposition to Ali had escaped to seek the protection of tribes in the desert. Ali issued a proclamation that they were free to come to their homes in Basra and no action would be taken for their sins of omission or commission in the past.

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