

Khalifa Ali bin Abu Talib - The Battle of Nahrawan

Ali's reaction to the Arbitration decision

The arbitration decision came as a great shock to Ali. Ali had hoped that as the umpires were to take the decision in accordance with the injunctions of the Holy Quran, they would act with a due sense of justice and fair play. The decision that was taken was neither just nor fair. It was taken in the spirit of the old Arab traditions of the age of Ignorance and was repugnant to Islamic values. The umpires were supposed to judge the relative merits of Ali and Muawiyah in the light of Islamic values and then choose one out of the two. The umpires did nothing of the sort. Abu Musa the umpire of Ali had some bias against Ali because Ali had deposed him from the governorship of Kufa, and hence wittingly or unwittingly he acted against the interests of Ali. Ali had been duly elected as the Caliph by the authorized electorate and Abu Musa had no authority to depose Ali. 'Amr b Al-6Aas the umpire of Muawiyah was a clever man, and taking advantage of the weakness in the stand of Abu Musa, he manipulated victory for Muawiyah. The entire arbitration proceedings thus turned out to be a farce based on betrayal and trickery. It nevertheless created an embarrassing position for Ali. The arbitration agreement had provided that the decision of the umpires was to be binding on both the parties. According to the terms of the agreement, Ali was bound to accept the decision and step aside from the office of the Caliph. Ali held the office as a trust from God and he could not betray such trust on the basis of a decision, which was arbitrary, frivolous, and capricious, and therefore no decision. Ali could not, therefore, accept the decision, and the only option left with him was to renew the war against Muawiyah who had manipulated to win power through underhand means. Ali accordingly gave call for arms and exhorted the people to join the war for the vindication of the truth and the suppression of falsehood. The people responded enthusiastically to the call, and soon an army of 65,000 strong was assembled.

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