

The Sayings of Hadrat Ali

Hadrat Ali was the embodiment of knowledge and wisdom. Some of the Sayings of Hadrat Ali, which breathe wisdom and have attained the dimension of aphorisms are on record. Some of these are:

- Fear God and you will have no cause to fear anyone.
- Resignation to the Will of God is the cure for the disease of the heart.
- The word of God is the medicine of the heart.
- Lead such a life that when you die people will mourn you, and while you are alive they long for your company.
- The days of your life pass away like clouds, so do good while you are alive.
- Of all the follies, the greatest is to love the world.
- Opportunity is swift of flight but slow to return.
- Pride, cowardice and miserliness are bad for man but good for women.
- The most happy is he to whom God has given a good wife.
- He who knows himself knows God.
- Do not sell your conscience for anything but heaven.
- The disease of the heart is worse than the disease of the body.
- To fight against one's desires is the greatest of all fights.
- The strongest among you is he who subdues himself.
- Wealth and greed are the roots of all evil.
- Riches without faith are the greatest poverty.
- A man's worth depends upon the nobility of his aspirations.
- Knowledge enlivens the soul.
- The learned lives although he dies.
- The sum total of excellence is knowledge.
- To respect the learned is to respect God.
- Generosity hides shortcomings.
- The wealth of a miser is as useless as a pebble.
- Desire is one's most inveterate enemy.
- Those who walk on the surface of the earth shall one day be interred in it.
- Every breath of man brings him nearer to death.
- People are asleep as long as they are alive, they are awakened when they die.
- Patience is the fruit of faith.
- Virtue never dies.
- A man's glory from his virtue is greater than the glory of his pedigree.
- No shelter is safer than piety.
- A man's behaviour is the index of his mind.
- Courtesy costs nothing but buys everything.
- Clemency graces power.
- Jealousy devours virtue as fire devours fuel.
- He that lends a listening ear to reproach is one of those that deserve reproach.
- Forgiveness is the crown of greatness.
- Carnal appetites are nets spread by the devil.
- Every arrow does not hit the mark, nor is every prayer granted.

Ostentatiousness spoils prayers.
Fear none but your sins.
He who praises you murders you.
A man who praises himself displays his deficiency of intellect.
Honour your parents and your sons will honour you.
A man is hidden under his tongue.
The tongue of a wise man lies behind his heart.
The tongue pierces deeper than the spear.
He who purifies his heart from doubt is a believer.
The opinion of a wise man is an oracle.
To seek council is to go to the fountain of guidance.
Association with a fool is tyrannical to the soul.
God hastens the fall of tyrants.
Tyranny leads to moral cowardice.
A tyrant's success is his moral defeat.
It is better to die than to beg.
When a man begs, he loses his faith.
Hajj is the jihad of every believer in faith.
A wise enemy is better than a foolish friend.
Silence is the best reply to a fool.
The best speech is one that is short and reasonable.
Speech is like a medicine, a small dose will cure but an excess will kill.
He that has no courage has no religion.
His grief is long whose hope is short.
The right of freedom of speech consists in speaking the truth.
Repentance washes away sins.
Folly is an incurable disease.
To assist the wrong is to oppress the right.
Sinning is a disease, repentance is its medicine, and abstinence from it is a sure

cure.

Sorrow makes a man old before his time.
Pride impedes progress and mars greatness.
To forgive is the crown of greatness.
He who understands humanity seeks solitude.
Right is the best argument.
Misrepresentation spoils narration.
As a man's wisdom increases so his desire to speak decreases.
He who seeks to do justice with men, let him desire for them what he desires for himself.

The greatest sin is the sin which the sinner considers to be ordinary.
Contentment is the asset which is never exhausted.
Governments are a trial for man.
He who fights against the truth, the truth will defeat him.
Finding fault with others is one's greatest fault.
Haste is a species of madness.
Greed is perpetual enslavement.

He who does not know his own worth, is doomed to destruction.
The best investment is one with which duties are performed.
Anger is a fire kindled, he who restrains anger extinguishes the fire; he who gives vent to it is the first to be consumed by it.
Jihad is the highway of prosperity.
None is more solitary than a miser.
Knowledge is the ornament of the rich and the riches of the poor.
Knowledge is the sum total of excellence; he who teaches you a letter binds you with a fetter of gratitude.
As long as we do not hope we do not fret.
He who indulges in jokes and loose talk loses a part of his wisdom.
Truth is bitter, but its result is sweet; falsehood appears to be sweet but it is poisonous in its effect.
Miserliness is the root of many evils.
Knowledge and practice are twins, and both go together for there is no knowledge without practice, and no practice without knowledge.
He who dissembles, plays with his honour.
When God wants to humiliate a person, He deprives him of knowledge.
When your power increases, decrease your desires accordingly.
He who listens to a backbiter loses a friend.
It is not justice to decide a case on mere conjecture.
He who does not know his own worth is shameful.
He who practices thrift will never be in want.
He who does not know should not be ashamed to learn.
Patience is to faith what the head is to the body. When patience goes, faith goes; when the head goes, the body goes.
The grace of God is the best guide.
A good disposition is the best companion.
Wisdom is the best friend.
Good breeding is the best inheritance.
There is nothing more hateful than pride.
Be among men like a bee among birds.
Mix with the people with your tongue, but be separate from them in your deeds.
Be generous, but do not be a spendthrift.
Do not run after the world, let the world to run after you.
A wise man is he who does not despair of the bounty and mercy of God.
He who is aware of his own faults is oblivious to the faults of others.
What the eye sees the heart preserves.
The vision of the eye is limited; the vision of the heart transcends all barriers of time and space.
Do not be misled by appearances for these are apt to be deceptive.
Do not have too many irons in the fire; concentrate on one thing at a time.
What you do not like for yourself, do not like it for others either.
Contentment is the treasure which is never exhausted.
The advice of old men is dearer than the bravery of young men.

That knowledge is superficial which is merely on the tongue; that knowledge is real which demonstrates itself in your practice.

To waste time is one's greatest loss.

He who knows to keep his secret, knows the way to success.

Foresight is the way to safety.

No relationship is stronger than the relationship that exists between man and God.

Enlighten the heart with prayers.

Strengthen your heart with faith.

Suppress all lust with piety.

Do not sell the Hereafter for the world.

Do not speak in a state of ignorance.

Refrain from unnecessary talk.

Do not tread the path from which you can apprehend the danger of running astray.

In the affairs of God, do not be afraid of the accusations of evil mongers.

In all that you do, seek the protection of God.

Do not covet what is undesirable.

If you seek the truth, neither straight from the right path nor be assailed by doubts.

Do not become a slave to your desires.

That wealth is no wealth which brings dishonour.

Whatever harm accrues of silence can be remedied, but whatever harm is done because of speech cannot be remedied.

It is better to restrain your desires than to stretch your hand before others.

A little that is burned because of honest labour is better than a larger amount gained through dishonest means.

Guard well your secret.

He who seeks more than what is necessary indulges in error.

To oppress the weak is the worst tyranny.

Do not bank on false hope for that is the capital of the dead.

A wise man takes a lesson even from a minor lapse.

Overpower desire and suspicion by patience and faith.

He who does not take the middle course strays.

A stranger is he who has no friends.

When hopes are frustrated despair becomes the way of life.

He who trusts the world the world betrays him.

Similes of Hadrat Ali

Hadrat Ali had the peculiar skill to explain things by giving appropriate similes. In his various addresses and sermons, we come across many

instances of his brilliance of expression that brings home the truth through these interesting examples.

The world: The world is like a serpent which was outwardly very soft-skinned but poisonous within.

Falsehood: Like the feathers of a peacock, falsehood might look very attractive, but was as ugly as of feet of a peacock. Falsehood has no legs to stand upon.

The unbelievers: Unbelievers are like bats who can see in the dark, but who are blinded by daylight and cannot see.

The people who did not respond to his call: When Hadrat Ali exhorted the people of Iraq to respond to his call for war against Muawiyah, they did not respond to his call. He said, "You are like a pregnant woman who undergoes the ordeal of childbirth, but gives birth to a dead child."

The tree and the fruit: When after the death of the holy Prophet, the Quraish based their claim to the caliphate on the grounds that they belonged to the same tree as the holy Prophet. Hadrat Ali said, "It is strange that they look to the tree, but neglect its fruit."

The people of Basra : When the people of Basra, who had originally taken the oath of allegiance to him, but later chose to fight against him, Hadrat Ali said that these people were near the water but far from the sky.

People of the age of ignorance : Referring to the people of the age of ignorance in the pre-Islamic era, Hadrat Ali said that they were like an egg which is broken in the nest.

The people of Kufa: Addressing the people of Kufa, Hadrat Ali said: "When I invite you to fight, your eyes begin to move in their sockets as if you are in the agony of death. You are like camels whose herdsmen have disappeared, and when these animals are collected on one side, they scatter on the other side."

Mughira b. Shu'aba : Mughira was regarded by the Quraish as a wise man. When Mughira favoured Muawiyah, Hadrat Ali said, "Mughira has profited from Islam only to the extent of seeking worldly gains. He is oblivious to the Hereafter."

The people who run after the world: About the people who run after the world, Hadrat Ali said, "Those people who chase after the world are like beasts who lunge at one another, with the strong oppressing the weak."

The people who are not deceived by the world: About the people who are not deceived by the world, Hadrat Ali said, "Those who have understood the deceptive character of the world, do not feel distressed on death. They are like the people who migrate from a famine-struck land to a land of plenty."

Hadrat Ali's complaint against the Umayyads: During the caliphate of Hadrat Othman, Hadrat Ali had a complaint that the Umayyads were was holding from him what was due to him. He said, "The Umayyads are withholding what is due to me just like the camelman, who milks the she camel, withholds milk from the young one of the camel.

Falsehood of Muawiyah: Referring to the falsehood of Muawiyah, Hadrat Ali said that falsehood had appeared in his case like the horns on the head of a young goat.

Shedding of sins through prayer: In a sermon, Hadrat Ali said that through prayer the sins of a man are shed just as a tree sheds its leaves.

Cleanliness and prayers: In another sermon, Hadrat Ali said, "Prayer is like a hot spring of water which flows at your door and provides you with the wherewithal for cleanliness."

Crumbs after meals: In a sermon, Hadrat Ali said that the world had run its course, and nothing had been left of it except the crumbs after the meals.

The people who did not respond to his call: Hadrat Ali compared the people who did not respond to his call to a camel who ran away from the herd shrieking with pains in its belly.

Hearts of the people: Hadrat Ali prayed for the hearts of the people to melt at the mention of the Word of God just like salt dissolved in water.

Ignorant persons: Hadrat Ali said that ignorant persons were like a person riding on a beast of burden which could not see. He deplored that such ignorant people dealt with the injunctions of Islam as wind scattered straw.

Ashas b. Qais: Hadrat Ali said that among his companions, Ashas b. Qais was what Abdullah b. Abi Sahi was in the time of the holy Prophet.

Patience and faith: Patience and faith bear the same relation in a human being where the head is attached to the body - a body cannot be without a head, and likewise there can be no faith without patience.

Disease and sins: Disease sheds sins just as the tree sheds its dead leaves.

Death of the virtuous: Hadrat Ali compared the death of the virtuous to the migration journey of the people from a famine-struck land to a land of plenty.

Days of life: The days of life pass like clouds in the sky.

Devotion to the world: Those who are devoted to the world are like barking dogs and ferocious animals who lunge at one another and where the strong devour the weak.

Seekers of the world: Those who seek the world are like a loose camel roaming about causing mischief.

Virtue of silence: Hadrat Ali advocated the virtue of silence by advancing the simile that water can be preserved in a waterskin only when its mouth is tied.

Thirsty camels on a water pond: When the people flocked to him and urged him to accept their allegiance, Hadrat Ali compared them to thirsty camels who flocked to a water pond when their strings are untied.

The caliphate of Hadrat Umar: When Hadrat Abu Bakr died, and still ignored his claims, Hadrat Umar became the Caliph. Hadrat Ali held that the second Caliph was like a person riding a camel, whose reins, if tightened would injure the camel, and if loosened would endanger the rider.

Umayyad use of the Bait-ul-Mai: Referring to the appropriation of the funds of the Bait-ul-Mai by the Umayyads for personal ends during the caliphate of Hadrat Othman, Hadrat Ali held that they ate away the public funds, just as the camel eats away the grass.

Withholding the milk of the she camel from its young: Hadrat Ali had the complaint that during the caliphate of the Hadrat Othman, the Umayyads withheld from him what was his right just like the camelman who, while milking the she camel, withholds its milk from its young one.

Handle of the grinding stone : When Hadrat Abu Bakr became the Caliph, Hadrat Ali held that Hadrat Abu Bakr had assumed the mantle of the caliphate forcibly while he knew that he (Hadrat Ali) was as essential for the caliphate as a handle was necessary for turning the grinding stone.

The simile of a sinner: A sinner is like a person riding on an animal over which he had no control, and which is running fast to hurl him into a precipice.

Drops of rain: The injunctions of God descend like drops of rain.

Summer clouds : When the people of Kufa did not respond to the call of Hadrat Ali to meet the challenge of Muawiyah, Hadrat Ali said that he longed for warriors who in their action and speed would be like summer clouds.

The goat and the lion: Addressing the people of Kufa, Hadrat Ali said, "I want you to tread the path of the truth, but you run from it like a goat runs away when hearing the roar of the lion."

Taking the thorn out of the foot with a thorn: On another occasion Hadrat Ali said that the people of Kufa were like a person who picked out the thorn from his foot with a thorn.

Solution of salt in water: With reference to the people of Kufa, Hadrat Ali prayed "O God, melt their hearts like salt dissolves in water."

Bull with crooked horns : When Talha defected after taking the oath of the allegiance to him, Hadrat Ali compared him to a bull with crooked horns.

Shaking plants: Referring to the piety of the Companions of the holy Prophet, Hadrat Ali said that they shuddered at the mention of the Hereafter as plants shake when a strong wind blows.

Pregnant woman separating from the child: Addressing the people of Kufa, Hadrat Ali said that they were not dependable and that they were likely to leave him like a pregnant woman is separated from the child at childbirth.

Households of the holy Prophet: Hadrat Ali described the household of the holy Prophet to be like stars in that if one star sets another star rises.

Foaming waves of the sea: While addressing Hadrat Othman, Hadrat Ali said that treason was likely to rage like the foaming waves of the sea.