

٢٢. وَقَالَ (عليه السلام): لَنَا حَقٌّ، فَإِنْ أُعْطِينَاهُ، وَإِلَّا رَكَبْنَا أَعْجَازَ الْإِبِلِ، وَإِنْ طَالَ السَّرَى.

22. Amīr al-mu'minīn, peace be upon him, said: We have a right. If it is allowed to us well and good, otherwise, we will ride on the hind part of the camel (like lowly people) even though the night journey may be long.

قال السيد الرضي: وهذا من لطيف الكلام وفصيحه ومعناه أنا إن لم نعط حقنا كنا أذلاء وذلك أن الرديف يركب عجز البعير كالعبد و الأسير و من يجري مجراهما.

As-Sayyid ar-Raḍī says: This is a very fine and eloquent expression. It means that if we are not allowed our right we will be regarded humble. This sense comes out from this expression because on the rear part of the camel only slaves, prisoners or other people of this type used to ride. [1]

Footnotes :

[1] The sense of the interpretation written by as-Sayyid ar-Raḍī is that Amīr al-mu'minīn intends to say that if our right, that lies with others in our position, as with the Imam whom it is obligatory to obey, is acknowledged and we are given the chance of worldly rule well and good, otherwise, we will have to bear all sorts of hardships and ignominies and we shall be compelled to live this life of ignominy and humiliation for a long time.

Some commentators have stated a different meaning than this, namely that “If our position is belittled and put aside, and others are given precedence over us, we shall bear it patiently and agree to remain behind” and this is what is meant by riding on the hind part of the camel, because the person who rides on the hind part is on the rear while the person who sits on its back is in the fore. Some people take it to mean that if we are allowed our right we will accept it but if it is not given we shall not behave like the rider who gives over the rein of his animal into the hands of some other person who is free to take him wherever he likes but we shall stick to our right even though a long time may elapse and not surrender to the usurpers.