

to be performed when there appears enough light of the dawn for a man to recognize the face of his companion.

While leading the prayers make them so short that the weakest amongst you may not feel tired to follow you and his strength and patience may not be overstrained.

LETTER – 53

[An order to Mālik Ashtar.]

[Mālik Ashtar was a famous companion of Imam Ali. He was head of the Bani Nakh'i's clan. He was a faithful disciple of Imam Ali. He was a brave warrior and had acted as a Commander-in-Chief of Imam Ali's Armies. His valour had earned for him the nick-name of "Fearless Tiger". Imam Ali had specially taught him the principles of administration and jurisprudence. He venerated and loved Imam Ali sincerely and had earned Muawiya's enmity on that account. Muawiya had conspired against him and got him killed by his gang of hirelings. His untimely death deeply grieved Imam Ali who, expressing his grief said: "He was to me, what I was to the Holy Prophet". The following instructions in the form of a letter were written to him by Imam Ali who appointed him as Governor of Egypt in place of Muhammad bin Abi Bakr:

This letter is a precis of the principles of administration and justice as dictated by Islam. It deals with the duties and obligations of rulers, their chief responsibilities, the question of priorities of rights and obligations, dispensation of justice, control over secretaries and subordinate staff; distribution of work and duties amongst the various branches of administration, their co-ordination with each other and their co-operation with the centre. In it Imam Ali advises Mālik to combat corruption and oppression amongst the officers, to control markets and imports and exports, to curb evils of profiteering, hoarding, black-marketing. In it he has also explained stages of various classes of society, the duties of government towards the lowest class, how they are to be looked after and how their

conditions are to be improved, the principle of equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities, orphans and their up-bringing, maintenance of handicapped, crippled and disabled persons and substitutes in lieu of homes for the aged and the disabled. Then he discusses the army, of whom it should consist of and how the ignorant, ruthless and corrupt mercenaries should not be allowed to join the army as their profession. He lays great stress upon the honour and the nobility of volunteers who, in time of need, offer their voluntary services to defend the Islamic State. Finally, he comments upon the rights of rulers over the ruled and of the ruled over the rulers.

There is a main central idea running all through these instructions, like one single thread out of which the cloth is woven, it is that of Allah. The regime is of Allah, the governors and the governed are both creatures of Allah, their respective duties are laid down by Allah. He expects each one of them to fulfil his obligations and to do his duties. The orphans and the depressed are the trust of Allah, the army is the army of Allah, whose soldiers should not behave like haughty and arrogant mercenaries but like honourable and noble knights; everyone is expected to do his duty to the best of his ability. He will be rewarded in Paradise accordingly.

In short this letter is on the one hand the Gospel of the principles of administration as taught by Holy Qur'an, a code to establish a kind and benevolent rule, throwing light on various aspects of justice, benevolence and mercy, an order based on the ethics of Divine rulership where justice and mercy are shown to human beings irrespective of class, creed and colour, where poverty is neither a stigma nor a disqualification and where justice is not tainted with nepotism, favouritism, provincialism or religious fanaticism; and, on the other hand, it is a thesis on the higher values of morality.

The famous Arab Christian, jurist, poet and philosopher Abdul Masih Antāki who died sometime in the beginning of the 20th Century while discussing this letter writes that it is a far superior and better code than the one handed

down by Moses and Hamurabi. It explains what a human administration should be like, how it is to be carried on. It justifies the claims of Muslims that Islam wants to introduce a Divine administration of the people for the people and by the people and it wants that a ruler should rule not to please himself but to bring happiness to the ruled and no religion before Islam tried to achieve this end, Ali should be congratulated for having introduced these principles during his rule and for having written them down for the posterity.]

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

These are the orders issued by the creature of Allah, Ali, the son of Abu Talib to Mālik, the son of Ashtar when he appointed Mālik as the Governor of Egypt to collect Zakat there, to combat the enemies of Islam and Egypt, to work for the welfare of its people and to look after its prosperity.

I order you, Mālik, always to keep fear of Allah in your mind, to give priority to His worship and to give preference to obeying His commands over every other thing in life, to carefully and faithfully follow the commandments and interdictions as are given by the Holy Book and the traditions of the Holy Prophet because success of man to attain happiness in this world and in the next depends upon these qualities, and a failure to achieve these attributes brings about total failure in both the worlds.

I order you to use your head, heart, hands and tongue to help the creatures of Allah because the Almighty Allah holds himself responsible to help those who sincerely try their best to help Him. Allah has further ordered you to keep your desires under control, to keep your self under restraint when extravagant and inordinate yearnings and cravings try to drive you towards vice and wickedness because usually your 'self' tries to incite and drag you towards infamy and damnation unless the Merciful Lord comes to your help.

Let it be known to you, Malik, that I am sending you

as a governor to a country which had seen many regimes before this. Some of them were benign, sympathetic and good, while others were tyrannical, oppressive and cruel. People will judge your regime as critically as you have studied the activities of other regimes and they will criticize you in the same way as you have censured or approved other rulers.

You must know that a good and virtuous man is known and recognized by the good that is said about him and the praise which Allah has destined him to receive from others. Therefore, make your mind the source and fountain-head of good thoughts, good intentions and good deeds. This can only be attained by keeping a strict control on your desires and yearnings, however much they may try to incite and coerce you. Remember that the best way to do justice to your inner self and to keep it out of harm is to restrain it from vice and from things which the 'self' inordinately and irrationally desires.

Mālik! You must create in your mind kindness, compassion and love for your subjects. Do not behave towards them as if you are a voracious and ravenous beast and as if your success lies in devouring them.

Remember, Mālik, that amongst your subjects there are two kinds of people: those who have the same religion as you have; they are brothers to you, and those who have religions other than that of yours, they are human beings like you. Men of either category suffer from the same weaknesses and disabilities that human beings are inclined to. They commit sins, indulge in vices either intentionally or foolishly and unintentionally without realizing the enormity of their deeds. Let your mercy and compassion come to their rescue and help in the same way and to the same extent that you expect Allah to show mercy and forgiveness to you.

Mālik! You must never forget that if you are a ruler over them then the Caliph is the ruler over you and Allah is the Supreme Lord over the Caliph. And the reality is that He has appointed you as the governor and tested you through the responsibility of this rulership over them. Never

think of raising yourself to such a false prestige that you can declare war against Allah because you cannot ward off His Wrath and you can never be free from the need of His Mercy and Compassion.

Do not feel ashamed to forgive and forget. Do not hurry into giving punishments, and do not be pleased with and proud of your power to punish. Do not get angry and do not lose your temper quickly over the mistakes and failures of those over whom you rule. On the contrary, be patient and sympathetic towards them. Anger and desire of vengeance are not going to be of much help to you in your administration.

Never say to yourself, "I am their lord, their ruler and all in all over them and that I must be obeyed submissively and humbly" because such a thought will unbalance your mind, will make you vain and arrogant, will weaken your faith in religion and will make you seek support of any power other than that of Allah. If you ever feel any pride or vanity on account of your sway and rule over your subjects then think of the supreme sway and rule of the Lord over the Universe, the extent of His creations, the Supremacy of His Might and Glory, His Power to do things that you cannot even dream of doing and His Control over you which is more dominating than that which you can ever achieve over anything around you. Such thoughts will cure your mental weakness, will keep you away from vanity and rebellion (against Allah), will reduce your arrogance and haughtiness and will take you back to the sanity which you had foolishly deserted.

Take care never to think of bringing yourself on a par with Allah, never to think of matching your power with Him and contesting His Glory and never to pretend that you possess might and power like Him, because the Mighty Lord will always humble pitiless tyrants and will degrade all pretenders of His Power and Might.

So far as your own affairs or those of your relatives and friends are concerned, take care that you do not violate the duties laid down upon you by Allah and do not usurp the rights of mankind; be impartial and do justice to them,

because if you give up equity and justice, then you will certainly be a tyrant and an oppressor. And whoever tyrannizes and oppresses the creatures of Allah, will earn enmity of Allah along with the hatred of those whom he has oppressed; and whoever earns the Wrath of Allah loses all chances of salvation and has no excuse to offer on the Day of Judgement. Every tyrant and oppressor is an enemy of Allah, unless he repents and gives up oppression. Remember, Malik! that there is nothing in this world more effective and quicker to turn His Blessings into His Wrath than persisting in oppression over His creatures, because the Merciful Allah will always hear the prayers of those, who have been oppressed, and He will give no chance to oppressors.

You must always appreciate and adopt a policy which is neither too severe nor too lenient. A policy which is based upon equity will be largely appreciated. Remember that displeasure of common men, the have-nots and the depressed persons overbalances the approval of important persons, while the displeasure of a few big people will be excused by the Lord if the general public and the masses of your subjects are happy with you. Remember, Mālik! that usually these big personages are mentally the scum of human society. They are the people who will be the worst drag upon you during your moments of peace and happiness, and the least useful to you during your hours of need and adversity. They hate justice the most; they will keep on demanding more and more out of the State resources and will seldom be satisfied with what they receive and will never be obliged for the favour shown to them if their demands are justifiably refused; they will never accept any reasonable excuse or any rational argument and when the time changes, you will never find them staunch, faithful and loyal, while the common men, the poor and apparently the less important section of your subjects are the pillars of Islam. They are the real assemblage of Muslims and the power and defensive force against the enemies of Islam. Keep your mind on their affairs; be more friendly with them and secure their trust and goodwill.

But be careful in forming your contacts (whether

with the important persons or the commoners); keep those people away from you and think them to be the enemy of the State who are scandal-mongers and who try to find fault with others and carry on propaganda against them because everywhere people have weaknesses and failings and it is the duty of the government to overlook (minor) shortcomings. You must not try to go in search of those weaknesses which are hidden from you, leave them to Allah, and about those weaknesses which come to your notice, you must try to teach them how to overcome them. Try not to expose the weaknesses of the people and Allah will conceal your own weaknesses which you do not want anybody to know.

Do not give cause to the people to envy each other (man against man, tribe against tribe or one section of the society against the other). Try to alleviate and root out mutual distrust and enmity from amongst your subjects. Be fair, impartial and just in your dealings with all, individually and collectively and be careful not to make your person, position and favours act as sources of malice. Do not let any such thing or such person, who does not deserve your nearness and your favour come near you. Never lower your dignity and prestige.

Remember that backbiters and scandal-mongers belong to mean and cunning group, though they pretend to be sincere advisers. Do not make haste to believe the news they bring and do not pay heed to their advice.

Do not accept the advice of the misers; they will try their best to keep you away from acts of kindness and from doing good to others. They will make you frightened of poverty. Similarly do not allow cowards to act as your advisers because they will make you timid in enforcing your orders, will prevent you from handling important affairs boldly and will make your enterprises and invasions timid and timorous attempts. At the same time avoid greedy and covetous person who would aspire to the position of acting as your counsellor, because he will teach you how to exploit the community and how to oppress people to get their wealth. Remember that miserliness, cowardice

and greed appear to be different wicked qualities but they all arise from the same evil mentality of having no faith and no trust in Allah.

Your worst ministers will be the men who had been ministers to the despotic rulers before you and who had been a party to atrocities committed by them. Such persons should not be taken into your confidence and should not be trusted because they have aided sinners and have assisted tyrants and cruel rulers. In their stead you can comfortably find persons who are equally wise and learned but who have not developed sinful and criminal mentalities, who have neither helped the tyrants in their tyrannies nor have they assisted them to carry on their sinful deeds. Such persons will prove the least troublesome to you. They will be most helpful. They will sincerely sympathize with you. If you take them in your confidence they will sever their connections with your opponents. Keep such people with you as your companions in your informal company as well as in official gatherings.

From amongst such honest and humane companions and ministers some would receive your fullest confidence and trust. They are those who can always speak out the bitter truth to you unreservedly and without fear of your status, who can refuse to assist you or associate in the deeds which Allah does not like. His good creatures to commit.

Select honest, truthful and pious people as your companions. Train them not to flatter you and not to seek your favour by false praises, because flattery and false praises create vanity and conceit and they make a man lose sight of his real self and ignore his duties.

You should not treat good and bad people alike, because in this way you will be discouraging good persons and at the same time emboldening the wicked to carry on their wickedness. Everyone should receive the treatment which his deeds make him deserve.

Try carefully to realize that a ruler can create goodwill in the minds of his subjects and can make them faithful and sincere to him only when he is kind and considerate to

them, when he reduces their troubles, when he does not oppress them and when he never asks for things which are beyond their power. These are the principles which you should keep in mind and act upon. Let your attitude be such that they do not lose faith in you because a good faith on their part will reduce many troubles of administration and will relieve you of many worries and anxieties. And so far as your confidence and trust is concerned, let it rest with those people whom you have tested in difficulties and whom you have befriended, but you should always mistrust those people whom you have wronged or who have proved themselves undeserving, inefficient or unfaithful.

Do not give up those practices and do not break those rules which good Muslims have evolved or introduced before you, which have created unity and amity among the various sections of the society and which have benefited the masses. Do not break them and do not introduce innovations because if you do away with those good rules and traditions, the reward of having introduced them will go to those who had evolved them and the punishment of having despoiled them will be your lot.

You must know, Mālik, that the people over whom you rule are divided into classes and grades and the prosperity and welfare of each class of the society individually and collectively are so interdependent upon the well-being of the other classes that the whole set-up represents a closely woven net and a reciprocal aspect. One class cannot exist peacefully, cannot live happily and cannot work without the support and good wishes of the other. Amongst them there are the soldiers of the army of Allah who defend His cause, the next class is that of the secretaries of the State to whom duties of writing out and issuing special or general orders are assigned, the third group is of the judges and magistrates who administer justice; the fourth is of officers who maintain law and order and guard the peace and prosperity of the country. Then there are common men, the Muslims who pay the taxes levied by the government, and non-Muslims who pay the taxes levied by the government, and non-Muslims who pay tribute to the

State (in lieu of taxes). Then comes the class of men who carry on various professions and trades and the last but not the least are the poor and the havenots who are considered as the lowest class of the society. The Merciful Allah has fixed rights and duties of each one of them. They have been either mentioned in His Book or explained through the instructions of the Holy Prophet. A complete code of them is preserved with us.

As far as the soldiers are concerned, they are by the commands of Allah a fortress and stronghold to guard and defend the subjects and the State. They are the ornaments to the ruler and the country. They provide power and protection to the religion. They propagate and preserve peace among mankind. In fact, they are the real guardians of peace and through them good internal administration can be maintained. The upkeep and maintenance of an army depends upon the taxes collected by the State out of which Allah has fixed for them a share. With this amount they provide for their requirements, maintain themselves and their arms in sound position to defend the religion and the cause of justice.

The army and the common men (common citizens who pay taxes or tributes) are two important classes, but in a Welfare State their well-being cannot be guaranteed without proper functioning and preservation of the other classes, the judges and magistrates, the secretaries of the State and the officers of various departments who collect various revenues, maintain law and order as well as preserve peace and amity among the diverse classes of the society. They also guard the rights and privileges of the citizens and look to the performances of numerous duties by individuals and classes. And the prosperity of this whole set-up depends upon the traders and industrialists. They act as a medium between the consumers and the suppliers. They collect the requirements of society. They exert to provide goods. They open up shops, markets and trading centres. Thus providing the consumers with their necessities, they relieve the citizens of the need of running after their requisites of life.

Then comes the class of the poor and the disabled

persons. It is absolutely necessary that they should be looked after, helped and well-provided for. The Merciful Allah has explained the ways and means of maintaining and providing for each of these classes. And everyone of this class has the right upon the ruler of the State that at least minimum necessities for its well-being and contented living are provided.

Remember, Mālik that Almighty Allah will not absolve any ruler from his obligations unless he sincerely tries his best to discharge his duties, invokes Allah to help him in their performance, remains steadfast and diligent on the path of truth and justice and bears all this whether the performance of these duties is congenial or hateful to him.

So far as the army is concerned its chief and commander should be a person who is most sincere and faithful to Allah, to the Holy Prophet and to your Imam who is most pious; who is famous for his forbearance, clemency and gentleness; who is neither short-tempered nor does he get angry quickly; who sympathetically treats sincere excuses and accepts apologies, who is kind and compassionate to the weak, but severe against the strong and the powerful; who has no vindictiveness, which might lead to violence or any inferiority complex or weak-mindedness which makes them helpless and dejected. To find and select such persons you should have contacts with pious and noble families with high ideals and exalted traditions, families well-known for their bravery and courage and generosity and magnanimity. These are the people who may be considered as sources of magnificence and sublimity of character and fountain-heads of piety and good deeds. When you have found and selected such persons, then keep an eye over them and watch them as parents watch their children so that you may find out if there appears any change in their behaviour. Treat them kindly and sympathetically. Do not grudge highest considerations to them (if they rightly deserve) and do not refuse small mercies. This kind of treatment will create reciprocal tendencies in them and they will trust you and will be faithful to you. Under the impression that you have paid enough attention to their

major necessities and wants, do not close your eyes to their minor requirements and needs because small favours often bear better fruits though careful attention to major necessities is very important. Among the military officers those should receive your highest respect and consideration who pay most attention to the needs of the soldiers under their command who come forward to help the soldiers with their personal means and property so that the soldiers may lead a happy and contented life and may have full confidence of the future of their families and children. If the soldiers are thus satisfied and are free from anxieties and care then they will bravely and whole-heartedly face the conflicts. Your constant attention towards the officers and the soldiers will make them love you more and more.

The thing which should most gladden the heart of a ruler is the fact that his State is being ruled on the principles of equity and justice and that his subjects love him. And your subjects will love you only when they have no grievance against you. Their sincerity and loyalty will be proved if they gather around you to support your government, when they accept your authority without considering it an unbearable burden on their heads and when they do not secretly wish your rule to come to an end. So let them have as many justifiable hopes in you as they can and fulfil as many as you reasonably can. Speak well of those who deserve your praise. Appreciate the good deeds done by them and let these good actions be known publicly. The correct and timely publicity of noble actions and golden deeds creates more zeal in the minds of the brave and emboldens the cowards and the weaklings. You must know and realize the good deeds done by every single individual so that the credit of noble deeds done by one may not be given to another. Do not underestimate and underpay the good work done. Similarly do not overpay a work simply because it has been done by a very important person and do not let his position and prestige be the cause of overvaluation of the merit of his work and at the same time do not undervalue a great deed if it is done by a very ordinary person or a commoner. Let equity, justice and fairplay be your motto.

When you are faced with problems which you cannot solve or with a difficult situation from which you cannot escape or when uncertain and doubtful circumstances confuse and perplex you, then you turn to Allah and the Holy Prophet because Allah has thus ordered those whom He wants to guide. The way to turn to Allah is to act diligently according to the clear and explicit orders given in His Holy Book and to turn to the Holy Prophet means to follow those of his orders about which there is no doubt and ambiguity and which have been generally accepted to be correctly recorded.

So far as dispensing of justice is concerned, you have to be very careful in selecting officers for the same. You must select people of excellent character and high calibre and with meritorious record. They must possess the following qualifications: Abundance of litigations and complexity of cases should not make them lose their temper. When they realize that they have committed a mistake in judgement they should not insist on it by trying to justify it. When truth is made clear to them or when right path opens up before them, they should not consider it below their dignity to correct the mistake made or to undo the wrong done by them. They should not be corrupt, covetous or greedy. They should not be satisfied with ordinary enquiry or scrutiny of a case, but should scrupulously go through all the pros and cons, they must examine every aspect of the problem carefully, and whenever and wherever they find doubtful and ambiguous points, they must stop, go through further details, clear the points, and only then proceed with their decisions. They must attach greatest importance to reasonings, arguments and proofs. They should not get tired of lengthy discussions and arguments. They must exhibit patience and perseverance in scanning the details, in testing the points presented as true, in sifting facts from fiction and when truth is revealed to them they must pass their judgements without fear, favour or prejudice. They should not develop vanity and conceit when compliments and praises are showered upon them. They should not be misled by flattery and cajolery. But unfor-

tunately there are a few persons having such characteristics. After you have selected such men to act as your judges, make it a point to go through some of their judgements and to check their proceedings. Pay them handsomely so that their needs are fully satisfied and they are not required to beg or borrow or resort to corruption. Give them such a prestige and position in your State that none of your courtiers or officers can overlord them or bring harm to them. Let judiciary be above every kind of executive pressure or influence, above fear or favour, intrigue or corruption. Take every particular care of this aspect because before your appointment this State was under the sway of corrupt, time-serving and wealth-grasping opportunists who were lewd, greedy and vicious and who wanted nothing out of the State but a sinful consent of amassing wealth and pleasures for themselves.

Then comes officers of your State. You must supervise their work. They must be appointed after a careful scrutiny of their capabilities and characters. These appointments must be made originally on probation without any kind of favouritism being shown or influence being accepted otherwise tyranny, corruption and misrule will reign in your State. While selecting your officers take care to select experienced and honourable persons, members of respectable families who had served Islam during its early days because these are usually of noble character and good repute. They are not greedy and cannot be easily bribed. They mostly have before them the ultimate result of their thoughts and their deeds. Keep them also well-paid so that they may not be tempted to lower their standard of morality and may not misappropriate the cash of the State which they hold in their trust and even if after being paid handsomely they prove dishonest, then you will be right to punish them. Therefore, keep a careful watch over their system of work and rule. You may also appoint trustworthy and honest men to keep a watch over the activities of these officers. The knowledge that they are being watched secretly will keep them away from dishonesty, misrule, malpractices and tyrannizing the subjects. Protect your

government from dishonest officers. If you find any of them dishonest and your confidential intelligence service submits acceptable proofs of his dishonesty, then you must punish him. This may be corporal punishment besides dismissal from service and taking back from him all which he has dishonestly collected. He must be humiliated and must be made to realize the infamy of his wicked deeds. His humiliation and punishment must be given publicly so that it may serve as a lesson and a deterrent to others.

So far as collection of land revenues and taxes are concerned you must always keep in view the welfare of the tax-payers which is of primary importance than the taxes themselves because these taxes and the tax-payers are the original source on which the welfare of your State and its subject depends. A State really lives upon the revenues collected from the tax-payers. Therefore, more importance should be attached to the fertility of land than to the collection of taxes because actual taxable capacity of people rests upon the fertility of the land. The ruler, who does not pay attention to the prosperity of his subjects and fertility of the land but concentrates only on collection of revenues, lays waste the land and consequently ruins the State and brings destruction to the creatures of Allah. His rule cannot last for long.

If the tax-payers complain to you of the heavy incidence of taxation, of any accidental calamity, of the vagaries of the monsoons, of the scarcity and recession of the means of irrigation, of floods or destruction of their crops on account of excessive rainfall and if their complaints are true, then reduce their taxes. This reduction should be such that it provides them opportunities to improve their conditions and eases them of their troubles. Decrease in State-income due to such reasons should not depress you because the best investment for a ruler is to help his subjects at the time of their difficulties. They are the real wealth of a country and any investment on them even in the form of reduction of taxes, will be returned to the State in the shape of the prosperity of its cities and improvement of the country at large. At the same time

you will be in a position to command and secure their love, respect and praises along with the revenues. Will that not be a lasting happiness? Not only this, but your benign rule and humane treatment will so affect them that they will come to your help at the time of your difficulties and you will be able to rely on their support. Your kindness, your clemency and your justice will be a kind of moral training to them, and the contented, happy and prosperous life, for which they will be grateful to you, will be the best support, strongest protection and the greatest treasury for you. Later if such circumstances arise that you find yourself in need of their support, their help, their confidence, their wealth and their man-power, then they will have no grudge against you.

Remember. Mālik! If a country is prosperous and if its people are well-to-do then it will happily and willingly bear any burden. The poverty of the people is the actual cause of the devastation and ruination of a country and the main cause of the poverty of the people is the desire of its ruler and officers to amass wealth and possessions whether by fair or to foul means. They are afraid of losing their posts or positions and sway or rule and want to make the most during the shortest time at their disposal. They never learn any lesson from the history of nations and never pay any attention to the commands of Allah.

You will also have to be very careful about your secretaries. You should entrust your work only to those who are the best among them. Specially the affairs which are of confidential nature and which deal with secrets and security of the State should be entrusted only to men of noble character because men who are intoxicated with power, position and prestige carry on propaganda and speak against the government in public. They openly misbehave towards you and consider themselves so important as to ignore you or your orders in financial transactions essential to the State. They avoid placing necessary papers before you or attending to important correspondence. Particular care should be taken that when the officers make contracts on behalf of the government or sign agree-

ments, these contracts and agreements are not defective or harmful to the State. If they are negotiating any treaties and alliances they do not overlook or forsake the interests of the State or if they find the State in a weak and embarrassing position on account of unfavourable terms of treaties or due to intrigues, they should be able to find sensible ways out of them. See that they know and realize their proper place and rank, because he who does not realize his place and position will never understand those of others.

One more thing about these officers: You must remember not to select them for very important posts and not to trust them completely, simply because you have found them honest, diligent, trustworthy and intelligent, and have formed a good opinion about them because there are some people who, when it suits them, pretend honesty, diligence and fidelity and can put on the garb of piety and virtue and thus find their ways in the hearts of the rulers, though actually they are neither honest nor diligent nor wise nor sagacious. Therefore, you must always look to the record or reputation of the services of such men during previous regimes. More importance should be attached to their good reputation. This kind of selection and supervision will prove that you are faithful to Allah and that you wish your Imam well.

Then you must appoint one officer as the Head of each important branch of your government. He should have knowledge and wisdom enough to cope successfully with all the intricate problems of his department and should be diligent enough to cope with extensive work.

Remember well that if there is any defect in your officers and you are tolerating it, then you and only you are responsible for all those evils.

I want to advise you about your businessmen and industrialists. Treat them well, and order your officers to follow the same policy. They may be local businessmen carrying on their trade in certain places or those who send their merchandise from one place to another. There may even be those who import and export goods. Similarly there may be industrialists and manufacturers as well as

industrial labour or men engaged in the handicrafts. They all deserve sympathy, protection and good treatment. They all are the sources of wealth to the country. They provide goods for the consumers. Most of these traders carry and convey these goods from across deserts, seas and over open lands and mountains. Their consignments are brought from distant lands, often from places which are not easy to approach and where usually people do not care or do not dare to go. These businessmen are usually peace-loving people, not given to mischievous disturbances and seditious fomentations. You must look after their interest and must protect them whether they are trading in your cities or towns or whether they are travelling over the countries carrying goods from place to place.

On more thing about these traders and industrialists. While treating them most sympathetically you must keep an eye on their activities as well.

You know they are usually stingy misers, intensely self-centred and selfish, suffering from obsession of grasping and accumulating wealth. They often hoard their goods to get more profit out of them by creating scarcity and by indulging in black-marketing. Such a condition is extremely injurious to the public on the one hand and disgraceful to the ruler on the other.

You must put a stop to all such practices, because the Holy Prophet (peace of Allah be upon him and his descendants) has explicitly prohibited such practices. Remember that trade should go on between the buyers and the sellers according to correct measures and weights and on such reasonable terms that neither the consumers nor the suppliers should have to face losses. But even with all the sympathetic treatments accorded to them and with all the facilities provided to them, if the traders and industrialists carry on hoarding and black-marketing, then you must punish them according to the intensity of their crime.

Then I want to caution you about the poor. Fear Allah about their conditions and your attitude towards them. They have no support, no resources and no opportunities. They are poor, they are destitute and many of them

are cripples and unfit for work. Some of them come out begging and some (who maintain self-respect) do not beg, but their conditions speak of their distress, poverty, destitution and wants. For the sake of Allah, Mālik, protect them and their rights. He has laid the responsibility of this upon your shoulders. You must fix a share for them from *Baytul Māl* (the Government Treasury). Besides this reservation in cash, you must also reserve a share in kind of crops etc. from government granaries in cities where food-grains are stored as are cultivated on State owned land because in these storage the share of those living far away from any particular city is equal to the share of those living near-by.

Let me remind you once again that you are made responsible for guarding the rights of the poor people and for looking after their welfare. Take care that the conceit of your position and vanity of wealth may not deceive you to lose sight of such a grave and important responsibility. Yours is such an important post that you cannot claim immunity from the responsibility of even minor errors of commission or omission with an excuse that you were engrossed in the major problems of the State which you have solved diligently. Therefore, be very careful of the welfare of the poor people. Do not be arrogant and vain against them. Remember that you have to take particular care of those who cannot reach you, whose poverty-stricken and disease-ridden sight may be hateful to you, and whom society treats with disgust, detestation and contempt. You should be a source of comfort, love and respect to them. Appoint a respectable, honest and pious person – a person who fears Allah and who can treat them honourably, order him to find out everything about them and to submit the report to you. Then treat these poor people in such a way that on the Day of Judgement you can plead your case successfully before Allah because of all classes of your subjects this class deserves more of your attention, sympathy and fair-deal.

Though everyone of these poor persons deserves your sympathy and you will have to do justice to his cause to

achieve His Favour, yet you should pay more attention to young orphans and old cripples. They neither have any support nor can they conveniently come out begging. They cannot reach you; therefore, you must reach them.

Remember that the fulfilment of this obligation and duty is considered as a tiresome burden by most of the rulers but to those who desire to achieve His Blessings and to enter into His Realm, even this work seems light and congenial. They bear it happily, dutifully and sincerely. They find pleasures in it and they believe in the promise made by Allah.

Out of your hours of work, fix a time for the complainants and for those who want to approach you with their grievances. During this time you should do no other work but hear them and pay attention to their complaints and grievances. For this purpose you must arrange public audience for them and during this audience, for the sake of Allah, treat them with kindness, courtesy and respect. Do not let your army and police be in audience hall at such time so that those who have grievances against your regime may speak to you freely, unreservedly and without fear. All this is a necessary factor of your rule because I have often heard the Holy Prophet saying, "That nation or regime, where the rights of the depressed, destitutes and suppressed are not guarded and where mighty and powerful persons are not forced to accede these rights, cannot achieve salvation". You must remember that in those audiences the most common men will gather. Therefore, if you find them misbehaving, becoming unmannerly or if you feel that their talk is irrelevant, tolerate them; do not be rude and do not insult them, so that Allah may be Kind and Merciful to you and may reward you for obeying His commands explicitly. Treat them courteously, hear their grievances patiently and if you are forced to reject their demands then reject in such a way that your rejection may please them as much as your grants.

Then there are certain duties which only you will have to perform and which none of your officers can carry out. Among them are such replies to the letters of your

commissioners and governors as are beyond the jurisdiction or purview of your secretaries. If you find that your officers are not attending as much to the complaints of the public as they should, then you should personally attend to them. You must finish a day's work on that day only because each day will bring its own special work for you. Reserve your best time for prayers to Allah, though every work of the State is the work of Allah, especially, if you are sincere and honest, and if your subjects are happy with your rule and are safe from your oppression.

Among those duties that you are to perform diligently must be your daily prayers. These should be offered sincerely and persistently. You must fix times for this during days and nights. You must tax your bodily strength for this duty though it may tire you. Your observance of prayers should be sincere and faultless and should neither be so long as to tire out those who follow you in these prayers nor so short as to be faulty and defective because amongst those who follow you during the prayers, there may be some sick persons, while others may have to attend to some important work. When the Holy Prophet sent me to Yemen I asked him how to lead the prayers. He advised me, "Offer prayers like a weak and old person and be kind to the Faithful" (so that weak and old persons may follow your prayers easily and happily).

You must take care not to cut yourself off from the public. Do not place a curtain of false prestige between you and those over whom you rule. Such pretensions and show of pomp and pride are in reality manifestations of inferiority complex and vanity. The result of such an attitude is that you remain ignorant of the conditions of your subjects and of the actual causes of the events occurring in the State. You will fail to realize comparative importance of events taking place and may attach great significance to minor events and may slip over important facts, similarly you may attach importance to mediocre or insignificant people and may ignore real men of consequence; and what is more, you may lose the power of distinction between good and bad and may take one for

the other or hopelessly mix up the two. After all a ruler is as much a human being as any other man and he may remain ignorant of facts of which his officers want to keep him in dark (and on which the public may throw light). And as truth may get mixed up with falsehood and may not be distinguished because there are no birth-marks on the forehead of truth that it may be easily differentiated from falsehood, one has to search for facts and sift realities from fictions; only then one can reach the truth. Think for yourself, there are only two categories of rulers and you may belong to one of them. You may either be pious, sincere and diligent ruler, doing the right thing at the right moment and following the principles of justice and equity and you may be protecting rights of others and doing your best to fulfil your obligations, in that case why hide from the public, why draw a curtain around you! Or you may be a miser refusing to be generous to anyone, in that case people will gradually come to know of this trait of your character and will gradually give up asking favours of you. But do not overlook the fact that most of their demands will have nothing to do with your private purse; they will be about the rights of people, obligations of the State, complaints against the State, oppressions, and solicitations of justice; then why try to avoid hearing these requests!

You should never overlook the fact that around the rulers there usually are certain privileged persons (relatives and friends). They may often try to take advantage of their status and may resort to selfishness, intrigues, fraud, corruption and oppression. If you find such people around you then do away with them (however closely connected they may be with you), immediately bring an end to the scandal and clear your surroundings of all such moral and spiritual filth.

You must never give lands in permanent lease with all proprietary and ownership rights to your friends and relatives. You must never allow them to take possession of the source of water-supply or lands which have special utility for the communes. If they get possession of such holdings

they will oppress others to derive undue benefits and thus gather all the fruits for themselves leaving for you a bad reputation in this world and the punishment in the next.

Be fair in dispensing justice. Punish him who deserves punishment even though he may happen to be your near relation or a close friend and even if such an action may give you pangs of sorrow and grief. Bear such a sorrow patiently and hope for the Divine Reward. I assure you that this will bear good fruits.

If on account of your strict measures people get suspicious of your behaving like a tyrant and oppressor, then come out openly before them and explain to them the reasons of your actions and let them see the facts for themselves and realize the truth. This will give training to your mind, will be an act of kindness to the subjects and the confidence thus reposed in them will make them support justice and truth while you will achieve the end you have in view of obtaining their support in the cause of truth.

If your enemy invites you to a Peace Treaty that will be agreeable to Allah, then never refuse to accept such an offer because peace will bring rest and comfort to your armies, will relieve you of anxieties and worries, and will bring prosperity and affluence to your people. But even after such treaties be very careful of the enemies and do not place too much confidence in their promises because they often resort to Peace Treaty to deceive and delude you and take advantage of your negligence, carelessness and trust. At the same time be very careful; never break your promise with your enemy; never forsake the protection or support that you have offered to him; never go back upon your words, and never violate the terms of treaty. You must risk even your life to fulfil the promises given and the terms settled, because of all the obligations laid by the Almighty Allah upon man (in respect to other men) there is none so important as to keep one's promises when made. Though people may differ in their religions and ideologies and may have divergent views upon various problems of State, yet they all agree that promises when

made must be fulfilled. Even the heathens take care to keep the promises made among themselves because they have seen and realized the evil effects of breaking the promises. Therefore, take very particular care of promises made, never go back upon the words given; never go into the offensive without previously challenging and giving an ultimatum. Deception and fraud even against your enemy is a deception against Allah and none but a wretched sinner would dare do that.

Allah has given promises and treaties the high rank of being messengers of peace and prosperity and through His Kindness and Mercy had made them a common desire (of keeping promises) in the mind of all men and a common requirement for all human beings. He has made them such a shelter and asylum that everybody desires to be under their protection. Therefore, there should be no mental reservation, no fraud, no deception and no underlying meanings in between the lines when you make a promise or conclude a treaty. Do not use such words and phrases in your promises and treaties as have possibilities of being translated in more than one way or as may have various interpretations and many explanations. Let there be no ambiguity in them, and let them be clear, precise and to the point. And when once a treaty has been finally concluded, do not try to take advantage of any ambiguous word or phrase in it. If you find yourself in critical situation on account of the treaty made in the cause of Allah, then try to face the situation and bear the consequences bravely and do not try to back out of the terms on that account, because to face such perplexing situations as may gain His Rewards and Blessings is better than to break your promises on that account and earn that about which you feel nervous and for which you will have to answer Allah and which may bring down His Wrath upon you in this world and damnation in the next.

Beware of the sin of shedding blood without religious justification and sanction because there is nothing quicker to bring down the Wrath of Allah, to take away His Blessings, to make you more deserving of His Wrath and to

reduce the span of your life than to shed innocent blood. On the Day of Judgement Allah will first attend to sins of bloodshed carried on by man against man. Therefore, never try to strengthen your power, position and prestige by shedding innocent blood. Such murders instead of making your position strong will not only considerably weaken it but may also transfer your power totally, taking it away from you and entrusting it to somebody else.

If you have intentionally murdered a man then no excuse shall be acceptable to Allah or to me because punishment of such a crime is necessary. And if you kill a man by mistake without any intention or motive of killing or while delivering legal penalties, your whip, sword or hand unintentionally and inadvertently deals a fatal blow because even a forcefully delivered slap or box on the ear may cause death, then do not, on account of your prestige and position, refuse paying the compensation to the heirs.

Beware and do not develop the trait of self-admiration and self-appreciation. Do not get conceited of the good points that you find in your character or good deeds that you have done. Do not let flattery and cajolery make you vain and egoist. Remember that of all the cunning ruses of the devil to undo the good deeds of pious people and to affect their piety, flattery and false praises are the ones on which it relies the most.

Do not boast of the favours and kindnesses you have done to your subjects and do not try to make them realize this; do not think too much of the good that you have done to them, and do not go back upon the promises made. All these three habits are very ugly features of one's character. The practice of boasting over the favours done undoes the good done; the habit of exaggerating and thinking very highly of our good actions will make us lose the guidance of Allah, and the habit of breaking one's promises is disliked both by Allah and by man. The Merciful Allah says, *It is most hateful in the sight of Allah, to say something and do not practise it.* (Surah al-Saf, 61:3)

Do not be hasty and do not precipitate your decisions and actions. When the time comes for an action to be

done, or a decision to be taken, then do not be lazy and do not waste time and do not show weakness. When you do not find a true way to do the thing on hand, then do not persist on the wrong way and when you find a correct solution, then do not be lethargic in adopting it. In short do everything at proper time and in proper way and keep everything in its proper place.

Do not reserve for yourself anything which is a common property of all and in which others have equal rights. Do not close your eyes from glaring malpractices of the officers, miscarriage of justice and misuse of rights because you will be held responsible for the wrong thus done to others. In near future your wrong practices and maladministration will be exposed and you will be held responsible and punished for the wrong done to the helpless and oppressed people. Take care and keep control over your temper, your anger and your desire to be arrogant and vain. Take care of your hands when you are out to deliver punishment and of the sharpness of your tongue when you are saying harsh things. The best way to achieve this is not to be hasty in making remarks and to delay in delivering punishment so, that you may keep your temper under control and are not overexcited. And this you cannot achieve unless you constantly remember that you have to return to Allah and unless His fear overcomes every other sentiment.

You must always try to remember the good and useful things done in the past, activities of a just and benign regime, good deeds done by it, good laws promulgated, instructions and traditions of the Holy Prophet, commands of Allah given in His Holy Book and things that you have seen me doing or have heard me saying. Follow the good actions and advice found therein. Similarly, follow carefully the pieces of advice contained in these orders. Through them I have tried to teach you all that can be taught about a good regime. I have done my duty towards you so that you may not go astray and your mind may not crave for base desires. If it does then you will have no excuse before Allah.

I beseech Allah that by His Limitless Mercy and by His Supreme Might He may grant our prayers that He may lead both of us to the Divine Guidance of achieving His Pleasure, of successfully pleading our cases before Him, justifying our deeds before man, of gaining good repute, of leaving good results of our benign and just rule with everexpanding prosperity and everincreasing welfare of the State and of meeting our ends as martyrs and pious persons, as our return is towards Him only.

May the peace of Allah be upon the Holy Prophet and his chosen descendants.