

Chapter 21

Having suffered continuous oppressions, constant tortures and hardships of the successive exiles at the hands of the worldly-minded men, Abu Dharr left this transient world at Rabzah, but the story of his love for Allah is still living and will last for ever. History is replete with examples, truthfulness and his straightforward and honest speeches are resounding in the hearts of the believers. He is still alive through his character even after his death; and he will remain immortal through the principles he held so dear.

The world knows that he died in the way of Allah. He suffered troubles and hardships in support of truth and in establishing and propagating the principles of Islam in the Islamic State. But it is a pity that the tyrant does not repent of his tyranny. We reproduce this incident here in the word of the translator of the "History" written by Muhammad bin Ali bin A'tham Kufi, a historian of the 3rd century hijri. He writes:

"When the news of Abu Dharr's death reached Uthman, Ammar bin Yasir was present there. Ammar said, "May Allah have His Mercy upon Abu Dharr. Allah! Bear witness that we pray for mercy for him with all our heart and soul. O Allah! forgive him".

As soon as the Caliph heard it he lost his temper and said, "O fool!" You will meet the same fate. Listen to me! I don't feel ashamed on account of the exile of Abu Dharr and his death in the wilderness". Ammar said, "By Allah, this will not be my end".

Hearing this, the Caliph ordered his courtiers, "Push him out, banish him from Medina and send him to the same place where Abu Dharr had been sent. Let him also lead the same life and don't let him come to Medina as long as I am alive".

Ammar said, "By Allah! I prefer the vicinity of wolves and dogs to my stay near you". After that he rose from there and came back to his house.

When the Caliph decided to send Ammar to Rabzah and the news reached the tribe of Bani Makhzum they flew into a rage. They said among themselves that Uthman had crossed the bounds of decency. After that they held a council and thought that it would be better if before taking any step this matter is settled by compromise. With this aim in view they came to Ali. Ali asked them, "Why have all of you come at this time?" They said, "A serious problem is facing us; the Caliph has decided to banish Ammar from Medina to Rabzah. Be kind enough to go to the Caliph and persuade him in suitable words to leave Ammar alone and not to banish him from the city otherwise such a disturbance will stir as would hardly be quelled".

Imam Ali listened to them, consoled them and asked them not to make haste. He told them, "I'll go to the Caliph and will try to settle the matter. I am sure it will be settled amicably. I am fully conscious of the situation. I'll bring him round to your view point.

After this Ali went to Caliph Uthman and said, "O Uthman! You are too hasty in some matters and ignore the suggestions of friends and advisors. Once you turned Abu Dharr out of Medina. He was a very virtuous Muslim, a dignified companion of the Prophet of Allah and the best of immigrants. You sent him to Rabzah where the poor fellow died in solitude. On account of this incident, the Muslims have turned all the more against you. Now I hear that you have decided to banish Ammar as well from the city. This is not a good thing. Have fear of Allah and desist from banishing Ammar from Medina. For Allah's sake don't give such troubles to the companions of the Prophet and let them live in peace". Hearing this Uthman angrily said to Ali. "You should be the first to be banished from the city because it is you who are ruining Ammar and others".

Hearing these indecent words Ali said, "O Uthman! How dare you think like this about me? You will not be able to do it even if you wish it, and if you doubt my words just try. Then you will realize the actual state of affairs and will come to know whom you are facing. And now you say that I am ruining Ammar and others. By Allah all this disorder is from your side. I don't see any fault with them. You are committing such acts as are against the religion and decency. People cannot tolerate them, and are turning against you, and you cannot tolerate these things. You fell offended with everyone and then you cause them trouble. This attitude is far from the ways of the elders". After that he rose from there and went out.

When the people of Bani Makkzum came to Ali, to know what the Caliph had told him in their case, Ali said, "Tell Ammar to remain indoors and not to come out. Allah will save him from the evil designs. The Caliph also came to know of this conversation through somebody and he gave up the idea of exiling Ammar. Zayd bin Thabit said to Uthman, "If the Caliph wishes we can go to Ali to have an exchange of views with him so that the misunderstandings which have cropped up may be removed and the normal relations are restored". The Caliph said, "You are at liberty to do so".

Zayd bin Thabit and Mughyrah bin Ahnas Thaqafi came to Ali, saluted him and took their seats. Then Zayd bin Thabit started praising Ali and said, "Nobody in the world holds that nearness, kinship, status, and honour with the Holy Prophet which you have. None could equal you in the support of and priority in Islam. You are the fountain of virtue and source of generosity".

After this eulogy Zayd bin Thabit expressed his real aim and said, "O Ali bin Abi Talib! We had gone to Caliph Uthman. He has made a sort of complaint against you, and has said that you sometimes object to his actions and interfere in matters which he wants to dispose of. So we considered it wise to come to you and explain those things, so that the mutual annoyances and displeasures may be removed, as it will be a matter of joy and pleasure for all the Muslims".

Ali said, "By Allah, so long as I could. I never objected to nor interfered with anything. But, now, matters have come to such a pass that it is not possible to show tolerance or assume silence. I had told him the truth about Ammar which implied his (Uthman's) welfare, safety and expediency. It was my duty which I performed and now it is upto him to do as he pleases".

Hearing this Mughyrah bin Ahnas spoke out. "O Ali! You should agree to what the Caliph says or does, whether you are convinced of it at heart or not. You should consider the obedience to his orders imperative, because he has control over you and you do not have control over him. He has sent us to you only to testify what you say after which he may be considered excused for whatever he says about you".

"Having heard Mughyrah's words Ali got angry and said, "By Allah he whom you support will never be honoured and he whom you set in motion, will never be at rest. Be off from me".

Mughyrah was dumbfounded at what Ali said, and he could not utter a word any more. Seeing this Zayd bin Thabit said, "O Ali! Mughyrah talks nonsense. He has said these things of his own accord. By Allah, we have not come to you to bear witness, nor is it our intention to criticize you or to object to what you say. We wanted to open the door of mutual good will and reconciliation and that was the reason for our coming here. We request you to think over it. Ali expressed his pleasure and Zayd bin Thabit went back.

It has been narrated above how Ali protested to Uthman. It goes without saying that Uthman's excesses had made the companions of the Holy Prophet awfully worried and distressed. They had already become disgusted with Uthman when they heard of Abu Dharr's sufferings. This episode caused great annoyance to the Muslims of all classes. As a consequence of it, people began to criticize the Caliph individually and collectively.

In this connection, Zubayr bin al-'Awam, a companion of the Prophet went to Uthman and said, "Had

Umar taken a promise from you that you would not impose children of Abi Mu'it on the people?" The Caliph said, "Yes, he had taken that promise from me". Zubayr said, "Why did you, then, appoint Walid Din Uqbah, Governor of Kufah?" The Caliph said, "I have done it just as Umar bin Khattab had granted the Governorship of Kufah to Mughyrah bin Shu'bah. I had, of course, appointed him the Governor of Kufah but when his conduct became anti-Islamic, that is, he started drinking wine and committing adultery, I deposed him and appointed another man in his place". Then Zubayr said, "Why did you appoint Mu'awiyah as Governor of Syria?" The Caliph answered, "I appointed him Governor of Syria according to the views of Umar bin Khattab because before me it was he who had appointed Mu'awiyah the Governor of Syria". Again he asked him, "Why did you rebuke the companions of the Prophet, although you are not superior to them in any way?" Uthman said, "I did not speak ill of you. What does it matter if I spoke ill of others?" He, then asked, "Why did you say that the recitation of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud was bad, when he had learnt the recitation of the Holy Qur'an from the Prophet? Besides, why did you oppress him? You got him beaten so much that he fainted". The Caliph said, "He used to utter such sentences as could not be tolerated". Again he asked, "Why did you kick Ammar bin Yasir and got him beaten so much that he developed hernia?" Uthman said, it was because he used to incite people against me".

Zubayr then asked him, "Why did you exile Abu Dharr and threw him into a place which was desolate and without a tree. The poor fellow died in a state of helpless despair. O Uthman! Did you not know that the Prophet of Allah considered him a great friend of his, and said that there is no one more truthful than Abu Dharr between the heavens and the earth? Did you not know that the Prophet of Allah did not tolerate his separation and whenever he was away from him, he used to go out in search of Abu Dharr?" Uthman bin Affan answered, "He used to instigate the Syrians against me, defamed me and disclosed my faults to the people".

Zubayr then asked, "Why did you turn Malik Ashtar and his companions out of Kufah, and why did you separate them from their families?" Uthman said, "They used to create disturbances in Kufah and disobey my Governor, Sa'id bin 'Aas". At this Zubayr bin 'Awam said, "O Uthman! Your actions are not justified. You did not think against whom you are taking such steps. The facts you mentioned did not warrant that you should have subjected the most revered companions of the Prophet to such tortures. O Uthman! If you allow me, I can point out to you your actions which contravened the very tenets of faith. I insist that you should fear Allah and should not be beside yourself on account of the Islamic State of which you are the Head, otherwise the day is not far off when you will get the retribution of your actions in this very world. This punishment will be in addition to the punishment which you will get in the Hereafter".

After the tragic death of Abu Dharr when the nobles of Egypt came to Medina to seek a remedy for their grievances and went into the masjid of the Holy Prophet, they saw there a gathering of the Muhajirs and the Ansar. They saluted them and were saluted in return. The Muslims who were gathered there asked

the Egyptians, "Why have you come over here from Egypt?" They explained to them the reason for their undertaking such a long journey. They said that the Governor who had been appointed in Egypt was utterly incompetent and mean".

The Egyptians however, went to the door of Caliph Uthman and sought permission for an audience. They got the permission and went in and after paying their respects said, "O Uthman! We have been persecuted by your Governor. The acts which he is committing are simply heart-rending, painful and saddening. O Caliph! Allah has given you abundant wealth. Be thankful to Allah, have a strict watch over your functionaries and make the welfare of the masses your aim. We have not only brought you complaints against your Governour, but we also protest that the things being done by you are extremely troublesome."

Uthman said: "Just tell me what these things are". The answered: "You called back Hakam Ibn 'Aas to Medina again, although the Prophet had exiled him from Medina to Ta'if for good, and Abu Bakr and Umar had respected his decision ion their respective regime. You tore the Holy Qur'an into pieces and got it burnt into ashes. You have given control of your kinsmen, the rain-water which was meant for the use of the masses and the people have been deprived of its benefits. You have banished some companions of the holy Prophet from Medina. You want people to follow you under all circumstances whether what you do is in conformity with the laws of faith or otherwise.

O Uthman! Listen; we tell you openly that we will follow you faithfully if you tread a right path and if you persist ion what you are doing at the moment, we will be obliged to throw off the yoke of your allegiance and consequently both of us will definitely be ruined.

"O Uthamn! Allah knows everybody's condition. Every Muslim must fear Him. Listen! The relations between the ruler and the ruled are very delicate. The ruler must fear Allah and should desist from doing things which are against the commands of Allah. We have said what we wanted to say. Now it is up to you to do as you like".

Hearing this Uthman inclined his head forward and after remaining silent for quite some time said, "For the present I do not want to give explanation to your objections because they are so many but I can simply say about Hakam bin 'Aas that the Prophet of Allah had not got offended with him due to some of his indecent and improper actions and that is why he had expelled him from the city. Now, when I became Caliph I called him back in view of our kinship. Tell me if the people of Medina have any grievance against him, I will definitely call for an explanation from him.

Historians say that when people directed at Uthman a volley of objections about some matters he decided to think over those things and in that connection he wrote to all the governors of the dominion to ask the people to come to Medina and make direct complaints to him against the governors. As soon as these letters reached the governors, complaints from all quarters of the dominion started coming to

Medina in succession.

The first to come were the people from Kufah, Basrah and Egypt. From Kufah Malik bin Ashtar Nakha'i in the company of one hundred people, from Basrah Hakam bin Heil with two hundred and fifty people, and from Egypt four hundred people including Abu Umar bin Badil, Wahhab bin Waraqa Khuza'i, Kanana bin Shir al-Hammi and Sa'id bin Hamran Muradi reached Medina.

After their arrival in Medina those Muhajirs and Ansar who were disgusted with the behaviour of Uthman and were very much distressed and sad owing to his wrong doings, joined them, and all of them decided by mutual consent that if Uthman thought over those points which they had presented before him and gave correct and satisfactory answers, they would follow him, but if he gave evasive replies as was his wont, they would depose him and make some able and noble man Caliph in his place.

When the informer conveyed this news to Uthman he very much repented and admitted that he had committed a great blunder in calling them to Medina. After seriously thinking over the matter however, came to conclusion that he should not see them. This was his wrong decision, but he took it, hid himself in the house and got the gates closed from inside.

When the people reached the gate of Uthman's palace, he started a dialogue with them from the roof of his house. He said, "Which action of mine do you consider wrong? Rest assured that I will accept every demand of yours and will do as you say. Don't be worried, I won't let you feel aggrieved in anyway".

Those people said, "You have made rainwater unlawful for the people and have given it to your relatives instead. The Caliph said, "Don't feel perturbed. Listen to me carefully. I have stopped water because I have reserved it for the camels which have come to me in charity, but if you want me to allow it for all the people I have no objection to it".

They said, "You have torn countless copies of the Qur'an and got them burnt. This is quite in contravention of the Islamic laws". The Caliph replied, "As there had been many versions of it I compiled one Qur'an and destroyed all other copies". They said, "Why did you not bury them instead of setting fire to them?"

They said, "Why did you not accompany the Holy Prophet in the Battle of Badr and why did you not participate in it?" He answered, "At that time, my wife was ill and I was busy in nursing her". They said, "Why did you not participate in Bay'atur Rizwan (allegiance promised to the Prophet at the place of Rizwan)?" He answered, "I had gone out at that time". They asked, "Why did you run away leaving the Holy Prophet alone in the Battle of Uhud?" He replied, "I had run away of course, but this sin of mine had been forgiven. So there should be no questioning about it now".

They said, "You have banished many companions of the Prophet who suffered great hardships in exile.

Some of them were such as were highly revered and dignified. You expelled them from their homes and entrusted their affairs to such inexperienced young men and wicked people who made lawful for themselves bloodshed and forbidden wealth. O Uthman! Among those exiled people was also the companion whom the Prophet loved very dearly, and about whom he said that Allah also loved him and that Allah had ordered the Prophet to love him. You know whenever Abu Dharr went somewhere the Prophet himself used to go out in search of him. You sent him to a desolate desert and there he died of hunger and thirst. What explanation can you give for this misdeed of yours".

Uthman said, "I banished these people from their hometown when they began to incite people against me. I feared that they would create dissension and discord. Leave it to Allah if you consider it my sin. Now about those people who are still in exile I say that you can call them back through somebody if you so wish. I have no objection".

They said, "The tyranny that you have let loose upon Ammar cannot be forgiven. Why did you get him beaten so much that he developed hernia and is still lying sick". The Caliph said, "He criticized me and gave publicity to my defects openly".

They said, "Why did you distribute the money of the Public Treasury among your kinsmen and made them rich? The poor starve and your relatives live in affluence". He answered, "Umar bin Khattab also used to do the same. He gave more to one who was capable". They said, "He did not practise nepotism so much as you did. You gave all the money to your own relatives. Is merit confined to your family only? Were Salman, Miqdad, Ammar, Abu Dharr etc. not competent so as to be deprived of grants and allowances? You have squandered the money and wasted the wealth of the Muslims". Uthman said, "If you think so, calculate the amount payable by me. I will pay up the money gradually and deposit it in the Public Treasury.

After that the Caliph talked in soft words and cringed before them, and at that time those people went away. The Caliph was not satisfied even after they had left. He knew that those people would attack him shortly. Therefore, he called Abdullah bin Umar and consulted him. He advised him to call Ali and ask him to calm those people. He was sure that they would follow Ali's advice.

The Caliph called Ali through a special messenger and explaining to him the whole thing desired him to pacify the people. Ali promised him to do accordingly and coming to the people said to them, "It is better to be cool-hearted". They were very much angry. They said, "We hold you in high esteem, but we cannot tolerate the outrages and excesses of Uthman". According to A'tham Kufi, Ali stood surety and said, "Don't be worried, compromise is better than dispute". After that Ali went to Uthman with the leaders of those groups. After a lot of argumentation they concluded a compromise and Uthman wrote down the following agreement, which we quote here in the words of the translator of Tarikh A'tham Kufi:

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

On behalf of Uthman, this document is given in writing to the people of Basrah, Kufah and Egypt who have objected to my actions, and I accept that from now onwards I will act upon the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet, will not ignore the will of the people and will avoid disputes. I will call back the people who have been banished from their hometown and will return to the people their confiscated grants. I will depose Abdullah ibn Sa'd ibn Abi Sarah from the Governorship of Egypt and will appoint a man whom the Egyptians like".

The Egyptians said, "We want that Muhammad bin Abi Bakr bin Abi Quhafah should be appointed our ruler". Uthman said, "Yes, that will be done". In short, Ali, was held surety to all these matters and the evidences of Zubayr bin al-'Awam, Talhah bin Abdullah bin Umar, Zayd bin Thabit, Sohayl bin Hanif, and Abu Ayyub bin Zayd, were recorded and their seals were affixed. The last sentence was, "This document was written in the month of Ziqad'ah 35 A.H.". After that Ali and all the people left the place.

Historians say that when Uthman gave a written document of governorship to the Egyptians they left Medina for Egypt happy and satisfied. Accompanied by Muhammad bin Abi Bakr (son of the First Caliph) they were going along their way stage by stage till, according to Ibn Qutaybah and Atham Kufi, they had traversed three stages or had covered a distance of three nights, when they caught sight of camel-rider going hastily towards Egypt. Muhammad Bin Abi Bakr ordered him to be arrested and brought to him. People rushed up and brought him. Muhammad asked him, "Where are you coming from, and where are you going to?" He said, "I am coming from Medina and am going to Egypt". They asked him why he was going to Egypt. He replied that he had a personal business. As they had become suspicious they asked him if he had any letter. He denied it. Muhammad bin Abi Bakr ordered him to be searched. When a search was made no letter could be found. Muhammad said, "Search his leather bottle". When the bottle was emptied of water they found a letter in a ball of wax. When they unfolded it, they discovered that the letter was written from Uthman with his seal on it and addressed to the Governor of Egypt; Abdullah bin Sa'd bin Abi Sarah.

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

I, the servant of Allah, Uthman order you (Abdullah bin Sarah) that as soon as Umar bin Badil Khuza'i reaches you, you should behead him, and cut the limbs of 'Alqamah bin Adis, Kananah bin Bashir, and 'Urwaisi so that they die rolling and wriggling in their blood. Then get their dead bodies hanged by the trees at crossroads. Ignore the orders written in my hand, which Muhammad bin Abi Bakr carries to you, and if possible kill him with some design. Stick to your post with confidence. Do not fear anything and rule over Egypt".

Muhammad bin Abi Bakr and the other dignitaries of Egypt got astonished to read this letter and said, "What a sound agreement has been concluded! How sincerely the vow has been made and how faithfully the word has been kept! What would have happened if we had reached Egypt and this slave

had reached earlier!"

In short they thanked Allah that they had escaped the danger, and returned to Medina in great haste. There they collected all the companions of the Prophet and read out the letter of Uthman bin' Affan before them. .

After listening to the contents of the letter and discovering the real fact, no inhabitant of Medina remained sympathetic to the Caliph. Strong revolt stirred up and all people began to talk openly against the Caliph. Hearts were filled with excitement and on account of this cunningness everybody got disgusted with the rule of the Caliph. Those people (according to al-Fakhri) who had heard Ayesha's sentence "Kill this Jew Uthman" and those people who (according to Atham Kufi) had become fed up and extremely sad, because their elders had been tortured, got ready to fight.

Bani Salim were enraged because of Abdullah bin Mas'ud, Bani Makhzum were excited owing to the tragic incident that had occurred to Ammar bin Yasir and Bani Ghifar had been infuriated on account of the treatment meted out to Abu Dharr Ghifari. In other words, these tribes revolted because of Uthman's behaviour in relation to their leaders and became so much inflamed that they could not think of anything except to kill Uthman.

Under these circumstances all tribes including the Egyptians resolved to see Ali at first, because he had stood surety for them and had signed the document in that capacity. So all of them came to Ali and presented before him the intercepted letter of the Caliph. As Ali read the letter and came to know of its contents he felt highly shocked. He said in great surprise, "I am very astonished. What has Uthman done?" After that he went to Uthman with that letter and putting it before him he said, "Read it". When Uthman had gone through it Ali said, "I am at a loss to understand what to do in your case. You have played havoc. I had made these people agreeable at your instance. Now you have done what is unbecoming of a Muslim. I am sorry that you did not even realize the difficulty with which I had removed their antagonism for you. You know that they had started for their homeland fully satisfied and happy on account of their confidence in me. O Uthman! I thought the matter had been settled once for all. I thought that enmity was removed and the Muslims got rid of this dispute. But alas! You yourself ruined the already settled case. O Uthman! Tell me what kind of letter is this? Who is the writer? What kind of act is it? What opinion will the world form about this unbecoming act? What will the world think of this fraud and design?"

Uthman said, "O Abul Hasan! By Allah, I did not write this letter, not did I order anybody to write it, nor did I ask my slave to go to Egypt. I am quite ignorant of this case". Ali asked. "Is this camel yours?" He replied, "Yes". Ali again asked, "Is the seal of this letter yours?" Uthman replied, "Yes". Ali said, "The hand-writing resembles that of your scribe. The seal is yours. The slave is yours and the camel is yours; even then you say that you do not know anything". The Caliph said, "It is possible that I was not

informed, and the letter was written and despatched". Anyway, Ali left that place after this conversation.

At last, the Caliph delivered an address in the central Masjid and tried to explain his position regarding the letter. People said, "All right! We suppose that you have not written this letter. But it is established that it has been written in the hand of your scribe, Marwan. The seal is yours. The camel is yours. The slave is yours. Now we ask you to go back to your palace and hand over Marwan to us". The Caliph said, "No, it will never be".

A great disturbance arose after this talk. According to A'tham Kufi fighting broke out and the masjid turned into an arena, so much so that Uthman became unconscious on account of his being stoned. He was then removed to his home.

Now the time approached when those people, who were ordered by Uthman to be killed in Egypt decided to carry out the orders of Ummul Mo'minin, Ayesha, the daughter of Abi Bakr, which she was giving constantly with the words, "Kill this Jew, Uthman. He has become an apostate". So the people surrounded the house of the Caliph. Al-Fakhri writes that as soon as the house was besieged by the rebels Ayesha left Medina for Mecca and Caliph Uthman was killed by the people, under the leadership of her brother Muhammad bin Abi Bakr.

According to Tarikh Abul Fida, Uthman was killed on 18th Zilhajjah 35 A.H. His Caliphate lasted for about thirteen years. His body remained unburied for three days because his enemies prevented his burial. According to Ibn Jarir Tabari the dead body of Uthman lay for two days and nobody could dare bury him. The historian A'tham Kufi writes that the dead body of Uthman could not be buried for three days and remained unguarded till the dogs took away one of his legs. After that Hubayr bin Mut'im Taujeer bin Mut'im and Hakim bin Hizam went to Ali and said, "Please try to get the dead body buried somehow". Accordingly under threats from Ali arrangement were made to bury the dead body. But the people could not agree in any way to bury it in the graveyard of the Muslims. At last his dead body was buried in Hash Kaukab, the graveyard of the Jews.

After that the same historian writes that this event took place on the 17th Zilhajjah, 35 A.H. on Friday after the Asr prayers. Uthman's age at that time was eighty two years. When the news of this event reached 'Ayesha the Mother of the Faithful, at Mecca and she came to know that Uthman had been killed by the distinguished companions of the Holy Prophet she was overjoyed and said, "Allah gave him the retribution for his deeds. I thank Allah He punished him appropriately". (Tarikh 'Atham Kufi, Tarikh Al-Imamah vas Siyasah, vol. 1, Tarikh al-Fakhri, Tarikh Abul Fida, Tarikh Tabari etc.)

In short, Uthman was killed only three years after the tragic death of Abu Dharr. If you think carefully, his murder was occasioned by those very acts from which Abu Dharr asked him to desist. If Uthman had accepted the counsels of the revered Abu Dharr, he would not have faced this day, and such calamities

would not have fallen on him and Abu Dharr also would not have been thrown into seclusion at Rabzah where he died a tragic death.

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