

Introduction: Profiles of The Benevolent Companions of The Prophet (S)

Abu Dharr (r.a.)

Abu Dharr was his patronym and the given name was Jundab bin Junada. He belonged to the tribe of Bani Ghaffar of Arabia. There are recorded traditions to prove that after the Infallibles of the Prophet's Family, the most exalted amongst the companions were Salman, Abu Dharr and Miqdad.

The traditions of the Holy Ahl-ul-Bayt bear witness that after the demise of the Holy Prophet (S), most of the companions turned apostate. But Salman, Abu Dharr and Miqdad were amongst the small group of steadfastly dedicated followers of the Prophet (S) and his family. It is another matter that many of the apostates came to the right path later on and owed allegiance to Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali bin Abi Talib (as).

The Qualities of Salman, Abu Dharr And Miqdad

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) says that Amir'ul-Mu'mineen, 'Ali (as), said to Salman, "O Salman! Call at the door of Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, to give to you a portion of the gift that she has received from the *Janna* {the Heaven}. Salman went to the door and made his request. The Lady said, "Three Houris came from the Heaven and brought gifts in three containers. One Houri, whose name was Salma, said that Allah has created her for Salman, the second Houri said that she was Zara and was earmarked for Abu Dharr and the third was named Maqdooda and was created for Miqdad!"

After this conversation Lady Fatima (as) gave to Salman a portion of the gift received from the Heaven. The material was so fragrant that wherever he went with it, the people asked him what material he was carrying that similar fragrance they had never experienced in their lives. Reliable books of both the Schools have it on record that the Prophet (S) has said that there is none more truthful than Abu Dharr on the earth and under the sky!

One person expressed his doubt to Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) about this Tradition that Abu Dharr couldn't possibly be more truthful than Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali bin Abi Talib (as).

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) asked the person if he was aware when and under what circumstance the Prophet (S) made this remark about Abu Dharr?

When the man replied in negative, the Imam (as) said, "Some persons went to the Prophet (S) and complained that Abu Dharr was attributing incomprehensible phenomena to Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali bin Abi Talib (as). At this point the Holy Prophet (S) mentioned about the truthfulness of Abu Dharr"

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) also told to the person that comparisons between the Infallible and the fallible persons should not be made.

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) has also said that once, when Abu Dharr reached the presence of the Prophet (S), he found him deeply engrossed in conversation with Dahia Kalabi, another companion. Abu Dharr quietly walked away intending not to disturb the conversation. In fact it was the Angel Gabriel in the guise of Dahia Kalabi who was visiting the Prophet (S). Gabriel expressed his surprise that Abu Dharr went away without greeting the Prophet (S).

He also mentioned that one of the supplications of Abu Dharr was a topic of discussion amongst the angels in the Heaven. When Gabriel took leave and Abu Dharr visited the Prophet (S), the Prophet (S) said, "O Abu Dharr! Why did you go away so quietly even without greeting me!"

Abu Dharr replied, "O Prophet! I found you so engrossed in conversation with Dahia Kalabi that I thought you were discussing some confidential matters and it was not discreet to disturb your talk." The Prophet (S) asked Abu Dharr, "Recount to me the supplication which you recite regularly. The Angel Gabriel, who was with me in the guise of Dahia Kalabi, told me that Abu Dharr walked away without greeting me and also mentioned that his supplication is the matter of discussion amongst the angels in the Heaven!"

Hearing this, Abu Dharr recited the following supplication:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ الْإِيمَانَ بِكَ، وَالتَّصَدِيقَ بِنَبِيِّكَ، وَالْعَافِيَةَ مِنْ جَمِيعِ الْبَلَاءِ،
وَالشُّكْرَ عَلَى الْعَافِيَةِ، وَالْغِنَى عَنْ شِرَارِ النَّاسِ.

"O Allah, grant me faith in you, and belief in Your Prophet, and safety from all calamities, and thankfulness for wellness, and independence from evil humans."

A reliable tradition of the Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) mentions that after the passing away of the Prophet (S) it is obligatory on the followers of the Faith to love the Companions who steadfastly followed the religion without any dissent or innovation. Amongst these steadfast persons were Salman Farsi, Abu

Dharr Ghiffari, Miqdad bin Aswad Kindi, Ammar bin Yassir, Jabir bin Abdallah Ansari, Abdallah bin Samit, Ibada bin Samit, Abu Ayoob Ansari, Hudhaifa bin al Iman, Abul Hasheem, Sahl bin Hanif, Khazeema bin Sabit, Abu Saeed Khadri etc.

Bin Babawaih narrates from Abdallah bin Abbas that one day the Prophet (S) was sitting in the Qiba Mosque with his Companions. He said, "The first person who enters the door of the Mosque will be destined for the Heaven." Hearing this, some companions got up to leave and grasp the privilege of entering the mosque first. The Prophet added, "many persons will enter this mosque and everyone will try to preempt the others, but the one amongst them who informs about the ending of the month of *Azur?* will be destined for the Heaven!"

Abu Dharr entered the Mosque along with the other persons. The Prophet (S) asked the gathering about the current month of the Roman Calendar. Abu Dharr replied that it was the end of the month of *Azur?*. The Prophet (S) said that he was aware of the fact but he wished to impress on the gathering that Abu Dharr was destined for the Heaven.

The Prophet (S) further added that this Heavenly person will be banished by the people because of his profound love for my family and that he would spend the rest of his life in a desolate place and die a lonely and hapless death! The people of Iraq would give him a burial taking pity on him. These persons too will be in the Heaven that has been promised by Allah to the benevolent.

Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) also said that there are ten stages of faith. He added that Salman was on the tenth stage, Abu Dharr on the ninth, and Miqdad on the eighth stage!

Abu Dharr Accepts Islam

Muhammad bin Yaqoob Kulaini narrates that Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq (as) told to a person about the manner in which Salman and Abu Dharr accepted Islam. He further said that one day Abu Dharr was grazing his sheep in his hamlet, Marka, which is situated near Mecca. While the sheep were grazing a wolf attacked them and Abu Dharr scared it away with his staff. The wolf repeated its attempt to attack the sheep when Abu Dharr ran after it shouting, "you cruel creature! Why are you not running away!" The wolf miraculously uttered, "Am I cruel or the people of Mecca who are perpetrating cruelty after cruelty on the Prophet (S)!"

Abu Dharr, when he heard this from the dumb animal, started to walk towards Mecca. When he reached Mecca it was very hot there and he was uneasy with acute thirst. He drew some water from the spring of Zam Zam. To his surprise Abu Dharr found that the container was having milk instead of water. He drank it, quenched his thirst, and understood that this was the first miracle of the truth of Allah's Prophet (S) that he was experiencing. When he proceeded towards the compound of the Ka'ba he found some people talking irreverently about the Prophet (S) of Allah.

At this juncture arrived a person and noticing him the group got scared and became quiet. When the person started to leave the place, Abu Dharr too followed him. Catching up with the person Abu Dharr asked, "Who are you?" He replied, "I am Abu Talib, the chief of Mecca. Have you any work with me?" Abu Dharr said, "I wish to meet the Prophet of Allah (S) to accept Islam." Abu Talib (r.a.) said, "Tomorrow you can come with me to meet him at the same time as now." The next day Abu Dharr reached the place at the appointed time, Abu Talib (r.a.) joined him and they both proceeded to meet the Prophet (S).

Abu Dharr (r.a.) says that Abu Talib (r.a.) took him to a house where Hamza (r.a.) was present. He greeted him and Hamza (r.a.) returned his greeting and inquired about the purpose of his visit. When Abu Dharr informed to him the purpose of his visit, Hamza (r.a.) said that there is one God, *Allah*, and Muhammad (S) is his Prophet. Abu Dharr rejoined bearing witness that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad (S) is His Messenger (*la ilaha ill Allah Mohammad ur rasool Allah*). Then Hamza (r.a.) took him to another house where Ja'far (r.a.) was there. He too asked Abu Dharr the same questions and was given similar replies. Then Ja'far Tayyar (r.a.) took Abu Dharr (r.a.) to the house of Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali bin Abi Talib (as). There too Abu Dharr (r.a.) bore witness about Allah and his Prophet (S) thrice.

Now Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) took Abu Dharr (r.a.) to the presence of the Prophet (S). He greeted the Prophet (S) who kindly asked him to sit and bear witness to the unity of Allah and that Muhammad (S) is Allah's Prophet. Now the Prophet (S) said, "O Abu Dharr! You must immediately return to your place that your paternal cousin has expired and you are the soul inheritor of his estate. Go home and take charge of the affairs of your estate. You must join us when we summon you." Therefore after the migration (*Hijra*) Abu Dharr had the honor of meeting the Prophet (S) in Medina.

Salman Accepts Islam

Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (as) says that some companions visited the grave of the Prophet (S) one day and were busy conversing with each other. Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) asked Salman Farsi, "O Salman! How did you accept the Faith of Islam?" Salman replied, "O Amir'ul-Mu'mineen! Since it is obligatory on me to reply to your queries, I am narrating to you the circumstances under which I accepted the Faith. I am a native of the city of Shiraz and my profession was farming. My parents used to love me very much.

One day when I visited a hermitage along with them I heard a sound as if someone was saying there is no God but Allah, 'Isa (as) is the Spirit of Allah and Muhammad (S) is the Messenger of Allah (*la ilaha il Allah 'Isa Rooh ul Allah Muhammad Rasool Allah*). These words had such profound effect on me that the love of the Prophet (S) got embedded in my entire existence. I instantly abandoned my ancestral belief of worshipping the sun. Hearing this my father got very angry on me and he incarcerated me in a deep well. I was held there for a very long time during which I used to pray to Allah for my deliverance.

One day an old person dressed in a white robe arrived and releasing me from the well took me to a hermit. I expressed to the hermit about my faith. He was very kind to me but one day he told me that he would expire on the following morning I asked him, 'Then what should I do and where should I go to?' The hermit mentioned to me the name of another hermit and his location. He asked me to give his reference when I met the other hermit. I therefore went there and spent quite a while with the hermit till he too expired.

After the hermit's death I continued to live with the other inmates of the hermitage. Those people were in the habit of taking wines with the food and insisted on my partaking of it. When I refused to comply they got angry on me and sold me as a slave to a Jew. This Jew also inflicted lot of hardships on me. In the end he sold me to a lady by the name of Salimia. The lady had an orchard and I was assigned to water the trees. The lady was very satisfied and happy with my work.

One day a group of persons entered the garden. They were having a cloud hovering over their heads. In the group there was the Prophet (S), Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as), Hamza, Zaid bin Haritha, Aqeel, Abu Dharr and Miqdad. I thought that the cloud following a person is the sign of the Prophet (S). But all of them couldn't possibly be prophets. Definitely one of them must be the Prophet (S). I was wondering about this when the Prophet (S) called me up and pushing aside his robe showed to me the Seal of prophet-hood on his back. I instantly fell on his feet but he raised me up with great affection.

Now the Prophet (S) told to Salimia that he wished to buy me from her. She asked for four hundred date palms in exchange for me and said that out of these two hundred should have yellow dates and the other two hundred red dates. The Prophet accepted this deal and asked Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) to gather four hundred seeds of dates.

When Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) completed the task, the Prophet (S) started sowing and Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) went after him watering the planted seeds. As the Prophet (S) sowed the next seed, a full-grown plant emerged from the first laden with fruits. Now, the four hundred date palms were ready, two hundred bearing yellow and the other two hundred bearing the red fruits.

When Salimia saw that her wish had been fulfilled she came up with another condition that she wanted all the palms to bear yellow fruits. Therefore, with Allah's wish Gabriel came and with the touch of his wings, he turned all the palms to bear yellow dates. Now Salimia had perforce to part with Salman. Then the Prophet (S) released Salman and said, "O Rozba! From this day we give you the name of Salman."

Abu Dharr, The Oppressed

'Ali bin Ibrahim narrates that during the battle of Tabook Abu Dharr fell behind the troops because his camel was weak and emaciated. Abu Dharr abandoned the camel and carrying his luggage on his back proceeded forward. When he reached near the group, the people informed the Prophet (S) that someone was seen approaching them from a distance. The Prophet (S) said, "This is Abu Dharr. Fetch

water for him that he might be very thirsty.”

When Abu Dharr reached the group, his thirst was quenched. Abu Dharr then took out a pitcher full of water from his luggage and presented to the Prophet (S). The Prophet (S) asked, “O Abu Dharr! Despite having water with you, you preferred to remain thirsty. What is the reason for this?” Abu Dharr politely replied, “I had obtained this water from a cistern on the way. The water was very sweet and cold. I thought that I must present this water to my Master instead of consuming it myself.” The Prophet (S) replied, “O Abu Dharr! May Allah be kind to you. You must be patient in your lonely journey, lonely death, poverty and helplessness. A group of God fearing persons will perform your last rites and Allah will give you entry to the Heaven.”

Reliable histories are witness that during the Second Caliphate Abu Dharr was banished to Syria. There, Abu Dharr started publicly criticizing Emir of Syria for his actions, which were contrary to the norms of Islam. He also continued to eulogize Amir’ul–Mu’mineen ‘Ali (as) in public. In the mean time the third caliph assumed power when the Emir of Syria (Mu’awiah) wrote to him complaining about Abu Dharr. He also mentioned in his letter that Abu Dharr was critical even of the Caliph. Orders were passed that Abu Dharr be sent to the capital expressly.

In consequence the thoughtless Emir dispatched this great companion of the Prophet (S) tied on to the naked back of a camel. Abu Dharr arrived at the court of the Caliph in an emaciated condition and was the recipient of the following reprimand from the Caliph, “why O Abu Dharr! You are making false allegations against us and praising Amir’ul–Mu’mineen ‘Ali bin Abi Talib (as)?”

Abu Dharr recited a long verse from the Holy Qur’an, the gist of which is that Allah will consign the disobedient persons to the Hell and they should also be warned that Allah is not unmindful of their deeds. The Caliph rejoined in a furious tone, “O Abu Dharr! Now you have so much courage that you are confronting me! What is the act that I have committed against the dictates of Allah and the Prophet (S)?” Abu Dharr said, “Don’t you remember one evening the two of us went to the presence of the Holy Prophet (S) when we noticed that he was very sad and pensive.

When we again went to his presence the next morning we found him very happy and pleasant. When we asked him to relate to us the reason for his changing moods, the Prophet said ‘Yesterday the treasury (*Bayt al Maal*) had four Dirhams. I was concerned that the amount was the share of some deserving person and it had remained undistributed. Today the amount has been given to the deserving. I am now satisfied that the amount has been disbursed.’

“O Caliph of the time! Today you are hoarding 100,000 Dirhams in the *Bayt al Maal* and are looking for arrival of another 100,000 that you can bestow favors on your kin.” Someone said, “Abu Dharr is a liar and the Verses he has quoted are never concerning you (The Third Caliph)”. Therefore Amir’ul–Mu’mineen ‘Ali (as) was called to arbitrate. The Caliph related to Amir’ul–Mu’mineen ‘Ali (as) what had transpired between the parties and asked his opinion whether Abu Dharr was telling a falsehood?

Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as) said, "Have fear of Allah! I have myself heard the Prophet (S) say that there is none more truthful than Abu Dharr on the land and under the sky!"

Abu Dharr cried and said, "It is a pity that you are greedy for wealth and call me a liar. You presume that I have uttered a falsehood concerning the Prophet (S). I am a better person than all of you." Othman asked Abu Dharr, "How do you feel that you are a better person than us?" He replied, "From the day I was separated from my Master (the Prophet) I am wearing the same robe. I have not sold my Faith for the worldly pleasures. To the contrary, you have compromised your Faith for your selfish ends. You have created innovations and squandered Allah's bounty. You shall have to face retribution on the Day of Judgment for your acts!" Othman said tersely, "I shall ask you certain questions under oath!" Abu Dharr replied, "I shall respond to all your questions, whether under an oath or not."

Othman took Abu Dharr into privacy and said angrily, "Look! Because you happen to be a companion of the Prophet (S) I cannot get you executed. But I can definitely banish you. Tell me which town you prefer to live in" Abu Dharr replied, "Mecca, which is the place of birth of the Holy Prophet (S)!" Othman asked, "Which is the place you don't like?" Abu Dharr replied, "Rabdha!" Orders were then issued that Abu Dharr be exiled to Rabdha and that none should accompany him to the place.

But Muhammad Yaqub Kulaini writes that at the time of the departure of Abu Dharr from Medina, Amir'ul-Mu'mineen 'Ali (as), Imam Husayn (as), Imam Hasan (as), Aqeel and Ammar went for some distance with him and advised him to be patient. Imam Husayn (as) told him, "O Uncle! The enemy wanted to deprive you of your Faith, but he didn't succeed! But in the bargain he has lost his own Faith. Allah shall reward you in abundance!"

Abu Dharr Ghiffari reached Rabdha, and lived a lonely existence. He had neither friend nor helper. He had a few sheep in the beginning that died in time. His sons succumbed to the harsh environment of the place and his wife too died. Only one daughter remained with him.

For three long days Abu Dharr remained without any food or sustenance in the desert. He put his head on a mound of sand and expired. Only his four-year-old daughter remained. The child started crying and shouting for help when a caravan of men arrived there. The girl recalling her father's last wish told to the new arrivals, "O travelers! The companion of the Prophet (S) has died and his body is lying for two days without a shroud and grave!"

The daughter of Abu Dharr says that she remained near the grave of her father and continued to offer prayers and fasting, as did the father. She witnessed in her dream one night that Abu Dharr was reciting the Holy Qur'an in his nightly prayers. She asked him, "O father! How has Allah treated you?" He replied, "My daughter! I have arrived in the presence of my Allah. He is happy with me and I am contented. He has given me many bounties. O daughter! Do good deeds and don't let pride overwhelm you."

The history of Asam Koofi records that the persons who attended the burial of Abu Dharr were Ahnaf bin

Qais Tamimi, Saasa bin Sauhan Abdi, Kharja bin Salat Tamimi, Abdallah bin Muslim Tamimi, Bilal bin Malik Muzni, Jareer bin Abdallah Bijli, Aswad bin Yazid al Naqhi, Alqama bin Qais al Naqhi and Malik-il-Ashtar.

Bin Abdul Birr writes in his book, *Al Istiaab*, that Abu Dharr died in 31 or 32H and that Abdallah bin Masood performed his funeral prayer.

The group that attended the last rites of Abu Dharr consisted of the companions of the Holy Prophet (S). The chief of the caravan was Malik al-Ashtar. Hearing the wails of the little girl, he couldn't control himself crying. He reached the body of Abu Dharr and recited a requiem. Malik al-Ashtar was carrying with him a shroud that he had bought for 4,000 Dirhams. He draped the shroud on the body of Abu Dharr for burial.

The gathering raised their hands towards the Heaven and said, "O Allah! This was your good creature! He was a beloved companion of your Prophet (S)! Bless him in the name of Muhammad (S) and his holy Progeny! Punish those who have inflicted hardships on this gentle soul!" The entire gathering said, "Amen!"

The Prophet's Will Concerning Abu Dharr

Sheik Abu 'Ali Tabarsi writes in his book, *Makarim al Akhlaq*, and several other reliable sources relate that when Abu Asad Deelmi went to Rabdha to meet Abu Dharr, he told him that when one early morning he entered the Prophet's Mosques in Medina none other was present with the Prophet (S) except for a copy of the Holy Qur'an and a *hamael* (a miniature compilation of the Holy Book). Being alone with the Holy Prophet (S), he took courage in his hands to ask him, "O Lord of the Universe! Kindly give me such advice that it is advantageous to me in both the worlds."

The Prophet (S) looked at him intently and said, "Abu Dharr! For us you are a member of our family! In my eyes you are a chosen creation of Allah. Listen, and listen with care, remember and act on my advice. "O Abu Dharr! Worship Allah as if you are seeing Him! And if you cannot see Him, then definitely He sees you!"

This tradition of the Prophet (S) is the comprehensive utterance of the Prophet (S) that might require volumes to explain and elucidate. We are trying to dwell on the subject briefly in the steps dealt with in the following chapter. My humble effort may not measure up to the comprehension of the eloquence of the Great Personality, but it is my duty to make an effort. Inshallah!

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