Al-Islam.org
Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project
Published on *Al-Islam.org* (https://www.al-islam.org)

Origins of Deviation

How did Muawiya ascend the ruling stage, and even dare claiming the succession of the Prophet? What happened to the Muslim World to be silent at the assumption of power by an ignoble person like Yazid?

Indeed, it is astonishing to witness the indifference and irresponsibility shown by the vast majority of Muslims as if Islamic values and ideals were totally alien to that society. What had happened to the dynamic forces which had awakened the world, when the Prophet's voice had not yet died away?

Regarding the responsibility of Muslims, he once said, "He who sees a cruel governor, violating Gods laws, breaking his Covenant, acting in contract to the Tradition of the Prophet, doing mischief and intruding upon people's rights, then does not try to change that governor through action or speech, God has promised him a suitable place in Hell".

We all may wonder over the causes of deviation that led to this deplorable situation. We know for sure that Islam is a perfect and practical religion, and there is no doubt of its ability to guide the Muslims to a stable and prosperous life. Therefore, the question of deficiency in its Islamic Message, or the way it was conducted by the Prophet (S) has no place.

Therefore the only possible errors are confined to; the subsequent status of the Muslims, their handling of affairs or their conformity to the Islamic laws; besides the 'natural' obstacles encountered in the sequence of events.

This topic is so large that it cannot be dealt with in this short review; nevertheless, it is important to review it.

It is well-known that the Islamic State vastly extended its borders, embracing huge population sizes. In this short time of conquest, it made cultural assimilation near to impossible; this was coupled with the language difficulties and primitive means of communications and propagation. This caused many Arab tribes to have fought against Islam, after the Prophets departure to the next world, who were under the political influence of Islam.

Needless to say that any real and thorough cultural transformation needs time as a basic factor and a

complete transition from one culture to another might require many generations before the new culture is firmly established.

The second factor in determining any cultural change is the presence of any ideological leadership, especially one that has a deep insight into the message and is potentially ready to sacrifice for its success. Naturally, such a leader is expected to conform by the ideological messages and orders, otherwise the aim of his presence would not be realized.

The Muslims had elected Abu Bakr as the successor to the Prophet and the events which accompanied that election was sadly recorded by all historians. This is by no means an objection to, nor an attack on the ability of the respected companion Abu Bakr (may God be pleased with him). But careful observation leads to the conclusion that Abu Bakr himself remarked that there were other people who were more able than himself for the task.

It is indeed eye-catching, the many incidents and Hadiths in Islamic history, which encourage Muslims to follow and proclaim the leadership of Imam Ali after the Prophet.

In Tafseer Abi Ishaq, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Al-Nisabouri Al-Thaalibi, who died in 337 A.H., gave a commentary on the following verse:

"Your guardians are God, His Prophet, and the believers who pray and give alms while prostrate to God. Regarding those who disobey God, His Prophet and the believers, the party of God are the victors" (***5:58,59***).

He quoted Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari stating, "I heard the Prophet (S) with these ears or would I be deaf, and saw him with these eyes or would I be blind; the Prophet once said, "Ali is the leader of the best believers, and the killer of unbelievers, the victor is he who supports him, and weak who doesn't ".

Abu Dharr added, "One day we were praying with the Prophet, a beggar had entered the mosque. The beggar was requesting people for help but none helped him except Imam Ali. While Imam Ali was offering his prayer, he donated his silver ring by pointing his finger to the poor man and the latter took it filled with joy.

After this incident the Prophet prayed humbly to God and said, "O God, my brother Moses asked You, "O my God, expand my breast; ease my task for me; and remove the impediment from my speech, so that they may understand what I say; and give me a Minister from my family, Aaron, my brother; add to my strength through him, and make him share my task that we celebrate thy praise without stint, and remember thee without stint". And You answered: "Granted is thy prayer, O Moses". "O God I am your servant and Prophet. Expand my breast; ease my task; and give me a Minister from my family, Ali, my brother; add to my strength through him, and make him share my task".

Abu Dharr concluded: "By God, as soon as the Prophet completed his prayer the trustworthy Gabriel

came with the following verses:

"Your guardians are God, His Prophet and the believers who pray and give alms while prostrate to God . . . !" (***5:58, 59***).

Ibn Sinan narrated this incident in Sahih Al-Bukhari and Ibn Abbas narrated this story in Asbab Al-Nuzol by Imam Wahidi. All interpreters of Kanz Al-Umaal held the same opinion of the cause of the revelation of this.

On a different occasion, the Prophet (S) told Imam Ali, "You are to me as Aaron was to Moses, but there is not Prophet after me". But perhaps the most outstanding occasion which sank into people's memories, is the Prophet's speech during his last pilgrimage. Amongst a large congregation of Muslims he declared, "He whoever I am his master, Ali is his master too. O God assist whoever supports him and disgrace those who have enmity towards him".

Indeed, whilst these are only a few of the quotations about Imam Ali, their consistency and the number and variety of people who confirmed the authenticity of the stories leaves no room for doubt that Imam Ali was chosen by God and His Prophet to be the ideological leader after the Prophet's departure. Hence it can be safely concluded that Imam Ali's exclusion from his assigned duty marked the first major mistake. The inevitable consequences were a slow deviation which ended up in a turbulent stream of events, which no one was able to exercise control over.

Abu Bakr's reign lasted approximately two years, which was an eventful epoch. The dangers besieging the Muslims were so great that the very existence of the Muslim community was threatened, only being eliminated by the many sacrifices of the Muslim community.

Umar ibn Al-Khattab was appointed by Abu Bakr as the Caliph, his rule being for ten years. His reign is particularly important because of the vast changes and events which took place during his time. The conquest of vast areas brought enormous wealth to the Muslims, but the way this wealth was handled created complex problems, eventually forcing Umar to admit their grave consequences. Indeed, he tried to reform the laws but it was too late to act, for by that time he was murdered.

Umar ibn Al-Khattab was the first person in charge of Muslim affairs to start uneven donation of provisions among Muslims. He used to prefer some people to others for various reasons, generating social classes and sparking off enmity and rifts within the Muslim society. His policies were also not in conformity with the traditions of the Prophet or even with Abu Bakr's policies.

Umar was sad when he saw the unrest and rifts within the Muslim community, once declaring "I was informed that people have distinct gatherings. When two sit together they talk of the different groupings and separate entities, by God that is harmful to your religion, honour and unity". Realising the cause of this social phenomenon he added, "I used to allure people in order to gain their goodwill by preferring some to others. But if I lived this year, the distribution of wealth will be even among all people as the

Prophet and Abu Bakr used to do."

A rather serious measure taken by the Caliph Umar ibn Al-Khattab was his appointment of six nominees to the Caliphate post. This, it is believed had induced a desire in the nominees to ascend one day to this powerful and honorable position. Since it was only a matter of time for everyone, they were engaged in preparing the way for their own ascents.

Eventually Uthman ibn Affan was chosen by Abdul Rahman ibn Auf to be the next Caliph, after being turned down by Imam Ali. Imam Ali refused to accept the Caliphate post because Abdul Rahman ibn Auf put a condition which meant retaining the status quo and preventing any radical change.

Uthman's policies were resented by the vast majority of Muslims. His monetary policy was the focus point of their resentment, because he donated large amounts of money to his relatives while the rest of the people were left empty handed (Muruj Al-dhahab 2/241 by Al-Masaudi Al-Ansab and Al-Ashraf (5/25,-28,48,52) by Al-Baladhiri).

Indeed, the governors who were assisting in administering the Muslim country had neither ability nor piety and is believed their appointment was because of their kin to Uthman. For instance, Al-Waleed ibn Aqabah ibn Abi Muaeet was appointed to govern Kufa. Al-Waleed was reputed to be a drunkard and when the people's dissatisfaction with his behaviour peaked and Uthman replaced him, it was with Saaid ibn Al-As, who had the famous statement "Iraq is Quraish's garden, we take or leave of it whatever we like" (Muroj Al-dhahab 2/346 by Al-Masaudi).

Muawiya who was governing Damascus and Jordan during the reign of Umar, Uthman added to his state Hams, Palestine, and Jazera. Egypt's governor was Abdullah ibn Abi Sirah, with all of its previous governors being Uthman's relatives. The most striking feature of this bunch of rulers was their contempt for people's rights and dignity, they simply looked at the whole Muslim country as their private property, as demonstrated in Al-Waleed's aforementioned statement.

Moreover the principal treasury at Madina was not utilised in its rightful ways. Many Muslims like the treasurer's trustees, Ammar ibn Yasir, Abu Dharr and similar distinguished companions objected strongly against Uthman"s monetary policies. Uthman's reply to those people was, "We take from the treasury whatever we want inspite of some people's objections".

These policies were not only foreign to Islamic conduct and ideals, but caused tremendous sufferings and hardships to the majority of Muslims. Many responsible Muslims played their role in warning Uthman against these deviations but their advice was in vain. Thus, the situation reached its danger point one day and exploded, resulting in Uthman's murder. This act of violence as I believe could have been avoided by using some peaceful methodology.

The chaotic conditions and the deterioration of the Muslims material and social statuses forced them to rethink their past, present and future. Perhaps it was like a film passing in their minds, reminding them of

previous events which were connected with their present. It is normally the last incident and last speech which remain alive in peoples' memories. Indeed, it was the Prophet's famous speech in Khum during his last pilgrimage which was recalled.

Muslims remembered that significant event where there were more than one hundred thousand Muslims present and the Prophet was briefing the Islamic message to them. Being within the middle of that anxious crowd, listening carefully to every word he (asa.h.f) uttered, and watching every sign he made. The Prophet took Ali ibn abi Talib's hand and raised it while saying "O, people who-ever I am his master, then Ali is his master too. O, God, assist those who support him and disgrace those who do not".

Thus after the cloud of events surrounding Uthman's death settled, the Muslims hurriedly went to Imam Ali (as) calling him to perform his assigned duty, but the abnormal situation existing at that time made the task difficult indeed. Indeed, the very acceptance of his duty during such a situation was not healthy.

Imam Ali's reply to the Muslims was negative. He (as) said "Leave me aside and seek someone else, we are heading at a subject which has many facets and various colours, neither the hearts would rise to, nor the minds would be firm upon. The horizons are black and gloomy while reason is rejected. You should know that my acceptance means what I know will he applied and obeyed. I shall not conform to ones ideas or listen to others reproachment. On the other hand, leaving me aside means I am one of you, listening and conforming to whom you have appointed for your affairs. I am better a minister than commander for you".

In this speech, perhaps, he (as) wanted to gauge peoples' interests and determination. Moreover, he showed his disinterest for power and ruling if that was an aim by itself. But the vast majority of Muslims were determined to see the Prophets' words and will be implemented, and they left no choice to Imam Ali but to accept his rightful role of being the ideological leader to the Muslim community.

Source URL:
https://www.al-islam.org/imam-husayns-revolution-analytical-review-yusuf-fadhl/origins-deviation#comment-0