

Chapter 1

Abu Dharr was one of those companions of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (s), who were pious and freedom-loving and possessed a lofty character, and according to the remark of the Holy Prophet (s), ardently desired by Heaven and the residents of Heaven. He was benefited by the company of the Prophet in the real sense of the word.

Abu Dharr himself says, "My real name is Jundab bin Junadah, but after my embracing Islam the Prophet (s) gave me the name "Abdullah" and this is the name I like most".

Abu Dharr was his kuniyyah (patronymic appellation) after his eldest son Dharr.

Scholars agree that Abu Dharr was the son of Junadah bin Qays bin Saghir bin Hazam bin Ghifar and his mother was Ramlah daughter of Waq'ah Ghifariah. He was an Arab by race and belonged to the tribe of Ghifar. That is why the word "Ghifari" is written with his name.

Abdullah al-Subaiti writes, "When we look at Abu Dharr's biography it seems that he was a light personified. He was the embodiment of qualities of a great man. He had a rare distinction of being endowed with intelligence, understanding, sagacity and wit". In the words of Imam Ja'far Sadiq (a): "He was always immersed in thought and his prayers were based on his reflections about God".¹

The famous Egyptian author Abdul Hamid Jaudatus Sahar, in his book "Al-Ishtiraki az-Zahid", writes. "Once there occurred a severe famine. The chiefs of Ghifar tribe assembled for consultation as to what they should do, because it had not rained since long, Hence, it was a time of great suffering. The animals had become lean and thin and the stores and stocks were all exhausted.

They said to each other, "We do not know why our god (Idol Manat) got offended with us, although we prayed for rain, sacrificed camels in offering and did everything possible to win its favour. The rainy season has now come to a close. There is not a trace of cloud in the sky. There has been no thunder and no shower this time, not even a drop of rain or a drizzle. What do you think? Have we turned perverts that the wrath of our god has befallen us? Why should it feel offended with us when we have made so many sacrifices for its pleasure"?

People began to ponder over the matter and exchanged views. They thought to themselves: "Man cannot interfere with heavenly arrangement. No one can bring clouds and rains from the sky.

This can only be done by "Manat". Hence we do not have any other alternative except that we, men and women, come out for pilgrimage, wailing and praying and beg Manat's forgiveness. It may, perhaps, forgive us and pour down rain to make the earth green after barrenness, so that our poverty is changed to prosperity, pain to pleasure and hardship to ease and comfort".

The whole tribe, therefore, started making preparations for a journey to reach Manat. Those who were sleeping got up, and began to put litters on their camels. Unais (Abu Dharr's brother) also rode his camel and drove her, in order to join the caravan, towards the sea coast, the Mushalsal and Qadid which lie between Mecca and Medina, and where Manat is set up. Unais looked around but could not see his brother. He made the camel sit, ran towards the house. He entered the house calling "Jundab"! "Jundab"! When he saw that Jundab was lying in his bed comfortably, he said;

Unais: Did you not hear the "call" to come out for the journey?

Abu Dharr: Yes, I did. But what should I do when I feel weary, and also I do not want to go on a pilgrimage to Manat either.

Unais: Shut up! Ask the god for mercy. Do you not fear lest the god should hear you and send torment on you?

Jundab: Are you convinced that (Manat) hears our voice and sees us?

Unais: What has happened to you today? Has any genie overpowered you, or have you contracted a disease? Come, feel sorry. It may, perhaps, accept your remorse.

When Abu Dharr started rolling in his bed, his brother said, "Rise! The caravan has moved, and off goes the tribe".

The brothers were busy talking when their mother dropped in and they kept quiet.

Mother: My sons! What is your opinion?

Unais: About what, mother?

Mother: About the rain.

Unais: We agree to your proposal.

Mother: I propose to go to your maternal uncle who is a rich man.

Unais: All right! As you please. May god improve our condition.

Abu Dharr and Unais along with their mother came to their uncle's house. Their uncle entertained them with great hospitality. They stayed there for a long time. Their hardship had now changed to comfort and their pain to pleasure.

When their tribesmen saw that their uncle was very kind to Abu Dharr and Unais and loved them like his own children, they felt jealous of them and started to think out plans by which he may despise them. They kept on thinking and consulting one another, till at last, they decided upon a device and selected a man for their conspiracy.

That man came to the uncle of Abu Dharr and sat down, quiet and downcast. Abu Dharr's uncle asked him, "Yes, how do you do?" That man assumed a sorrowful look and said, "I have come to you for an important business! Had it not been for my affection towards you or out of respect for you, I would not have told you anything. But my loyalty has forced me to do so. I want to unfold what is hidden to you, so that you may see what is happening because I see that favour is rewarded with ingratitude".

Abu Dharr's uncle felt that there was something definitely amiss. He felt much aggrieved and said, "Speak out frankly". The man said, "How should I tell you that when you go out Unais, your nephew sits with your wife and talks to her secretly. I do not know what he talks about".

Unais's uncle said, "This is a false accusation against him, and I cannot believe it in any case". He replied, "We also wished it to be false and a calumny. But I regret to say that it is a fact".

He asked him for a proof of it. The man replied, "The whole tribe can bear witness to it. All have seen him and have the same feeling. If you so desire I can produce countless witnesses from my tribe".

Hearing this, the poor fellow began to think of his honour and prestige. He felt his self-respect injured. That man went out of the house after having bitten him like a serpent. Unais's uncle felt convinced about it. He made constant efforts to regain his peace of mind, but he could not do so. He was very sad and felt anguish and agony day and night. Whenever his nephews happened to come before him he turned his face away. Stillness pervaded the whole house.

When Abu Dharr saw signs of grief on the face of his uncle he asked, "Dear uncle! What has happened to you? I have been observing your changed state for some days. You talk to us very little unusually and remain very thoughtful and depressed".

The uncle answered, "There is nothing unusual".

Abu Dharr said, "No, there is certainly some reason behind it. Please tell me. Perhaps, I may relieve you of your worries or I may share some of your troubles".

He said, "I cannot describe what my tribesmen have told me".

Abu Dharr said, "Please let me know. What have the tribesmen told you?"

His uncle replied. "They say that Unais goes to my wife when I am away from home".

Hearing this Abu Dharr flushed crimson with anger and said, "You have spoiled the favours that you have done us. Now we leave, and will not see you again".

At last they set off from there and took their dwelling at "Batn Marv" which was situated near Mecca. Here, Abu Dharr came to know that a prophet had appeared at Mecca. He became anxious to know about it. He, at once, called his brother Unais and asked him to go to Mecca and find out the particulars of the Prophet.

Unais had not yet set out for Mecca when a man was seen coming from there and he went straight away to join the company at Abu Dharr's house. Abu Dharr asked him, "Where are you coming from?" He answered, "I am coming from Mecca".

Abu Dharr asked, "What is the situation over there? He replied: "A man says that he is a prophet and he gets revelation from the heavens".

Abu Dharr said: "What did the Meccans do with him?" The man said: "They falsified him, tortured him, and prevented the people from going to him. They frighten and threaten everyone who goes to him".

Abu Dharr asked: "Why do the people not believe him?" "How can they believe him", he said, "who vilifies their gods, calls them foolish and their forefathers perverts".

Abu Dharr said: "Does he really say so?"

"Yes, he says that God is one. Just see! What a strange thing it is!" said he.

Abu Dharr started thinking about the man who said that God is One. He kept on thinking quietly for quite some time. The new comer looked at him and found him thoughtful. He begged leave of him and departed.

After his departure Abu Dharr addressing his brother Unais, said, "Just go to Mecca and find out who this man is. He says that he receives revelation from the heavens. What is the mode of his conversation? See if there is any sincerity in his talk or not".

Unais set off on the journey. After crossing different stations he reached Mecca and went to Ka 'bah for circumambulation. When he came out from there, he saw a crowd of people. He asked a man who was coming towards him, "What is going on here?" He replied, "An apostate is inviting the people to a new faith".

As soon as Unais heard it, he ran to that place. On reaching there he saw that a man was saying, "Praise belongs to Allah. I praise Him and seek help from Him. I believe in Him, depend on Him and testify that there is no God except He and He has no partner".

To quote Subaiti, Unais heard that man proclaiming, "O people! I have brought for you the blessings of the world and the hereafter. Say that there is no god except Allah, so that you may get deliverance. I am a messenger of Allah and have come to you. I warn you of the punishment of the Day of Judgment.

Remember that nobody will get deliverance except the one who comes to the presence of Allah with a

humble heart. Neither the riches will be of any use to you, nor will your children help you. Fear Allah, Allah will be kind to you. O people! Listen to me! I say clearly that your forefathers had deviated from the right path in worshipping these idols and you are also following in their footsteps. Remember that these idols can neither harm you, nor can they benefit you. They can neither stop you, nor guide you".

When Unais listened to this eloquent address he got astonished. But in his astonishment he saw that people were talking different things against him.

Hearing this, the Prophet said, "Prophets do not tell lies. I swear by Allah other than whom there is no god that I have been sent to you as a messenger. By Allah you will die as you sleep and will rise as you wake up. You will be called to account for your deeds. Then you will get eternal Heaven or Hell".

On saying this people asked the Prophet, how they would rise after becoming dust. At that time Allah revealed the following verses:

"Muhammad, say: Yes, even if you become rocks, iron or anything that you think is harder to be brought to life. They will soon ask: Who will bring us back to life? Say: The One who created you for the first time: They will shake their heads and say: When will He bring us back to life? Say: Perhaps very soon". (Surah Isra, 17:50- 51)

As soon as the Prophet finished his speech people got up. While they were dispersing from there, one of them said, "He is a soothsayer". Another said, "No, he is a poet". The third one remarked, "He is a magician".

Unais listened to the Prophet and the people. He kept his head down for some time and murmured; "By Allah, his words are sweet. What he has said is true and those people are undoubtedly foolish".

Then he rode his camel and set off. He kept on thinking about Muhammad, the Prophet of Allah, throughout the journey, and was wondering at his talk, till he joined Abu Dharr.

As soon as Abu Dharr looked at Unais, he asked him eagerly, "What is the news? What did you see at Mecca?"

Unais; I am coming after seeing a man who says that God is One. I saw that he orders the people to do good and refrain from evil.

Abu Dharr: What do people say about him?

Unais: They say that he is a poet, a magician and a soothsayer. But when I examined his talk from the point of view of poetry I found that it is not poetry. He is neither a magician because I have seen magicians, nor is he a soothsayer as I have met many soothsayers, and his talk is not like that of the soothsayers.

Abu Dharr: What does he do and what does he say?

Unais: He says wonderful things.

Abu Dharr: Can you not recall anything which he talked of?

Unais: By Allah! His speech was very sweet, but I do not remember anything more than that which I told you, but I have seen him offering prayers near the Ka'bah, and have also seen a handsome boy who is of a preadolescent age, offering prayers beside him. People say that he is his cousin Ali. I also saw a woman offering prayers behind him. People told me that she is his wife, Khadijah.

1. Sahih Muslim

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