

## Introduction

From that day when Muhammad (PBUH) left Mecca after thirteen years of anguish and continuous struggle and went to Medina, he knew that the period of weakness and concealment of Islam had ended and that he must, with the help of his loyal and valiant followers, lay the foundation of a civilisation with the glory of an Islamic organization, and construct the basis of his political regime in the way which God desired.

At this time, to the east of the peninsula, the King of Iran had a splendid palace and sumptuous court in which thousands of female slaves, and thousands of enslaved people and servants, had been appointed to perform the ceremonial duties there, and the product of the labor of the miserable and hard-working people was spent in order to maintain that system.

To the north of Arabia, also, Heraclitus was rising to prominence with his frightening regime and sumptuous empire. It could be said that the things which were the most striking in these two large countries were these palaces which reached towards the sky, for the exclusive enjoyment of the rulers, and that art, literature, war, the collection of taxes, design and invention, were all undertaken so that the royal and imperial ceremonies could be held in the greatest splendor possible.

But as to the Prophet of Islam, as soon as he entered Medina, he built a mosque and his humble house beside it. The door to his house opened from inside the mosque. Until the end of his life, when Islamic rule was established throughout Arabia, he did not change his lifestyle.

He was the absolute ruler of a country and he ate barley bread. He would sit with the poor upon the ground at their meal just like a humble slave. He would ride a donkey bareback and, most of the time, he would sit another person behind him.

This method of ruling by the ruler was to show the difference between his regime and the monarchic regimes of Iran and the Roman Empire. The people could see with their own eyes that a new regime and a young organization had come into being, between two aristocratic bases, in which there was no difference between ruler and ruled, commander and commanded, master and slave, and that all stood in one rank upon the threshold of God and justice.

The founder of this regime passed away and, with the dispossession of 'Ali and political manoeuvres, the first brick in the wall of the Caliphate was laid crooked. Abu Bakr then designated 'Umar as his successor, and the second blow was dealt to the Islamic regime.

Even though 'Umar and Abu Bakr were themselves the cause of this deviation, the political organization of Islam was established upon the basic principles which the Prophet laid down: simplicity, equality, and the fair distribution of wealth and prevention of its concentration, just as it had been previously.

'Umar also left and 'Uthman, this incompetent, pseudo-religious old man, took over the reins of rulership, and the instability which had come into being in the foundation of Islamic rule became so strong that the infrastructure of Muhammad (PBUH) was immediately destroyed. During 'Uthman's rule, the Caliphate was changed into a monarchy and the mud homes of the Islamic rulers were changed into king's palaces; simplicity changed into the splendid ceremony of the court of Mu'awiyah and the extravagant organization of 'Uthman.

Abu Dharr, who was the fourth or fifth person who joined Islam, and whose sword had been most effective in assisting the progress of the Islamic movement, saw this deviation. 'Ali, the image of piety and truth, became isolated and the enemies of Islam had found their way into the Caliphate organization and, like termites, they were eating away at Islam.

Each of the liberated truth-seekers was driven into a corner and silenced. The day when Abu Bakr pushed Ali aside from the political scene, and he himself sat upon the throne of the Caliphate, Abu Dharr became anxious and terrified. The future of Islam was black, to his mind, and appeared to be frightful, but he still saw that, at any rate, the caravan of Islam still progressed on its main course and even though an important rightful claim was being disregarded, the Islamic system had not been torn apart. Even though he was incensed and boiling with indignation, he put the seal of silence on his lips.

When the regime of 'Uthman dominated Islam, the humiliated working masses and the helpless were suppressed under the heels of usurers, slave merchants, the wealthy, and aristocrats who were coming and going in the courts of 'Uthman and Mu'awiyah. Class differences and the concentration of wealth were revived; Islam, threatened with a great danger, was changed from the situation of the Prophet and the simplicity and unpretentiousness of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, who were living like average people or even like the poor and needy. Thousands of dinars were spent to build a Green Palace for the Islamic governor Mu'awiyah and a regime was established which was like a king's court.

Abu Bakr, in order to earn his living, had milked the goats of a Jewish woman, yet now a necklace belonging to the wife of 'Uthman, the Prophet's caliph, was worth a third of the taxes from Africa! 'Umar, because of one horse, took to court a boy who misused his father's position, and his father (who was one of his leading commanders), because they tried to steal a horse by force, whereas 'Uthman had made Marwan Hakam, (that is, a person who the Prophet had exiled), his consultant and had given the district of Khaybar and the taxes from the north of Africa, part and parcel, to him!

Abu Dharr was watching these shameful scenes and because he could no longer bear it, could no longer remain silent, he rebelled, a manly and wonderful rebellion; an uprising which caused rebellion in all the Islamic lands against 'Uthman; an uprising from which the waves of enthusiasm can still be felt until the present day in the situations of human societies. Abu Dharr was trying to develop the economic and political unity of Islam and the regime of 'Uthman was reviving aristocracy. Abu Dharr believed Islam to be the refuge of the helpless, the oppressed and the humiliated people and 'Uthman, the tool of capitalism, was the bastion to preserve the interests of the usurers, the wealthy and the aristocrats.

This struggle between Abu Dharr and 'Uthman began, and Abu Dharr, in the end, lost his life upon this path. Abu Dharr would cry out, "This capital, wealth, gold and silver which you have hoarded must be equally divided among all Muslims. Everyone must share in the others' benefits in the economic and ethical system of Islam, in all blessings of life." But 'Uthman saw Islam in ceremonies, external show and the pretence of piety and sanctity. He did not believe that religion should interfere with the poverty of the majority and the opulence of the minority. Abu Dharr, who had begun the struggle for the development of Islamic equality, would not be pacified and would not let the enemy be pacified, either ...

Whenever I think about the wonderful life of Abu Dharr and I see his worship of God, I recall Pascal. Pascal says, "The heart has reasoning powers which the intellect does not attain. The heart bears witness to God's existence, not the intellect; faith comes in this way." Abu Dharr says, "In this unbounded existence, I have found signs by which I have been guided to God. There is no hope that the intellect will reach His Essence through discussion and analysis because He is greater than any of that, and there is no possibility of encompassing Him." Abu Dharr, just like Pascal, believed in God, knew God through the heart, and he had worshipped God for three years before he met the Prophet.

When he was speaking of capitalism and the hoarding of wealth and he was strongly defending the wretched, and when he was turning against the aristocrats and the palace-dwellers of Damascus and Medina, he resembles an extreme socialist like Proudhon, but the truth is that Abu Dharr is one thing and Pascal and Proudhon are different. Abu Dharr knew God; from that day on, he never stopped upon God's Way; not for a moment did he weaken in thought or action. Neither does Proudhon have the purity, devotion and worship of Abu Dharr, nor does Pascal have his activity and enthusiasm. Abu Dharr had become a complete human being in the School of Islam, and this commentary alone is sufficient to demonstrate his greatness.

It is possible for the following question to arise for many people who are studying Islamic history:— What was the glorious result of this movement, other than a few movements of armies, some military victories and the creation of a great empire which dispersed after a few centuries? What is the difference between the Islamic movement and other political and military movements in history which achieved similar victories and even greater triumphs, particularly when we see that the Islamic movement, from the very first phase, was faced with political differences, and was made to deviate from its main purpose, and that the real leaders of Islam were also aware of this?

Then what did Islam do? What results were attained from all those sacrifices and struggles of the Prophet and his God-worshipping, brave followers? If it had military victories, they do not deserve to be considered important in the way we look at religion, in particular since these victories were gained through the Bani Umayyid and Bani 'Abbas sultans and people like them, and did not have a real and direct relationship with the truths of Islam.

This opinion on this point is at least correct in some degree, and we must not conceive this expansionism, these military victories and the Islamic empire's power, to be the goal of Islam, nor believe them to be among the great results of this movement. If we look at Islam in the way in which we must look at religion, this problem will not only be solved, but also we will marvel at the glorious results, progress and victories of Islam.

Religion is the only factor which has a duty towards the universal elevation of creation, obliging humanity to progress and ascend, and just as there was some stimulant that transformed the inanimate into a plant and the plant into an animal and an animal into a human being, so to find completion, religion is also a reason for the continuation of this amazing story of creation, and it also carries the human being to the final stage which he or she must reach, allows the human spirit to fly to the highest summits of the loftiness of gnosis and humanness, and even elevates one beyond that desert and puts one above time and place.

Thus one can use this commentary to show that religion is the instigator, stimulant and impetus for the human being to move up the ladder of transformation. In other words, religion is a factory in which the real human being is built and we should expect nothing other than this from religion.

Now we must consider whether or not Islam has been able to attain success in this direction, and offer examples or models of its product to the market of humanity. To study this perplexing issue, one must seek out, on the margins of history, some of the men and women who arose from among the nameless masses, oppressed slaves and the exhausted people. That is, one must search out the names of those very people who History has always been too ashamed to record. History has most often been kneeling before the splendid palaces of the sultans, in the battlefields and on the threshold of the gods of gold and of coercion.

But this time we see that this very aristocracy-worshipper History is going to the worn tents, to the destroyed mud houses of the African slaves, to the nameless, bare-footed people of the Arabian desert, to unknown and unimportant people like Abu Dharr, a man from the Ghifar tribe, Salman, a homeless man from Iran, and Bilal, a cheap slave. History records their lives, one by one, with great greed and envy. With the highest of honors, it offers them to future generations of humanity. And it must also be asked why, and as of when, this pharaoh-seeker, royal court-dweller, History became so humble.

Thus, in order to assess the results which the Islamic movement has achieved, one must not look at the victories in Asia and Africa and in the lands in southern Europe. Rather, one must become aware of the

progress that this movement made in the depths of the thoughts, brains, hearts and souls of a limited group of its followers. The victories which Islam had in causing the changes and new directions in the souls of these people appear more splendid, more extensive and more wonderful to those people who place greater value on truth and humanness than on power and extraterrestrial military domination.

The Islamic victories in the history of places like Rome and Iran and in the fate of expansionists like Ghengis Khan, Dara, Napoleon, and others like these 'famous brainless', are not exceptional, but restructuring an unknown desert-dweller and half-savage like Jundab ibn Junadah into an Abu Dharr Ghifari is unique in any ideology or movement. If the result of Islam was no more than educating these four or five human beings like Abu Dharr, Salman, Ammar Yasir and Bilal, it would suffice for the intellect to be amazed at the victories of Islam.

But unfortunately the legacies of great men who are considered to be an honor to the history of Islam have been wasted, because the followers of that very religion, who were nurtured by the power of the thoughts and the swords of these people in the world, do not know them, have not understood the highest levels which these models of humanness attained in the chain of transformation, and do not know even brief details of their life stories. With this indifference and apathy to the destruction of the reputations of these rightful pioneers and images of piety and courage, we have struck blows against truth and humanity for which it is difficult to compensate, and all Muslims share in this fault.

More amazing than this is that, in general, people who were considered to be leaders of the Islamic Revolution continued to support truth and even sacrifice themselves for it, during the time of the rule of Abu Bakr and his successor, when Ali, the leader of the Shi'ites, was humiliated and his rightful claim was disregarded. It can be said with certainty that because of their struggles with the regime and because of their efforts, pure Islam was delivered into the hands of History. They helped humanity attain the source of truths and wisdom, in spite of the desires of the hypocrites and the ambitious, because of their struggles and brave resistance to the changes in the Islamic regime.

Abu Dharr is one of these exceptional people, one of those leaders and liberated saviours longed for by mankind today. From the time when the system created a severe crisis in the world of economics, making economics the most sensitive issue of life and the basis of everything, his opinions have found greater importance and today, once again, they recreate those scenes in Damascus and Medina. He who gathered the humiliated and the needy around him, rallying them against usury, money-worshippers, gold gatherers and aristocrats, has now caused the Muslims of the world to listen to his heart-warming words and opinions; his fiery rhetoric. It is as if they see him in distant history with their own eyes; he who gathered the oppressed and wretched in the mosque, rightfully inciting them against the inhabitants of the Green Palace and against the regime of 'Uthman, cries out,

***“And there are those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the Way of God ... “ (9:34).***

“O Mu'awiyah! If you are building this palace with your own money, it is extravagance, and if with the

money of the people, it is treason.” “O 'Uthman! You have made the poor, poor and the wealthy, wealthy.” Mashhad, 1334 AH (1955) Continue to Part I Back to Main Page.

Revision by: Dr. Bartlett M.D.

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.al-islam.org/and-once-again-abu-dharr-dr-ali-shariati/introduction>