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Part 2 .3: A Probe into Saqifah 3

Governmental Policies of Uthman

As far as other governmental policies of Uthman are concerned, it can be said that none of his personal policies were in order. He always relied on Bani Umayyah and gave importance to what his in-laws and other relatives said.

Marwan ibn Hakam held a special honor in Uthman's time. Uthman always relied on Marwan's suggestions and preferred Bani Umayyah over Muslims.

As soon as Bani Umayyah came to power, they increased injustice and oppression on Muslim Ummah and it became a target of severe atrocities because of them. However, despotic rulers continued to plunder Muslims and did not care about them because the Muslim Caliph was pleased with them. They had no qualms about the displeasure of other Muslims.

The worst part of Uthman's personality is that he was strict to other Companions and common Muslims as much as he was generous to Bani Umayyah. He misbehaved with even great Companions like Abdullah ibn Masood, Abu Zar Ghiffari and Ammar ibn Yasir. These Companions became victims of oppression under his order. Abu Zar was not only oppressed but also exiled to Rabaza. He was left there alone without food and water. The only mistake of these great Companions was that they wanted to put an end to the plundering of Bani Umayyah.

Balazari writes regarding this: Uthman appointed as governors those persons of Bani Umayyah who never accompanied the Prophet nor did they have any status in Islam. Uthman used to turn a deaf ear to complaints of common people and he appointed his cousin as governor, six years prior to his death.

Abdullah ibn Saad ibn Abi Sarah was appointed as governor of Egypt during this time. He lived in Egypt for a number of years. People of Egypt complained to Uthman about his injustice. Uthman wrote to him advising him to keep away from evil. However he did not heed Uthman's words and inflicted severe atrocities on the complainants, as a result of which one of them died on the spot.

After that, another representative of the Egyptian folks came to Medina to complain about Ibn Abi Sarah. He met the Companions during prayer times and narrated the atrocities inflicted on them. Consequently, Talha came to Uthman and protested against him harshly. Ayesha also sent him a message demanding justice for the people of Egypt.

The great Companions including Imam 'Ali (a), Miqdad, Talha and Zubair sent a letter to Uthman reporting the injustice of his governors. They also condemned Uthman saying that if he did not improve, it would not be rightful for him to be a Caliph.

Ammar took that letter to Uthman. Uthman got angry on reading a single line. He told Ammar: "How dare you bring this letter to me?"

Ammar replied: "I did so because I care about you."

Uthman said: "O son of Sumayya! You are a liar."

Ammar said: "By Allah, I am the son of the first martyrs of Islam, Sumayya and Yasir."

Uthman ordered his slaves to tie up Ammar. The slaves caught him and tied him up. Uthman kicked Ammar so hard that he fell down unconscious.¹ After analyzing the history of Uthman, it becomes clear that the only aim of his financial and governmental policies was to play with the destiny of Muslim Ummah, weaken the supporters of Islam and to pave way for the rule of the enemies of Islam, especially Bani Umayyah.

The policy of Uthman was not only different from holy Quran and Prophetic Practice (*Sunnah*) but also different from the practice of Abu Bakr and Umar.

Waqidi narrates: People protested strongly when Uthman gave a hundred thousand dirhams to Saeed ibn Aas. Imam 'Ali (a) and other Companions discussed this matter. Uthman said: "He is my close relative." The Companions asked: "Didn't Abu Bakr and Umar have relatives in this world?"

Uthman said: "They used to be happy after depriving their relatives while I feel happy after giving wealth to my relatives."²

This practice of Uthman was not similar to the practice of Abu Bakr and Umar. It had nothing to do with the spirit of Islam.

Practice of Uthman's Governors

Let us have a look at the practice of Uthman's governors:

There is no doubt that Uthman relied on his relatives for government. We are not so narrow-minded that we would object to someone only because of his relations. It is an old practice of the rulers to appoint

their reliable relatives in government posts. There is no harm if the relatives are capable, but were the relatives upon whom Uthman relied capable and reliable?

Uthman also appointed such relatives to important posts about whose mischief, justice and hypocrisy Allah has testified in holy Quran.

The character of some of them is presented below as example for readers. If we discuss the evil acts of Uthman's governors, a separate book would be required for it.

Walid ibn Uqbah

To begin with, let us consider the real face of Walid ibn Uqbah ibn Abi Mui't who was appointed as the governor of Kufa.

A brief account of this star of Bani Umayyah is that he was sent to Bani Mustaliq to recover taxes on behalf of the Prophet, but he went to this tribe and returned without meeting its members and told the Prophet that they wanted to kill him. "Fortunately, I escaped alive from the place." The Prophet intended to attack them.

During this time, a respectable man from this tribe came to the Prophet and said: "Your representative had come to us, but when we came to know of his arrival and we came forward to welcome him, he returned without meeting us."

Almighty Allah revealed the following verse:

«يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْبِحُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ.»

O you who believe, if an evil-doer comes to you with a report, look carefully into it, lest you harm a people in ignorance, then be sorry for what you have done.³

Once Walid's wife came to the Prophet and complained that her husband beats her without any excuse. The Prophet told her: "Go and tell him that you are under the protection of Allah's Messenger."

She returned and conveyed the Prophet's message but came back the next day and said: "O Messenger of Allah! He beat me on hearing your message."

The Prophet tore up a part of her dress and said: "Go and tell him that the Prophet has torn it as a sign and tell him not to beat you." She came back after some time, crying and said: "O Messenger of Allah! When I gave your message and showed your sign, he beat me more."⁴

Walid Drinks Wine in Kufa

Uthman had appointed this Walid as governor of Kufa. He used to drink wine the whole night with his friends. Once he went to lead the Morning Prayer completely drunk. He offered four units (rakats) instead of the prescribed two and turned to the congregation and asked: "If you want, I can offer more."

Some narrators report that he used to recite in prostration: "Drink and make me also drink."

A person standing in the first row said: "I am not surprised at you. I am astonished at the person who appointed you as our ruler." Once Walid delivered a sermon and the people stoned him. He was taken aback and went inside his palace.

Walid was a fornicator and he used to drink wine. Once he entered the mosque to lead prayers while drunk and he vomited in the Prayer Niche (*Mihraab*). The color of wine was distinct in vomited liquid. Then he recited these lines:

"My heart became attached to Rabab when both of us reached the age of adolescence."

The people of Kufa came to Uthman with complaints and asked him to take legal action. Uthman appointed a person to punish Walid. When that person came to Walid with a whip, Walid told Uthman: "I beg forgiveness from you for the sake of Allah and our relation." Uthman forgave him. Then he thought that the people would say that he has shunned a religious commandment. So he got up and whipped him three or four times.

When the people of Kufa came to Uthman again with their complaints, he got really angry with them and said: "Whenever you are angry with a ruler, you start picking out his faults."

The people came to Ayesha to seek help. When Uthman saw that they were under the protection of the Mother of faithful, he said: "Only the house of Ayesha will provide shelter to the hypocrites of Iraq." When Ayesha heard these words, she came out with a slipper of the Prophet in her hand and said: "You have left the Practice (*Sunnah*) of the owner of this slipper."⁵

Why Walid was Appointed as a Governor of Kufa?

The story of Walid's appointment as governor of Kufa is also strange. Narrator says that there was space for only one more person to sit on the throne that Uthman occupied.

Only four persons used to sit with Uthman viz. Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib, Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, Hakam ibn Aas and Walid ibn Uqbah.

Once Walid was sitting with Uthman and Hakam ibn Abil Aas arrived. Uthman signaled Walid to get up in order to make Hakam sit near him. Walid said: "You gave preference to your uncle over your cousin. I

hereby quote two lines.”

It should be clear that Marwan’s father Hakam was Uthman’s uncle and a senior member of Bani Umayyah, while Walid was a maternal cousin of Marwan.

Uthman asked him to recite those lines:

I have seen that people respect their uncles more than their brothers, which was not customary earlier. May your sons Umar and Khalid live long so that they address me as uncle one day.

Uthman appreciated him for these lines and said: “I make you the governor of Kufa.”

This Walid is same whom Quran has called a hypocrite. He is the same who did not obey the Prophet’s command.

He took his appointment letter to Saad, the governor of Kufa. Saad asked him: “You have come here for a vacation or to rule?”

Walid replied: “I have come here as a ruler.” Saad said: “By Allah, I don’t know whether I have gone crazy or you have become wise.” Walid said: “Neither you have gone crazy nor I have become wise. It is the decision of one who rules.”⁶

Books of history are full of descriptions of other governors of Uthman. Even though many experienced and elder Companions were present at that time, Uthman appointed Abdullah ibn Aamir as the governor of Basra, who was 25 years old at that time.

Abdullah ibn Saad ibn Abi Sarah was appointed as the governor of Egypt. He is the one whose killing was made obligatory by Allah and His Messenger. It was announced at the time of conquest of Mecca that everyone is safe except Abdullah ibn Saad ibn Abi Sarah. He should be killed even if he is found clinging to the covering of holy Kaaba.⁷

Uthman’s Behavior with Companions

The Injustice done by despotic rulers of Bani Umayyah to Muslims is one part of history. However, Uthman’s personal behavior with the great Companions was unsound.

Readers of History are well-aware of the fact that Umayyad governors did not misbehave with Muslim Ummah as much as Uthman misbehaved with senior Companions.

When the selected Companions complained to Uthman, that despotic governors should be dismissed, he targeted them with oppression instead of behaving with them in a nice manner.

Abdullah ibn Masood was one of those who had to bear oppression. When he had conflict with Uthman

regarding compilation of holy Quran, Uthman ordered his slaves to whip him instead of settling the matter. The slaves hit him badly and he was thrown down flat, as a result of which his ribs were broken. As if this was not enough, Uthman stopped his pension. He misbehaved with Abu Zar Ghiffari more than this.

Abu Zar Ghiffari was an honorable Companion of the Prophet, about whom the Prophet had said: "Paradise is waiting for Abu Zar." The Prophet has compared Abu Zar's piety with that of Prophet Isa's. The following tradition is very famous: "There is no one under the sky or over the earth more truthful than Abu Zar."

Capitalism and stockpiling had increased during the time of Uthman to a great extent and Abu Zar decided to fight against it. He used to go out in the markets protesting and he used to recite the following verse of Surah Taubah:

«وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ.
يَوْمَ يُحْمَىٰ عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوَىٰ بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ وَظُهُورُهُمْ هَذَا مَا
كَنْزْتُمْ لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْنِزُونَ.»

(As for) those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah's way, announce to them a painful chastisement, On the day when it shall be heated in the fire of hell, then their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded with it; this is what you hoarded up for yourselves, therefore taste what you hoarded.⁸

When Uthman realized that the lower class people of Medina were becoming aware due to Abu Zar's protests, he was exiled to Syria and Muawiyah, the governor of Syria was ordered to keep a close watch on him.

Abu Zar continued his practice in Syria also. Muawiyah sent him to Medina on a fierce camel, but Uthman did not allow him to live in Medina. He was instead exiled to a desert called Rabaza. His son Zar passed away over there and his daughter was left alone. He also passed away in this state after a few days. When a caravan of Iraqis passed by, they shrouded and buried this great Companion of the Prophet.

Balazari narrates that when the Caliph got the news of Abu Zar's demise, he said: "May Allah's mercy be on him."

Ammar asked: "What is your opinion regarding a person who exiled him?" Uthman promptly replied: "Do you think that I feel ashamed after exiling Abu Zar?"

Then he ordered that Ammar should also be exiled and told him: “You also go to the desert of Rabaza.”

Ammar had made all the preparations for his exile. The people of his tribe, Bani Makhzoom came to Imam ‘Ali (a) to redress their grievance. Imam ‘Ali (a) went to Uthman and said: “Fear Allah, you had exiled a virtuous believer earlier who passed away as a result of it. Now you want to repeat that with someone else.” Both had a bitter argument and Uthman told Imam ‘Ali (a): “You are more rightful of being exiled as compared to Ammar.”

Imam ‘Ali (a) said: “If you have courage, try to exile me.” After that, Emigrants gathered around the Caliph and said: “Whenever someone argued with you, you have exiled him. This is not a good practice.”⁹

He was compelled to cancel the order of Ammar’s exile. A great companion like Ammar was made the target of severe atrocities, the detailed description of which is narrated as follows in the words of Allamah Abul Fatah Abul Maqsood: “Many Companions came forward and wrote a letter complaining about the injustice of Uthman’s governors. Ammar took this letter to Uthman but when he reached Uthman’s court, Marwan said to Uthman: “This black slave is trying to instigate people against you. You would remain safe from harm in future if you kill him now.”

Uthman followed Marwan’s advice and began to hit Ammar with a stick, non-stop. The Caliph’s men left no stone unturned in beating Ammar.

As a result of this beating Ammar got hernia. The servants of Caliph threw him on the road, in rain and cold weather.¹⁰ This was the time when justice disappeared and clouds of oppression hovered on the Muslim Ummah.

Dr. Taha Husayn has correctly said: Ahl al-Sunnah and Motazela will not only have to justify the deeds of Uthman’s governors but also the deeds of Uthman himself. His behavior with great Companions like Abdullah ibn Masood and Ammar ibn Yasir was not at all appropriate.

Ammar was beaten up so badly that he suffered from hernia. Abdullah ibn Masood was disgraced before being thrown out of the mosque and his ribs were crushed.

Such behavior of Uthman to these great Companions was on the advice of his governors.

Both of these personalities were not tried in court nor were the testimonies taken from witnesses. They were made to suffer without any solid proof.

Surely, Uthman had no legal right to do so. Take the example of Abu Zar. His only crime was that he had criticized Uthman for favoring his relatives i.e. Bani Umayyah which was the basis of his economic policy; therefore he had to exile Abu Zar from Medina.

Not only this, he had given complete right to all his governors to exile whomever they wished. After

getting this right, his governors used to exile all those who opposed them from Kufa to Syria or from Syria to Basra or from Basra to Egypt. Saeed used to exile people and send them to Muawiyah and vice versa. He also used to exile people and send them to Abdur Rahman ibn Khalid. There was no one to hear the pleas of oppressed persons nor could they appeal to some court.¹¹

Story of Abdullah ibn Masood's Victimization

The story of Abdullah ibn Masood's oppression has a great lesson. His sufferings started when Walid ibn Uqbah, the maternal cousin of Uthman became governor of Kufa. Abdullah ibn Masood was the treasurer of Muslim treasury at Kufa during that time.

Walid withdrew a huge amount from the treasury and Abdullah permitted him to do so. After a few days, Walid ordered another huge withdrawal, but this time Abdullah refused. Walid wrote to Uthman and complained about the behavior of the treasurer.

Uthman wrote to Abdullah ibn Masood saying that he was their treasurer and must obey Walid's orders.

After reading this letter, Abdullah ibn Masood threw the keys away and said: "I considered myself a treasurer of Muslim wealth. If you want me to be your personal treasurer, I am resigning."

He lived in Kufa even after resigning.

Walid wrote to Uthman narrating the whole incident. Uthman ordered that he should be sent to Medina. Ibn Masood left Kufa and the people of Kufa bade farewell to him. He advised the people to fear Allah and adhere to the holy Quran. The people told him: "May Allah reward you. You have taught the illiterate among us and made our scholars steadfast. You have taught us Quran and religion."

When Ibn Masood arrived in Medina, Uthman was delivering a sermon from the Prophet's pulpit. When he saw Ibn Masood, he said: "Look there, the worm of evil comes to you."

Ibn Masood said: "I am not as such; I am a companion of the Prophet." Uthman ordered his courtiers to disgrace him and take him out of the mosque. Abdullah ibn Zamna lifted him up and threw him flat on the ground with full force. As a result, his ribs broke.

Abdullah ibn Masood lived in Medina and Uthman did not allow him to go out of the town. He passed away two years before Uthman's murder. Uthman had come to see him a few days before his death and they had the following conversation:

Uthman: What disease are you suffering from?

Ibn Masood: My sins

Uthman: Should I call a doctor?

Ibn Masood: The doctor has given this disease to me.

Uthman: What do you want?

Ibn Masood: My Lord's mercy.

Uthman: Should I continue your pension?

Ibn Masood: When I needed it, you did not grant me. What will I do with it at my death-bed?

Uthman: Your children will live a happy life with pension.

Ibn Masood: Allah is their sustainer.

Uthman: O father of Abdur Rahman! Pray for my forgiveness.

Ibn Masood: I pray to Allah that he take back my right from you.

Ibn Masood willed that Uthman should not attend his funeral.¹²

People objected to Uthman's behavior and some objections were due to incidents, which were not at all in accordance with the soul of Islam, the Prophetic Practice (*Sunnah*) and the practice of Abu Bakr and Umar.

The Companions also objected to other acts of Uthman's extravagance. Some were against holy Quran and Prophetic Practice (*Sunnah*). All these objections can be concluded in the words of Dr. Taha Husayn as follows:

Allegations of Uthman's Rivals

Uthman's opponents used to accuse him that he broke the laws of Shariah immediately after coming to power.

1. He did not punish Umar's son, Abdullah even though he killed Hurmuzan, Jufaina and daughter of Abu Lulu in retaliation of his father's murder. He should have filed a case of his father's murder and the court would have delivered a verdict. He took the law in his hands instead of approaching the court. Hurmuzan was a Muslim, while Jufaina and Abu Lulu's daughter were citizens accorded protection by Muslim State and Islam is responsible for the safety of its Zimmis (non-Muslim subjects) in its jurisdiction.

A group of Companions demanded from Uthman that it was obligatory to punish Umar's son and that this Islamic ruling should not be ignored in any way. Uthman took no action against him and said: "Yesterday his father was killed, do you want me to kill him today?" He forgave Umar's son. Muslims protested severely at this and said: "Taking no action against him is against Quran and Prophetic

Practice (*Sunnah*). It is also against practice of Abu Bakr and Umar.

2. He offered complete prayer in Mina while the Prophet, and Abu Bakr and Umar used to offer shortened (*Qasr*) prayer. Even Uthman had offered the shortened prayer at that place many times.

Companions were taken aback seeing this because they considered it against Prophetic Practice (*Sunnah*). The Emigrants in particular considered it very harmful because when the Prophet migrated from Mecca to Medina, he considered Medina his home and Mecca a distant location. Therefore whenever the Prophet or his Companions used to come to Mecca, they used to offer shortened prayers so that everyone should come to know that Mecca is no longer a home for the Prophet and he does not intend to shift there in future. The Prophet did not like that a Companion should die in Mecca after migration.

3. The Companions also objected to Uthman because he used to levy Zakat on horses also. The Prophet had not included horses in Zakat and nothing of this sort existed during the time of Abu Bakr and Umar also.

4. Uthman had acquired the possession of some pastures. The Companions objected to it because the Prophet had made water, air and pastures free to all.

5. Zakat was also spent in wars during Uthman's time. Many Companions objected to it saying that Almighty Allah has fixed the ways of spending Zakat and any expenditure other than those mentioned is incorrect.

6. A group of Companions objected during the compilation of holy Quran. They objected that the committee elected for compilation was limited to a handful of persons. While such reciters and memorizers were present during that time that had more knowledge than the selected members of the committee.

Personalities like Abdullah ibn Masood and Imam 'Ali (a) were not included in the committee. It should be remembered that Abdullah ibn Masood was a great reciter of holy Quran. He used to say: "I learnt the verses and Surahs of holy Quran from the Prophet while Zaid ibn Thabit had not even reached puberty." Imam 'Ali (a) is an elevated personality about whom Allah says: "One who has the knowledge of the book." Sidelineing these great personalities to appoint Zaid ibn Thabit and his friends in the committee was not appropriate.

7. It was not right to burn the remaining copies of holy Quran.

8. Uthman was also blamed for recalling his uncle Hakam and his cousin, Marwan, to Medina. Earlier they were banished from Medina by the Prophet.

9. Hakam ibn Abil Aas lived near the Prophet's house before the advent of Islam. He was the worst neighbor of the Prophet. He used to trouble the Prophet very much.

He had accepted Islam after the conquest of Mecca in order to save his life. However he had not changed his ways even after migrating to Medina. He used to make fun of the Prophet in his absence by mimicking him. Once the Prophet saw him doing so and said: “Hakam and his children cannot live with me in the same town.” Then he was exiled to Taif where he remained during the times of Abu Bakr and Umar also. Uthman recalled him to Medina as soon as he came to power. The Companions used to say that Uthman should not have hurt the Prophet by recalling the person whose face was disliked by the Prophet.

10. Uthman not only allowed his exiled uncle to return but also gifted him a hundred thousands dinars. Was this gift given to hurt the Prophet or for some other purpose?

11. Marwan, the son of Hakam was appointed as his special advisor. Wasn't any virtuous person left at that time?

12. Harith ibn Hakam was made in-charge of activities in Medina. His practice was not at all in accordance with the demands of trustworthiness and honesty. He was favored with wealth instead of being interrogated for his corrupt activities.¹³

Disloyalty of Relatives

“Leaves that were relied upon began to fly away.”

Downfall of Uthman's Caliphate began when his supporters started ignoring him. Excessive wealth and bloated bellies had showed him this day when his own relatives, supporters and those who appointed him as Caliph, began to oppose him.

The example of Muhammad ibn Abi Huzaifah is explicit. He complained that Uthman favors his relatives more than him. He asked the soldiers coming back from the battle of Rome: “Are you returning from Jihad?”

They replied in affirmative. Then he pointed to Hijaz and said: “At this time, we need to do Jihad against Uthman.”

Then this person went to Egypt to spread more hatred. He organized the opponents of Uthman telling them: “O Egyptians! If you want to do Jihad, go to Medina and perform Jihad against Uthman.”

Uthman sent him thirty thousand dirhams and a royal robe in order to placate him, but he brought those things to the mosque and said: “People! Bear witness that Uthman wants to buy my religion but I am not going to be sold.”

This incident led to severe opposition against Uthman in Egypt.

Repentance of a Person who Repented soon

Seeing the nepotism of Uthman and his abnormal practice, even Abdur Rahman ibn Auf who had appointed him as Caliph started to oppose him and he used to say: “If I had brought the next one before, even my shoe lace would not have appointed Uthman as Caliph.”

Abdur Rahman was murmuring in his death-bed: “Keep him away. Hasten to stop his rule before it becomes strong.”¹⁴

Balazari narrates: After the sorrowful demise of Abu Zar, Imam ‘Ali (a) came to Abdur Rahman ibn Auf and said: “You are responsible for all this. You made him the ruler and because of that he inflicted several atrocities on an innocent companion. You are the real criminal.”

Abdur Rahman said: “If you want, I would unsheathe my sword and you also do so. We both will fight against him. He did not care about the vows he had taken.”

Abdur Rahman ibn Auf willed at his death-bed that Uthman should not be allowed to attend his funeral.

Amr ibn al-Aas and Uthman

Uthman dismissed Amr ibn al-Aas from the post of governor of Egypt, hence Amr ibn al-Aas had also become his rival. He also started spreading hatred against Uthman among the people. Once he dared to say before Uthman: “You did injustice to people and we participated in it. Therefore seek repentance and we will also do so.”

When Amr ibn al-Aas saw that conditions are out of Uthman’s control, he returned to his property in Palestine and waited there for news from Medina.

He lived in Palestine with his two sons where he got the news of Uthman’s murder after some time. He told his son Abdullah: “Abdullah! I am your father. You must draw blood from the wound I have scratched till date.”

This statement shows that he paved the way for Uthman’s murder and it happened.¹⁵

Amr ibn Aas narrates: “I created Uthman’s hatred in the hearts of people. I also instigated the shepherds against him.”¹⁶

In the first siege of Uthman by the rebels Amr ibn al-Aas came to meet Uthman and told him: “You have done a lot of injustice to people. Fear Allah and seek repentance.”

Uthman replied: “O son of Nabigha! You played a great role instigating people against me because I dismissed you from the charge of Egypt.

After that, Amr ibn al-Aas came to Palestine and instigated people against Uthman. When he got the news of Uthman's murder, he remarked: "I am Abdullah's father. Whichever wound I have scratched till date, has invariably bled."¹⁷

Uthman and Mother of Believers, Ayesha

Out of all Mothers of faithful, Ayesha opposed Uthman the most. When Uthman insulted the great companion, Abdullah ibn Masood, Ayesha scolded Uthman from behind the veil. She used to criticize Uthman and his governors openly. The people used to consider her as the greatest opponent of Uthman.¹⁸

Once Ayesha brought a shirt of the Prophet to the mosque and raising it said: "People! Look at this. The Prophet's shirt has not become old but Uthman has made his Practice (*Sunnah*) old. Slay Nathal, may Allah kill Nathal."¹⁹

Ayesha instigated people against Uthman and ordered them to kill Uthman on numerous occasions. When the oppressed people laid siege to Uthman, she went to Mecca on the pretext of performing Hajj and Umrah and she did not try to extinguish the flames of sedition lit by her. Although she resided in Mecca she was always waiting for news of Medina.

Once she heard a rumor that Uthman has killed the protestors and the agitation has come to an end. Ayesha was enraged on hearing this. She said: "This is very bad! People seeking justice and opposing injustice were killed!"²⁰

Once there was a bitter argument between Ayesha and Uthman. Uthman said: "What have you got to do with the affairs of government? Allah has ordered you to sit in your house."

She became furious on hearing this. She took out a few hair, a dress and a slipper of the Prophet and said: "The hair, dress and slipper of the Prophet have not become old and you have left his practice (*Sunnah*)!"²¹

The wave of agitation reached the entire Muslim community because of protests from the Mother of faithful and some great Companions. The agitation was more severe in Hijaz, Egypt and Iraq as compared to other parts of the Muslim world. It is strange that Uthman was completely unaware of this wave of discontent. He did not heed the humble advice of great Companions but always accorded importance to the advice of Marwan ibn Hakam and other governors, who were responsible for all the problems.

Bani Umayyah Conference

When Uthman was surrounded by agitation from all sides, he called a meeting of his cabinet comprising of Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, Abdullah ibn Abi Sarah, Abdullah ibn Aamir and Saeed ibn Aas.

Uthman addressed the trusted persons in this meeting: “Every king has a vizier and you all are my viziers. You all are aware of current agitation and I need your advice to put it down.”

Muawiyah suggested that all governors should be sent to their respective states and should be given all powers to handle people who create mischief. And that the governors should not allow any agitator to go to Medina.

Saeed ibn al-Aas suggested: “The leaders of this agitation should be eliminated.” Abdullah ibn Abi Sarah suggested: “In this way, our government will be dishonored more. We should silence the leaders by bribing them with huge amounts. Abdullah ibn Aamir suggested that people should be involved in Jihad and sent to the border.”²²

The above mentioned advices show that the advisors had overlooked reality and they could not come to a conclusion. They were planning to involve people in external battles instead of putting an end to nepotism and misuse of public funds. Even Uthman could not put forward any suggestion in this meeting. He had no temporary or permanent solution to end the troubles.

We are surprised to know that some Companions gave him humble advice, however Uthman told them: “Every Ummah has some calamity and the calamity of this Ummah is criticism against me.”

“O Emigrants and Helpers! What kind of people you are! You objected to those of my acts which were also done by Umar ibn Khattab. You did not object to him and now you criticize me. You did not object to Umar because the migrants were ready with bridles pulled. You should know that the family of Ibn Khattab was small, while mine is large.”

This discourse of Uthman shows that the Companions wanted him to rule according to holy Quran, the Prophetic Practice (*Sunnah*) and the practice of Abu Bakr and Umar. However, this legal and natural demand of the Companions was considered greedy and harmful by Uthman. He should have justified himself and his governors and justified the expenditure on Bani Umayyah. Instead, he taunted them saying that Umar also did so but they did not object to it. The Caliph ended his discourse with a threat.

It was because of these policies that this spark of hatred which entered the army, gradually turned into a huge flame.

When Abdullah ibn Aamir was returning after defeating the Romans, Muhammad ibn Abu Huzaifah had instigated his army against him. Muhammad ibn Abu Huzaifah used to tell his men: “We should do Jihad against Uthman in Medina because Uthman is not acting according to the Book of Allah, Prophetic Practice (*Sunnah*) and practice of Abu Bakr and Umar. He has stripped the Companions of the Prophet off important posts and appointed hypocrite and dishonest relatives in their place. The example of your leader is explicit. Holy Quran has testified to his hypocrisy and the Prophet had made it obligatory to kill him. In spite of all these, Uthman appointed him as your leader because he is the step-brother of Uthman.”²³

Such a front opened up against Uthman that reports were released about him openly and circulated among all the people but no one knew their true origin.

When Uthman expanded the area of the Prophet's Mosque, people used to say: "The Prophet's mosque is being expanded but his practice (*Sunnah*) is being distorted."

A number of pigeons had increased during the time of Uthman. The roofs of the Prophet's Mosque and houses of Medina were inhabited by a large number of pigeons. Uthman ordered that the pigeons should be exterminated. At this, People said: "The pigeons who were seeking shelter were killed and the person who was exiled by the Prophet i.e. Hakam ibn Abi al-Aas and his son Marwan were recalled and given shelter."²⁴

Balazari has narrated the following tradition from Saeed ibn Musayyab: "When Uthman ordered the slaughter of pigeons, people said: 'Innocent pigeons are being killed and those who were exiled by the Prophet are given shelter in Medina.'²⁵

An Important Question that must be Answered

Here an important question arises. It is extremely necessary to find the answer to it. The question is: From where did the agitation against Uthman start? Did it start from Medina, the center of Caliphate? Or did it start from other cities and covered Medina also?

This question can be answered explicitly in the following words: Did the wave of agitation against Uthman start from Emigrants and Helpers and then spread to all cities? Or did it start from the army and then traveled to Medina and reached Emigrants and Helpers?

We know that it is very difficult to answer this question for those who have blind-faith.

If we assume the first case, it means that the Caliphate of Uthman was first opposed by Emigrants and Helpers Companions and after that others followed them.

If we assume the second case, considering it less harmful, it would mean that seeing the political disparities of Uthman his loyal army began the opposition and Companions followed the opponents. But along with this, we would also have to consider if great Companions were prone to accept the statements of common people and could they allow themselves to be manipulated by them?

We believe that the agitation against Uthman started from Medina and it was the source from which the agitation spread to other cities.²⁶

We have the practice of senior Companions as proof of our assumption. We know what Uthman did to Abu Zar. We also know how much Uthman oppressed Abdullah ibn Masood and Ammar ibn Yasir. There are numerous examples of such behavior of Uthman. Hence the Companions had also started to

protest against him.

Let us have a look at the discourse of Jaballa ibn Amr al-Saadi as narrated by Balazari: During the days when opposition of Uthman had become common, Uthman passed by the house of Jaballa ibn Amr al-Saadi who was standing at his doorstep. He told Uthman: “O Nathal! By Allah, I will kill you or I will exile you and make you mount a fierce camel. You have appointed Harith ibn Hakam in-charge of the market and you have done such and such wrong things.”²⁷

It should be clear that Harith ibn Hakam was Marwan’s brother who had tyrannized the entire market of Medina. Hence Jaballa ibn Amr al-Saadi objected to it. Someone told Jaballa: “You should not oppose Uthman in this matter.” He replied: “I have to present myself in front of Allah tomorrow and I do not want to say:

«إِنَّا أَطَعْنَا سَادَتَنَا وَكُبَرَاءَنَا فَأَضَلُّونَا السَّبِيلًا.»

Surely we obeyed our leaders and our great men, so they led us astray from the path.²⁸

Uthman’s Murder

Uthman’s relatives had created havoc in the Islamic government. The poor people sent delegations to Medina with hope that conditions would improve but Marwan ibn Hakam always gave advices to Uthman and the members of delegations returned to their homelands in despair.

A Great tragedy occurred during the last days of Uthman. The people of Egypt came to Uthman complaining about their governor. They demanded that he must be dismissed and some worthy person be appointed in his place.

After a long debate, Uthman accepted their demand and a new governor was appointed; while the current governor was dismissed.

The people of Egypt were returning to their homeland satisfied. They had reached a place called Kinana where they saw a rider on a she-camel, going on an unknown way. They doubted that person and caught him after a good chase. They checked all this belongings and recovered a letter enclosed in wax in his water-bag. This letter was written by Uthman to the governor of Egypt. He had ordered his governor to kill the leader of this agitating group and punish the remaining members severely.

The People arrested that black slave and confiscated the she-camel. This was the slave of Uthman and the she-camel was a part of Muslim treasury. The original seal of Uthman was present on the letter.

The people came back to Medina along with the she-camel and that slave and asked the Caliph: “Why

did you do this?" The Caliph swore and denied writing any such letter.

The people asked: "Do you know this negro?" Uthman replied: "Of course, he is my slave."

The people then asked: "Do you know this she-camel?"

He replied: "Yes, and this seal is also mine."

The people said: "Then how is it possible that the she-camel, slave and the seal belong to you and you have not written the letter?"

Uthman said: "I have not written the letter. This is the work of Marwan." The people requested him: "We accept your words and consider you innocent. All blame goes to Marwan; so please hand him over to us. After that we would not trouble you in any way."

Uthman flatly refused to fulfill their demand. The people besieged Uthman's palace and this siege continued for a month. None of Uthman's relatives helped him during this time nor did any companion from Medina come forward to speak in his favor.

After this long siege, the people entered his house and murdered him.²⁹

Conspiracies of Bani Umayyah after Uthman's Murder

I would like to describe the conspiracies of Muawiyah and Marwan before discussing about Imam 'Ali (a). After Uthman's death, Bani Umayyah began to hatch conspiracies to end Imam 'Ali's rule.

They wrote to different persons in order to launch an armed agitation against Imam 'Ali (a). I would like to present some of those letters to the readers:

Marwan ibn Hakam wrote to Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan after Uthman's murder:

"I write this letter to you after Uthman's murder. The traitors attacked him and killed him unjustly. They have spread all over like clouds and went to 'Ali ibn Abi Talib like a swarm of locusts.

Therefore gather Bani Umayyah around you and take up the central position as one of the exalted stars. You are most appropriate to take revenge for Uthman's death."

When this letter reached Muawiyah, he gathered the people and gave an emotional speech. Muawiyah's speech had such an effect that even women offered to participate in the war.

After that, Muawiyah wrote to Talha ibn Ubaidullah, Zubair ibn Awwam, Saeed ibn al-Aas, Ubaidullah ibn Aamir, Walid ibn Uqbah and Yaala ibn Aameya.

Muawiyah wrote the following letter to Talha:

“You hold a high rank among Quraish because of the beauty of your face and your generosity. You have the honor of accepting Islam during its early days. You are of those who were given glad-tidings of Paradise. You earned a special honor in the Battle of Uhad. You should accept whatever post is given to you by the people. Allah will be pleased with you if you do so. I would make the situation beneficial for you as much as possible. Zubair does not have more excellence than you. It would be appropriate for one of you to become an Imam and other to become his heir-apparent.”

Muawiyah wrote the following letter to Zubair:

“Zubair! You are the son of the Prophet’s paternal aunt. You are the Companion of the Prophet, son-in-law of Abu Bakr and a leader of Muslims. You should know that the subjects have become like wild beasts. There is no one to control them. You should save their lives. I want to turn the matter of Caliphate in favor of you and your companion. One of you should become the master and the other should be the vizier.”

Then Muawiyah wrote to Marwan ibn al-Hakam:

“I have received your letter. I got the news of the state of Amirul Momineen through your letter. You should become active like a cheetah after you receive this letter. Hunt your prey by deceiving them and remain careful like a fox. Tread the path carefully and hide yourself in these conditions, in the same way as a porcupine hides her head on sensing danger. You should become humble and wretched at this moment like a person who has become hopeless after serving the community. You must leave Hijaz for Syria soon.”

Muawiyah wrote the following letter to Saeed ibn al-Aas:

“O Bani Umayyah! The days of disgrace have come for you. You will have to travel long distances to earn a simple living. Your acquaintances will also feign ignorance. Your relatives will cut off ties from you. I see that in future, Bani Umayyah will roam in the valleys hiding their faces. You will be concerned about your sustenance.

People got angry with Amirul Momineen only because of you. He was killed only because of you. Why did you not help him? Why have you become lazy in taking revenge of his blood?

You are the near relatives of the deceased and you are his heirs. You have kept yourselves busy with simple matters of this world. You have gathered all this wealth and goods only through Amirul Momineen. All this would be snatched away from you soon.”

Muawiyah wrote to Abdullah ibn Aamir:

“O Bani Umayyah! I see that you will be exiled in future and made to sit on the backs of camels. Try to control the mischief of the opponents. You should take as much precautions as possible. Use the weapon of persuasion quickly. Keep your eyes away from one-eyed opponents. Avoid people who love

to fight. Shower your love on people who stay away and encourage your Companions.”

Then he wrote to Walid ibn Uqbah:

“If the rule goes into the hands of your opponent you will run hiding your face in sand like an ostrich. You will have to drink muddy water and wear the clothes of fear.”

He wrote the following letter to Yaala ibn Umayyah:

“Of all the allegations put on the deceased Caliph, your appointment as the governor of Yemen and remaining in power for such a long time is the first target. People got angry with the Caliph only because of you. He was killed in spite of the fact that he used to offer prayer, observe fast and keep himself occupied in the recitation of holy Quran.

You know that the iron-collar of allegiance of the deceased Caliph is around our necks. It is our duty to revenge his murder. You make preparations to enter Iraq. I have strengthened my rule in Syria. You should not worry about Syria. I have written to Talha ibn Ubaidullah and told him to meet you in Mecca. I want you both to prepare a possible plan to revenge this unlawful murder. I have also written to Abdullah ibn Aamir to prepare the land of Iraq for you. You should also know that soon people will take away your wealth from you.”

Marwan wrote to Muawiyah in reply:

“The protector of the community and guardian of honors, Muawiyah should know that I would remain firm on my intention and sanctity of our relations. My blood is also boiling like yours but I do not have a say before your word or actions.

You are the son of Harb. You are rebellious and self-sufficient. I would change my color like a chameleon who is troubled because of hot sun and who is keeping a close watch on the conditions. My condition is like a beast that has somehow saved itself from the clutches of the hunter and now it fears its own voice.

I am keenly awaiting your order and would surely obey it.”

Abdullah ibn Aamir replied to Muawiyah:

“No doubt Amirul Momineen was like a wing shading us and small children used to take shelter under it. Alas when people attacked this shelter, we ran away like ostriches. I want to make you aware of the fact that nine out of ten persons are with you in this agitation and one of them is against you.

By Allah, it is better to die respectfully than to live the life of disgrace. You are the son of Harb. You are a warrior of battles. You are the guardian of the honor of Bani Abdush Shams. All agitations are related to your personality at this moment. You are responsible for granting honor to the tribe. All hopes of Bani

Umayyah are reposed in you after the death of Uthman. I wait for your order.”

Walid ibn Uqbah replied to Muawiyah:

“According to intellect, you are the lion of Quraish. You are unique as far as understanding and reasoning is concerned. You have the wealth of beautiful character and etiquette of ruling because whenever you come down for a battle, you prove yourself wise and successful. Whenever you leave a battle, it is because of your wisdom and foresight.

There is no point in being kind. Disgrace is a defect and a weakness. I have prepared myself for death and shackled my conscience in chains like a camel. Now I would get killed like Uthman or eliminate his killer.

Also I would act as per your orders. We are always with you and follow your footsteps.”

Yaala ibn Umayyah wrote to Muawiyah in reply:

“We, the people of Bani Umayyah are like a stone, which cannot be kept on another without kneaded clay. We are sword-holders. My father should cry at my death if I keep away from taking revenge of Uthman. I feel that life has become bitter after Uthman’s death.”

The reply of Saeed ibn al-Aas was different from those mentioned above.³⁰

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1. Balazari, Ansaab al-Ashraaf, Vol. 5, Pg. 25–26
 2. Balazari, Ansaab al-Ashraaf, Vol. 5, Pg. 27
 3. Surah Hujurat 49:6
 4. Ibn Abil Hadid, Sharh Nahjul Balagha, Vol. 4, Pg. 195
 5. Masoodi, Murujuz Zahab Vol. 2, Pg. 224
 6. Dr. Taha Husayn, Al-Fitnah al-Kubra “Uthman bin Affan”, Pg. 187
 7. Abdul Fattah Abdul Maqsood, Al-Imam “Ali bin Abi Talib Vol. 2, Pg. 33
 8. Surah Taubah 9:34–35
 9. Ansaab al-Ashraaf, Vol. 5, Pg. 54–55
 10. Abdul Fattah Abdul Maqsood, Al-Imam “Ali bin Abi Talib, Vol. 2, Pg. 34
 11. Dr. Taha Husayn, Al-Fitnah al-Kubra Uthman bin Affan, Pg. 198–199
 12. Balazari, Ansaab al-Ashraaf, Vol. 4, Pg. 27
 13. Dr. Taha Husayn, Al-Fitnah al-Kubra Uthman bin Affan, Pg. 175–176
 14. Abdul Fattah Abdul Maqsood, Al-Imam “Ali bin Abi Talib, Vol. 2, Pg. 72
 15. Dr. Taha Husayn, Al-Fitnah al-Kubra “Ali wa Banuh, Pg. 67–68
 16. Abbas Mahmood al-Aqqad, Abqariyat al-Imam “Ali, Pg. 83
 17. Balazari, Ansaab al-Ashraaf, Vol. 5, Pg. 74
 18. Dr. Taha Husayn, Al-Fitnah al-Kubra “Ali wa Banuh, Pg. 29
 19. Sharh Nahjul Balagha, Ibn Abil Hadid Mutazali, Vol. 4, Pg. 408
 20. Abdul Fattah Abdul Maqsood, Al-Imam “Ali bin Abi Talib, Vol. 2, Pg. 276–277
 21. Balazari, Ansaab al-Ashraaf, Pg. 48–49
 22. Dr. Taha Husayn, Al-Fitnah al-Kubra Uthman bin Affan, Pg. 206–207

23. Dr. Taha Husayn, Al-Fitnah al-Kubra Uthman bin Affan, Pg. 168

24. Ibid.

25. Ansaab al-Ashraaf, Vol. 5, Pg. 77

26. Dr. Taha Husayn, Al-Fitnah al-Kubra Uthman bin Affan, Pg. 136

27. Balazari, Ansaab al-Ashraaf, Vol. 5, Pg. 47

28. Surah Ahzaab 33:67

29. Refer Pg.400–406 of Al-Isabah fi Tamiz al-Sahaba for the detailed explanation of this incident. I have written this incident briefly. Apart from this, this incident is mentioned in all books of History.

30. Ibn Abil Hadid, Sharh Nahjul Balagha, Vol. 8, Pg. 83

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