

‘Uthmān’s appointment as khalīfah

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‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān : His life and Times

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‘Umar’s deep insight when appointing his successor

‘Umar’s concern remained focused on the unity and future of the ummah even during the last moments of his life, despite the painful wounds from which he was suffering. Undoubtedly this was a critical moment in history, in which his deep faith, sincerity and selflessness were manifested.¹ During those critical moments, ‘Umar رضي الله عنه managed to invent a new and unprecedented way of choosing the new khalīfah.

This is tangible and clear evidence of his understanding and skill in running the affairs of the ummah. Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم had passed away before him without clearly appointing a successor, and when Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq رضي الله عنه passed away, he appointed ‘Umar رضي الله عنه after consulting the senior Ṣaḥābah. When ‘Umar رضي الله عنه was asked to appoint a successor as he was on his death bed, he thought for a while, and then he decided on a different method that suited the situation.

When the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم passed away, the people were all agreed upon the superiority and seniority of Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, so the possibility of conflict was remote, especially since Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم had shown the ummah, in word and deed, that Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه was the most qualified to take control after he passed away. When Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه appointed ‘Umar رضي الله عنه as his successor, he knew that the Ṣaḥābah were all convinced that ‘Umar رضي الله عنه was the strongest and most capable of bearing that responsibility after he was gone. So he appointed him as khalīfah after consulting the senior Ṣaḥābah, and no one disagreed with him, so there was consensus and they all swore allegiance to ‘Umar رضي الله عنه.²

The method of selecting the new khalīfah was based on limiting shūrā to a specific number of people. ‘Umar رضي الله عنه chose six of the companions of the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم all of whom were fit to become khalīfah, even though they varied in

1 Al-Khalīfah al-Fārūq ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb by al-‘Āni, p. 161

2 Awwaliyyah al-Fārūq, p. 124; *Faṭḥ al-Bārī*, 13/208

their qualifications for the post. ‘Umar رضي الله عنه also defined the way in which the selection was to be made, and how long it should take. He ordered some troops to keep watch over the proceedings and stipulated punishments for anyone who went against the jamā‘ah. He sought to prevent disorder by ruling that no one was to enter upon them or listen to what was going on in the assembly of decision makers.¹ There follows a more detailed discussion of these events:

The number of those appointed for the shūrā, and their names

The number of men appointed was six. They were: ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf, Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqās, Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwām and Ṭalḥah ibn ‘Ubayd-Allah رضي الله عنه. Sa‘d ibn Zayd ibn Nufayl was excluded even though he was one of the ten who had been promised Jannah; perhaps that was because he was from the tribe of Banū ‘Adī (which was ‘Umar’s رضي الله عنه own tribe).² ‘Umar رضي الله عنه was very careful to exclude his relatives from positions of authority, even though there were among them those who were qualified for that. So he kept his relative Sa‘d ibn Zayd رضي الله عنه off the list of nominees for the khilāfah.³

The way in which the khilāfah was to be selected

He commanded them to assemble in the house of one of them and consult with one another. ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه was to be present among them as an advisor only, with no lot in the khilāfah. Prayers were to be led by Suḥayb al-Rūmī during this consultation period, and he said to him: “You are the imām od ṣalāh for these three days.” He did not appoint any of the six to lead the prayers lest that be interpreted as ‘Umar’s رضي الله عنه nominating him to be khilāfah.⁴ And al-Miqdād ibn al-Aswad and Abū Ṭalḥah al-Anṣārī were commanded to watch over the proceedings.⁵

1 *Awwaliyyah al-Fārūq*, p. 124

2 *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 7/142

3 *Al-Khulafā’ al-Rāshidīn* by al-Khālidi, p. 98

4 *Al-Khilāfah wa al-Khulafā’ al-Rāshidūn* by al-Bahnasāwī, p. 213

5 *Ashhar Mashāhīr al-Islām fī al-Ḥarb wa al-Siyāsah*, p. 648

How long the selection process took

‘Umar رضي الله عنه stipulated a period of three days, which was sufficient time. If they took longer than that, it would mean that deep conflict would spread, so he said to them:

Do not let the fourth day come without you having a leader over you.¹

The number of votes that were sufficient to elect the khalīfah.

Ibn Sa’d narrated, with an isnād whose men are *thiqah* (trustworthy), that ‘Umar رضي الله عنه said to Suhayb رضي الله عنه:

Lead the people in ṣalāh for three days, and leave this group of men in a house. When they have agreed upon a man, then whoever disagrees with them, strike his neck (i.e., execute him).²

‘Umar رضي الله عنه issued orders that anyone who tried to go against this group and cause division among the Muslims was to be executed, acting upon the command of Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم:

مَنْ آتَاكُمْ ، وَأَمْرُكُمْ جَمِيعٌ ، عَلَي رَجُلٍ وَاحِدٍ ، يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَشُقَّ عَصَاكُمْ ، أَوْ يُفَرِّقَ جَمَاعَتَكُمْ ، فَاقْتُلُوهُ

Whoever comes to you when you are united behind one man, seeking to cause division among you, then execute him.³

What is mentioned in the history books, that ‘Umar رضي الله عنه commanded them to gather and consult one another, and stated that if five of them agreed on a man and one objected, his head was to be struck with the sword, and if four of them agreed on a man and two of them objected, their heads were to be struck⁴, is a

1 *Al-Ṭabaqāt* by Ibn Sa’d, 3/364

2 *Al-Ṭabaqāt*, 3/342

3 *Muslim*, no.1852, 3/1480

4 *Tarīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/226

report that has no sound chain of transmission. It is one of the weird reports concocted by Abū Mikhnaf, the Rāfiḍī Shī'ah, and it is contrary to the ṣaḥīḥ texts and what is known of the conduct of the Ṣaḥābah. Abū Mikhnaf narrated that 'Umar رضي الله عنه said to Suhayb رضي الله عنه:

Stand over them - i.e., the people of shūrā - and if five agree on a man and one objects, strike his head with the sword. If four of them agree on a man and two object, then strike their heads.¹

But this is a false report. How could 'Umar رضي الله عنه have said such a thing, when he knew that they were among the elite of the Ṣaḥābah of the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم and he was the one who had chosen them for this task because he knew of their virtue and high status?²

It was narrated from Ibn Sa'd that 'Umar رضي الله عنه said to the Anṣār:

Let them stay in a house for three days. If they come to an agreement (all well and good), otherwise enter upon them and strike their necks (i.e., cut off their heads).³

These narrations have unconnected chains and also include Sammāk ibn Ḥarb, who is a weak narrator.⁴

Ruling in the case of a difference of opinion

'Umar رضي الله عنه advised them that 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه should be present with them in the gathering, but he was not to have a lot in the khilāfah. But he told them:

1 *Tarīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/226

2 *Marwiyāt Abū Mikhnaf fī Tarīkh al-Ṭabarī*, by Dr. Yaḥya al-Yaḥya, p. 175

3 *Al-Ṭabaqāt*, 3/342

4 *Marwiyāt Abū Mikhnaf fī Tarīkh al-Ṭabarī*, p. 176

If three men approve of one man and three approve of another man, then refer to ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar, and whichever of the two groups he favours, let them choose a man from among themselves. If they do not approve of the ruling of ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه, then go with the group among whom is ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه.

He described ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf as being wise and mature, saying:

What a wise man ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf is, and how mature. He is guided and protected by Allah, so listen to him.¹

A group of Muslim soldiers were to watch over the election and prevent disorder

‘Umar رضي الله عنه said to Abū Ṭalḥah al-Anṣārī رضي الله عنه:

O Abū Ṭalḥah, Allah, may He be exalted and glorified, has supported Islam through you. Choose fifty men of the Anṣār to urge this group until they choose a man from among their number.²

And he said to al- Miqdād ibn al-Aswad رضي الله عنه:

When you have placed me in my grave, bring this group of men together in a house until they elect one of their number.³

Permissibility of appointing someone as khalīfah even if there is someone else who is better than him

One of the things that we learn from the story of the shūrā is that it is permissible to appoint someone as khalīfah even if there is someone else who is better than him, because ‘Umar رضي الله عنه appointed six men for the shūrā even though he knew

1 *Tarīkh al-Ṭabarī*, 5/225

2 op. cit., 2/225

3 op. cit., 5/225

that some of them were better than others. This can also be seen in the fact that when ‘Umar رضي الله عنه appointed governors, he did not take into account their level of religious commitment only, but he also looked at their ability in dealing with people whilst avoiding anything that goes against sharī‘ah.

So he appointed Mu‘āwiyah, Mughīrah ibn Shu‘bah and ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه even though there were others who were superior to them in terms of religious commitment and knowledge, such as Abū al-Dardā’ رضي الله عنه in Syria and Ibn Mas‘ūd رضي الله عنه in Kūfah.¹

‘Umar’s compromise between appointing a successor and not appointing one

‘Umar رضي الله عنه compromised between appointing a successor, as Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه had done, by selecting candidates, and not appointing one as Rasūl صلی الله علیه و آله و سلم had done. He selected six people and asked them to consult one another about the matter.²

Consultation was not only among these six

‘Umar knew that consultation would not take place only among these six men, rather public opinion in Madīnah on who should be appointed as khalīfah would also be taken into consideration. He set a limit of three days so that their choice of the one who would be appointed as his successor would be based on the agreement of the majority of those present at that time in Madīnah, where most of the Ṣaḥābah were living. All those living elsewhere would follow them in whatever they agreed upon. Until 23 A.H, Madīnah was still the gathering place of the Ṣaḥābah, and the senior Ṣaḥābah were still there as ‘Umar رضي الله عنه kept them by his side and did not allow them to migrate to the conquered lands.³

1 *Al-Madīnah al-Nabawīyah - Fajr al-Islām wa al-‘Aṣr al-Rāshidī* (2/97)

2 *ibid.*

3 *ibid*

The shūrā council was the highest political body

‘Umar رضي الله عنه gave the shūrā council alone the responsibility of selecting the new khalīfah from among their number and it is important to note that not one of the shūrā council objected to this decision that was taken by ‘Umar رضي الله عنه and none of the other Ṣaḥābah objected either. This is what is indicated by the texts that we have before us, and we do not know of any other suggestion that was made or any objection that was raised by anyone at that time to ‘Umar’s رضي الله عنه command either during the last moments of his life or after his death. All the people agreed with this arrangement and thought that it was in the best interests of all the Muslims.

We can say that ‘Umar رضي الله عنه formed the highest political body and entrusted it with the mission of selecting the head of state or khalīfah, and this was a new organisational system introduced by the genius of ‘Umar رضي الله عنه which did not contradict the basic principles established by Islam, especially those that have to do with the principle of shūrā, because what matters is the general swearing of bay‘ah (allegiance) which takes place in the Jāmi‘ Masjid.

There may be a question that arises here: who gave ‘Umar رضي الله عنه the right to do this? What is the basis for ‘Umar رضي الله عنه making this arrangement? It is sufficient to note that a number of Muslims approved of this arrangement and no voice was heard objecting to it, so we can be certain that there was *ijmā‘* (consensus) - which is one of the sources of sharī‘ah - that it was a valid arrangement.¹

We should not forget that ‘Umar رضي الله عنه was a wise khalīfah, and we may be certain that this principle— that the shūrā council is the highest political body — was approved by the Islamic regime at the time of the Rightly Guided Khulafā’. Moreover, the council that was appointed by ‘Umar رضي الله عنه enjoyed many advantages that were not shared by any other Muslim group, advantages that were bestowed by Allah and confirmed by Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم and no other Muslim could reach the status of piety and trustworthiness that these ten had reached.²

1 *Nizām al Ḥukm fi al-Sharī‘ah al-Islami*, by Zāfir al Qāsīmī, 1/227,228

2 *op. cit.*, 1/229

Thus ‘Umar’s رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ life came to an end, and neither the calamity that had befallen him nor the pangs of death could keep him from conducting the affairs of the Muslims and establishing an unprecedented system of *shūrā*. Undoubtedly the basic principle of *shūrā* is established in the Noble Qur’ān and the Sunnah, both words and deeds, and the Rasūl of Allah and Abū Bakr both implemented this principle. So ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was not introducing a new or innovated principle, rather what ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ did was to set out a method of selecting a new khalīfah and limit the number of people from whom the choice was to be made. This was not done by Rasūl صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ or by Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ the first one to do that was ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, and what a good thing he did. It was the best of the options available to the *Ṣaḥābah* at that time.¹

‘Umar’s advice to the khalīfah who would come after him

‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ offered important advice to the khalīfah who was to come after him and lead the ummah. He said:

I advise you to fear Allah alone, with no partner or associate. I advise you to treat the first *muhājirīn* well and acknowledge their seniority. I advise you to treat the *Anṣār* well, and show approval of those among them who do well, and forgive those among them who make mistakes. I advise you to treat the people of the outlying regions well, for they are a shield against the enemy and conduits of *fay’* (booty); do not take anything from them except that which is surplus to their needs. I advise you to treat the people of the desert well, for they are the original Arabs and the protectors of Islam. Take from the surplus of their wealth and give it to their poor. I advise you to treat *Ahl al-dhimmah* (Jews and Christians living in Muslim lands under government protection) well, to defend them against their enemies and not burden them with more than they can bear if they fulfil their duties towards the believers or pay the *jizyah* with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued. I advise you to fear Allah and fear His wrath, lest you do anything wrong.

1 *Awwalīyyāh al-Fārūq* by Dr. Ghaib ‘Abd al-Kāfi al-Qurashī, p. 127

I advise you to fear Allah with regard to the people, but do not fear the people with regard to Allah. I advise you to treat the people justly, and to devote yourself to looking after them and protecting them against their enemies. Do not show any favour to the rich over the poor. That will be better for your spiritual well-being and will help to reduce your burden of sin, and it will be better for your hereafter, until you meet the One Who knows what is in your heart. I instruct you to be strict with regard to the commands of Allah, His sacred limits and disobedience with all people, both relatives and others. Do not show any mercy to anyone until you have settled the score with him according to his offence. Treat all people as equal, and do not worry about who is at fault or fear the blame of the blamers. Beware of showing favouritism among the believers with regard to the fay' that Allah has put you in charge of, lest that lead to injustice. Keep away from that. You are in a position between this world and the hereafter. If you conduct your affairs justly in this world and refrain from indulgence, that will earn you faith and divine pleasure. But if you let whims and desires overwhelm you, you will incur the displeasure of Allah.

I advise you not to let yourself or anyone else do wrong to Ahl al-dhimmah. I am offering you sincere advice; seek thereby the Countenance of Allah and the Hereafter. I have chosen advice for you that I would offer to myself or my son. If you do as I have advised you and follow my instructions, you would have gained a great deal. If you do not accept it or pay attention to it, and do not handle your affairs in the way that pleases Allah, that will be a shortcoming on your part and you will have failed to be sincere, because whims and desires are the same and the cause of sin is Iblīs, who calls man to everything that will lead to his doom. He misguided the generations who came before you and led them to Hell, what a terrible abode. What a bad deal it is for a man to take the enemy of Allah as his friend, who calls him to disobey Allah.

Adhere to the truth, strive hard to reach it and admonish yourself. I urge you by Allah to show mercy to the Muslims honour their elderly, show compassion to their young ones and respect the knowledgeable ones

among them. Do not harm them or humiliate them, and do not keep the fay' for yourself lest you anger them. Do not deprive them of their stipends when they become due, thus making them poor. Do not keep them away on campaigns for so long that they end up having no children. Do not allow wealth to circulate only among the rich. Do not close your door to the people lest that allow the strong to oppress the weak. This is my advice to you, as Allah is my witness, and I greet you with peace.¹

This advice is indicative of 'Umar's ﷺ farsightedness with regard to matters of ruling and administration, which clearly reflects an integrated methodology and system of ruling and administration.² This advice covers a number of very important issues and deserves to be viewed as a precious document because it includes basic principles of ruling which incorporate the religious, political, military, economic and social aspects of rule.

How 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Awf conducted the shūrā process

Assembling the group for consultation

Barely had the people finished burying 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ when the members of the consultation group and the highest council of the state hastened to gather in the house of 'Ā'ishah ﷺ the Mother of the Believers, or it was said that they gathered in the house of Fāṭimah bint Qays al-Fihriyyah, the sister of al-Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Qays, to decide the most important issue facing the Muslims after the death of 'Umar ﷺ. The people spoke and expressed their opinions, and they were guided by Allah to agree on some terms that were approved by the notables and by all the Muslims.³

1 *Al-Ṭabaqāt* by ibn Sa'd, 3/339; *al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn* by al-Jāhiz, 2/46, *Jamhurat Khuṭab al-'Arab*, 1/263-265; *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, 2/210; *al-Khalīfah al-Fārūq 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb* by al-'Ānī, p. 171, 172

2 *Al-Idārah al-Islamiyyah fī 'Aṣr 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb*, p. 381

3 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān by Ṣādiq 'Arjūn, p. 62,63

‘Abd al-Raḥmān called for some of them to give up their candidacy for the khilāfah.

When the members of the shūrā council had assembled, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه said to them: Delegate the matter to three among you. Zubayr رضي الله عنه said: “I delegate my say to ‘Alī.”¹ Ṭalḥah رضي الله عنه said: “I delegate my say to ‘Uthmān.” Sa’d said: “I delegate my say to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf.” So now there were three candidates: ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه said: “Which of you will declare that he should not be appointed, so we will give him the responsibility of choosing the khalīfah, and Allah will watch over him, so that he may think to himself who is the best candidate?” The two men remained silent. Then ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf said: “Will you leave it up to me, and Allah is watching, so that I will only choose the better of you?” They said: “Yes.”²

Delegating Ibn ‘Awf to conduct the process of shūrā

‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه began to contact people and consult them as soon as the meeting with the six candidates ended, on the Sunday morning, and that went on for three whole days, until dawn on Wednesday, the 4th of Muḥarram, which was the end of the period stipulated for them by ‘Umar رضي الله عنه. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān رضي الله عنه started with ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه, and said to him: “If I do not choose you, then tell me who you would nominate for khalīfah.” ‘Alī رضي الله عنه said: “‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān.” ‘Abd al-Raḥmān رضي الله عنه went to ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه and said to him: “If I do not choose you, who would you nominate for khalīfah?” ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه said: “‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.” After that, Ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه went to the other Ṣaḥābah and consulted them, and he consulted each of the senior Ṣaḥābah whom he met in Madīnah, as well as the commanders of the army, and visitors to Madīnah. His consultation also included women in seclusion, who expressed their views, as well as children and slaves in Madīnah.

1 *Al-Bukhārī, Kitāb Faḍā’il Aṣḥāb al-Nabī*, no. 3700

2 *ibid*

The outcome of his consultation was that the majority of Muslims suggested ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān رضي الله عنه, and some of them suggested ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه. At midnight on Wednesday, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه went to the house of his sister’s son, al-Miswar ibn Makhramah, where he knocked at the door and found Miswar sleeping.¹ He banged on the door until he woke him up, then he said: “I see you sleeping but by Allah I have not slept much. Go and call Zubayr and Sa’d.” So I [Miswar] called them for him, and he consulted them, then he called me and said: “Call ‘Alī for me.” So I called him and he conversed with him until halfway through the night, then ‘Alī رضي الله عنه got up and left. Then he said: “Call ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه for me.” So I called him and he conversed with him until the mu’adhīn’s call to Fajr ṣalāh interrupted them.²

Agreement to swear allegiance to ‘Uthmān

After Fajr ṣalāh on the day of swearing allegiance (the last day of Dhū al-Ḥijjah 23 AH/ 6 November 644 CE), which was led by Suhayb al-Rūmī رضي الله عنه, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه came, wearing the head cover that the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم had put on his head. The men of the shūrā committee had gathered by the mimbar, and he sent for those of the Muhājirīn, Anṣār and army commanders who were present, among whom were Mu‘āwiyah رضي الله عنه the governor of Syria, ‘Umayr ibn Sa’d رضي الله عنه the governor of Homs, and ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ رضي الله عنه the governor of Egypt. They had gone for ḥajj with ‘Umar رضي الله عنه and had come with him to Madīnah.³

In the report narrated by al-Bukhārī it says:

When the people had prayed Fajr and that group had assembled by the mimbar, he sent for everyone who was present of the Muhājirīn and Anṣār, and he sent for the commanders of the army, who had attended ḥajj that year with ‘Umar رضي الله عنه. When they had gathered, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān رضي الله عنه recited the shahādah, then he

1 *Al-Khulafā’ al-Rāshidūn* by al-khalidī, p. 106,107

2 *Al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Aḥkām*, no. 7207

3 *Shahīd al-Dār ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān*, by Aḥmad al-Khurūf, p. 37

said:” O ‘Alī, I have spoken to the people and asked for their opinions, and I do not believe that they think anyone is as good as ‘Uthmān, but do not give anyone a reason to criticise you (by expressing disagreement with the majority).”

He (i.e., ‘Abd al-Raḥmān رضي الله عنه) said (to ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه): “I swear allegiance to you in accordance with the way of Allah and His Rasūl and the two Khulafā’ who came after him.” So ‘Abd al-Raḥmān رضي الله عنه swore allegiance to him and the people swore allegiance to him, the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār and the commanders of the army and the Muslims.¹ According to the report of the author of *al-Tamhīd wa al-Bayān*, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib رضي الله عنه was the first one to swear allegiance after ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه.²

The wisdom of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf in conducting the shūrā process

‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه conducted the shūrā process in a manner that is indicative of his wisdom and noble character, and his preference for the general interests of the Muslims over any personal interest. He willingly gave up his chance for the highest position that any man could hope to attain in this world in order to keep the Muslims united, and he conducted the shūrā process in a systematic way to choose the one who would become khalīfah and direct the Muslims affairs. He succeeded by means of deliberation, patience, resolution and good management in achieving his great mission. The steps that he took were as follows:

- a. He explained his plan in the first meeting of the shūrā council, drawn up within the time frame stipulated by ‘Umar رضي الله عنه. Thus he was able to make all the members of the council express their views and he managed to find out the views and aims of each of them, and he executed his plan with clarity.
- b. He gave up his own right to candidacy so as to ward off any doubts about him and to create trust.

1 *Al-Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Aḥkām*, no. 7207

2 *Al-Tamhīd wa al-Bayān*, p. 26

- c. He found out what each of his partners in the shūrā council was hoping to achieve. He kept discussing it with them until he obtained a partial result in which ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه was favoured with the support of Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqās and Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwām رضي الله عنه. Thus it seemed to him that ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه had the majority of support from those present.
- d. Then he sought to find out what each of the two leading figures, ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, thought of the other in relation to the other people nominated by ‘Umar رضي الله عنه. He found out that each of them did not think that any of them was better than his counterpart, if he did not become khalīfah himself.
- e. He started to find out the opinion of those outside the shūrā council, among the notables of the ummah and the people of wisdom, then the common folk and the weakest members of society. Then he realised that most of the people did not regard anyone as equal to ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, so he swore allegiance to him and the people followed suit.¹

Thus by means of his smartness, honesty, straightforwardness and selflessness, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه was able to give up his own ambition for khilafā’ and showed no interest in the highest position in the state. He passed this test and led the shūrā council skilfully, which deserves the greatest appreciation.² Al-Dhahabī said:

One of the greatest deeds of ‘Abd al- Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه was when he took himself out of the race at the time of the shūrā; he chose for the ummah what the decision-makers suggested and did a marvellous job in uniting the ummah behind ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه. If he had been unfair, he could have tried to seize the position himself or given it to his cousin and the closest of the council members to him, Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqās.³

1 ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān by Ṣādiq ‘Arjūn, p. 70,71

2 Majallāh al-Buḥūth al-Islamiyyah, issue no. 10, p. 225

3 Siyar A’lām al-Nubalā’, by Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabi, 1/86

Thus another form of *shūrā* took place at the time of the Rightly Guided *Khulafā'*, which was appointing the *khalīfah* by means of a *shūrā* council who were to select one of their number, after assessing public opinion, then the *ummah* in general was to swear allegiance to him.¹

False reports inserted by the Rāfiḍīs into the story of the *shūrā*

There are false reports and lies that the Rāfiḍī Shī'ah have inserted into the history of Islam, including the story of the *shūrā* and 'Uthmān's رضي الله عنه appointment as *khalīfah*. These reports were then taken up by the Orientalists, who tried to spread them further, and many modern historians and thinkers have been influenced by them without examining the reports or checking their chains of transmission and texts, and thus they became widespread among the Muslims.

The Rāfiḍī Shī'ī historians paid attention to the story of the *shūrā* and the appointment of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān رضي الله عنه as *khalīfah*, and they inserted lies and false reports into it. Some of them wrote whole books on the topic. Abū Mikhnaf wrote a book called *Kitāb al-Shūrā*, and Ibn 'Uqdah and Ibn Babawayh also wrote similar books.²

Ibn Sa'd narrated nine reports via al-Wāqidī about the *shūrā*, the oath of allegiance to 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه and the story of how he was appointed *khalīfah*.³ He narrated another report via 'Ubayd Allāh ibn Mūsā which includes the murder of 'Umar رضي الله عنه, his limiting the *shūrā* to six men, and his advice to both 'Alī and 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه if either of them should be appointed *khalīfah*, and his advice to Suhayb رضي الله عنه regarding this matter.⁴

Al-Balādhuri narrated a report about the *shūrā* and the oath of allegiance to

1 *Dirāsah fi 'Ahd al-Nubuwwah wa al-Khilāfah al-Rāshidah*, p. 278

2 *Al-Dharī'ah ila Taṣānīf al-Shī'ah*, 14/246

3 *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* by Ibn Sa'd, 3/63 and 3/67

4 *op. cit.*, 3/340

‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه from Abū Mikhnaf¹, and from Hishām al-Kalbī, some of which was quoted from Abū Mikhnaf and some of which was narrated only by him², and from al-Wāqidī,³ and from ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Mūsā.⁴ Al -Ṭabarī based his version of this story on a number of reports, such as that of Abū Mikhnaf.⁵ Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd narrated some of the events of the shūrā story via Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Jawharī⁶ and he mentioned that he was quoting from the book al-Shūra by al-Wāqidī.⁷ The Shīī reports include a number of interpolations for which there is no sound evidence. These are:

Accusation against the Ṣaḥābah of favouritism in issues concerning the Muslims

The Shīī reports accuse the Ṣaḥābah of favouritism in issues concerning the Muslims and suggest that ‘Alī رضي الله عنه was not happy about ‘Abd al-Raḥmān رضي الله عنه choosing the khalīfah. It was narrated by Abū Mikhnaf and Hishām al-Kalbī from his father and Aḥmad al-Jawharī that ‘Umar رضي الله عنه gave the deciding choice in the event of an equal split to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه, and ‘Alī رضي الله عنه realised that the khilāfah had slipped from his grasp because ‘Abd al-Raḥmān رضي الله عنه would choose ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه because they were related by marriage.⁸

But Ibn Taymiyyah refuted that there was any close relationship by blood between ‘Uthmān and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān رضي الله عنه. He said:

‘Abd al-Raḥmān was not a brother or cousin of ‘Uthmān, and he was not from the same clan at all. Rather one was from Banū Zuhrah and the other was

1 *Anṣāb al-Ashraf* by al-Balādhurī, 5/18,19

2 op. cit., 9/15

3 *Athr al-Tashayyu’ ‘ala al-Riwāyāh al-Tarīkhiyyah*, p. 322

4 ibid

5 ibid.

6 op. cit., 6/5

7 *Athr al-Tashayyu’ ‘ala al-Riwāyāh al-Tarīkhiyyah* by Dr. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Nūr, p. 321. This is the main source for this section.

8 *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, 9/49,50-58

from Banū Umayyah, and Banū Zuhrah was closer to Banū Hāshim than Banū Umayyah. Banū Zuhrah were maternal uncles of Rasūl ﷺ, including ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf and Sa’d ibn Abī Waqqās, of whom Rasūl ﷺ said:

هَذَا خَالِي فَأُبَيِّرُنِي امْرُؤًا خَالَهُ

This is my maternal uncle; who dares to compare his maternal uncle to mine?¹

Rasūl ﷺ did not establish brotherhood between one Muhājir and another, or between one Anṣārī and another, rather he established brotherhood between the Muhājirīn and the Anṣār. He established brotherhood between ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf and Sa’d ibn al-Rabī’ al-Anṣārī.² This ḥadīth is well known and established in the books of ṣaḥīḥ and elsewhere, and all the scholars know that.³ The Shī’ah based their reports of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ favouring ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ on the fact that they were related by marriage, but they forgot that the ties of blood are stronger than ties through marriage, and they also forgot the nature of the relationship between the believers in the first generation of Islam, and that it was based on neither ties of blood nor ties through marriage. The way in which ‘Abd al-Raḥmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ were related through marriage was that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān was married to Umm Kulthūm bint ‘Uqbah ibn Abī Mu’īṭ, the sister of al-walīd.⁴

The Umawi party and the Hāshimi party

The report of Abū Mikhnaf suggests that there was a dispute between Banū Hāshim and Banū Umayyah during the swearing of allegiance, but this is not true. It is not mentioned in any report, sound or weak.⁵ Some historians were

1 Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī, 3/220, no. 3752

2 Al-Bukhārī, Kitāb Manāqib al-Anṣār, no. 3780

3 Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyah by Ibn Taymiyah, 6/271,272

4 Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā, 3/127

5 Al-Khulafa’ al-Rāshidīn by Amīn al-Qadāh, p. 78, 79

influenced by the reports of the Rāfiḍī Shī'ah and based their incorrect analysis on these reports, so they portrayed the discussion among the Ṣaḥābah of Rasūl ﷺ about the appointment of the new khalīfah as a tribal dispute, saying that they divided into two groups, the Umawī party and the Hāshimī party. This is an imaginary idea and incorrect conclusion for which there is no evidence at all, because that is not the kind of atmosphere in which the companions of the Rasūl of Allah were living when a Muhājir would stand with an Anṣār against his own father brother or cousin or tribe.

It ignores the fact that these Ṣaḥābah are the ones who sacrificed all worldly gains in order to protect their religion. It is not based on sound knowledge of these nobles who had been given the glad tidings of Jannah. There are many events in their lives which prove that these people were far above looking at things from such a narrow perspective when dealing with their affairs. It was not the matter of family or tribal representation; they were appointed to the shūrā council because of their status in Islam.

Words that were falsely attributed to 'Alī رضي الله عنه

Ibn Kathīr said:

“What is said by many historians such as Ibn Jarīr and others who narrated from unknown men about 'Alī رضي الله عنه saying to 'Abd al-Raḥmān رضي الله عنه: “You deceived me; you only appointed him because he is related to you through marriage and so that he would seek your advice every day,” and that he did not swear allegiance to 'Uthmān until 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf said:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَمَنْ نَكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنْكُثُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فَسَيُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١٠﴾

Verily, those who give bay'ah (pledge) to you (ﷺ) they are giving bay'ah to Allah. The Hand of Allah is over their hands. Then whosoever breaks his pledge, breaks it only to his own harm; and whosoever fulfils what he has

covenanted with Allah, He will bestow on him a great reward.¹

is false.”

Accusation against ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ and Mughīrah ibn Shu‘bah

Abū Mikhnaf stated in his report about the shūrā that ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ and al-Mughīrah ibn Shu‘bah sat at the door and Sa‘d told them off. This would be strange if it was done by low-class people, let alone the noble Ṣaḥābah. How could Sa‘d have said to them: “You want to say that you were present and were among the people of shūrā,” when people already knew the people of shūrā by name and that was well established among them? In fact, the report of Abū Mikhnaf contradicts itself, as is clear to anyone who studies it and examines it against the sound sources.

It is too obviously strange to mention. Dr Yaḥyā al-Yaḥyā has produced examples to disprove this report and show that it is not worthy of attention.² These are some of the ideas that he mentioned in order to warn against these poisonous notions that are widespread in our classical history books, which have influenced our thinkers, writers and historians.

‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه was more qualified to become the khalīfah

No believer would doubt that ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه was more qualified to become khalīfah and that his claim to the khilāfah was more valid. No one can criticise that except one who has deviation in his heart and who bears a grudge against the Ṣaḥābah of the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم because of the hatred that he has in his heart towards them. This only applies to the Rāfiḍī Shī‘ah who have made it their main aim in life to slander and express hatred towards the Ṣaḥābah رضي الله عنهم.

The criticism that they direct against the first three khulafā’ is not worth paying attention to because it is obviously unfounded and fabricated. In a number

1 Sūrah al Fath: 10

2 *Marwiyāt Abī Mikhnaf* p. 179

of definitive ṣaḥīḥ texts and well known reports there are signs that ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān رضي الله عنه was qualified to become khalīfah. These reports include the following:¹

1. Allah says:

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ . وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا ۗ يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا ۗ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

Allah has promised those among you who believe and do righteous good deeds, that He will certainly grant them succession to [the present rulers] in the land, as He granted it to those before them, and that He will grant them the authority to practice their religion which He has chosen for them (i.e. Islam). And He will surely, give them in exchange a safe security after their fear (provided) they (the believers) worship Me and do not associate anything (in worship) with Me. But whoever disbelieved after this, they are the fāsiqūn [rebellious, disobedient to Allah]).²

The relevant point in this verse with regard to ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه being qualified for the khilāfah is that he was one of those to whom Allah granted succession in the land and granted authority. During his khilāfah he did well and ruled the people with justice, establishing regular prayer, paying zakāh, enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil. So this verse indicates that he was qualified to become khalīfah.³

2. Allah says:

قُلْ لِلْمُخَلَّفِينَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ سُدُوعُونَ إِلَى قَوْمِ آوَلِيِّ بَاسٍ شَدِيدٍ تَقَاتَلُونَهُمْ أَوْ يُسَلِّمُونَ ۚ فَان

1 ‘Aqīdah Ahl al-Sunnah fi al-ṣaḥābah, 2/656

2 Sūrah al-Nūr: 55

3 ibid

تَطِيعُوا يُؤْتِكُمُ اللَّهُ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا ۗ وَإِن تَوَلَّوْا كَمَا تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّن قَبْلُ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

Say (O Muḥammad ﷺ) to the Bedouins who lagged behind: “You shall be called to fight against a people given to great warfare, then you shall fight them, or they shall surrender. Then if you obey, Allah will give you a fair reward; but if you turn away as you did turn away before, He will punish you with a painful torment.”¹

The relevant point in this verse with regard to ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ being qualified for the khilāfah is that those who called these Bedouins would call them after Rasūl صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ was gone, and that was Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ. Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ called them to fight the Byzantines, Persians and Turks. So it was obligatory to obey these three according to the text of the Qur’ān, and if it was obligatory to obey them then their khilāfah was valid.²

3. It was narrated that that Abū Mūsā رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ دَخَلَ حَائِطًا ، وَأَمَرَنِي بِحِفْظِ بَابِ الْحَائِطِ ، فَجَاءَ رَجُلٌ يَسْتَأْذِنُ فَقَالَ: ائْذَنْ لَهُ وَبَشِّرْهُ بِالْجَنَّةِ .
فَإِذَا أَبُو بَكْرٍ ، ثُمَّ جَاءَ آخَرٌ يَسْتَأْذِنُ فَقَالَ: ائْذَنْ لَهُ وَبَشِّرْهُ بِالْجَنَّةِ .فَإِذَا عُمَرُ ، ثُمَّ جَاءَ آخَرٌ يَسْتَأْذِنُ فَسَكَتَ هُنَيْئَةً
ثُمَّ قَالَ: ائْذَنْ لَهُ وَبَشِّرْهُ بِالْجَنَّةِ .عَلِيٌّ بَلَّوْا سِتْصِيبُهُ .فَإِذَا عُثْمَانُ بْنُ عَفَّانَ

Rasūl صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ entered a garden and told me to watch the gate of the garden. A man came and asked permission to enter, and he said: “Let him in and give him glad tidings of Paradise.” And that was Abū Bakr. Then another man came and asked permission to enter, and he said: “Let him in and give him glad tidings of Paradise.” And that was ‘Umar. Then another man came and asked permission to enter, and he said: “Let him in and give him glad tidings of Paradise for a calamity that will befall him.” And that was ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān.³

1 Sūrah al-Faṭḥ: 16

2 Al-Faṣl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwā’ wa al-Niḥal, 4/109,110

3 Al-Bukhārī, no. 3695

This ḥadīth points to the order of the first three khulafā', and foretells a calamity that would befall 'Uthmān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ. This calamity befell him when he was besieged in his house, until he was killed unlawfully. So this ḥadīth is one of the signs of nubuwah and indicated that 'Uthmān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ would be a martyr.¹

4. Abū Dāwūd رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ narrated with his isnād from Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ that the Rasūl of Allah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said:

أُرِيَ اللَّيْلَةَ رَجُلٌ صَالِحٌ أَنَّ أَبَا بَكْرٍ نَبِطَ بِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَنَبِطَ عُمرُ بِأَبِي بَكْرٍ وَنَبِطَ عُثْمَانُ بِعُمَرَ

Last night a righteous man was shown (in a dream) that Abū Bakr was tied to the Rasūl of Allah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, and 'Umar was tied to Abū Bakr, and 'Uthmān was tied to 'Umar.

Jabir رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ said: When we left the Rasūl of Allah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, we said:

As for the righteous man, that was the Rasūl of Allah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, and as for their being tied to one another, they will be in charge of this matter with which Allah has sent His Rasūl صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ.²

5. Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥakīm narrated with his isnād that Abū Hurayrah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ said: I heard the Rasūl of Allah صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ say:

إِنَّهَا سَتَكُونُ فِتْنَةً وَاجْتِلَافٌ أَوْ اجْتِلَافٌ وَفِتْنَةٌ، قَالَ: قُلْنَا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، فَمَا تَأْمُرُنَا؟ قَالَ: عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْأَمِينِ وَأَصْحَابِهِ

There will be turmoil and conflict - or conflict and turmoil. We said: "O Rasūl of Allah, what do you command us to do?" He said: "Be with the trustworthy one and his companions."

1 'Aqīdah Ahl al Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah fi al-Ṣaḥābah, 2/657

2 Sunan Abī Dawūd, (4636) 2/513

And he pointed to ‘Uthmān.¹ This ḥadīth is an evident miracle of the Rasūl and points to the truth of his nubuwwah, as it foretells the turmoil that would occur during the khilāfah of ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ and it happened as it was foretold. The ḥadīth also indicates that ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was a legitimate khalīfah, as Rasūl صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ commanded the people to rally around ‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ: when there arose turmoil and conflict with the khalīfah and leader, he commanded them to unite around him and stay with him, because he would be following the truth, whereas those who rebelled against him would be following falsehood, deviancy, whims and desires. Rasūl صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ testified that he (‘Uthmān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) would be adhering to the truth and would not depart from it.²

6. Abū ‘Īsā al-Tirmidhī narrated with his isnād going back to ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا that Rasūl صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ said:

يَا عُثْمَانُ! إِنَّهُ لَعَلَّ اللَّهُ يَقْمِّصُكَ قَمِيصًا فَإِنْ أَرَادُواكَ عَلَيَّ خَلَعِهِ فَلَا تَخْلَعَهُ لَهُمْ

O ‘Uthmān, Allah may give you a garment to wear, and if they want you to take it off, do not take it off for them.³

In this ḥadīth the khilāfah is likened to a garment, and the fact that he mentions that some people will want him to take it off is like a nomination, as if he is saying: Allah will make you khalīfah, so if the people want to depose you, do not depose yourself for their sake, because you will be following truth whilst they will be following falsehood.⁴

7. Tirmidhi narrated with his isnād that Abū Sahlah said:

1 *Al-Mustadrak*, 3/99; he said: this ḥadīth has a ṣaḥīḥ isnād although they (*al-Bukhārī* and *Muslim*) did not narrate it; and al-Dhahabī agreed with him.

2 ‘*Aqīdah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah fi al-Ṣaḥābah*’, 2/660

3 *Faḍā’il al-Ṣaḥābah*, 1/613; its isnād is ṣaḥīḥ, *Al-Tirmidhī* (3705)

4 *Al-Dīn al-khālīs* by Muḥammad Ṣiddīq Ḥasan al-Qanūhi, *al-Bukhārī*, 3/446

‘Uthmān said to me on the day when he was besieged: The Rasūl of Allah ﷺ gave me some advice and I am going to adhere to it.¹ The advice given was not to give up the khilāfah,

As he said:

فَإِنْ أَرَادُواكَ عَلَىٰ خَلْعِهِ فَلَا تَخْلَعْهُ لَهُمْ

If they want you to take it off, do not take it off for them.²

The words I am going to adhere to it mean I am going to follow that advice.

8. Abū ‘Abd Allāh al-Ḥākim narrated with his isnād going back to Abū Sahlah, the freed slave of ‘Ā’ishah رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا, that the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ said:

Call for me - or I wish there was here with me - one of my Ṣaḥābah. She said: “I said: Abū Bakr?” He said: “No.” I said: “Umar?” He said: “No.” I said: “Your cousin ‘Alī?” He said: “No.” I said: “Then ‘Uthmān?” He said: “Yes.” So ‘Uthmān came and he said (to ‘Ā’ishah): “Get up (and leave us).” Rasūl ﷺ started whispering to ‘Uthmān and his colour changed. He (the narrator) said: “Then when the day of the siege came, we said: ‘Will you not fight?’” He said: “The Rasūl of Allah ﷺ gave me some advice and I will adhere to it.”³

This ḥadīth and the one before it both point to the legitimacy of ‘Uthmān’s khilāfah. Whoever rejects his khilāfah and does not believe that he is one of the people of Paradise and martyrs, and speaks disrespectfully of him; is beyond the pale of faith and Islam.⁴

1 *Al-Dīn al-Khālīs*, 3/446

2 *Faḍā’il al-Ṣaḥābah*, 1/605 - its isnād is Ṣaḥīḥ; *al-Tirmidhī*, 5/295

3 *Tuḥfah al-Aḥwadhī*, by Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mubarakpūri, 10/209 *al-Tirmidhī*, (3705)

4 *Faḍā’il al-Ṣaḥābah*, 1/605 -its isnād is Ṣaḥīḥ; *al-Mustadrak*, 3/99-the ḥadīth has a Ṣaḥīḥ isnād although they (*al-Bukhārī* and *Muslim*) did not narrate it, and *al-Dhahabī* agreed with him.

9. Another indication of the legitimacy of his khilāfah is the report narrated by *al-Bukhārī* with his isnād from Ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه who said:

At the time of Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم we did not regard anyone as equal to Abū Bakr, then ‘Umar, then ‘Uthmān, then after that we left the Ṣaḥābah of Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم and did not differentiate between them.¹

This indicates that Allah had instilled in their hearts the order of khulafā’ which He had ordained for after His Rasūl’s صلى الله عليه وسلم demise.² Ibn Taymiyyah said:

This ḥadīth tells us what the Ṣaḥābah believed at the time of Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم that Abū Bakr was the best, then ‘Umar, then ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه. It was narrated that the Rasūl heard about that and did not deny it. So this superiority is proven by the text, and even if that were not the case, it would still be proven by the attitude of the Muhājirīn and Anṣār at the time of the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم without any disapproval on his part, and by their attitude when ‘Umar رضي الله عنه passed away, as they all swore allegiance to ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān رضي الله عنه without any materialistic motive and without fear, and no one disagreed with his being appointed khalīfah.³

All the texts that we have quoted here offer strong evidence that the khilāfah of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه was legitimate and there is no doubt concerning that and no conflict among those who adhere to the Qur’ān and Sunnah, to whom nothing brings greater joy than adhering to them, namely Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā’ah. Every Muslim is required to believe that the khilāfah of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه was legitimate and he must accept fully the texts which indicate that.⁴

1 *Al-Bukhārī, Kitāb Faḍā’il Aṣḥāb al-Nabī*, no. 3698

2 *‘Aqīdah Ahl al-Sunnah*, 2/664

3 *Manhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah* by Ibn Taymiyyah, 3/165

4 *‘Aqīdah Ahl al-Sunnah wa l-Jamā’ah fī al-Ṣaḥābah al-Kirām* by Dr. Nāṣir ibn ‘Alī ‘Āyid Ḥasan al-Shaykh, 2/664

Consensus concerning the khilāfah of ‘Uthmān

The Ṣaḥābah of the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ and those who came after them and followed their way, Ahl al-Sunnah wa l- Jamā‘ah, are agreed that ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ was the most qualified of people to become khalīfah after ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, and no one objected or disagreed with that. Rather they all submitted to that because he was the best of Allah’s creation after the two Shuyūkh Abū Bakr and ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ, and a number of scholars of ḥadīth and others narrated that there was consensus on the legitimacy of ‘Uthmān’s رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ khilāfah after ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ. These reports include the following¹ :

1. The report of Ibn Abī Shaybah with his isnād going back to Hārith ibn Muḍarrib who said:

I performed ḥajj during the khilāfah of ‘Umar and they did not doubt that the khilāfah would pass to ‘Uthmān after him.²

2. Abū Na‘īm al-Asbahānī narrated with his isnād going back to Ḥudhayfah that he said:

I was standing with ‘Umar, my knee touching his knee and he said: “Who do you think the people will appoint?” I said: “The people have already decided on Ibn ‘Affān.”³

3. Al-Ḥāfiz al-Dhahabī narrated that Sharīk ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Qāḍī رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ said:

Rasūl ﷺ passed away and the Muslims appointed Abū Bakr as his successor; if they had known that there was anyone better than him among them, then they would have deceived (the ummah, by doing that). Then Abū Bakr رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ appointed ‘Umar رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ as his successor and he was a

1 op. cit., 2/665

2 Al-Muṣannaḥ, 14/665

3 Kitāb al-Imāmah wa al-Radd ‘ala al-Rāfiḍah, p. 306

man of truth and justice. When he was dying, he delegated the matter (of succession) to a council of six men, who agreed on ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه. If they had known that there was anyone better than him among them, then they would have deceived us (by doing that).¹

All these reports clearly indicate that it was well established among the Ṣaḥābah of Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم that ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه was more qualified to succeed to the khilāfah when ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه was still alive, because they already knew and had learned from the texts which spoke of his position in the order (of khulafā’) that he would become khalīfah after ‘Umar رضي الله عنه, and because they knew that he was the best of all the people after Abū Bakr and ‘Umar رضي الله عنه.²

4. Ibn Sa’d narrated with his isnād going back to al-Nazzal ibn Sabrah رضي الله عنه who said: ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas‘ūd said, when ‘Uthmān was appointed as khalīfah: “We have appointed as khalīfah the best of those who are left, and we did not fail to select the best.”³
5. Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Za‘farānī said:

I heard al-Shāfi‘i say: “The people were unanimously agreed on the khilāfah of Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, and Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه appointed ‘Umar رضي الله عنه as his successor, then he delegated a council of six men to appoint one of their number, and they appointed ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه.⁴

Abū Hāmid Muḥammad al-Maqdisī narrated some words which he attributed to Imam al-Shāfi‘i:

You should know that the rightful ruler after ‘Umar رضي الله عنه was ‘Uthmān

1 *Mizān al-l’tidāl fi Naqd al-Rijāl*, by Muḥammad ibn ‘Uthmān al-Dhahabi, 2/273

2 *‘Aqīdah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah fi al-Ṣaḥābah al- Kirām*, by Dr. Nāṣir ibn ‘Alī ‘Āyid, 2/666

3 *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 3/63

4 *Manāqib al-Shāfi‘i* by al-Bayhaqi, 1/434,435

ﷺ. That is because the members of the shūrā council delegated the task of choosing the khalīfah to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf ﷺ and he chose ‘Uthmān ﷺ, and the Ṣaḥābah ﷺ were unanimously agreed on that. The people approved of what ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ﷺ did, and ‘Uthmān ﷺ led the people in the path of truth and ruled with justice until he was martyred.¹

6. Ibn Taymiyyah narrated that Imām Aḥmad said:

They did not all agree to swear allegiance to anyone as they all agreed to swear allegiance to ‘Uthmān.²

7. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash‘arī said:

The khilāfah of ‘Uthmān ﷺ after ‘Umar ﷺ is proven because he was chosen by the members of the shūrā council who were appointed by ‘Umar Taymiyah. They chose him and approved of his leadership, and they were unanimously agreed about his virtue and justice.³

8. ‘Uthmān al-Sabūnī said, explaining the belief of the salaf and of the scholars of ḥadīth concerning the order of the khulafā’, after mentioning that they said that the khilāfah of Abū Bakr ﷺ came first, then ‘Umar ﷺ, then came the khilāfah of ‘Uthmān ﷺ by the consensus of the shūrā council and all the Ṣaḥābah of Rasūl ﷺ and with their approval, thus he became the khalīfah who was in charge.⁴

9. Ibn Taymiyyah said: All the Muslims swore allegiance to ‘Uthmān ﷺ and no one held back. When the prominent people and people of authority and power swore allegiance to him, he became the ruler. If ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ﷺ had sworn allegiance to him but ‘Alī and other prominent and powerful Ṣaḥābah had not done so, he would not have become the ruler.

1 *Al-Radd ‘alā al-Rāfiḍah*, p. 319, 320

2 *Manḥaj al-Sunnah*, 3/166; *al-Sunnah* by al-Khallāl, p. 320

3 *Al-Inābah ‘an Uṣūl al-Diyānah*, p. 68

4 *‘Aqīdah al-Salaf wa Aṣḥāb al-Ḥadīth dimna al-Risālah al-Minbariyyah*, 1/139

But ‘Umar appointed six men to the shūrā council - ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī, Ṭalḥah, Zubayr, Sa’d and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه, then Ṭalḥah, Zubayr and Sa’d رضي الله عنه withdrew from the race willingly, leaving ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān رضي الله عنه, who did not withdraw but he was delegated to select one of the other two. For three days during which ‘Abd al-Raḥmān swore that he did not sleep much, he consulted the first Muslims and those who had followed them in truth. He consulted the commanders of the troops who had gone for ḥajj with ‘Umar that year.

The Muslims suggested to him that ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه should be appointed khalīfah, and he said that they all favoured ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, so they swore allegiance to him, not because of something that he gave them or because they were afraid of him. Hence more than one of the salaf and A’immah, such as Ayūb al-Sakhtiyānī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, al-Dāraqutnī and others said:

Whoever prefers ‘Alī رضي الله عنه over ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه has thought badly of the Muhājirīn and Anṣār. This is another sign of ‘Uthmān’s superiority, because they appointed him as their leader willingly and on the basis of shūrā.¹

10. Ibn Kathīr رحمته الله narrated that there was consensus among the Ṣaḥābah about the appointment of ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه as khalīfah and he reported that the members of the shūrā council delegated the matter to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān رضي الله عنه, for him to work out for the Muslims who was the best of them to be appointed to this position. He asked those whom he could ask of the shūrā council members, and others, and they did not suggest anyone but ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān رضي الله عنه. He said to ‘Alī رضي الله عنه: “If I do not appoint you, who do you suggest?” He said: “‘Uthmān.” And he said to ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه: “If I do not appoint you, who do you suggest?” He said: “‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib.” It seems that this was before the matter was limited to three people and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān رضي الله عنه withdrew from the race in order to choose the best candidate.

Then ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه began to consult the people about

1 *Minḥāj al-Sunnah*, 1/134

these two and he collected the opinions of both the ordinary Muslims and their leaders, consulting them in groups and individually, secretly and openly, even consulting the women in seclusion from behind their curtains and asking the children in their schools. He even asked the travellers and Bedouin who came to Madīnah during those three days. He did not get much sleep, rather he spent his time in prayer and supplication, seeking guidance and asking wise people. He did not find anyone suggesting that anyone was better than ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān رضي الله عنه.

On the fourth day after the demise of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb رضي الله عنه, he came to the house of his nephew Miswar ibn Makhramah and told him to call ‘Alī and ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه for him. So he called them and they came to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān رضي الله عنه. He told them that he had asked the people and he did not find anyone who suggested that anyone was better than either of them, then he took a solemn promise from each of them that if he was appointed he would be just, and if he was not appointed, that he would hear and obey.

Then he went out to the masjid, wearing the head cover that the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم had put on him and with a sword by his side. He sent for the most prominent people among the Muhājirīn and Anṣār, and the call went out to the people at large: *Al-Ṣalat Jāmi‘ah* (prayer is about to begin). The masjid filled with people and was so crowded that ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه could not find a place to sit except at the back, and he was a very shy man. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf رضي الله عنه ascended the mimbar of the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم where he stood for a long time and said a lengthy du‘ā that the people could not hear. Then he spoke and said: “O people, I have asked you secretly and openly about your leader, and I did not find suggesting that anyone was better than either of these two men, ‘Alī and ‘Uthmān. Come here, O ‘Alī.” He came and stood beneath the mimbar, and then ‘Abd al-Raḥmān رضي الله عنه took him by the hand and said: “Will you swear allegiance to me in accordance with the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Rasūl and the deeds of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar?” He said: By Allah, no, but on the basis of my efforts and ability (i.e., I will do my best). He let go of his hand

and said: “Come here, O ‘Uthmān.” He took him by the hand and said: “Will you swear allegiance to me in accordance with the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Rasūl and the deeds of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar?” He said: “By Allah, yes.” He looked up at the ceiling of the masjid, still holding ‘Uthmān’s ﷺ hand, and said:” O Allah, listen and bear witness; O Allah, listen and bear witness; O Allah listen and bear witness. O Allah that which was on my shoulders I place on the shoulders of ‘Uthmān ﷺ.” The people crowded around, swearing their allegiance to ‘Uthmān ﷺ, until they surrounded him beneath the mimbar.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān sat down where the Rasūl of Allah ﷺ used to sit and ‘Uthmān ﷺ sat beneath him on the second step, and the people came to him and swore allegiance to him, and ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib ﷺ swore allegiance to him first - or it was said that he was the second to do so.¹

These reports, all of which mention the consensus of all these leaders, offer definitive proof that the oath of allegiance to ‘Uthmān ﷺ as khalīfah was done with the consensus of all the Ṣaḥābah and no one disagreed or objected to that.²

Ruling on preferring ‘Alī over ‘Uthmān ﷺ

The view of Ahl al-Sunnah is that the one who prefers ‘Alī ﷺ over Abū Bakr and ‘Umar ﷺ is a misguided innovator, and the one who prefers ‘Alī ﷺ over ‘Uthmān ﷺ is mistaken, but they did not regard him as misguided or an innovator³, although one of the scholars spoke harshly about the one who prefers ‘Alī ﷺ over ‘Uthmān ﷺ, as he said:

The one who prefers ‘Alī over ‘Uthmān is claiming that the Ṣaḥābah of Rasūl ﷺ betrayed the trust when they chose ‘Uthmān over ‘Alī.⁴

1 *Al Bidāyah wa al Nihāyah*, 7/159-161

2 *‘Aqīdah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah fi al-Ṣaḥābah al-Karām*, by Dr. Nāṣir ibn ‘Alī ‘Āyid, 2/671

3 *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwa*, 3/101, 102

4 *Ḥuqūbah min al-Tarīkh* by ‘Uthmān al-Khamīs, p. 66

Ibn Taymiyyah said:

Ahl al-Sunnah are agreed that ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه is of a higher status, although this issue — the issue of ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī رضي الله عنه — is not a fundamental issue such that the one who differs concerning it is regarded as misguided, according to the majority of Ahl al-Sunnah. The issue concerning which the one who differs is regarded as is misguided is the issue of khilāfah. That is because they believe that the khalīfah after the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم was Abū Bakr, then ‘Umar, then ‘Uthmān, then ‘Alī رضي الله عنه, and whoever criticised the khilāfah of any of these leaders is more misguided than his people’s donkey.¹

He mentioned the comments of the scholars about the issue of preferring ‘Alī over ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه, concerning which there are two reports:

The first is that this is not acceptable. The one who prefers ‘Alī over ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه has transgressed beyond the Sunnah and introduced an innovation, because he disagreed with the consensus of the Ṣaḥābah. Hence it was said that the one who prefers ‘Alī over ‘Uthmān رضي الله عنه has thought badly of the Muhājirīn and Anṣār. This was narrated from more than one scholar, including Ayūb al-Sakhtiyānī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and al-Dāraqutnī.

The second view is that the one who prefers ‘Alī رضي الله عنه is not to be regarded as an innovator, because ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī رضي الله عنه are so close in status.²

1 *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwa*, 3/101,102

2 *op. cit.*, 4/367

