

The Martyrdom of

Sayyidunā 'Uthmān

رضي الله عنه

Dhū al-Hijjah is indeed a blessed month of the Islamic calendar. It is the month in which the sacred pilgrimage takes place and in it is the day of Arafah, one of the most auspicious days of the year. While many aspects relating to Hajj are often discussed, many important historical events which occurred in this month are often overlooked due to the auspiciousness of Hajj. A few important events that took place in this month: Sayyidunā Hamzah رضي الله عنه became a Muslim in 6th year of Prophethood, Sayyidunā 'Umar رضي الله عنه became a Muslim in 6th year of Prophethood, the Second Pledge of 'Aqabah took place in 13th year of Prophethood, and it was during this month that Sayyidunā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه was martyred in 35 AH.

KHILĀFAH OF SAYYIDUNĀ 'UTHMĀN

Sayyidunā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه was the third Khalīfah of Islam. During his rule conquests spread east and west, and wealth started pouring into the public treasury. These blessings from the conquests, however, also had a negative impact on society, resulting in greed and avarice among those whose faith was not strong, such as the desert Arabs, those who converted after the conquests, and members of prosperous nations who entered Islam at a superficial level. It was not long before these people started to criticize and find fault with their Khalīfah on the most mundane issues.

CHANGE IN DEMOGRAPHICS AND SOCIETY

The expansion of the Islamic empire also brought with it different races, cultures, customs, ideas, beliefs, and other aspects of life, especially in the large provinces. There were, thus, many changes in the structure of society which consisted of the early generation of Muslims and others. Society now comprised of a number of groups: (a) Those who remained of the early generation of the Sahābah and those who had learned to some extent from the Sahābah. They were the minority (b) The original inhabitants of the conquered regions. (c) The Bedouins (d) Those who had previously apostatized. (e) The Jews and Christians. (f) Emergence of a new generation

A NEW GENERATION

A new generation of people also started to take up positions in society. They were different from the generation of the Sahābah, living in a different era and

with different characteristics. This is a generation which in general is regarded as being of a lesser quality than the first generation that had borne on its shoulders the burden of building and establishing the state. The new generation did not accept the way of the previous generation, and were accustomed to a different way. Thus, a new mentality and a new outlook on life emerged, which was a concept that drifted away from the outlook that had prevailed at the time of the first two Khalīfahs.

RISE OF AMBITIOUS PEOPLE

The influx of wealth and successful conquests created many ambitious people in society who regarded themselves as qualified to rule and for leadership, but they found that the way to that was blocked. Usually when there are ambitious people who cannot find a way to fulfil their ambitions, they get involved in any movement that is aimed at changing the status quo.

'ABD ALLAH IBN SABA' STIRS UP FITNAH

It was in this climate that in the last years of 'Uthmān's Khilāfah, when signs of trouble in the Muslim society began to loom on the horizon, due to the changes that we have mentioned, that some of the Jews seized this opportunity to stir up trouble by pretending to be Muslim and using the tactic of Taqiyyah (dissimulation). Among them was 'Abd Allāh ibn Saba'. Ibn Saba' now began to spread views and beliefs which he fabricated, that reflected his hateful nature, namely introducing new things into the Muslim society to destroy its unity and stir up fitnah. So, he planted seeds of division among the people. That was one of several factors that led to the murder of the Khalīfah 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه and the division of the Ummah.

REBELS MARCH ON MADĪNAH

Ibn Saba', from Egypt, remained in continuous contact with his cohorts from Basrah and Kūfah. They would write letters to one another regarding the 'faults' of the rulers and each party would read the letter of the other to the people of its city. Complaints increased and the discontent reached its zenith, until finally they marched on Madīnah, dead set on removing Sayyidunā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه from the seat of Khilāfah. These letters were falsely ascribed to a few of the eminent Companions, who were most surprised



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when this mob arrived in Madīnah. These rebels thought they were acting on their orders only to discover that the sternest defenders of Sayyidunā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه were these very Sahābah: Sayyidunā 'Ālī, Sayyidunā Talhah, and Sayyidunā Zubayr رضي الله عنه. They raised a number of grievances against Sayyidunā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه which he answered fittingly, leaving them with no excuse to continue with their insurrection.

THE FALSE STORY OF THE RIDER

While all assumed the unrest was now at an end, to their surprise the rebels returned the next day. The Sahābah were alarmed to hear yelling and protests in the streets once more. When they were asked why they had returned, they claimed that they had been deceived and that on their journey back home, the Egyptians, spotted a rider who at times would be in sight and times would disappear, they suspected him and subsequently found him to be the 'messenger' of 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه to the governor of Egypt carrying a letter entailing an order of their execution. Hence, they immediately returned to Madīnah. Surprisingly though their allies from Basrah and Kūfah also returned at the same time. Sayyidunā 'Ālī رضي الله عنه was first to question the veracity of their claim, saying to them, "Each group was returning home and the routes are far apart. How did you all arrive in Madīnah at exactly the same time? This is something you have plotted by night." [Tabarī] 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه denied writing such a letter as well, saying, "A letter can be forged and so can a stamp or signature against anyone. Furnish evidence." [al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah] The rebels, however, insisted, "We don't care! We don't want this man, 'Uthmān."

SIEGE AND MARTYRDOM

They laid siege to Madīnah for approximately 25 days, during which Sayyidunā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه was prevented from leaving his house, going to the Masjid, and even having water from the well of Rūmah—the very well he had purchased and donated for the use of all Muslims. The rebels could not reach Sayyidunā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه because of a number of Sahābah defending him: Hasan ibn 'Ālī, Husayn ibn 'Ālī, Abū Hurayrah, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar, and 'Abd Allāh ibn Zubayr رضي الله عنه.

ADHERING TO THE PROPHET'S صلى الله عليه وسلم ADVICE

'Uthmān رضي الله عنه following the advice of the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم that he told him in secret and which 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه announced on the day of the siege, a promise that he made to him, that he would bear it with patience. Which is shared in the following words of his, "I will never be the first of the successors of the Rasūl of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم to shed blood among his Ummah." [Musnad Ahmad]

PREPARATION OF REINFORCEMENTS

The governors of the other regions later learnt about what was transpiring in Madīnah and began preparing armies to be sent to Madīnah to aid the Khalifah. The days of Hajj had ended and scores of pilgrims were now returning to Madīnah as well. This prompted the rebels to carry out their evil intentions before their arrival.

THE DREAM OF 'UTHMĀN

On the last day of the siege—which is the day on which he was martyred—'Uthmān رضي الله عنه fell asleep and that morning told the people, "They are going to kill me today." [Tabaqāt Ibn Sa'd] Then he said, "I saw the Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم in my dream. Abū Bakr and 'Umar were with him, and the Rasūl صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "O 'Uthmān, break your fast with us." He was fasting, and he was killed that day. [Ibid]

THE MURDER OF SAYYIDUNĀ 'UTHMĀN

The rebels snuck into the house of 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه just when he had begun reciting the Qur'an. One of the rebels struck him with his sword, severing the hand of 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه as he tried to shield himself. 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه was killed when the Mushaf was in front of him, and when his hand was cut off, the blood spilled onto the Mushaf that was in front of him.

May Allah سبحانه وتعالى shower His endless blessings upon Sayyidunā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه, the fourth man to embrace Islam, the only man in history to ever marry two daughters of a Nabī, and that too the daughters of the final Messenger Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. The one who extended for the Muslims al-Masjid al-Nabawī, thus, securing for himself a house in Jannah. The one who purchased the well of Rūmah and donated it to the Muslims, thus, securing for himself a garden in Jannah. The one who equipped one third of the Army of Tabūk, thus, earning the guarantee of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, "Nothing can harm 'Uthmān after this day.", and the one who was called a Shahīd (martyr) by none other than the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. It is the saying of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that the place upon which the blood of the martyr falls will testify for him on the Day of Qiyāmah; thus, for some the plains of Badr and Uhud will testify. For others, the soil of Makkah and Madīnah, for 'Umar رضي الله عنه it will be the Musallā of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, while for 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه it will be the noble Qur'an itself that will testify for him, the very verses upon which his blood fell:

So, Allah will suffice for you against them, And He is the All Hearing, the All Knowing. [Baqarah: 137]

May Allah have mercy upon him and instil within us, love for this noble Companion of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and unite us with him in the everlasting gardens of Paradise.

