

HAZRAT ABU DHARR AL-GHIFARI

THE COMPANION OF THE HOLY PROPHET
WHO PROTESTED AGAINST
HOARDING OF GOLD AND SILVER

by

Dr. S. M. YUSUF
Professor of Arabic
University of Karachi

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ANJUMAN-E GHULAMAN-E ASGHAR
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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يَتَّقُونَ فِيهَا سَبِيلَ اللَّهِ
فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ يَوْمَ يُجْعَلُ عَلَيْهِمْ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ
ثَنَاتٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْنِزُونَ
فَذَرْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْنِزُونَ
(التوبة ٣٤-٣٥)

"They who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah, unto them give tidings (O Muhammad) of a painful doom, on the day when it will (all) be heated in the fire of hell and their foreheads and their flanks and their backs will be branded therewith (and it will be said unto them): Here is that which ye hoarded for yourselves. Now taste of what ye used to hoard. IX, 34-35."

14, Rohailkhand Housing Society,
Haider Ali Road,
Off: Shaheed-e-Millat Rd,
KARACHI-5.



22nd April, 1969.

Qibla Doctor Sahib,

It was a pleasure to have seen you last evening at your University residence after your return from Hajj. I look upon you for guidance, advice, and correction. Our young and progressive country is facing many problems, and the most important and serious matter is of character building. I am writing to you inspite of my own shortcomings, and pray to God that through His Mercy and Blessing, He may mould me to be good. It is a pity that inspite of our being Muslims, we all look to foreign and alien philosophies, and doctrines. As per discussion, I feel it is the most appropriate time when we all should know about the life and economic philosophy of one of the greatest Sahabas, Hazrat Abu Dharr Ghifari, who preached and lived by a code

of social and economic equality, which is basically Islamic. To add a sixth word to Islam by any other Isms is a sin. Being a pious man as well as a scholar you are in a position to write on the great Sahaba. I would request you to spare some time and prepare a booklet which I would get printed for free distribution so that the so called intellectuals who are bracketed under the category of "new thinking" should realise that what they are trying to preach has already been preached and practised fourteen hundred years back by our beloved Prophet through love and patience and not through violence and bloodshed. We all must look back to the life of our beloved Prophet for practical guidance, and not to so called modern philosophers.

With kindest regards.

Yours as ever,



(INAM MOHAMMAD)

Dr. S.M. Yousuf,
Head of the Department of Arabic,
University of Karachi,
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Dr. S. M. Yusuf,

M.A. (Persian); M.A., Ph.D. (Arabic);
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PROFESSOR OF ARABIC
UNIVERSITY OF KARACHI

A-9, UNIVERSITY CAMPUS,
KARACHI-32,
(PAKISTAN)

Date 1-8-1968


Mr. Inam Mohammad,
14, Rohailkhand Housing Society,
Haider Ali Road,
Off: Shaheed-e-Millat Road,
KARACHI-5

Dear Mr. Inam Mohammad,

I have pleasure in permitting you to have the manuscript written by me in English on the life of Hazrat Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari, printed for the purpose of free distribution for as many copies as you like.

The booklet is only an academic treatment of the life of a companion of the Prophet, which can serve as a beacon light to our youth, torn as they are between conflicting 'isms'. It is based on authentic sources; it has nothing to do with politics.

Yours Sincerely,


(S.M. Yusuf)

BIOGRAPHY

ABU DHARR AL-GHIFARI

His name is commonly given as Jundub B. Junada, but other names are also mentioned. He is said to have worshipped One God before his conversion. When news of Muhammad reached him he sent his brother to Mecca to make enquiries, and being dissatisfied with his report, he went himself. One story says he met Muhammad with Abu-Bakr at the Ka'ba, another that Ali took him secretly to Muhammad. He immediately believed, and is surprisingly claimed to have been the fifth (even the fourth) believer. He was sent home, where he stayed till he went to Medina after the battle of the Ditch (5/627 A.D.). Later he lived in Syria till he was recalled by Uthman because of a complaint against him by Mu'awiya. He retired, or was sent to al-Rabadha, where he died in 32/652-3 or 31. He was noted for humility and asceticism, in which respect he is said to have resembled Jesus. He was very religious and eager for knowledge, and is said to have matched Ibn Mas'ud in religious learning. He is credited with 281 traditions, of which al-Bukhari and Muslim rendered 31 between them.

(Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition.)

1. Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari (died 32 A.H.), the fifth in order of precedence to accept Islam among the *sahaba*, is best known for his vehement protest against the hoarding of money (gold and silver), the emergence of a wealthy and privileged class indulging in luxury and high life and the misappropriation of public funds on the part of Emirs, provincial governors and lesser officials, who built splendid palaces, acquired vast holdings of land and owned huge flocks of camels and sheep. He was pained to observe that he alone clung to the standards which prevailed at the time of the Prophet's death; everyone else had changed and smeared his character with things which are not countenanced by the Kitab and the Sunnah. Truth was suppressed; falsehood was patronised; the truthful were put to shame and the selfish people achieved their sordid ends with no regard for *taqwa* (fear of Allah).

2. Abu Dharr was complimented by the Prophet as "the most truthful person on the surface of the earth and under the canopy of the sky". He was rightly reputed to be outspoken, fearless and overwhelmed by missionary zeal. He cared for no opposition, no adverse comment and no unpopularity in insisting upon a thorough, almost literal, observance of the directives of religion. He had a rare confidence in his own knowledge acquired directly and through importunate questions from the Prophet. With legitimate pride he would brush aside, sometimes rather brusquely, the arguments of his juniors in companionship of the Prophet. On occasions he would behave violently towards those whose good faith he suspected.

3. Before the days of Uthman, Abu Dharr did not feel himself called upon to admonish the powers that be for any serious lapse from the norms of the ideal society founded by the Prophet and developed along healthy lines by the first two Caliphs. Until then he was never in a mood to revolt; he never offended any particular class of people by his words or deeds. On the whole he was at peace with life and people around him. Only he was regarded as a bizarre man of unkempt appearance and somewhat blunt in manner of speech. At the same time he was held in great awe for his deep knowledge, scrupulous piety and disdain for wordly temptations.

4. Then the society underwent some change which outraged Abu Dharr's sense of propriety. It must have been a profound and vital change, compromising the faith and the fortune of the general body of Muslims. The nature of the change is indicated by the form of Abu Dharr's protest against it. He lashed out at the ruling and the privileged wealthy class by recalling the following verse of the Quran:—

“They who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah, unto them give tidings (O Muhammad) of a painful doom, on the day when it will (all) be heated in the fire of hell and their foreheads and their flanks and their backs will be branded therewith (and it will be said unto them): Here is that which ye hoarded for yourselves. Now taste of what ye used to hoard. IX. 34-35.”

Most of the time Abu Dharr would content himself with recalling the verse and hurling the same at the “haves”, whom he accused of injustice to the “have not's”. Now and then he would

augment the verse with one or two sayings of the Prophet in the same vein:

“They are in great loss indeed who have plenty of wealth except those who show generosity on all sides. But how few are such people.”

“Whoever keeps gold and silver tied up, the pieces turn into burning embers for their owners.”

5. Typical objects of Abu Dharr's angry protests, as specified in the records, were the building of the “Green Palace” by Muawiya for himself and the appropriation of huge sums by the Umayyads, Marwan B. al-Hakam and al-Harith B. 'al-Hakam B. Abi al-As (the latter's appropriation amounting to three lacs of dirhams) and Zaid B. Thabit al-Ansari with the concurrence of the Caliph Uthman. One day while passing by the Green Palace then under construction Abu Dharr pulled up Muawiya with the words: “If this palace is built with money belonging to Allah (*i.e.*, public funds) then it is but *Khiyanah* (misappropriation); otherwise if it is built with your own money then it amounts to *israf* (wasteful extravagance).”

6. Abu Dharr also did not mince words while objecting to the way the rulers disposed of the funds of the Baitu Mal in sheer self-aggrandisement without any compunction. His way of formulating the question looked queer but was quite perspicuous indeed. He exhorted Muawiya to call the public treasury the Baitu Mal al-Muslimin (the treasure house of the Muslims) and not the Baitu Mal Allah (the treasure house of Allah). Abu Dharr was not getting fussy or unnecessarily punctilious about the nomenclature. He was calling for a fundamental change

in the viewpoint of the state towards public funds. These funds were not to be treated as a gift bestowed by Allah upon the rulers, who behaved as if they were free to dispose of them as they wished without any obligation towards the people. On the contrary, the funds in the Baitul Mal actually represented the contributions of the people from their own hard-earned lawful income. They just deposited the contributions in the Baitu Mal in a religious spirit on the solemn assurance that the common pool would be disbursed for purpose of common weal in accordance with the clear injunctions of the *shariat*. Muawiya was not so callous as to deny the force of the argument of Abu Dharr. He conceded that he would call the treasury the Baitu Mal al-Muslimin but there is no evidence that he ever sincerely observed any restriction on his financial powers, so to say. Abu Dharr also condemned the common practice of the rulers and the governors "borrowing" at will from the Baitu Mal and paying off whenever it suited them to do so. There was an acrimonious argument over the question between him and *Kab al-Ahbar* the Jewish rabbi convert to Islam. The latter's defence of the practice showed the promiscuity prevalent at the court. Abu Dharr could not control himself and hit a blow at the "Son of the Jewish couple".

7. The lonely voice of Abu Dharr evoked tremendous response from the common people. They flocked round him wherever he went voicing their support for him. They also became bold and bood and jeered at the members of the ruling and the privileged wealthy class. The common taunts were, of course, the *Ayat al-Kayy* (i.e., the verse cited above threatening the hoarders of gold and silver with "branding") and the significant title of the treasury, the *Baitu Mal al-Muslimin*. The hoarders of wealth smarted under the show of popular resentment against

them. The ruling Umayyads took particular umbrage against Abu Dharr and feared impending revolt against them at his behest. They were bent on dealing with Abu Dharr not as a problem of *ijtihad* in religious law, but simply as a problem of law and order and maintenance of the *status quo* with their own vested interests fully safeguarded in it. Abu Dharr on his part came to scorn the Government and its agents so much so that he would not meet his old friend and high ranking *sahabi*, Abu Huraira, until the latter assured him that he did not indulge in any illegal gratification while in the service of the state. Abu Dharr also enjoined it in his will, which he made a little before his death, that no government servant, no Emir or *Wali* be allowed to take part in his funeral. It was the same Abu Dharr who once approached the Prophet with a request for appointment to some administrative job. The Prophet is reported to have advised him not to bother about it inasmuch as he was not cool-tempered enough to administer authority efficiently and wisely. It is obvious that Abu Dharr was not averse to administrative service; only he could not bear what he believed to be corruption among the crafty Umayyad officials who exploited freely and unscrupulously the virtues in the character of Uthman.

8. Let us now probe into the abrupt, profound and vital change in administrative policies and social conditions under Uthman, which outraged Abu Dharr's sense of propriety. Quite clearly the brunt of Abu Dharr's attack was directed against the fiscal and administrative policies of the Government, the privileges appropriated to themselves by the Umayyad officials with the concurrence of Uthman and the socio-economic consequences of the same for the common people. Abu Dharr himself pointed with indignation to the new phenomena of high palaces, vast holdings of land, flocks of camels and sheep. These were, of

course, the privileges enjoyed by a few, if not by a particular class, while the common people were deprived of a share in the wealth and prosperity of the conquered lands.

9. Actually, the conquests began during the reign of Umar I. Bold and imaginative as Umar was, he realised that division of conquered lands among the warriors would have disastrous consequences on military administration, economic equilibrium and moral tendencies. He, therefore, forbade division of land among the warriors, and instead, nationalised the rent for the benefit of the community as a whole. The land was to be left in the possession of the original cultivators, who as a whole dealt without any intermediary and paid a stipulated sum, *i.e.*, the *kharaj* direct to the state. Fortunately enough, despite the uncertainty of our knowledge in regard to particular aspects of this system, the result which is of immediate concern to us is beyond doubt. It is, as stated by Wellhausen, that the acquisitive instinct of the Arabs was diverted from land purchases. Thus the warriors only received pensions. Of course, a considerable sum of the revenue of the conquered provinces was distributed on a progressive scale to people in Medina according to their 'merit in Islam' and also according to their relationship with the Prophet. Umar always avowed his concern for "the last of the Muslims", *i.e.*, he would spread out the benefits of national wealth and prosperity to the largest number of people but in his own day he could do no more than rewarding the merit of the stalwarts of Islam. It will, however, be observed that he fully safeguarded against multiplication of unearned income through the institution of landlordism. There was yet no accumulation of wealth in a few hands, no unemployment and no sense of exploitation among the lower income groups.

10. The general laxity of Uthman's administration and the opportunity of self-aggrandisement enjoyed by the Umayyads soon excited the envy of the less privileged Arabs. It was perhaps about this time that landlordism also raised its ugly head here and there. The acrimonious discussion as to the *sawad* being the personal property (bustan) of this or that governor, was only symptomatic of a seething discontent and was rightly taken to be a serious warning of it. Ultimately, the discontent crystallised into a disorderly protest on behalf of the less privileged Arabs in the provinces supported by the convert immigrants into the towns. Uthman acted with unusual alacrity in the matter; his plan was presented in the *khutba* preserved in *Tabari* (year 30 A.H.). He was intensely concerned with safeguarding the privileges of the residents of Arabia; this he achieved by making them lords of such lands as yielded an income equivalent to their pensions and further prompting these landlords to exchange their titles to lands in the provinces for lands in Arabia proper. This was the magic way of transferring home the *fay* from the provinces, which brought such an immense relief to those whose interests were in jeopardy. The system of Umar was breached just at the point where it had the most salutary economic effect; an entirely new relationship between the landlords and the tenants grew up and a virtual *latifundia* was introduced. In the words of Taha Husain, it was a change radical enough to shake the very foundations of the state.

11. Life in Medina became intolerable for Abu Dharr "when the new buildings of the town reached the limit of the mountain of *Sal'*". The expansion of the town and the growth of new buildings were abominable to Abu Dharr as symptoms of the new economic pattern which enabled the rich to grow richer at the expense of the poor. High life and luxury were the con-

comitant evils of such uneven economic growth. Even then Abu Dharr preferred to lodge a silent protest and make a quiet exit to Syria.

12. Abu Dharr only fell from the frying pan into the fire, or as the Arabic proverb says, ran away from burning sands to seek refuge in fire. His experiences in Syria proved to be the last straw on camel's back. He seems to have taken a thoughtful decision to relieve his conscience by 'voicing' his protest in public. Of course, selfless and fearless as he was, he knew not how to mince words. One fateful day he cried to Muawiya within the hearing of the multitude that the Baitul Mal was only a pool of the contributions of the Muslims; hence, it should be administered in the interests of the people and, of course, in accordance with the dictates of the *shariat*. The ruler and the governors had no legal or moral authority to dispose of public funds at will. Muawiya acknowledged the force of the argument of Abu Dharr and the Umayyad governors stood condemned for ever in the eyes of the public. Neither Muawiya, nor any one else, attempted to put up a defence on the issue.

13. It is a historical fact that within a few years of Uthman's accession the Umayyads claimed among themselves the governorship of all the important provinces of Basra, Kufa, Syria and Egypt. These Umayyad governors in turn relied on the support of their own kinsmen whom they pampered and allowed to dominate the counsels. It is well known that Uthman's abortive attempt to separate the financial from the administrative affairs of the provinces was thwarted by the Governor of Egypt, Abdullah B. Sad B. Abi Sarh on the ground that "he would not hold the cow for another to milk it". The provinces were treated as a milk cow whose milk was to be reserved for the greedy Umayyads.

14. Thus we see that under Uthman the classless social order of Islam suffered a complete collapse by the emergence of the Umayyads as a privileged class enjoying high material advantages to the exclusion of the rest of the various sections of the population. During the last years of Uthman's reign the whole population was seething with discontent over the spectacle of Umayyad aristocrats seated in high office, rolling in wealth and luxury and lavishly spending the immense wealth which they appropriated to themselves not quite legitimately. The resulting disequilibrium in the economic structure caused the explosion of Abu Dharr as well as the gruesome murder of Uthman. Abu Dharr's preachings were but a solemn protest against the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few, which was the inevitable result of the appearance of a privileged class where formerly the society has been classless.

15. Having battered the defences of Muawiya, Abu Dharr launched his sweeping attack upon "accumulation of wealth" in general, which often went together with political power and influence. As stated earlier Abu Dharr taunted the rich, whosoever they be, with the *Ayat al-Kayy* (or *Ayat al-Kanz*), which was immediately taken up and echoed gleefully by the public at large. Muawiya tried first the weapons of jurisprudence to steal the thunder from the guns of Abu Dharr. Being himself a *sahabi* enjoying the privilege of *ijtihad*, Muawiya matched his own sophistication with straightforward Abu Dharr. He argued with Abu Dharr that the *ayat* in question was only in condemnation of the Jewish and the Christian clergy, who are mentioned in the preceding *ayat*. The two *ayats* taken together read as follows:—

"O ye who believe! Lo! many of the (Jewish) rabbis and the (Christian) monks devour the wealth of mankind

wantonly and debat (men) from the way of Allah. They who hoard gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah, unto them give tidings (O Muhammad) of a painful doom....." IX, 34.

Abu Dharr was not to be taken in or cowed down. He was adamant that the two *ayats* were not joined together; the *ayat al-Kayy* was an independent one constituting a warning to the Muslims following the condemnation of the Jewish and the Christian clergy.

16. Having despaired of winning over Abu Dharr by argument, Muawiya resorted to his characteristic diplomacy with a view to testing the sincerity, rather exposing the insincerity, of his adversary. He commissioned a confidant of his to deliver by night a purse of one thousand dinars to Abu Dharr on behalf of the governor. Early next morning he sent the confidant once again to Abu Dharr to depose that the purse was meant for some one else and that the governor was insistent that the mistake be rectified. Abu Dharr replied that he had distributed the sum among the needy before dawn but he would try to make it up and pay back if the governor demanded the same. Just as the argument did not work the trick also failed.

17. Thereupon Muawiya sought the intercession of prominent *sahaba*, including Abu Darda, Amr B. Al-As, Ubadha B. Al-Samit and a woman, Ummi Haram,—to plead with Abu Dharr. But Abu Dharr was quite sure of the knowledge which he had imbibed directly from the Prophet. He was also frank enough to tell the visiting *sahaba* that they were junior to him in Islam and also in knowledge about Islam. He had nothing to learn from them.

18. Clearly, if the Umayyads were to persist in their crafty ways, Abu Dharr presented a problem of law and order. His protest was getting louder and louder and drawing larger and larger popular support every day. The "hoarders of wealth" had a difficult time and dared not appear in public. Muawiya issued a proclamation banning the association of the people with Abu Dharr. The order was obeyed by Abu Dharr inasmuch as he would warn his visitors against incurring the wrath of the administrative authorities. The people, however, would defy the ban. Thus Abu Dharr on his part would do nothing to approach the people. But once they were attracted towards him for his exposition of Islam in the context of the economic disequilibrium at the time, he would not allow himself to be gagged because he was enjoined by the Prophet "to tell the truth bitter though it may be". He would, therefore, 'expound the truth even if the sharp edge of the sword touched the veins in his neck'. He was bound to obey the rulers without allowing himself to be restrained from exhorting the people to do good and abstain from evil, and from expounding the Sunnah of the Prophet quite unreservedly. So the people would come not only from the town but also from upcountry and muster around Abu Dharr, defying the ban and rejecting Abu Dharr's warning about the consequences of such defiance. It amounted to hypocrisy if Abu Dharr obliged the rulers by stopping his tirade against the "hoarders of wealth".

19. Muawiya was helpless. It was not in his nature to use force unwisely. He wrote to Uthman that Abu Dharr was disturbing law and order and that his stay in Syria was utterly undesirable. Uthman immediately recalled Abu Dharr to Medina. Abu Dharr responded to the call with alacrity, not waiting even for his family to accompany him. He thus proved once again his good faith in obeying the constituted authority. Uthman's

treatment of Abu Dharr at Medina shows his gentle nature to be under the influence of his crafty Umayyad advisers. He tried to induce Abu Dharr to live a life of plenty as the Caliph's honoured guest "close to him", i.e., under his surveillance. Abu Dharr refused saying he would not succumb to worldly temptations.

20. At Medina Abu Dharr was no less popular than he was in Damascus. And he was no less vociferous either. The people of Medina went out of the town to receive him with demonstrative acclaim. Subsequently they would throng around him and listen to his ubiquitous harangue against the hoarders as gleefully and boisterously as the Syrians. Only the scene had shifted; the episode was the same. And the result was also the same; Uthman was no less annoyed with him than Muawiya, perhaps even more. It could not be otherwise.

For a while Uthman also tried the method of argumentation with Abu Dharr. He himself would only plead that the leaders and rulers were, of course, charged with the duty of practising simplicity and moderation themselves and enjoining the same upon the people. But it was beyond them to compel everyone to take to the path of austerity and complete renunciation of the world. In reply Abu Dharr would shout that no quarter be given to the hoarders until they parted with their wealth for improving the lot of their brethren. Uthman was concerned with the *de-facto* rights of the privileged minority of the rich; Abu Dharr reviled at the resulting economic disequilibrium and championed the just rights of the vast majority of the poor. The twain could never meet.

21. Uthman left it to Kab Al-Ahbar to employ casuistry against Abu Dharr. Prompted by him the ex-Jewish rabbi said

to Abu Dharr: Islam is characterised by moderation. Of all the religions it is the easiest to practise. Its laws are fully in conformity with human nature. The laws of Moses imposed no ban on hoarding; the Jews were not obliged to part with their entire wealth for charity. It is, therefore, unthinkable that Islam with all its moderation should be so rigorous in regard to the compulsory donation of the entire surplus wealth for charitable purposes. A further argument was that if hoarding were totally banned there would be no occasion for the elaborate laws regarding the distribution of the wealth of a deceased person. The conclusion was that only *zakat* was compulsory; over and above that the surplus wealth could be hoarded without any objection. The choice of Kab Al-Ahbar was most unfortunate. Abu Dharr suspected his good faith and regarded him as an insincere yes-man. Actually, he is responsible for a good deal of interpolation in religious lore. Abu Dharr would simply not give him the privilege of opining on religion in support of the policies of the government. 'O the son of a Jewish couple! are you going to teach religion to us'? he shouted in excitement and struck a blow at him.

22. Uthman would often remonstrate with Abu Dharr and try to browbeat him. But Abu Dharr would please Allah rather than the Caliph, who dared not restrain him from reciting a verse of the Quran. After all, what else did he do except reciting the *ayat al-kayy* in public? The context of economic disequilibrium which caused the *ayat al-kayy* pinch so hard was a palpable reality. On the one hand, there was a privileged class wielding political power for self-aggrandisement and, on the other hand, there was the vast multitude which was deprived of a share in the overall growth of prosperity in the Empire. There was general discontent in the capital as well as in the provinces. The *sahaba*

were even more discontented than the common people because it was they who had been dislodged from their place of honour in the counsels of the Caliphate by the unworthy Umayyads. Ammar B. Yasir came very close to Abu Dharr in blaming and reprimanding Uthman for rending the classless fabric of Islamic society. On many occasions Ali interceded with Uthman on behalf of Abu Dharr and Ammar B. Yasir. The identity of views among the trio was an open secret and Uthman angrily protested to Ali against his making common cause with the two vociferous recalcitrants. The same was the case with most of the *sahaba* who made no secret of their moral support for the complaints of the provincials though of course they scrupulously avoided assuming leadership of the opposition.

23. The reasons for adopting such an attitude of passivity on the part of the *sahaba* could only be a reluctance to array themselves against a fellow companion of the Prophet. The inevitable result was that the devils stepped in where the angels feared to tread; people like Abdullah B. Saba took the task of organisation into their hands and served their own nefarious ends. The evil geniuses organised disorder in a very methodical manner; so much so that they had their agents in every town and city and these agents continuously corresponded with one another, propagated stories of economic and social repression and preached sedition ceaselessly and assiduously. We must strongly dissent from the viewpoint of those historians who have laboured a good deal to make out that the fall of Uthman was due only to the evil machinations of these mischief-mongers, and that the grievances which they manipulated were all faked and artificial. Such historians have utterly disregarded the fact that these mischief-mongers, evil and malicious though they were, had real and legitimate grievances to work on and the tacit support of

the *sahaba* to provide the necessary sanction. The unseemly incidents at the court of Said B. Al-As and elsewhere were no doubt designed to create trouble for the hated Umayyad overlords. But they should only be taken as the rowdy outburst of the deep-seated resentment against the undue privileges misappropriated by the Umayyads.

24. It must be remembered that to work discontent and a legitimate grievance into open rebellion two things are essential. First, leadership and leadership must come from those who command respect in society. Second, time and opportunity to organise and concert action. The ill-intentioned mischief-mongers under Abdullah B. Saba had enough organisational skill, legitimate cause for grievance, and plenty of time to pursue their activities unchecked. They were also most anxious to set up a leader from among the *sahaba*, who might be willing to lend his name and prestige as a cover for their disruptive activities. Abu Dharr was a natural choice for them. Actually, they approached him more than once with the suggestion that he should lead a popular movement to overthrow Uthman and his government. Abu Dharr would not entertain the suggestion even for a moment. His allegiance to Uthman was firm and unshakable. To rebel against constituted authority even though it be that of an Abyssinian slave, was expressly prohibited by the Prophet. Abu Dharr only practised *al-nush*, i.e., sincere advice and verbal protest against the lapses of the administration from the truly Islamic norms; he would reform the administrators in office while scrupulously refusing to partake in any subversive move to throw them out of office.

25. Uthman was fully aware of the surging popular resentment against economic disequilibrium and political repression;

he was also not ignorant of the activities of Abdullah B. Saba and his associates though he did nothing to check them in time. In the circumstances he had become highly suspicious. It was well nigh impossible for him to believe that Abu Dharr who was so uncompromising and vociferous and who commanded such vast influence upon the masses would be sufficiently deterred by his scruples from taking the opportunity of overthrowing him and toppling down his hated administration, particularly when he had arbitrarily refused to listen to Abu Dharr and to reform himself accordingly. And Uthman was in no doubt what a great accession of strength it would be to the subversive elements if Abu Dharr ever decided upon *action* against him either on his own or jointly with others. Anyway, it is on record that Uthman did have serious misgivings about Abu Dharr. The development must have been common knowledge to the informed people; Abu Dharr also got wind of it. True to his nature, he went straight to Uthman and said to him rather bluntly: "Do you think I am also one of them?" What transpired between them is not certain, rather it was never disclosed. It was soon after this that Abu Dharr left Medina for a lonely place called al-Rabadhah, a distance of three stages from Medina. There long persisted a general impression that Abu Dharr was deported by Uthman. It is also said that Abu Dharr was refused his choice of Jerusalem or Mecca or a town in Iraq as the place of deportation. But even if the act was voluntary without a formal order being served on Abu Dharr, it is obvious that Uthman wanted him to be isolated from all contact with the public and the purpose was served by his withdrawal to the lonely confines of a small hamlet such as al-Rabadhah. The circumstances attending upon Abu Dharr's departure from Medina can only be gauged from the fact that no less a person than Ali was pulled up by Marwan (supported as usual by Uthman) for giving a send-off

to Abu Dharr. The sort of loneliness and isolation to which Abu Dharr was condemned for the rest of his life is symbolised by the absence of any local inhabitant of al-Rabadhah to attend to his burial when he died there in 32 A.H. As Abu Dhar himself used to say, his only crime was that he tendered sincere advice to Muawiya and Uthman; he was left with no friend because he always spoke the truth.

IN CONCLUSION, it will be noted that there was a phenomenal rise in overall prosperity of the Caliphate as a result of the first wave of conquests in Iran and Egypt. Umar, in whose reign the conquests began, was far-sighted and resolute enough to forestall economic disequilibrium by imposing a ban on landlordism. Uthman breached the system at this very point; he allowed landlordism to grow freely without a limit. An entirely new kind of relationship between tenants, the actual tillers of the soil, and idle, absentee landlords resulted in quick multiplication of unearned income in the hands of a few. Soon the rich began to grow richer and the poor poorer. Another factor which aggravated the process was the misuse of political power and misappropriation of public funds by the greedy officers of the government. Luxury, high life, callousness to the woes of the common people and an insatiable passion for hoarding money spoiled the whole society.

II. Abu Dharr's protest against misappropriation of public funds had to be admitted. His contention regarding the prohibition of "hoarding" was widely acclaimed in the context of repulsive economic disequilibrium but disputed on juridical grounds. Firstly, it was argued from the other side that the *ayat al-kayy* concerned the Jewish rabbis and Christian monks. This is, of course, not valid. Grammar and rhetorics do not support it.

Abu Dharr's reply that it applied to the Muslims is quite tenable. Secondly, it was said that the *ayat* was abrogated by the *ayat* which made *zakat* obligatory on the Muslims. This is also not quite acceptable. As a matter of fact the *ayat al-kayy* was revealed in the year 9 A.H. whereas *zakat* was promulgated in the year 2 A.H. Thirdly, it was pointed out that in the *ayat* itself the prohibition of hoarding was conditioned by the words "and spend it not in the way of Allah", which refer to the obligatory *zakat*, no more no less. This is ingenious indeed and represents the position actually adopted in subsequent times. Yet it is not convincing either. There is no gainsaying the fact that the *ayat* did have some such import as perplexed the mind of scholars and rendered the conscience of pious men uneasy about it. Ali would take it to lay down a ceiling of four thousand dirhams (according to his estimate) on hoardings, after initial deduction of obligatory *zakat*. Abu Dharr's madness was not without a method. Quibbling about the minimum obligation betrays the same lack of charitable feeling which was an anathema to Abu Dharr. Wealth earned and owned by individuals may be a blessing or a curse for the community. Of course, the satisfaction of one's legitimate needs is the first charge on one's lawfully earned income; there is no conceivable objection to it. Moreover, spending on one's personal needs confers benefits on the community as a whole inasmuch as it sets the money in circulation. It is only the hoarding of surplus wealth which makes all the difference. In any case, it blocks the money and withdraws it from circulation, which affects adversely the volume and the pace of economic activity and the natural process of circulation and wide distribution of wealth. The crucial point is that the payment of obligatory *zakat* does not mitigate the anti-social consequences of hoarding. It will be remembered that Islam does not countenance any use for gold and silver except as currency or medium of

exchange. The prohibition of the use of golden or silver ware is accounted for by the same considerations of economic welfare and social justice. Very reluctantly, and I should say quite sparingly, a concession was made to feminine nature in permitting the wearing of ornaments. It is specifically in respect of ornaments that Umme Salama clearly asked the Prophet: "Do they constitute *kanz* ('hoarding as mentioned in *ayat al-kayy*)?" The Prophet replied: "If they are in such quantity that *zakat* is leviable on them and the *zakat* is paid, then they are excluded from *kanz*." This particular exception does not warrant total abrogation of the clear words of the *ayat al-kayy*.

III. Abu Dharr did not advocate the abolition of private ownership. He himself owned land, cattle, and all that he needed for his simple living, including private servants. Only he had a strong aversion to building a house of stone and mortar; he always lived in a tent, which may be discounted as personal eccentricity. All that Abu Dharr wanted was, firstly, a check on such institutions as landlordism, which facilitate quick accretion and multiplication of unearned income by constraining the actual worker to pay economic rent for the gift of Allah, which is land with its 'original and in-destructible powers of nature'. That is why he singled out "vast holdings of land" as the symbol of corruption, of lapse from the true norms set by the Prophet. It is also very significant in this regard that Abu Dharr was joined in al-Rabadhah by Rafi' B. Khadij, a prominent *sahabi* marked out for his interest in agriculture. He developed serious scruples about charging rent for agricultural land, himself gave up the practice and also converted Abdullah B. Umar to his view. He is said to have gone over to al-Rabadhah for the sake of some saying of the Prophet, which nevertheless remained unspecified and unexplained. Could it be other than the following

which is credited to him at another place? "Rafi' said (to Ibn Umar): I heard my two uncles (themselves great agriculturists), who were present at Badr, testifying that the Prophet prohibited the renting of land." It was this affinity of views between Rafi' and Abu Dharr which brought them together at al-Rabadhah, their solitary refuge from corruption and exploitation all around.

IV. Secondly, Abu Dharr would not allow surplus wealth to be hoarded in gold and silver. It was not enough to pay the obligatory *zakat*. "The *zakat*-payer should not stop at it." He should participate with all his surplus wealth in acts of public welfare, beginning of course with his neighbours, relations and friends. Abu Dharr would not object to surplus wealth being invested in lawful productive enterprise nor did he actually mean that nobody be allowed to collect money for the satisfaction of his needs within the limit prescribed in the *shariat*. It is true that he himself was so careful that he would not keep any surplus money with him overnight. But that was only to underline his principle and escape calumny by his spiteful adversaries. Once the caluminators searched the luggage of his family and eagerly pounced upon a fat heavy purse, which they thought contained pieces of gold and silver. Soon it was discovered that Abu Dharr would not keep with him even a few coins of gold and silver for his daily needs. He would immediately convert them into small coins of base metal to prove that the money was kept for expenses and not hoarded. But such rigours befit only a leader; the common people are not expected to observe them. Thus Abu Dharr was quite clear and emphatic that, in addition to the *zakat*, the hoarding of surplus wealth (in gold and silver) was unlawful.

V. The reluctance to part with anything in excess of the obligatory *zakat* was symptomatic of selfishness, greed, nonchalance to common weal, and exploitation of the poor. And this

attitude of mind, this deadening of moral conscience, this disavowal of social responsibility was the direct result of the latitude given to the hoarders of gold and silver. The *ayat al-kayy*, the pet theme of Abu Dharr, clearly prohibits it and hurls blood-curdling threats at those who contravene it. Abu Dharr's unimpeachable merits—his precedence in Islam and his knowledge acquired directly from the Prophet—entitle him to be heard with the utmost respect and attention. His view-point has not been taken seriously nor controverted in a conclusive manner. It has only been bypassed in the onward march of Islamic history.

In recent times, many a developing Muslim country has had vast phenomenal growth of overall prosperity along un-Islamic lines. The resulting economic disequilibrium makes it impossible to bypass the memory of Abu Dharr. May Allah shower His blessings upon him.

مَسْأَلُوا نَكَ مَا تَرَائِفُونَ قُلِّ الْعَفْوُ
 (البقرہ ۲۱۹)

“And they ask thee what they ought to spend.
 Say: That which is superfluous.”

II, 219

جو صرف ”قُلِّ الْعَفْوُ“ میں پوشیدہ ہے اب تک
 اس دور میں شاید وہ حقیقت ہو نو د ا ر
 (اقبال)

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