

Assassination of Hajrat `Uthman

and

Battle of the Camel

Akash Malik

(Copied from links below)

Disclosing real facts about assassination of `Uthman Ibn `Affan' Amir al-mu'minin (Hajrat Ali) said:

If I had ordered his assassination I should have been his killer, but if I had refrained others from killing him I would have been his helper. The position was that he who helped him cannot now say that he is better than the one who deserted him while he who deserted him cannot say that he is better than the one who helped him. I am putting before you his case.

He appropriated (wealth) and did it badly. You protested against it and committed excess therein. With Allah lies the real verdict between the appropriator and the protester.

Uthman is the first Umayyad Caliph of Islam who ascended the Caliphate on the 1st Muharram, 24 A.H. at the age of seventy and after having wielded full control and authority over the affairs of the Muslims for twelve years was killed at their hands on the 18th Dhi'l-hijjah, 35 A.H. and buried at Hashsh Kawkab.

This fact cannot be denied that `Uthman's killing was the result of his weaknesses and the black deeds of his officers, otherwise, there is no reason that Muslims should have unanimously agreed on killing him while no one except a few persons of his house stood up to support and defend him.

Muslims would have certainly given consideration to his age, seniority, prestige and distinction of companionship of the Prophet but his ways and deeds had so marred the atmosphere that no one seemed prepared to sympathise and side with him.

The oppression and excesses perpetrated on high ranking companions of the Prophet had roused a wave of grief and anger among the Arab tribes.

Everyone was infuriated and looked at his haughtiness and wrong doings with disdainful eyes. Thus, due to Abu Dharr's disgrace, dishonour and

exile Banu Ghifar and their associate tribes, due to `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud's merciless beating Banu Hudhayl and their associates, due to breaking of the ribs of `Ammar ibn Yasir, Banu Makhzum and their associates Banu Zuhrah, and due to the plot for the killing of Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, Banu Taym all had a storm of rage in their hearts.

The Muslims of other cities were also brimful of complaints at the hands of his officers who under intoxication of wealth and the effects of luxury did whatever they wished and crushed whomever they wanted. They had no fear of punishment from the centre nor apprehension of any enquiry. People were fluttering to get out of their talons of oppression but no one was ready to listen to their cries of pain and restlessness; feelings of hatred were rising but no care was taken to put them down.

The companions of the Prophet were also sick of him as they saw that peace was destroyed, administration was topsy turvy and Islam's features were being metamorphosed. The poor and the starving were craving for dried crusts while Banu Umayyah were rolling in wealth. The Caliphate had become a handle for belly-filling and a means of amassing wealth. Consequently, they too did not lag behind in preparing the ground for killing him. Rather, it was at their letters and messages that people from Kufah, Basrah and Egypt had collected in Medina. Observing this behaviour of the people of Medina, `Uthman wrote to Mu`awiyah:

So now, certainly the people of Medina have turned heretics, have turned faith against obedience and broken the (oath of) allegiance. So you send to me the warriors of Syria on brisk and sturdy horses.

The policy of action adopted by Mu`awiyah on receipt of this letter also throws light on the condition of the companions. Historian at-Tabari writes after this:

When the letter reached Mu`awiyah he pondered over it and considered it bad to openly oppose the companions of the Prophet since he was aware of their unanimity.

In view of these circumstances to regard the killing of `Uthman as a consequence of merely enthusiasm and temporary feelings and to hurl it at some insurgents is to veil the fact, since all the factors of his opposition existed within Medina itself, while those coming from without had collected for seeking redress of their grievances at their call. Their aim was only improvement of the position, not killing or bloodshed. If their complaints had been heard then the occasion for this bloodshed would not have arisen.

What happened was that when, having been disgusted with the oppression and excesses of `Abdullah ibn Sa`d ibn Abi Sarh, who was foster brother of `Uthman, the people of Egypt proceeded towards Medina and camped in the valley of Dhakhushub near the city. They sent a man with a letter to `Uthman and demanded that oppression should be stopped, the existing ways should be changed and repentance should be offered for the future.

But instead of giving a reply `Uthman got this man turned out of the house and did not regard their demands worth attention. On this these people entered the city to raise their voice against this pride and haughtiness, and complained to the people of this behaviour besides other excesses. On the other side many people from Kufah and Basrah had also arrived with their complaints and they, after joining these ones, proceeded forward with the backing of the people of Medina and confined `Uthman within his house, although there was no restriction on his going and coming to the mosque.

But in his sermon on the very first Friday he severely rebuked these people and even held them accursed, whereupon people got infuriated and threw pebbles at him as a result of which he lost control and fell from the pulpit. After a few days his coming and going to the mosque was also banned.

When `Uthman saw matters deteriorating to this extent he implored Amir al-mu'minin very submissively to find some way for his rescue and to disperse the people in whatever way he could. Amir al-mu'minin said, "On what terms can I ask them to leave when their demands are justified?" `Uthman said, "I authorise you in this matter. Whatever terms you would settle with them I would be bound by them." So Amir al-mu'minin went and met the Egyptians and talked to them. They consented to get back on the condition that all the tyrannies should be wiped off and Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr be made governor by removing Ibn Abi Sarh. Amir al-mu'minin came back and put their demand before `Uthman who accepted it without any hesitation and said that to get over these excesses time was required.

Amir al-mu'minin pointed out that for matters concerning Medina delay had no sense. However, for other places so much time could be allowed that the Caliph's message could reach them. `Uthman insisted that for Medina also three days were needed.

After discussion with the Egyptians Amir al-mu'minin agreed to it also and took all the responsibility thereof upon himself. Then they dispersed at his suggestion. Some of them went to Egypt with Muhammad ibn Abi

Bakr while some went to the valley of Dhakhushub and stayed there and this whole matter ended.

On the second day of this event Marwan ibn al-Hakam said to `Uthman, "It is good, these people have gone, but to stop people coming from other cities you should issue a statement so that they should not come this way and sit quiet at their places and that statement should be that some people collected in Medina on hearing some irresponsible talk but when they came to know that whatever they heard was wrong they were satisfied and have gone back." `Uthman did not want to speak such a clear lie but Marwan convinced him and he agreed, and speaking in the Holy Prophet's mosque, he said:

These Egyptians had received some news about their Caliph and when satisfied that they were all baseless and wrong they went back to their cities.

No sooner he said this than there was great hue and cry in the mosque, and people began to shout to `Uthman, "Offer repentance, fear Allah; what is this lie you are uttering?" `Uthman was confused in this commotion and had to offer repentance. Consequently, he turned to the Ka`bah, moaned in the audience of Allah and returned to his house.

Probably after this very event Amir al-mu'minin advised `Uthman that, "You should openly offer repentance about your past misdeeds so that these uprisings should subside for good otherwise if tomorrow people of some other place come you will again cling to my neck to rid you of them." Consequently, he delivered a speech in the Prophet's mosque wherein admitting his mistakes he offered repentance and swore to remain careful in future. He told the people that when he alighted from the pulpit their representatives should meet him, and he would remove their grievances and meet their demands.

On this people acclaimed this action of his and washed away their ill-feelings with tears to a great extent. When he reached his house after finishing from here Marwan sought permission to say something but `Uthman's wife Na'ilah bint Farafisah intervened.

Turning to Marwan she said, "For Allah's sake you keep quiet. You would say only such a thing as would bring but death to him." Marwan took it ill and retorted, "You have no right to interfere in these matters. You are the daughter of that very person who did not know till his death how to perform ablution." Na'ilah replied with fury, "You are wrong, and are laying a false blame. Before uttering anything about my father you should have cast a glance on the features of your father.

But for the consideration of that old man I would have spoken things at which people would have shuddered but would have confirmed every such word." When `Uthman saw the conversation getting prolonged he stopped them and asked Marwan to tell him what he wished.

Marwan said, "What is it you have said in the mosque, and what repentance you have offered? In my view sticking to the sin was a thousand times better than this repentance because however much the sins may multiply there is always scope for repentance, but repentance by force is no repentance. You have said what you have but now see the consequences of this open announcement, that crowds of people are at your door.

Now go forward and fulfil their demands." `Uthman then said, "Well, I have said what I have said, now you deal with these people. It is not in my power to deal with them." Consequently, finding out his implied consent Marwan came out and addressing the people spoke out, "Why have you assembled here? Do you intend to attack or to ransack? Remember, you cannot easily snatch away power from our hands, take out the idea from your hearts that you would subdue us.

We are not to be subdued by anyone. Take away your black faces from here. Allah may disgrace and dishonour you."

When people noticed this changed countenance and altered picture they rose from there full of anger and rage and went straight to Amir al-mu'minin and related to him the whole story. On hearing it Amir al-mu'minin was infuriated and immediately went to `Uthman and said to him, "Good Heavens. How badly you have behaved with the Muslims. You have forsaken faith for the sake of a faithless and characterless man and have lost all wit. At least you should have regard and consideration for your own promise. What is this that at Marwan's betokening you have set off with folded eyes.

Remember he will throw you in such a dark well that you will never be able to come out of it.

You have become the carrier animal of Marwan so that he can ride on you howsoever he desires and put you on whatever wrong way he wishes. In future I shall never intervene in your affair nor tell people anything. Now you should manage your own affairs."

Saying all this Amir al-mu'minin got back and Na'ilah got the chance, she said to `Uthman, "Did I not tell you to get rid of Marwan otherwise he would put such a stain on you that it would not be removed despite all

effort. Well, what is the good in following the words of one who is without any respect among the people and low before their eyes. Make `Ali agree otherwise remember that restoring the disturbed state of affairs is neither within your power nor in that of Marwan." `Uthman was impressed by this and sent a man after Amir al-mu'minin but he refused to meet him.

There was no siege around `Uthman but shame deterred him. With what face could he come out of the house? But there was no way without coming out.

Consequently, he came out quietly in the gloom of night and reaching Amir al-mu'minin's place, he moaned his helplessness and loneliness, offered excuses, and also assured him of keeping promises but Amir al-mu'minin said, "You make a promise in the Prophet's mosque standing before all the people but it is fulfilled in this way that when people go to you they are rebuked and even abuses are hurled at them. When this is the state of your undertakings which the world has seen, then how and on what ground can I trust any word of yours in future. Do not have any expectation from me now.

I am not prepared to accept any responsibility on your behalf. The tracks are open before you. Adopt whichever way you like and tread whatever track you choose." After this talk `Uthman came back and began blaming Amir al-mu'minin in retort to the effect that all the disturbances were rising at his instance and that he was not doing anything despite being able to do everything.

On this side the result of repentance was as it was. Now let us see the other side. When after crossing the border of Hijaz, Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr reached the place Aylah on the coast of the Red Sea people caught sight of a camel rider who was making his camel run so fast as though the enemy was chasing him. These people had some misgivings about him and therefore called him and enquired who he was.

He said he was the slave of `Uthman. They enquired wherefore he was bound. He said Egypt. They enquired to whom he was going.

He replied to the Governor of Egypt. People said that the Governor of Egypt was with them. To whom was he going then? He said he was to go to Ibn Abi Sarh. People asked him if any letter was with him. He denied. They asked for what purpose he was going. He said he did not know that. One of these people thought that his clothes should be searched.

So the search was made, but nothing was found on

him. Kinanah ibn Bishr at-Tujibi said, "See his water-skin." People said, "Leave him, how can there be a letter in water! Kinanah said, "You do not know what cunning these people play. " Consequently, the water-skin was opened and seen. There was a lead pipe in it wherein was a letter. When it was opened and read, the Caliph's order in it was that "When Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr and his party reaches you then from among them kill so and so, arrest so and so, and put so and so in jail, but you remain on your post." On reading this all were stunned and thus began to look at one another in astonishment.

A Persian hemistich says:

Mind was just burst in astonishment as to what wonder it was!

Now proceeding forward was riding into the mouth of death, consequently they returned to Medina taking the slave with them. Reaching there they placed that letter before all the companions of the Prophet.

Whoever heard this incident remained stunned with astonishment, and there was no one who was not abusing `Uthman. Afterwards a few companions went to `Uthman along with these people, and asked whose seal was there on this letter. He replied that it was his own. They enquired whose writing it was.

He said it was his secretary's. They enquired whose slave was that man. He replied that it was his. They enquired whose riding beast it was. He replied that it was that of the Government. They enquired who had sent it.

He said he had no knowledge of it. People then said, "Good Heavens. Everything is yours but you do not know who had sent it.

If you are so helpless, you leave this Caliphate and get off from it so that such a man comes who can administer the affairs of the Muslims." He replied, "It is not possible that I should put off the dress of Caliphate which Allah has put on me. Of course, I would offer repentance." The people said, "Why should you speak of repentance which has already been flouted on the day when Marwan was representing you on your door, and whatever was wanting has been made up by this letter. Now we are not going to be duped into these bluffs. Leave the Caliphate and if our brethren stand in our way we will hold them up; but if they prepare for fighting we too will fight.

Neither our hands are stiff nor our swords blunt. If you regard all Muslims equally and uphold justice hand over Marwan to us to enable us

to enquire from him on whose strength and support he wanted to play with the precious lives of Muslims by writing this letter." But he rejected this demand and refused to hand over Marwan to them, whereupon people said that the letter had been written at his behest.

However, improving conditions again deteriorated and they ought to have deteriorated because despite lapse of the required time every thing was just as it had been and not a jot of difference had occurred. Consequently, the people who had stayed behind in the valley of Dhakhushub to watch the result of repentance again advanced like a flood and spread over the streets of Medina, and closing the borders from every side surrounded his house.

During these days of siege a companion of the Prophet, Niyar ibn `Iyad desired to talk to `Uthman, went to his house and called him. When he peeped out from the above he said, "O' `Uthman, for Allah's sake give up this Caliphate and save Muslims from this bloodshed.

" While he was just conversing, one of `Uthman's men aimed at him with an arrow and killed him, whereupon people were infuriated and shouted that Niyar's killer should be handed over to them. `Uthman said it was not possible that he would hand over his own support to them. This stubbornness worked like a fan on fire and in the height of fury people set fire to his door and began advancing for entering, when Marwan ibn al-Hakam, Sa'id ibn al-`As and Mughirah ibn al-Akhnas together with their contingents pounced upon the besiegers and killing and bloodshed started at his door.

People wanted to enter the house but they were being pushed back.

In the meanwhile, `Amr ibn Hazm al-Ansari whose house was adjacent to that of `Uthman opened his door and shouted for advancing from that side. Thus through this house the besiegers climbed on the roof of `Uthman's house and descending down from there drew their swords. Only a few scuffles had taken place when all except people of `Uthman's house, his well-wishers and Banu Umayyah ran away in the streets of Medina and a few hid themselves in the house of Umm Habibah bint Abi Sufyan (Mu`awiyah's sister) the rest were killed with `Uthman defending him to the last. (at-Tabaqat, Ibn Sa'd, vol. 3, Part 1, pp. 50-58; at-Tabari, vol. 1, pp. 2998-3025; al-Kamil, Ibn al-Athir, vol. 3, pp. 167-180; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, vol. 2, pp. 144-161).

At his killing several poets wrote elegies. A couplet from the elegy by Abu Hurayrah is presented:

Today people have only one grief but I have two griefs - the loss of my money bag and the killing of `Uthman.

After observing these events the stand of Amir al-mu'minin becomes clear, namely that he was neither supporting the group that was instigating at `Uthman's killing nor can be included in those who stood for his support and defence but when he saw that what was said was not acted upon he kept himself aloof.

When both the parties are looked at then among the people who had raised their hands off from `Uthman's support are seen `A'ishah, and according to the popular versions (which is not right) the then living persons out of the ten Pre-informed ones (who had been pre-informed in this world by the Prophet for their being admitted in Paradise), out of those who took part in the consultative committee (formed for `Uthman's selection for Caliphate), ansar, original muhajirun, people who took part in the battle of Badr and other conspicuous and dignified individuals, while on the side (of Uthman) are seen only a few slaves of the Caliph and a few individuals from Banu Umayyah.

If people like Marwan and Sa'id ibn al-`As cannot be given precedence over the original muhajirun their actions too cannot be given precedence over the actions of the latter. Again, if ijma` (consensus of opinion) is not meant for particular occasions only then it would be difficult to question this overwhelming unanimity of the companions.

Battle of the Camel

Prelude

In 656 [CE](#) Uthman was besieged in his own house, surrounded by rebels that were discontent with Uthman's [Caliphate](#). They refused him food and water, and kept him imprisoned, seeking to force his abdication. Uthman was murdered despite [Ali's](#) having sent his two sons, Hasan and Husayn, to defend Uthman.

Following Uthman's death, Ali was offered the caliphate by the majority of the people. He is reported to have refused the caliphate, saying, "You are not a people fit for my rulership nor are I a master fit for you people". He finally accepted the caliphate.

These events displeased Aisha, the widow of Muhammad, who was strongly opposed to Ali. After Ali had been chosen as the fourth Caliph, Aisha instigated a rebellion against his rule, despite her earlier opposition to Uthman. She challenged Ali's caliphate under the claim that Ali had

not been successful in finding Uthmans murderer, claiming Qias for Uthman. She is said to have gone to the mosque of Mecca, veiled, and there delivered a fiery speech calling for vengeance against Ali.

Ali replied by pointing to the fact that Aisha was not related with Uthman and therefore was not in position to demand Qias for Uthman. This was also in contradiction to Uthmans relatives, which did not participate in the rebellion as well as the fact that Ali had sent his two sons, to defend Uthman.

Massing support

Aisha got the support of Talha and Zubair, her two brothers-in-law, despite them having already given their oath of alliance to Ali. Both had been nominated for the Caliphate by [Umar](#). Aisha also managed to enlist the support of the powerful clan of Bani Umayyah, to whom Uthman had belonged. The ex-governors of Uthman, who had been replaced by Ali, also joined her. Yala, the ex-governor of [Yemen](#) had carried off to [Makka](#) a large sum of treasure when he was deposed. He gave over to Ayesha, sixty thousand [Dinars](#), along with six hundred camels; one of which was a very large and well bred animal, valued at 200 gold pieces. It was named Al-Askar and was specially presented for the Ayesha's personal use.

The preparations of war completed, Aisha tried to convince Umme Salma to side with her, and was refused. Umme Salma instead tried to convince Aisha to abandon her plan, and nearly succeeded. Aisha's adopted son, Abdallah bin Zubayr, convinced her to proceed. Aisha also tried to have Hafsa follow her, but Ibn Umar, Hafsa brother managed to prevent her. Ayesha mounted on a litter on the camel al-Askar, and marched from Makka at the head of 1,000 men. On her right was Talha and on her left, Zubayr.

The other widows of Mohammad residing at Mecca accompanied her a little way, and then returned. As they parted, the company gave vent to their feelings and wept bitterly at the lowering outlook; "there was no such weeping, before or after, as then; so that day was called The Day of Tears."

<http://answering-islam.org.uk/Books/Muir/Caliphate/chap34.htm>

On their way many more joined them, and their numbers swelled to 3,000.

It was now for month after the death of Uthman, and questions began to arise whether Talha or Zubair would in event of victory be the Caliph; but Aisha, staying the strife, as premature, desired that Ibn Zubair should lead the prayers; and it was given out that the choice of the future Caliph would be left, as heretofore, to the men of [Medina](#).

Sa'id, the ex-governor of [Kufa](#), distrusting the motives of the rebel leaders, turned aside at the last moment and with his company went back to Mecca. As the remaining cavalcade swept by Sa'id, shouting that they were on their way to destroy the murderers of Uthman, Sa'id cried out, "Whither away? the objects of your vengeance (meaning Talha and Az-Zubeir) are on their camels' humps before your eyes. Slay them both and return then to your homes!"

Ali receives news

When rumours of the defection first reached Medina, Ali refused to move against the malcontents so long as no overt act of rebellion threatened the unity of Islam. But shortly after, news arrived of the design on [Basra](#). At the first, Ali thought that the insurgents had not made Kufa, with its greater Bedawi population, their object. Ibn Abbas, however, pointed out that Basra was really the more dangerous, because fewer of the leading chiefs were there, able to curb the people and repress rebellion.

Ali admitted this; and alarmed, gave orders that the column destined for Syria should march instead to [Nejd](#), hoping thereby to intercept the insurgents on their way to Basra. A column of 900 men was got together, at the head of which Ali marched hastily in pursuit of the insurgents; but on striking the Mecca road he found that they had already passed. Not being equipped for further advance, he halted there. Messengers were sent to Kufa, Egypt, and elsewhere, demanding reinforcements; and for these the Caliph waited before he went forward.

Dogs of Haw'ab

On the way to Basra in Iraq, the rebel army received news that Ali had come out of Madina in their pursuit. They decided to leave the main road and proceed to Basra through a different route. When they passed through the valley of Hawab the dogs of the village surrounded Ummul Ayesha's camel, barking loudly. She was immediately worried and asked for the name of the place. When she was told it was Hawab, she was shocked and she despairingly cried, "Alas! Alas! I am the wretched woman of

Hawab. The Prophet of Allah had already warned me against this." She was reminded of what Umm Salama had told her:

"I also remind you that you and I were with the Prophet of Allah and he said to us: 'Which one of you will be the rider of the trained camel, at whom the dogs of Haw'ab will bark, and she will have deviated from the right path?' We said: 'We seek refuge from Allah and His Prophet from that'. He touched your back and said: 'Don't be that one, O Humayra.'" Aisha said: "I remember that."

Aisha remembered the warning of the Prophet, and she cried and said: "Take me back! Take me back!" But Talha and Zubair brought fifty men and bribed them to testify in front of her that the place was not the plain of al-Haw'ab.

Basra

The rebel army reached Basra, and encamped close by. Messages were exchanged, and Uthman Ibn Hanif, the governor of Basra, aware that the cry of vengeance on the regicides really covered designs against his master Ali, called an assembly, to try the temper of the people. Finding from the uproar that the strangers had a strong party in the City, he put on his armour, and, followed by the larger portion of the citizens, went forth to meet the enemy, who, on their side, were joined from the town by all the malcontents. A parley ensued. Talha, Zubair, and Aisha all three declaimed against the murderers of Uthman, and demanded justice.

The other side were equally loud in their protestations against Aisha and her attack upon their City. They said it was a shame and a slight on the memory of the Prophet for her to forego the sanctity of the Veil, and the proprieties of "Mother of the Faithful." Ali had been elected and saluted Caliph; and now Talha and Az-Zubeir were violating the allegiance which they had been the first to swear.

Both protested that the oath had been forced upon them. On this point the controversy turned; and from words they fell to blows. Night interposed; but fighting was resumed the following day, and with so serious a loss to Basra that a truce was called, and agreement come to, on the understanding that the facts should be ascertained from Medina. If force had really been put upon Zubair and Talha to take the oath, then Uthman Ibn Hanif, the governor, would retire and leave the City in their hands.

Envoy to Medina

An envoy accredited by either side was deputed to Medina. He arrived there while and forthwith proclaimed his mission before the assembled City. The people at first were silent. At last, one declared that both Talha and Az-Zubeir had done homage under compulsion, whereupon a great tumult arose; and the envoy, having seen and heard enough to prove diversity of view, at once took leave.

When the news of these things reached Ali, who was with his army in Nejd, he addressed a letter to Uthman Ibn Hanif, his governor. "There was no compulsion," he wrote, "on either Talha or Zubair; neither of these my adversaries was constrained otherwise than by the will of the majority. By the Lord! if their object be to make me abdicate, they are without excuse; if it be any other thing, I am ready to consider it."

So when the envoy returned from Medina, and when upon his report the insurgents called on Uthman Ibn Hanif to evacuate the City according to agreement, he produced the Caliph's letter and refused. But the insurgents had already obtained a footing within the City. Arming themselves, they repaired to the Mosque for evening service, and, the night being dark and stormy, were not perceived until they had overpowered the bodyguard, entered the adjoining palace, and made a prisoner of the governor, Uthman Ibn Hanif.

Counquer of Basra

On the following day, a severe conflict raged throughout the City, which ended in the discomfiture of Ali's party, and so the government passed into the hands of Talha and Zubair.

They took along with seventy of the governor officers who were in charge of the public treasury as prisoners. They brought them to Aisha who ordered that they be put to death. The life of Uthman Ibn Hanif, the governor, was spared. Set at liberty, his head and beard were shaven, and his eyelashes and moustaches clipped; and in this sorry plight the ousted governor made the best of his way back to Ali

Talha and Zubair now made proclamation that every citizen who had engaged in the attack on Uthman, the Caliph, should be brought forth and executed. The order was carried out, and great numbers were put to death. It is reported there were 400 men and that they were the first Muslims whose heads were cut off whilst they were patient.

The insurgents communicated tidings of their success to Syria, where Muaviya ruled. Aisha also wrote letters to Kufa, Medina, and the Yemen,

dissuading the people from their allegiance to Ali, and stirring them up to avenge the death of Uthman.

Meanwhile the Citizens of Basra swore allegiance to Talha and Zubeir conjointly. To avoid appearance of rivalry, prayers were conducted alternately by a son of each.

Talha proclaimed an expedition against Ali, But no one responded to the call, and his spirits fell. Thus some weeks passed, till the City was aroused by the announcement that Ali with an army was in full march upon it.

Hasan and Kufa

Finding that the insurgent troops, with Aisha, Az-Zubeir, and Talha had already passed, Ali halted for a while on the road to Basra, waiting to strengthen his army; for, although joined on his march by certain loyal tribes, he still felt too weak for immediate action.

To Kufa he addressed a special summons, inhabited as it was by many veterans on whose loyalty he might reasonably depend; and he added force to the call by promising that Kufa should be his seat of government.

"See," he wrote, "have not I chosen your city before all other cities for my own? Unto you do I look for succour, if haply peace and unity should again prevail as it behoveth, among brethren in the faith." But the summons was at the first unheeded. The City was made up of many factions; and from some of these the message of Aisha, demanding revenge for Uthman's blood, had already found response.

Abu Musa, its governor, was unequal to the emergency. Loyal to the memory of the murdered Caliph, he yet sought to allay the ferment by a neutral course, and urged the citizens to join neither party, but remain at home. A second deputation meeting with no better success, Ali bethought him of sending his elder son Hasan, in Company with Ammar ibn Yasir, the former governor of Kufa, to urge his cause.

Al-Hasan bin 'Ali was at the top of the pulpit and 'Ammar was below Al-Hasan. We all gathered before him. I heard 'Ammar saying, "'Aisha has moved to Al-Busra. By Allah! She is the wife of your Prophet in this world and in the Hereafter. But Allah has put you to test whether you obey Him (Allah) or her ('Aisha)."

Source: [Bukhari](http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/bukhari/088.sbt.html#009.088.220)

(<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/bukhari/088.sbt.html#009.088.220>)

The appeal of Hasan, grandson of the Prophet had at last the desired effect. A tumult arose, and Abu Musa, unable to maintain his weak neutrality, was deposed. The Arab tribes rallied around the loyalists.

Soon 10,000 men, partly by land, partly by river, set out to join the Caliph, who, advancing slowly, awaited their arrival. Thus reinforced, Ali was able at last to take the field effectively, and march on the rebellious city.

Negotiations

Basra itself was not wholly hostile, and numbers of the citizens came out to join the camp of Ali. The insurgent army, which still nearly equalled that of the Caliph, now marched forth with Talha and Zubair at their head, and Aisha herself seated in a well-fenced litter of the camel al-Askar.

But Ali's thoughts were for peace if possible. He The cry of Talha and Az-Zubeir was for vengeance against the murderers of Uthman; and against these, Ali as yet did not deny that justice should be dealt.

But he was obliged to temporise. He had in his army great numbers of the very men who had risen against Uthman; and he felt that to inflict punishment on them, as his adversaries required, would for the present be impossible.

Holding these views, he halted, still some little way from Basra, and sent forward Al-Ka'ka' (who with other leaders of renown had joined him from Kufa) to expostulate with Talha and Zubair.

"Ye have slain 600 men of Al-Basra," said Al-Ka'ka' to them, "for the blood of Uthman; and lo! to avenge their blood, 6000 more have started up. Where is this internecine war to stop? It is peace and repose that Islam needeth now. Give that, and again the majesty of law shall be set up, and the guilty brought to justice."

As he spoke, Zubair, Talha and Aisha returned word that if these really were the sentiments of Ali, they were ready to submit. After several days spent in such negotiations, Ali, glad at the prospect of a bloodless compromise, advanced.

The besiegers of Uthman

Ali's army recruited from the Bedawi settlements and comprised a great number of notorious besiegers of Uthman. Afraid of bringing these into contact with the heated army of his opponents, still breathing out fire and slaughter against them, Ali command that none who had shared in the attack on Uthman should for the present accompany him in his advance. These in their turn, with Al-Ashtar at their head, became alarmed.

Talha's troops, sworn to their destruction, were double their number, if peace were patched up, no hope remained. Reasoning thus, they held a secret conclave, and came to the conclusion that their only safety lay in precipitating hostilities, and thus forcing Ali's hand to crush their enemies. Accordingly they remained behind, but with the resolve that at the right moment they would advance and throw themselves upon the enemy.

Further negotiations

The army of Al Basra, numbering some 20,000 men, remained encamped on the outskirts of the city. Ali's force, advancing unopposed, halted within sight; and negotiations for peace went on, evidently substantial and sincere. Ali himself approached on horseback and Talha with Zubair rode forth to confer with him.

"Wherefore have ye risen against me" said Ali; "did ye not swear homage to me?" "Yea" replied Talha "but with the sword over our necks; and now our demand is that justice be executed against the murderers of Uthman." Ali replied that he no less than they held the murderers of Uthman to be guilty; he even cursed them in no measured terms, but added that for their punishment they must bide their time.

Zubair on his side was softened by certain words of the Prophet towards him which Ali recalled to his mind, and bound himself by an oath that he would not fight. Then they all retired. Both armies, understanding that negotiations were in progress, went to rest that night in security such as they had not felt for many weeks.

Surprise attack

Towards morning, a sudden shock changed the scene. The besiegers of Uthman, during the night, carried their design into execution. Led by them, squadrons of Bedawi lances bore down, while yet dark, upon the

Basra tents. In a moment all was confusion. Each camp believed that it had been attacked by the other; and the dawn found both armies drawn up, as the conspirators desired, in mortal combat against each other. In vain Ali endeavoured to hold back his men. The sense of treachery embittered the conflict. It was a strange engagement,—the first in which Muslims had crossed swords with Muslims. It resembled a battle of the old Arab times, only that for tribal rivalry were now substituted other issues.

Clans were broken up, and it became in some measure a contest between the two rival cities;

"The Beni Ar-Rabi'a of Al-Kufa fought against the Beni Ar-Rabi'a of Al-Basra, the Beni Modar of the one against the Beni Modar of the other;"

and so on, with the various tribes, and even with families, one part arrayed against the other. The Kufa ranks were urged on by the besiegers of Uthman, who felt that unless Ali conquered, they were all doomed men. The fierceness and obstinacy of the battle can be only thus accounted for. One of the combatants tells us that "when the opposing sides came together breast to breast, with a furious shock, the noise was like that of washermen at the riverside."

The attitude of the leaders was in marked contrast with the bitter struggle of the ranks. Zubair, half-hearted since his interview with Ali, left the battlefield according to his promise, and was killed in an adjoining valley.

End of battle

Talha, disabled by an arrow in the leg, was carried into Basra, where he died. Bereft of their leaders, the insurgent troops gave way. They were falling back upon the city, when they passed by the camel of Aisha.

Attacked fiercely all around, she from within her litter kept crying out with fruitless energy,—"Slay the murderers of Uthman." The word ran through the retiring ranks, that "the Mother of the Faithful was in peril," and they stayed their flight to rescue her. Long the conflict raged around the camel. One after another warriors rushed to seize her standard; one after another they were cut down.

Of Qureish seventy perished by the bridle. At last, Ali, perceiving that her camel was the rallying-point of the enemy, sent one of his captains to hamstring, and thus disable it. With a loud cry the animal fell to the ground. The struggle ceased and the insurgents retired into the city.

The litter, bristling with arrows like a hedgehog, was taken down, and, by desire of Ali, placed in a retired spot, where Aisha's brother Mohammad ibn Abu Bakr pitched a tent for her.

As he drew aside the curtain, she screamed at the unknown intrusion;— he said "Are thine own people, then become strange unto thee?" "It is my brother!" she exclaimed, and agreed to be led into the tent. The lady had escaped without a wound.

Losses in the Battle

The carnage in the ill-starred Battle of Camel (for so it came to be called) was very great. The field was covered with 10,000 bodies in equal proportion on either side; and this, notwithstanding that the victory was not followed up.

For Ali had given orders that no fugitive should be pursued, nor any wounded soldier slain nor plunder seized, nor the privacy of any house invaded. A great trench was dug, and into it the dead were lowered, friends and foes alike. Ali, encamped for three days without the city, himself performed the funeral service.

It was a new experience to bury the dead slain in battle not against the infidel, but believer fighting against believer. Instead of cursing the memory of his enemies (too soon the fashion in these civil wars), Ali spoke hopefully of the future state of such as had entered the field, on whatever side.

When they brought him the sword of Zubair he cursed the man who took his life; and calling to mind the feats displayed by the man that wielded it in the early battles of Islam, exclaimed:—"Many a time hath this sword driven care and sorrow from the Prophet's brow."

The Muslims might well mourn the memory both of Talha and Zubair, remembering how on the field of Uhud the Talha had saved the life of Mohammad at the peril of his own; and how often the Zubair had carried confusion into the ranks of the idolaters of Mecca. Their fall, and that of many of the Companions, was a loss to the Ummah itself, because seriously weakening Qureish in the struggle yet to be fought out between them and the Arab tribes.

In fact, this victory of Ali was virtually the victory of the besiegers of Uthman, supported by the factious citizens of Kufa. Thenceforward Ali was wholly dependent upon them. If, instead, he had effected a

compromise with Talha and Zubair, his position would have been incomparably stronger.

The booty

The bearing of 'Ali was generous towards his fallen foe. Having entered the city, he divided the contents of the treasury amongst the troops which had fought on his side, promising them a still larger reward "when the Lord should have delivered Syria (Muaviya) into his hands."

But otherwise he treated friends and foes alike, and buried in oblivion animosities of the past. Marwan and the adherents of the house of Ummeya fled to their homes, or else found refuge in Syria and Muaviya. All that remained in the city swore fealty to Ali. The only class dissatisfied was that of the slaves and rabble, who murmured at having no share in the treasure, nor any chance of plunder. These, gathering into marauding bands, occasioned much disquietude to the Caliph, and hastened his departure from the city, with the view of checking the mischief they were bent on.

'Aisha retires to Medina

Aisha was treated by Ali with the reverence due to one who bore the title of "the Prophet's Spouse in this life and also in the life to come." She was now 45 years of age, but had lost little of the fire and vivacity of youth.

After the battle, the Caliph visited her tent, and expressed his satisfaction at finding her unhurt; adding mildly, but half reproachfully:—"The Lord pardon thee for what hath passed, and have mercy upon thee." "And upon thee also!" was the pert and ready answer.

The best house in Basra was given up to her and there she was waited on by her own adherents. Not long after, she left with a retinue of forty handmaids, attended by her brother. Ali himself accompanied her a short distance on foot; and a large party went as far as the first stage to bid her farewell.

Proceeding to Mecca, she performed the Umrah (lesser Pilgrimage); and then retiring to Medina, no more attempted to interfere with the affairs of State. Her nephew Abdallah ibn Zubair, retired with her. He became famous in the subsequent history of the Caliphate; but that was not till Aisha had passed away. She spent the remainder of her days at Medina. There crowds of pilgrims visiting the Prophet's grave (her own apartment) gazed wonderingly at the once beautiful and favourite wife of Mohammad; while she, garrulous in old age, became the fertile source of

tradition and the narrator of incidents in the Prophet's life beginning with her earliest childhood.

External sites

- [Was Ayesha seeking Qisas for the blood of Uthman?](http://www.answering-ansar.org/answers/ayesha/en/chap4.php)
(<http://www.answering-ansar.org/answers/ayesha/en/chap4.php>)
(Note: Shia site)
- [Agitation Against Uthman](http://www.islamic-paths.org/Home/English/Sects/Shiite/Encyclopedia/Chapter_1a_Part09.htm) (http://www.islamic-paths.org/Home/English/Sects/Shiite/Encyclopedia/Chapter_1a_Part09.htm)(Note: Shia site)
- [The Caliphate: Its Rise, Decline, and Fall](http://answering-islam.org.uk/Books/Muir/Caliphate/chap34.htm) (<http://answering-islam.org.uk/Books/Muir/Caliphate/chap34.htm>)

<http://www.holynajaf.net/eng/html/nahjulbalaga/030.htm>

http://www.answers.com/main/ntquery?method=4&dsid=2222&dekey=Uthman+ibn+Affan&gwp=8&curtab=2222_1&linktext=Uthman%20ibn%20Affan

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http://www.answers.com/main/ntquery?method=4&dsid=2222&dekey=Battle+of+Bassorah&gwp=8&curtab=2222_1&linktext=Battle%20of%20the%20Camel

Please also read-

Khalid bin Al Waleed (Lieutenant-General A.I. Akram. Rawalpindi, Pakistan.)

The Concise Encyclopedia of World History

Amirul Mumenin Khalifa Hajrat Usman. (In Bengali.)

Ummul Mumenin Hajrat Ayesha (In Bengali)

Khelapoth O Rajtontro (In Bengali)