

Khalifa Uthman bin Affan - Political Administration

Allegation of nepotism how far justified?

The Shia writers because of partisan considerations condemn the administration of Uthman in strong terms, and hold him guilty of nepotism. Most of the Sunni writers in order to give an impression of their objectivity and fairness impliedly concede that the charge of nepotism was justified against him. If we examine the issue objectively the allegation stands rebutted. There were twelve provinces in the country, but Uthman as Caliph appointed his relatives in four provinces only, namely Egypt, Syria, Kufa and Basra. In the remaining eight provinces persons other than his relatives were appointed. If Uthman was out to give high offices to his relatives, he could have appointed his family members to high offices in the other provinces as well. As he did not do so, the point that is forced to notice is that he appointed his relatives to four provinces not because he wanted to bestow high offices on his family members, but because the strategic importance of these four provinces demanded that in these provinces there should be Governors who were loyal to him and enjoyed his confidence. In the age in which Uthman lived, blood relationship could be the only guarantee for loyalty. It may be appreciated that even in the modern times when the political systems are highly developed, high- offices are bestowed on the members of the parties on the maxim that spoils belong to the victors. In the age of Uthman when the party system was not developed, only blood relations could serve as the party. As such if Uthman appointed some of his relatives as Governors no blame rests on him. He acted in public interest. It may be recalled that when Ali became the Caliph he also appointed his relatives as Governors. No blame rests on Ali for such appointments because what he did was in the best interests of the State. As such we can emphatically state that when Uthman appointed some of his relatives as Governors there was nothing wrong in that.

Some of the writers find fault with Uthman that he appointed incapable persons as Governors. This view is incorrect and uncharitable. All the persons appointed by Uthman were capable persons of great caliber. Muawiyah was a ruler of outstanding capacity, and as a ruler and administrator he was second to none. Abdullah b Sa'ad was successful as Governor. Under his rule the revenues increased manifold. He conquered the whole of North Africa, and that was a great achievement. In Kufa, Walid enjoyed great popularity for the first five years. He conducted successful campaigns in Azarbaijan and Armenia. In Basra Abdullah bin Aamar proved to be most successful. He reconquered the whole of Fars, Seestan, and Khurasan and even penetrated into Transoxiana. None of the Governors appointed by Uthman proved to be a failure, and it is unjust to condemn Uthman for appointing Governors who made great conquests. Uthman did not make such appointments arbitrarily. He made the appointments after assessing the merits of the persons concerned. It may be recalled that Uthman had brought up Muhammad b Huzaifa as his son. When Muhammad b Huzaifa wanted to be appointed as a Governor, Uthman did not oblige him because he did not consider him fit enough for such office. If nepotism was the sole consideration with Uthman as alleged by his critics he could have appointed Muhammad b Huzaifa to some high office. Muhammad b Huzaifa later led the agitation against Uthman. That clearly establishes that there is no substance in the allegation of nepotism against Uthman.

[View Page](#)

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