

Khalifa Uthman bin Affan - Ali bin Talib

Ali and Uthman

On the death of Umar, there was again a crisis in the matter of the election of the Caliph. In the matter of the election of the Caliph there was a tie between Ali and Uthman. Abdur Rahman b Auf who was virtually acting as the Chairman of the Board of Electors gave his verdict in favor of Uthman and Uthman accordingly became the Caliph. Ali did not feel happy at being passed over. Ali continued to be a member of

Majlis-i-Shura, but it appears the Majlis-i-Shura was not very active in the time of Uthman. During his caliphate Uthman had to depend on advice from other sources as well.

From the accounts that have come down to us, it appears that Ali played no conspicuous role in the early years of the caliphate of Othman. During the early years of his caliphate, Uthman enjoyed considerable popularity with the people, and Ali had practically no part to play. In the later part of the caliphate of Uthman, when agitation began against Uthman, Ali came into the picture.

Unfortunately the accounts which have come down to us in this respect are colored, and prompted by partisan interests. Ali played the role of a mediator, but it is not clear what exactly was the nature of the part that Ali played. According to the most common account it appears that Ali arrived at some terms with the rioters, which Uthman undertook to fulfil, but that Uthman went back on such undertaking. Thereupon Ali is reported to have parted company with Uthman for his breach of faith. These accounts are obviously the work of such persons who somehow or the other justify the assassination of Uthman. According to my research, there was no understanding between the rioters and Ali. Uthman gave no undertaking, and as such there was no breach of faith on the part of Uthman.

Ali commanded respect with the rioters, but it is not correct that they were under his command or they obeyed him in all matters. Ali posted his sons Hasan and Hussain to stand guard at the house of Hadrat

Uthman. That shows that there was no straining of relationship between Ali and Uthman because of an alleged breach of faith on the part of Uthman. As a matter of fact it was when Hasan was wounded in the defense of Uthman that the rioters decided to hurry up with the murder of Uthman, lest the Hashimite might come to fight to help the cause of Hasan. It appears that Ali had no control over the rioters. What happens in such cases of mob revolt, scenes of perfect rowdyism prevailed and this was something beyond the control of Ali. Both Ali and Uthman were great souls. They were most eminent Muslims and may God bless their souls. It is unfortunate that some writers because of partisan considerations have tried to create the impression that there were strained relations between Ali and Uthman and they worked in opposite camps. That is far from the truth There was no love lost between Uthman and Ali, but unfortunately things got out of control and neither Uthman, nor Ali could avert the crisis. It may be recalled that Ali had no political power; he could exercise moral pressure only, and in a crisis when a mob is a victim of rowdyism, moral pressure cannot go a long way in making the people see the light of reason.

My analysis of the situation is that in this crisis, Ali did not play any active role. His role was of peripheral character. The version that Ali commanded any influence with the rioters is not correct. The rioters were in no mood to follow reason and as such they could not be under the influence of a man like Ali.

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