

## **Khalifa Uthman bin Affan - Uthman in History**

### **Assessment**

Unfortunately, history has not done proper justice to Uthman. Extensive conquests were made during the caliphate of Uthman. While sufficient details are available about the conquests made during the caliphate of Abu Bakr, and Umar, no details are available about the conquests made during the caliphate of Uthman. A greater part of Spain was conquered during the time of Uthman but surprisingly no details are available in this behalf, and even the names of the territories occupied by the Muslims are not known. It appears that most of the history books were written during the Abbasid period, and the tendency with the pro-Abbasid writers was to suppress the achievements of the Umayyads, and the history of the period of Uthman was mutilated because Uthman was an Umayyad.

Shia writers have been very loud in their criticism of Uthman. Even a writer like Ameer Ali has condemned Uthman as an old man, feeble in character, and quite unequal to the task of Government. The view is obviously biased and therefore unfair.

The Sunni writers were supposed to take a favorable view of the caliphate of Uthman, but as history books were mostly written during the Abbasid period, and the Abbasids were opposed to the Umayyads, the tendency with pro-Abbasid writers was to suppress the achievements of the caliphate of Uthman simply because he was an Umayyad.

The source books that have come down to us are loaded with so much material unfavorable to Uthman, that some of the Sunni writers when writing about Uthman took the apologetic way of approach, and shifted the blame to Marwan and other Umayyads around Uthman. These writers have purposely or otherwise projected the view that Uthman was himself virtuous and honest and the Umayyads who were close to Uthman were his evil genius, Sir William Muir's view is that such allegations are frivolous, and are merely due to party calumny.

We do not have many books about the biography of Uthman. In Pakistan only two books in Urdu are available on the subject. One is a book by Raza Misri and the other is a book by Taha Hussain. Taha Hussain has not furnished much of biographical details about Uthman. A greater part of the book is devoted to the justification of the agitation against Uthman. Raza Misri has given some biographical details, but his impressions about the activities of Uthman are on the whole unfavorable.

Unfortunately I have not come across any publication containing an objective assessment of Uthman or his caliphate. As I have studied the history of the period, and studied the facts as an impartial historian my impression is that much of the criticism that was levelled against Uthman was misplaced, and the agitation against him was the result of a conspiracy sponsored by foreign powers with a view to subverting Islam from within.

Nothing succeeds like success and nothing fails like failure. As the caliphate of Uthman came to an end in chaos and confusion culminating in his assassination, we cannot regard his rule as a Caliph to be a success. As a man Uthman was not liable to any reproach; he was an embodiment of all the good qualities that a good Muslim should have. He was, however, not successful as a ruler. That was not so because of any lapse or weakness on his part; that was so because he was ahead of the times. Umar, his predecessor, ruled with a strong hand, and in this way, he kept the democratic tendencies of the Arabs under control. Uthman tried to rule as a democrat, and in the absence of any safeguards to restrain the people from indulging in false propaganda, the liberties of the people degenerated into licence, and brought the Muslim polity to grief. Uthman did not succeed as the Caliph not because he was weak or he favored his relatives, but because he was kind to the people, and the people took undue advantage of his

kindness.

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