

The Virtues Of 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (radiallahu anh)

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Sayyiduna 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (radiallahu anh) is one of the many Companions (sahaba) from whom the great Imams of jurisprudence have related hadiths and after whom modelled their juridical opinions. He is one of the most revered Companions and is known for his deep understanding of the Holy Qur'an and jurisprudence (fiqh). Many of his narrations form the basis of numerous opinions in the Hanafi school. Therefore, in an attempt to discredit the Hanafi school, some have attacked this great Companion of Allah's Messenger (salallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) and hurled a great amount of criticism at him. Below are some of the virtues and merits of this great Companion in the words of the Messenger (salallahu 'alayhi wa sallam). It is hoped that the words of the Messenger (salallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) will provide an effective means of correcting misconceptions and establishing the true status of this great Companion.

Most of the narrations quoted here have been taken from 'Allama Shawkani's 'Durr al-Sahaba'. It is related that 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra) was very close to the Messenger (saw). He was permitted to enter his house frequently and was also his companion on many journeys. He benefitted immensely from the Messenger (saw). 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Zayd relates: **"I asked Hudhayfa (ra) to inform me about someone who closely resembled the Messenger (saw) in manner, conduct, and behaviour, so that I could learn from him. He replied, 'We are not aware of anyone who possess a closer resemblance to the Messenger (saw) in manner, conduct, and habit than Ibn Ummi 'Abd. This is until he enters his house (after which we are not aware).'"**

Ibn Ummi 'Abd was the agnomen of 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra), since Ummi 'Abd was his mother's name. Hudhayfa (ra) meant that although he was not aware of the life of 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra) at home, his social conduct surely resembled that of the Messenger of Allah (saw). Abu Musa (ra) narrates: **"My brother and I arrived from Yemen and remained (in Madina) for some time. We were led to believe that 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra) and his mother were part of the Messenger's (saw) household due to their (frequent) visits to his home and his attachment to them."** (Sahih al-Bukhari, Muslim)

This shows the closeness of 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra) to the Messenger (saw). Therefore, the claim that 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra) was ignorant of the way and manner of the Messenger (saw) is totally unfounded. 'Alqama reports: **"When I arrived in Syria (Sham), I performed two rak'ats and the prayed, 'O Allah, facilitate for me a pious companion.' I met a group of people and sat down with them. One of them came along and sat down by my side. I enquired as to who he was, and he replied that he was Abu'l-Darda'. I informed him that I had asked Allah to provide for me a pious sitting-companion, and (it seemed as if) He had fulfilled this request. He asked where I had arrived from so I told him I was from Kufa. Upon this he remarked, 'Do you not have Ibn Ummi 'Abd among you, the keeper of the slippers and pillow of the Messenger (saw) and the one in charge of his ablution water? Among you is also the one who Allah has protected from Satan, as revealed upon the tongue of His Envoy (saw); and there is also among you the keeper of the Messenger's (saw) secrets, those which nobody besides him has any knowledge of."** (al-Mustadrak)

Later on 'Alqama came to be recognized as one of the greatest students and successors of 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra).

'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra) possessed deep insight into the meaning of the Qur'an, its method of recitation, and the causes of revelation of its verses. He himself stated: **"By the One besides Whom there is no Lord, there is no chapter revealed in the Book of Allah, except that I am the most knowledgeable one regarding where it was revealed. There is no verse from the Book of Allah that has been revealed, except that I am the most knowledgeable one regarding the circumstances of its revelations. If I were to learn of anyone possessing more knowledge than me of the Book of Allah who was within reach of a camel's journey, I would mount it (to visit him)."** (Sahih al-Bukhari, Muslim)

'Umar ibn al-Khattab (ra) relates that once the Messenger (saw) said: **"Whoever gains satisfaction from reciting the Qur'an as though it were freshly revealed should recite it according to the recitation of Ibn Mas'ud."** 'Umar (ra) then says: **"I went to convey the glad tidings of this to him and found that Abu Bakr (ra) had reached him before me and had conveyed the glad tidings to him. I have never been able to outdo Abu Bakr (ra) in any good deed; he has always surpassed me."** (Musnad Abi Ya'la, Ahmad, Bazzar)

At another point 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (ra) said regarding Ibn Mas'ud (ra): **"A small person brimming with (the knowledge of) jurisprudence."** (Mu'jam al-Tabarani)

'Umar ibn al-Khattab (ra) is known for his scrupulousness in matters of religion. Therefore, his statements regarding 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra) are ample evidence that Ibn Mas'ud (ra) held a very high position in the science of jurisprudence. 'Ali (ra) narrates that the Messenger (saw) said: **"If I were to appoint someone as a leader without consulting (anyone), I would appoint Ibn Ummi 'Abd."** (al-Mustadrak)

For the Messenger (saw) to be able to place so much trust in a person and appoint him to manage the affairs of the Muslims surely indicated that the person had to be of high character, knowledge, and insight into the religion. Concerning him the Messenger (saw) also said: **"I am pleased for my Umma (nation) with whatever Ibn Ummi 'Abd (ra) is pleased with."** (al-Mustadrak)

It is further related that, **"Once the Messenger (saw) ordered 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra) to deliver a sermon. He stood up and said, 'O people! Allah Most Glorified and Exalted is our Lord, Islam is our religion (Din), the Qur'an is our guide (Imam), the House of Allah (Ka'ba) is the direction we face in prayer (qibla), and this is the Envoy (of Allah) sent to us (gesturing towards the Messenger - saw)."** He then concluded, **"We are satisfied with what Allah and His Envoy are satisfied with for us."** The Messenger (saw) remarked, **"Ibn Ummi 'Abd has spoken the truth. Ibn Ummi 'Abd has spoken the truth, and I am satisfied with what Allah is satisfied with for me, for my Umma, and for Ibn Ummi 'Abd."** (Mu'jam al-Tabarani)

'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra) was well known for delivering brief but very comprehensive sermons. He was also known for his piety among the Companions. He relates: **"When the verse was revealed: "On those who believe and do righteous good deeds, there is no sin for what they ate (in the past),"**

if they fear Allah (by keeping away from His forbidden things) and believe and do righteous good deeds, and again fear Allah and believe, and once again fear Allah and do good deeds with perfection (ihsan). And Allah loves the good-doers" (al-Qur'an 5:93), the Messenger (saw) informed me, 'You are from among them.'" (Sahih Muslim, Sunan al-Tirmidhi)

'Ali ibn Abi Talib (ra) narrates: **"Once the Messenger (saw) ordered 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra) to climb a tree to bring something (a toothstick) down for him. Some of the Companions of the Messenger (saw) caught sight of his calves while he was climbing and began to laugh at their thinness. The Messenger (saw) remarked, 'What are you laughing at? One leg of 'Abdullah will be heavier in the scale (on the Day of Judgement) than mount Uhud.'**" (Musnad Ahmad, Abi Ya'la, Mu'jam al-Tabarani)

'Amr ibn al-'As (ra) relates: **"The Messenger of Allah (saw) passed away in the state that he loved 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud and 'Ammar Ibn Yasir (radiallahu anhuma)."** (Mu'jam al-Tabarani)

Hudhayfa (ra) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (saw) said: **"Whatever 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra) narrates to you, accept it."** (Sunan al-Tirmidhi)

This proves that 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra) was considered (as all Companions are) a competent and reliable narrator of hadiths. It is reported that when Mu'adh Ibn Jabal (ra) was on his deathbed he advised: **"Take knowledge from four people: 'Uwaymir Abu 'l-Darda; Salman the Persian; 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud; and 'Abdullah ibn Salam (raa), who was once a Jew but later embraced Islam."** (Sunan al-Tirmidhi)

Similarly Hudhayfa (ra) relates: **"We asked the Messenger of Allah (saw), 'O Messenger of Allah! If only you could appoint a caliph.' He replied, 'If I appoint a caliph over you and you disobey him then you would be punished, but whatever Hudhayfa relates to you, accept it, and however 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud teaches you to recite, recite in that way.'"** (Sunan al-Tirmidhi)

It is reported that the Messenger of Allah (saw) also said: **"Learn from four people: 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, Salim the slave of Abu Hudhayfa, Ubay ibn Ka'b, and Mu'adh ibn Jabal (raa)."** (Sahih al-Bukhari, Sunan al-Tirmidhi)

Hafiz Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani (ra) states that the mention of someone's name before others (as in the case of the above narration where Ibn Mas'ud's (ra) name is mentioned first) indicates the superiority of that person. Hence, the status of Ibn Mas'ud (ra) in the knowledge of the Qur'an can also be gauged from the above hadith. In this regard, the narration of 'Umar (ra) has already been mentioned previously, in which the Messenger of Allah (saw) said that whoever intended to recite the Qur'an as though it were freshly revealed should recite it according to the recitation of 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra).

Imam Sha'bi states: **"No Companion of the Messenger of Allah (saw) entered Kufa whose knowledge was more beneficial (for the people) or who was a greater jurist than 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra)."**

'Allama Dhahabi, describing the status of the great Companion, writes:

"'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra), the learned leader (al-imam al-rabbani), Abu 'Abd al-Rahman 'Abdullah Ibn Ummi 'Abd al-Hudhali; Companion and personal servant of the Messenger (saw); among the first to embrace Islam; among the veterans of the battle of Badr; among the expert jurists and teachers of the Qur'an; among those who strove to convey (the words of the Messenger - saw) very accurately; extremely scrupulous in (his) narrations; and one who would admonish his students upon their negligence in recording the exact words (of the Messenger - saw)...(Due to extreme caution) he would narrate very little (himself)... His students would not give preference to any Companion over him.... Surely he was from among the leading Companions, the bearers of sacred knowledge, and the exemplars (a'imma) of guidance."
(Tadhkirat al-Huffaz 1:13-16)

The above is some of what has been related concerning the excellence and virtues of 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra). There is no doubt that every Companion (radiallahu anhum) is deserving of high praise, especially those who have been complimented by the Messenger (saw). As we have learned, 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud (ra) was one of the elect Companions, renowned and praised for his learning and deep insight into the religion.

Criticizing any person close to Allah (azza wa jal) means incurring the wrath of Allah (may Allah protect us from it). In a divine (qudsi) hadith, the Messenger (saw) relates that Allah (azza wa jal) says, **"Whoever harbors enmity towards a Friend (wali) of Mine, I declare war against him."** (Sahih al-Bukhari) Therefore, it is considered a very serious crime to belittle the position of a Companion in any way, especially one who possessed so many virtues. The Companions (radiallahu anhum) are among those whom Allah (azza wa jal) has expressed His pleasure with: **"Allah is well pleased with them and they pleased with Him. He has prepared for them Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein for ever. That is the supreme success."** (al-Qur'an 9:100)