

A Brief History of

Abdullah Ibn

Mubarak

(740-803 CE)

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***In The Name Of Allah,
The Most Beneficent, The Most Merciful***

A rare phenomenon among scholars, who put his knowledge into practice, which in present times is nonexistent, hardly a minute exception here and there. He was given the title of *Amir al- Mu'minin fi al- Hadith*.

It is really surprising that such a giant in Islamic history is hardly known to the Muslims, hence I thought of writing a few lines in his honour, which I am sure will not do justice to such a towering personality.

He was born in a town called Marw in the Khorasan Province (which is the present-day northeast Iran, northern Afghanistan, central Asia).

His father was of Turkish origin and mother from one of the central Asian tribes

Abdullah ibn Mubarak memorized the Qur'an at a young age, while still in his home town.

MEMORY

He had an excellent memory that was displayed by an incident which took place while he was travelling with his friend, they were both memorizing the Qur'an and they came across an Imaam giving a Khutba: Both of them sat down to listen to the khutba, at the end of the khutba, Abdullah ibn Mubarak told his friend that he has memorized the whole khutba, his friend was astonished and said, 'you are joking right? Abdullah ibn Mubarak

responded by narrating the whole khutba verbatim from start to finish.

His age was 22 years when he travelled to Iraq in search of knowledge, Iraq at that time was the epicenter of knowledge and was the seat of the Islamic empire. ibn Mubarak took knowledge from the Tabi'een. Imaam Abu Hanifa was one of his teachers.

ibn Mubarak is known for following the Prophet (ﷺ), on two things.

1. Knowledge
2. Jihaad

WHAT OTHERS SAID ABOUT IBN MUBARAK

Imam Ahmad bin Hambal said, “During the era of Abdullah ibn Mubarak, there was no one who sought knowledge more than him, he travelled to Yemen, Egypt, Syria, Basra, Kufa, Levant.”

Abu Na'eem said, “Master of Qur'an and Hajj and Jihaad. His actions were Mubarak (blessed) and his speech was Mubarak.”

Ad Dhahabi said, “He was the scholar of Islam, the teacher of the pious, spent his life in Jihaad and sponsored his brothers to gain knowledge and perform Hajj.”

Yahya ibn Mae'e'n said, “ He was a cup overflowing with trustworthiness, a scholar of ahadith.”

Safyan ibn Uyayna said, “I did not see a scholar better than ibn Mubarak, except that they had the company of the companions of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).”

Ismail ibn Ayyash said, “ There is no one on the face of this earth like ibn Mubarak. He had all the great qualities, he was honest, modest and trustworthy and he had taqwa.”

Friends, “He brought together knowledge, fiqh, tahajjud, Hajj, jihaad, chivalry and bravery.”

An Nasa’i, “There was no one at the time of ibn Mubarak who was who was more virtuous than him.”

As Sufyan, “He is the best person in the whole of the east and west.”

Al Amree, “Abdullah ibn Mubarak was the most suitable to be the Khalifah.”

ibn Hibban, “He had characteristics that were not found in anyone else at that time.”

KNOWLEDGE

He was a Muhaddith and authored 9 books, the most famous among them is Kitab Az-Zuhd and Kitab Al- Jihaad.

Yahya bin al Yahya al laythee narrated, “Once ibn Mubarak went to the town of Imaam Maalik (Madinah). There was a

huge study circle, and Imaam Maalik asked ibn Mubarak to sit next to him. Everyone was surprised as they had no idea who this stranger was, people would ask questions and Imaam Maalik would turn to his left and whisper to the stranger and then give an answer based on what ibn Mubarak had said. Afterwards people asked Imaam Maalik ‘who was that man? Imaam Maalik replied, Abdullah ibn Mubarak, the *Faqeeh*, the *Aalim* of Khorasan.

At the time of ibn Mubarak the *Khalifah* was Haroon al Rashid. One day his mother was on the balcony of the Khalifa’s palace and she saw a huge gathering of people around Abdullah ibn Mubarak, she enquired who is that man? Someone told her that is Abdullah ibn Mubarak, the *Faqeeh* and *Aalim* of Khorasan to which she replied, “He should be the *Khalifah*, not my son, my son needs bodyguards to go out in the public. But this man, without

bodyguards is able to travel and teach in front of thousands.”

JIIHAAD

Hibban abu Musa narrated, “When Abdullah ibn Mubarak went on his first expedition he said, “*Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi rajeun-* we have spent all our life seeking knowledge on the minor points of *fiqh* and we didn’t realize that the open doors of paradise are here at the battlefield, and he began to cry.”

BRAVERY

In the battle between the Muslims and the Romans, it was the standard practice in those days that the participants of each side to duel first. A Roman soldier killed a Muslim then he dueled with another Muslim and killed him too and then another-in all three Muslims were killed by the same Roman. Then a man from

amongst the Muslims came forward and dueled with the Roman and killed him then he dueled with another Roman and killed him and then another until he killed three Romans. This man's face was hidden, someone from amongst the Muslims wanted to see who he was who had killed the Romans, so he followed the man and when that man took off his cloth that was covering his face, his identity was revealed as Abdullah ibn Mubarak. At this ibn Mubarak said, "why have you embarrassed me by exposing me and my good deeds?"

Abdullah ibn Mubarak travelled extensively km just to wage Jihaad, once he went to a place and asked the people do they want to protect the Muslim borders? So all those who were interested in participating got together, a lot of these people were poor, therefore in order to save them the embarrassment, Abdullah ibn Mubarak said, why don't we all get our

money combined together and as we go along we will spend the money equally amongst ourselves. They put all their money together in one chest, and all through the journey he gave the people whatever they desired like food, clothing etc. At the end of the expedition he put more of his own money in the chest and gave it back to the people so they received more than they had put in the chest initially. When someone asked him why he did such, he replied, don't you think that Allah can Bless your intentions and deeds with more wealth."

A FAMOUS INCIDENT

During one of his travels for Hajj, he witnessed an incident that deeply moved him. It so happened that while he was camping in a town on way to Makkah, he saw a girl picking up a dead fowl from a rubbish dump and running back to her

house with it across the street, when he enquired about that house hold, he was told that once they were very affluent but have fallen in bad times. He realized that the family is so needy that the haram (prohibited) has become halal (permissible) for them. He gave them all the provisions and money that he was carrying with him for the journey and returned back, without performing the Hajj

ANOTHER FAMOUS INCIDENT

Al fudayi ibn Ayyad was a good friend of ibn Mubarak and he was also a scholar (ibn Ayyad was a highway robber before he became a pious Muslim).

During his Hajj one year, ibn Ayyad decided to write to his friend ibn Mubarak (who was at the battlefield) asking him to perform Hajj with him so they could feel the spirituality of this occasion together. ibn Mubarak responded to ibn Ayyad with

a long letter highlighting the importance of Jihaad. To which ibn Ayyad replied back agreeing with ibn Mubarak and saying that real *Ibaadah* was at the battlefield.

PIETY/PERSONALITY

He was a rich businessman, but spent very little money on himself.

He would give money to people so that they could renovate their homes and buy foods. He used to welcome those who came back from Hajj and battlefield. His famous saying **“If you have to have Taqwa then go to Jihaad, and it has to start with your money. Be detached with your money.”**

PERSON OF TRUST

Once he borrowed a pen from someone in Syria and then he travelled to Iraq where he realized that he still had the pen with him, so he went all the way back to Syria just to return the pen.

A Jew wanted to sell his house for two thousand dirhams, but when a buyer told him it's not worth more than one thousand, the Jew replied one thousand for the house and another one thousand for having a neighbor like ibn Mubarak.

VERY FREQUENTLY RELATED THIS HADITH

The Prophet (ﷺ), said, *“Most of the hypocrites of my Ummah would be the scholars and the learned ones.”* With this he was constantly reminding himself to be humble and to frequently purify his intentions. (The above mentioned hadith is in ibn Mubarak's ‘Kitab uz Zuhd’, ‘Majmul Kitab at Tabrani, Musnad Ahmad’ and authenticated by Sheikh al Albani in ‘Silsilatul Ahadith us sahihah-No. 2439)

HIS FAMOUS QUOTES

- “The beginning of knowledge is intention, then listening, then understanding, then action.”
- “We sought the knowledge of the dunya and we shunned the dunya”
- “Adaab is one third of the deen.”
- “I sought knowledge for 20 years and *adaab* for 30 years.”
- “Sahaba sought adaab first and then knowledge.”
- “Many a big action is belittled by intention,”

DEATH

Abdullah ibn Mubarak died at the age of 63 on his way back from the battlefield. He is buried in Iraq.

Remember us in your prayers