

Khalifa Umar bin al-Khattab - Inter-Personal Relations and Interactions

Ayad Bin Ghanam

Ayad bin Ghanam was the conqueror of the Jazira, the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates in the upper part of Iraq. He served as the Governor of Jazira for some time. Later he was transferred to Egypt.

One day a Bedouin came to Umar and said, "Umar, beware of the fire of hell."

Umar enquired what was the matter.

The Bedouin said, "You have enjoined upon your Governors to lead a simple life and be accessible to the people at all times. But do you know that Ayad your Governor of Egypt is living a luxurious life and he is not accessible to the people."

Umar noted the complaint and assured the complainant that suitable action would be taken thereon. He deputed an agent to Egypt to verify the complaint. He instructed further that if the complaint was correct, Ayad should be summoned to Madina.

On reaching Egypt the agent deputed by Umar felt satisfied that the Governor dressed himself in fine clothes, and that he was not easily accessible to the public. The emissary of Umar accordingly summoned Ayad to Madina.

When Ayad was presented to Umar, the latter could not recognise him. When he was told that he was in fact Ayad, he said:

"When I sent you as Governor you were neither so white nor so fat as you are now. Prima facie you have abused your position."

Umar asked him to take off his fine clothes, wear the dress of a shepherd and look after the goats of the Baitul Mal in the State pasture. Ayad complied with the order. A few days later Umar went to the State pasture and enquired of Ayad as to how he felt. Ayad said, "My father was a shepherd, and I feel no humiliation in following in the footsteps of my father."

Thereupon Umar said, "If that is so, it means that your conscience is not guilty. I have checked your accounts and these have been found in order. You are not corrupt but you have indulged in luxury. You became arrogant because of the office held by you. I hope you are now rid of your pride and arrogance. What sort of man will you be if I send you back to your office."

Ayad said, "I have no desire for the office, but if that is your command, I will do as you ordain."

Umar said, "That is well said. I order you to resume charge as the Governor of Egypt. Dress yourself as a simple man and avoid wearing Egyptian finery. Let there be no guard at your door, and see that you are accessible to the people at all times."

Ayad said, "The orders of the Caliph still be complied with strictly."

Ayad returned to Egypt, a changed man. He strictly complied with the orders of Umar both in letter and spirit.

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