

Khalifa Umar bin al-Khattab - Death of Umar

Umar And His Successor

When Umar was on his death bed, he was asked that he should nominate his successor. Umar sighed and said, "Whom should I nominate my successor? If Abu Ubaida had been alive, I would have nominated him as my successor for about him the Holy Prophet had said that he was the trustee of the Muslim community. If Salam the liberated slave of Abu Huzaifa had been alive, I would have nominated him as my successor for about him the Holy Prophet had said that among the Muslims he loved Allah most."

Some one said, "I propose the name of your son Abdullah for the office."

Thereupon Umar said:

"May God curse you for tempting me to nepotism by nominating my son when I am going to meet my Creator. The Caliphate is an affair affecting the entire Muslim community, and I would not like to make it an hereditary office in my family. I swear it by God that I never coveted the caliphate for myself. Therefore what I never coveted for myself I would not like to pass on to my family. If the caliphate is something good then by holding the office for the last ten years, I have had the blessing for my family. If the caliphate is something bad then why should I pass on this bad thing to my family? God is my witness that during my caliphate I showed no favour to my family members. On the other hand I was more hard with them than with the other Muslims. I have tried to fulfil the obligations of the office always under the shadow of the fear lest I may at any stage falter in the performance of my duties. I do not know whether I have succeeded in my purpose, but I will be happy if my achievements and failures just balance, so that I am neither rewarded nor punished for holding the office of the caliphate. Remember ye men, that if I nominate my successor, a better man than me (namely Abu Bakr) also nominated his successor. And again if I do not nominate a successor, remember that the best of men, namely Muhammad (peace be on him) did not nominate a successor. Whatever the case I am confident that Allah will Himself protect the interests of Islam."

At this, the persons around Umar went away. Umar had some sleep. Then the men came again and they said:

"O Amirul Momnin, if you are not going to nominate a successor at least leave some instructions for the selection of your successor."

Thereupon Umar said:

"After hearing you and weighing the pros and cons of the case carefully I had decided that I should nominate my successor who should lead the Muslims on the path of righteousness. But then I lost consciousness, and in that state of unconsciousness I had a dream. I saw that a man who had laid out the garden was plucking all ripe and unripe fruit from all the trees, and gathering it on the ground. I interpret this dream to mean that I will die, and Allah will Himself attend to the affairs of the Muslim community. I therefore refrain from nominating a successor for I do not wish that even after death I should continue to carry the burden of the caliphate."

When pressed to leave some guidance for the people to choose his successor, Umar said that he would nominate a Committee comprising Ali, Usman, Abdur Rahman b. Auf; Sad bin Abi Waqqas; Zubair b. Awwam; and Abu Talha. All these were eminent Companions whom the Holy Prophet gave the tidings of paradise in their lifetime. Umar said:

"I enjoin that this Committee should elect one of themselves as the Caliph."

The following day Umar called the members of the Committee (except Abu Talha who was cut of station) and enjoined them that they should deliberate and choose one from among themselves as the Caliph. The Committee retired to hold a meeting. It was soon found that there were strong dissensions among the members, and loud voices were raised highlighting the differences. Thereupon Abdul Rahman b. Auf addressing the members of the Committee said:

"The Amirul Momnin is not yet dead, and you have started quarrelling over the question of succession."

When this state of affairs was brought to the notice of

Umar he instructed:

"Defer the consideration of this issue for the present. When I die you take up the issue and then settle it within three days. On the fourth day after my death the person chosen by you should take the oath of office. He should be some one out of you. Abdullah b. Umar will sit with the Committee as Adviser and Moderator, but he will have no vote, nor will he be eligible for election as the Caliph. If during this period Abu Talha joins you he will be a member. If he does not come within three days, the rest of the members of the Committee will have the authority to take the decision. During these three days, Suhaib will lead the prayers. Thereafter, whosoever, is elected as the Caliph will lead the prayers."

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Source : Alim.org-Umar bin al-Khattab History