

Khalifa Umar bin al-Khattab - Pre-Islamic Period

Ta Ha

One hot sultry day in the year A.D. 616, Umar buckled his sword and set out to kill the Holy Prophet (peace be on him). In the way, Umar met Nuaim bin Abduilah. He was a friend of Umar. He had been converted to Islam, but Umar did not know of that.

Noticing the dark frowns on his face, Nuaim asked Umar what he was up to. Umar said that he was going to slay Muhammad (peace be on him), and thus vindicate the gods of Ka'bah. Nuaim said! "Beware if you harm Muhammad (peace be on him) you will not be safe from the fury of Banu Hashim. Desist from such a course in your own interest". Umar ejaculated angrily: "It appears you have also become a Muslim." Nuaim said, "Umar, do not bother about me, but take care of your sister and brother-in-law who have been converted to Islam, and who may be reading the Quran at this very moment."

That made Umar pause. Instead of going to the Holy Prophet, he went to the house of his sister. His sister was Fatima and her husband was Saeed bin Zaid. Umar loved his sister. He had never thought that his brother-in-law or his sister would have the audacity to accept Islam. This was news to him. He could not believe it, but he thought it advisable to verify the facts.

As Umar stepped into the house of his sister, he found that both Fatima and her husband were reading the Quran from a leaf. Seeing Umar, his sister hid the leaf. Fatima rose to welcome her brother with a smile. But there was a dark frown on the face of Umar. "What were you reading", he thundered. "Nothing", replied Fatima.

Umar caught his brother-in-law by the throat and said, "So you have apostasised from the faith of your forefathers". Saeed retorted, "Rather we have abandoned falsehood for truth." Thereupon Umar was about to strike Saeed when Fatima intervened saying, "Hands off from my husband. If you have anything to say, say it to me, but do not touch my husband." Umar asked, "Is it a fact that you have become Muslims." She replied, "Yes. we have become Muslims. You may kill us if you like, but we will not waver in our faith".

Umar stayed his hands and desired that the leaf from which they had been reading should be shown to him. Fatima said that he could not touch the sacred leaf until he had washed his hands. Umar washed his hands, and the sacred leaf was handed over to him. It was the Sura Ta Ha. It read:

"Ta Ha

We have not sent the Qur'an to thee,

To be an occasion for thy distress,

But only as an admonition to those who fear God.

A revelation from Him,

Who created the earth and the heavens on high.

God most gracious,

Is firmly established on the throne of authority.

To Him belongs what is in the heavens and on earth,

And all between them and all beneath the soil.

If thou pronounce the word aloud, it's no matter

For verily He knoweth what is secret

And what is yet hidden.

Verily there is no god but He

To Him belongs the most beautiful names." (20: 1-8)

As Umar read the verses over and over again, he felt as if these verses were addressed to him in person, and the mysterious Ta Ha referred to Umar-the Man. Umar shuddered with the fear of God, and he felt as if his conscience was upbraiding him, "Umar, how long would you stay away from the path of truth. Has not the time come for you to follow the truth?"

And then Umar resolved that he would lose no time in following the truth. Turning to his sister and brother-in-law he said, "I came to you as an enemy of Islam; I go from you as a friend of Islam. I had buckled this sword to slay the Prophet of Islam; I now go to him to offer him allegiance."

Fatima and Saeed cried "Allah o-Akbar".

The episode has been dramatised by Allama Iqbal in his poem "Secrets of the Self". He has exhorted the Muslim women to be like the sister of Umar. He says:

"O Muslim women;

Out of the evening create a new dazzling morn.

To the true lovers of God,

Recite the Holy Qur'an

And enthusiastically translate

Its spirit into action

Don't you know that such recitation

Changed altogether Umar's fate."

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