

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

Criticism Against Umar

One day in a Friday address Umar said that he had tried to serve Islam and the Muslims to the best of his capacity. He added that being a human being he was apt to make mistakes. He requested the faithful to point out his mistakes if any, so that he may correct himself.

After the prayers Umman bin Sawad stepped upto Umar and said that he wanted to apprise him of his mistakes. Umar invited him to come along to his house where they could talk over the matter at leisure.

Umman bin Sawad said that he had no intention of criticising the Caliph; as a well wisher he merely wanted to bring some points to his notice. Umar said that such observations and counsels were most welcome to him.

Umman bin Sawad said that he had four objections and these were:

- (1) That Umar had prohibited Umra in the month of Hajj;
- (2) That Umar had declared Mut'ah unlawful.
- (3) That Umar had emancipated slave girls who bore their masters children.
- (4) That Umar was harsh and stern.

Umar enquired whether these were all the objections against him or whether there were any other objections as well. Umman said that these were the only points of criticism against him.

About the first charge Umar said:

"I have not prohibited Umra. My only instructions are that in the month of Hajj priority should be given to Haj over the Umra. Some of the persons were prone to think that when they had performed the Umra that was enough and that thereafter Hajj need not be performed. Such a course was derogatory to Hajj and in order to preserve the integrity and sanctity of Hajj. I have merely instructed that in the month of Hajj, the pilgrims should concentrate on the Hajj. In the other months it is open to them to perform Umra."

About the Mutah, Umar said:

"Mutah was an ancient practice with the Arabs. The Holy Prophet did not like the practice though he tolerated it on some occasions due to special circumstances. Even then on at least two occasions he prohibited the practice. God has spoken of the sanctity of the marriage ties, and if the marriage is held sacred on one side and Mutah is allowed on the other that would be inconsistent. If Mutah is allowed that would be a sort of sanctioned prostitution. That is repugnant to Islam. If any person marries the idea is to establish a home. If a person marries for a few specified days that is foreign to the establishment of a home. Mutah is thus repugnant to Islam. If any person wants to dissolve the marriage after a few days it is open to him to give the divorce in the usual way. I have prohibited Mutah in the interests of the sanctity and integrity of Muslim homes. That is a social reform. There is no express injunction allowing Mutah and by disallowing it I have not contravened any provisions of Islamic law."

As regards the emancipation of slave girls, Umar explained:

"We have already laid down that no Arab can be a slave. If the slave girls were not emancipated there would have been the anomaly that while the children were free their mother was not free. Moreover for every marriage there is a dower. In the case of slave girls the dower is that when they become mothers they would be emancipated. This is a humanitarian reform strictly in accordance with the Spirit of Islam."

As regards the fourth charge Umar said:

"I am harsh and stern only for the wrong doer, the tyrant and the oppressor. For the weak and the meek I am never harsh or stern."

After hearing these explanations Umman bin Sawad said: "Verily Umar you have spoken the truth. You have done well in whatever you have done. You have acted in the interests of Islam. May God bless you. No blame rests on you."

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