

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

Dismissal Of A Governor For Writing Poetry

Al-Numan was the son of Adiy. Adiy was an early convert to Islam. He migrated to Abyssinia under the instructions of the Holy Prophet and died there. Al. Numan was born in Abyssinia. Later he returned to Madina. He was a good poet.

During the caliphate of Umar, he was appointed the Administrator of the district of Maisan in Iraq. He had a beautiful wife al-Hasna who stayed at Madina.

In a poetic vein, Al-Numan composed some verses and sent them to his wife at Madina.

The verses read:

"Hasn't al-Hasna heard that her husband in Maisan

Is drinking from glasses and jars?

If I wished the chief men of the city would sing to me

And the dancing girls whirl in ecstasy.

If you are my friend, give me a drink in the largest cup,

Don't give me the half-filled cup,

Perhaps the Commander of the Faithful will take it amiss

That I am indulging in the drinking of wine."

Al-Hasna showed the letter of her husband to some of her girl friends. They appreciated the verses of al-Numan. The verses got popular and Umar also came to hear them. Hearing the verses, Umar said:

"He is right. By God I do take it amiss, and I will call him to account."

Umar forthwith dismissed Al-Numan from his office.

Al-Numan came to Madina. He saw Umar and pleaded that he had never acted in the way that his verses implied. He urged that he was a poet who wrote in an exaggerated way.

Umar said, "The penalty for writing in an exaggerated way is dismissal; if you had acted in the way the verses implied I would have lashed you in the public. Know that I want the rulers to have a balanced view of things, and If they write in an exaggerated way, poetry or otherwise, they are not fit to hold administrative offices."

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