

Caliph ‘Umar (r)

Describe the events that led up to Umar becoming a Muslim.

Among the Ashab of the holy prophet (s.a.w), Hazrat Umar was one of the bravest. He was known for his sincerity in his work, his high personality and his bravery. There had been many crucial events where his presence had been of utmost importance. He was born from a Merchant family and he developed the sharp idea of a successful businessman. His Father was Khattab and his Mother was Khatmah. According to history he was 12/13 years younger than the prophet (s.a.w) and they shared a common Ancestor in Ka’ab. He received both Formal and informal education making him suitable and apt for reading and writing Arabic Language. He was very Learned, Intelligent and studious to the extent that no one was able to challenge him in educational field. He was a successful trader as well as a wise and loyal friend. He was admired for his sharp mind, his dedication to his work, his loyalty towards his relatives, his eagerness towards his religion and for his bravery.

He was among the polytheists and the idol worshippers but Allah had planned otherwise. He opposed the Muslims because he believed in the gods of the Kaaba amounted to 360 idols. He was aware of the mission of the prophet and he felt strongly about killing him to end all problems arising in Mecca and to avoid any risk of conversion. So, in the year 616 (in the 6th year of the prophet’s mission) he set out with his sword. On his way he met and told a clansman known as Nu’aym bin Abdullah where he was going and about his objective. The clansman said to him that “By God, you have deceived yourself, O Umar! Do you think that Banu Abd Manaf would let you run around alive once you kill Muhammad? Your sister is a Muslim now. Why don’t you return to your own house and set it straight?” In a furious mood, he angrily returned to his sister’s house. Arriving there he saw one of the companions, Khabbab, spreading Islam to his sister and his brother in law. He was moreover angry when he noticed that Fatima, his sister hid a few pages of Qur’an she was reading. The pagans used to call that rubbish reading. Her sister knew about his character and what he could do if these pages would fall into his hands. She didn’t want to give the paper on her brother’s request. In the meantime Khabbab slipped away. Umar began hitting Sa’id, his brother in law and when Fatima wanted to interfere and to defend her husband, she got hit by Umar. She received a slap in the face and she was bleeding. The sight of blood stopped Umar and the latter was very sorry as he loved his sister so much that he never harmed her. It was not done intentionally. He was a bit calm and he was sorry. He asked to read the pages but still Fatima did not trust him. Fatima wanted him to wash himself before touching and handling these pages.

As such Umar returned home, took off his sword and washed himself, then came to his sister. Fatima then hand over the pages to him. He was reading surah Ta Ha and he was so impressed by these words. Umar’s eyes filled with hot tears and asked “Is this what we were against? The One who has spoken these words needs to be worshipped.” He then left and went towards the prophet (s.a.w). During that period the Muslims would gather in the house of a companion known as Arqam ibn Abil Arqam to say their congregational prayers. They were just beginning to assemble, when one of them, looking out the window, saw Umar approaching the house with a drawn sword. In a state of considerable alarm, he told other members of the congregation what he saw. Presumably, they too were alarmed. But Hamza, the uncle of the prophet who six months earlier converted to Islam was also present in the house of Arqam, reassured them, and said that if Umar was coming with good intentions, then it was all right but if not, then he (Hamza) would run him (Umar) through with his (Umar’s) own sword. When he knocked the door the prophet asked the companions to let him in but they were ready for anything to happen. The prophet asked him why he had come. Umar faced the prophet with humility and joy and said, “O Messenger of God, I have come for no reason except to say I believe in God and his Messenger”. Prophet Muhammad was overcome with joy and cried out that God was Great! Within days, Umar lead a procession of Muslims to the house of God where they prayed openly. It was on this occasion that Prophet Muhammad gave him the nickname Al Farooq – the criterion. It denotes one who is able to distinguish truth from falsehood. Islam was strengthened with Umar, his fierce hatred melted into a love that knew no bound. His life and his death

were now for the sake of God and his Messenger. That was unexpected and everyone rejoiced saying Allahu Akbar. According to hadith the prophet was praying Allah to strengthen Islam through Umar.

Assess the main achievements of his Caliphate.

There had been many different achievements in the caliphate of Umar. He was a very successful leader as he continued the principles of the prophet and Hazrat Abu Bakr with an iron fist. He was not the one to tolerate any **unislamic aspects and immoralities** in his society.

He continued with the **Majlis shurah with 11 members** for decision making. That was done to facilitate decision making and taking.

He divided his **caliphate into provinces and districts** under different governors. He had regular checks on them. They would in return report to him during the period of Hajj on annual basis.

He established **office of judge** (qadi) independent of provincial governor.

He was the one who **created the Hijri calendar**.

He contributed to the expansion of **cultivated lands and new tax (ushr)** was levied on produce of land.

He established the **finance department** known as diwan of those entitled to state pensions for helping in wars.

There were different **sources of revenue** such as Jizya (poll tax), zakaat, kharaj (spoils of war), Fay (income from crown lands) and ushr (1/10 of produce). All these were meant for funding the Baitul Maal (public treasury).

In order to have a better control on the territories his armies were **forbidden to buy land in conquered territories**.

He settled his army in new planned towns such as Kufa and Basra and these were accessible when there was the need to fight. He had a well-disciplined army and considered the welfare of soldiers, both Muslims and non-Muslims.

He standardised the Military division, Police department and the Educational department.

To have a better control over his population, he had regular census.

In order to ensure the spreading of Islam, teachers were sent throughout country to teach how to read the Qur'an and other Islamic fields.

He constructed mosques, schools, roads and outposts for travellers.

He gave individuals the right to question him or / and all officials and complain. This was a means of a strong democratic government.

He checked weights and measures and prevented profiteering and hoarding.

He dedicated great deal of time to religious affairs and he spiritualised the whole state. Some of his personal example could be seen in the fact that he was clear in thought, deeds, fair, pious and upright.

Moreover, Hazrat Umar was a successful military commander. He was victorious in the Battle of Namarraq against Sassanians (Persians), in the Battle of Buwaib, against Sassanians again, in the battle of Qadisiya in 14 AH and finally broke strength of Sassanians. He was victorious in the Battle of Yarmuk 15AH against the Romans and at the Battle of Nahawand in 21AH. There was the fall of Jerusalem into Muslim hands in 16AH and the conquest of Egypt in 17AH.

There are other achievements of Hazrat Umar such as the establishment of Public Treasury, the establishments of courts of Justice and appointment of Judges, the establishment of Postal service, the survey and assessment of lands, the public census, the punishment of those who practice Monopoly by exile to different lands, the establishment of and use of Jails, the building of Canals and Bridges, the use of the Whip, the establishment of Public Rest Areas, hostels and *Wudu* (Ablution) Stations, the use of secret reports and specially designated emissaries to provide first reports as what is really going on in different provinces, the salary for Imams, *Muadhin* (Callers to prayer), teachers and public lectures, the stipends for the poor among the Jews and Christians who lived in conquered lands, the punishment for drunkenness, written satires and lampoons, the establishment of Guilds for certain trades, the prohibition of the mention of women's names in poetry, the holding of *tarawih* (Ramadan night prayers) in congregation, the providing of lighting in the Mosques at night, the persuading of Abu Bakr to collect the Qur'an in one book, the establishment of Military bases at strategic points in the different provinces, the personally making nightly rounds to check on the condition of the people first hand, the formulation of the Principal of *Qiyas* (Analogical Reasoning.) for determining rulings on newly encountered matters in *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence.), the establishment of a more exact system of calculation of the inheritance, the limiting the relationship between Muslims and Non-Muslims, the establishing a stable for the lost camels, the state intervention to control the price of merchandise and the enlargement the *al-Haram* (the Sacred Mosque) at Mecca.