



Islamic Caliphate

Caliph or Khalifah

A Khalifah (Caliph) was meant to be the successor of the Holy Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), whose job was to provide Muslims with the most desired leadership, according to the commandments of Allah (SWT) and His Messenger Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). He was not supposed to rule the believers, but only to act as a guiding principle in matters concerning the implementation of Islamic rules and regulations leading towards a just and peaceful society.

1. Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique (R.A) (June 8, 632-August 23, 634 A.D)

He was born in 573 A.D, is almost 2 years younger than the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Hazrat Abu Bakr (R.A) belonged to a noble family of Bunu Tamim of Qureyshi tribe in Makkah. His original name was Abdullah ibn Abu Quhafa. He started doing the trade as a profession and accompanied Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) on some business missions. He was the closest companion of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and shared great personality characteristics of truthfulness, honesty, and integrity with Him.

He as the First Caliph

With the passing, away of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), the Muslim community was faced with the problem of succession. Who would be its leader? There were four persons obviously marked for leadership: Hazrat Abu Bakr al-Siddique (R.A), who had accompanied Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) to Madinah ten years before and had been proved very generous in the need of hours for Islam. Hazrat Umar Ibn al-Khattab (RA), an able and trusted Companion of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH); 'Hazrat Usman Ibn 'Affan (R.A), a respected early convert; and 'Hazrat Ali ibn Abi Talib (R.A), Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)'s cousin and son-in-law and a very pious and knowledgeable personality.

To avoid contention among various groups, 'Hazrat Umar (R.A) suddenly grasped the Hazrat Abu Bakr's (R.A) hand, the traditional sign of recognition of a new leader. Soon everyone concurred and before dusk Hazrat Abu Bakr (R.A) had been recognized as the Khalifah.

In his first address as caliph, he said,

"I have been given the authority over you, and I am not the best of you. If I do well, help me; and if I do wrong, set me right. Sincere regard for truth is loyalty and disregard for truth is treachery. The weak amongst you shall be strong with me until I have secured his rights if God wills, and the strong amongst you shall be weak with me until I have wrested from him the rights of others if God wills. Obey me so long as I obey God and His Messenger. But if I disobey

God and His Messenger, you owe me no obedience. Arise for your prayer, God has mercy upon you”.

His Accomplishments as Caliph

Hazrat Abu Bakr's (R.A) caliphate was short but important. An exemplary leader, he lived simply, assiduously fulfilled his religious obligations, and was accessible and sympathetic to his people. But he also stood firm when, in the wake of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)'s death, some tribes renounced Islam; in what was a major accomplishment, Hazrat Abu Bakr (R.A) swiftly disciplined them. He also defeated the rebellion of several Arab tribes (the Ridda Wars, or the Wars of Apostasy).

The Ridda or Apostasy Wars were a series of conflicts with various Arab tribes that had become Muslim in the last years of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) life. These people thought that their agreement to become a Muslim was a contract only with Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and that once Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was dead, the contract was no longer valid. But Muslim's thought has always been that becoming a Muslim is a lifetime commitment and, should a person's belief waver, it is the responsibility of the community to help the person back to a state of belief.

Later, he consolidated the support of the tribes within the Arabian Peninsula and subsequently funneled their energies against the powerful empires of the East: the Sassanians in Persia and the Byzantines in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt.

In short, he demonstrated the viability of the Muslim state. Some other major contributions of his were to assemble the scattering Muslims to common Islamic faith and the compilation of the Holy Quran in hard copy for the first time.

His Death

The time of his Caliphate was very short, i.e. 27 months only. Hazrat Abu Bakr (R.A) died on Monday, 23rd August, 634 A.D and is buried next to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

2. Hazrat Umar Farooq (R.A) (August 23, 634-November 7, 644 A.D)

He was born in 580 A.D, is almost 10 years younger than the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Hazrat Umar ibn Khattab (R.A) belonged to the Adi family of the Qureyshi tribe of Makkah. He used to graze cattle in his early age and was also among a few educated people of Makkah at that time. In his youth, He was physically strong and was proven as a wrestler. He accepted Islam when he was actually going to kill (God forbid) Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) but after listening to the recitation of Quranic Verses in the house of his sister, he acknowledged the Ayahs (verses) as true and embraced Islam at the hands of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

He as the Second Caliph

In 634, Hazrat Umar Ibn al-Khattab (R.A) became the second caliph. He had been one of the chief advisors to Hazrat Abu Bakr (R.A) and had served as his secretary. Hazrat Abu Bakr (R.A) named Hazrat Umar Ibn al-Khattab (R.A) as his successor because of his willpower, intelligence, political astuteness, impartiality, justice, and care for poor and underprivileged people.

His Accomplishments as Caliph

During his Khilafat, the Islamic dominion reached the far-off corners of the world, including Roman and Persian regions. Hazrat Umar (R.A) extended Islam's temporal rule over Syria, Egypt, Iraq, and Persia in what from a purely military standpoint were astonishing victories. Within four years after the death of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) the Muslim state had extended its sway over all of Syria and had, at a famous battle fought during a sandstorm near the River Yarmuk, blunted the power of the Byzantines – whose ruler Heraclius had shortly before disdainfully rejected the letter from the unknown Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) of Arabia.

Being the Second Caliph of Islam, the major contributions of caliph Hazrat Umar (R.A) include implementation of peace and justice in Muslim society, the formation of Baitul Maal for maintenance and provision of finances, the division of larger regions into smaller provinces, making of present Hijri (Islamic) Calendar etc.

His caliphate was a high point in early Islamic history. He was noted for his justice, social ideals, administration, and statesmanship. His innovations left all enduring imprint on social welfare, taxation, and the financial and administrative fabric of the growing empire.

His Death

Hazrat Umar (R.A) was assassinated by a rebel while he was praying congregational Salah in the mosque. He died three days after that unfortunate happening, i.e. on 7th November, 644 A.D. Upon his wish, Hazrat Ayesha (R.A) gave the permission to bury Hazrat Umar (R.A) alongside Prophet Mohammad (PBUH).

3. Hazrat Usman Ghani (R.A) (November 11, 644-July 17, 656 A.D)

He was born in 573 A.D, is almost 2 years younger than the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Hazrat Usman ibn Affan (R.A) belonged to the Umayyah family of the Qureyshi tribe of Makkah. He readily accepted Islam when his close friend Hazrat Abu Bakr (R.A) told him about it. He was a wealthy man and he spent most of it in the true service of Islam like buying a well from Jew in Madinah and making it free for use for all Muslims and acquiring a portion of land to enlarge the capacity of Masjid-e-Nabawi. Due to his generosity, he was commonly known as Al-Ghani.

He as the Third Caliph

After the death of Caliph Hazrat Umar (R.A), an advisory council composed of the Companions of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) selected Hazrat Usman (R.A) as the third caliph.

His Accomplishments as Caliph

Hazrat Usman (R.A) achieved much during his reign. He pushed forward with the pacification of Persia, continued to defend the Muslim state against the Byzantines, added what is now Libya to the empire, and subjugated most of Armenia. Hazrat Usman (R.A) also, established an Arab navy, which fought a series of important engagements with the Byzantines.

During his time, he contributed by capturing the far-off regions of the world like North Africa, the formation of first Muslim Naval Force and beating the Roman realm. He also gathered Muslims on single Tajweed of Quran by making its common recital process.

His Death

These successes, however, were qualified by serious administrative weaknesses. Hazrat Usman (R.A) was accused of favoritism to members of his family – the clan of Umayyah. Negotiations over such grievances were opened by representatives from Egypt, but soon collapsed and Hazrat Usman (R.A) was killed on 17th of July, 656 A.D. He died at the old age of 84 and is buried in Jannat-ul-Baqi (graveyard in Madinah).

4. Hazrat Ali Murtaza (R.A) (656-661 A.D)

He was born in 600 A.D, being the First Cousin of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and almost 30 years younger than Him (PBUH). Hazrat Ali ibn Abi Talib (R.A) belonged to a highly-respected family of Bani Hashim of Qureyshi tribe in Makkah. He was the first one among young ones and one the earliest of all the acceptors of Islam. He also risked his life for the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) by lying on His (PBUH) bed at night when non-believers had already planned to kill (God forbid) Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), successfully returned the entrusted possessions to their original owners the very next day and migrated to Madinah. Hazrat Ali (R.A) had the great honor of having married the youngest and the most beloved Daughter of Hazrat Mohammad (PBUH) Hazrat Fatima (R.A) and being the Father of Hazrat Imam Hassan (R.A) and Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A), who made the greatest sacrifice later for the purpose of upholding Islam. He fought every battle with huge courage right from the very first clash with infidels, i.e. Ghazwa Badr. At the occasion of Ghazwa-e-Khaibar, considered to be the toughest of all battles that the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) fought, Hazrat Ali (R.A).

No doubt, Ali is from Me (PBUH) and I am from Ali , and Ali will be the Saint of every Momin after Me, and will keep a love from him (Momin), no one will be hatred from Him. (Tirmidhi)

He as the Fourth Caliph

Following the assassination of Caliph Hazrat Usman (R.A), Hazrat Ali (R.A) was literally forced to accept the position of the Caliph. He did so reluctantly on the condition that He would rule strictly by the true Sunnah of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and by the ordinances contained in the Qur'an. However, He assumed leadership at a time when the Islamic world was not unified. He was unwilling to compromise His principles for the sake of political expediency.

His Accomplishments as Caliph

Being the fourth Khalifah of Islam, Hazrat Ali ul Murtaza (R.A) tried his best to unite Muslims and make peace, but the resistance from hypocrites had become very strong. He fought them and destroyed most of the Kharijites (rebellion movement) in the battle of Nahrawan and introduce the reforms in taxes.

He removed the corrupt regional governors of the Islamic empire, and demanded honesty, integrity, accountability, and compassion from the government officials. He himself adopted an extremely austere lifestyle.

His Death

When he was 63 years of age, Hazrat Ali (R.A) was martyred with a poisoned sword by one of the rebels while he was performing the prostration of Fajar Salah in Kufa mosque on the 19th of Ramadan, 40 A.H. (661 A.D.).