



## Umayyads and Abbasids

### Introduction

The discussion under the perspective of leadership is continued, we would like to discuss what happened after the Rashidun Caliphate. We would see some interesting points to talk about Umayyad and Abbasids. We have talked about some of the great qualities of a good leader and what it takes to be a good leader. Here, we have excellent examples to compare and contrast of Right Caliphs and the successors of the Umayyad and Abbasids. Also, some factors regarding the rising empire of Muslims and its decline.

### Umayyad Period

During the time of rightly Caliphs, the Islamic empire expanded and it was known as *Dar-ul-Islam* where Islamic principles and provisions were followed. The Caliph was supposed to follow strictly the Qur'an and Sunnah, which were primary sources of the Caliphate. In this Caliphate, *Ahlul Kitaab* were not forced to embrace Islam, but they were allowed to follow their own religious practices representing religious tolerance as long as they pay *Jizya*, that is, for their protection under attacks or battles. Although, Muslims were also to pay a tax known as *zakat*.

### Expansion of Umayyads

The expansion under Umayyads can be observed from Spain, Persia, some parts of Pakistan, Mesopotamia, North Africa, Crete, Sicily, Sardinia, Northwest India, and Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

The capital of the Umayyads was at Damascus. The Umayyads not only brought wealth, but also new converts to Islam. However, the domestic turmoil remained prevailing and later turned severe within the empire. The riches of the world were reaching in their hands.

Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) mentioned that, "I do not fear for your poverty, but the wealth of the world opens for you which will be the cause of the Fitna." (***Sahih Hadith***).

Umayyads became wealthy and they moved away from Taqwa and lived lavish lifestyles like royals. They did not care about the principles of Islam and Sunnah.

The only notable and devout leaders among Umayyads is the Hazrat Umer bin Abdul Aziz also known as Umer II. He was also known as a just, upright and an honest leader. His era can be regarded as the golden period of the Umayyad. He lifted away from the Jizya tax on those Non-believers who convert to Islam. He lifted away all extra allowances to his own family members. He treated everyone equally without any nepotism. The relatives of the leader were not given any privileges as they were treated as a common man in the society. He was later poisoned when his successive government tried to reverse his financial and tax policies

## **Decline of Umayyads**

The Umayyad became soft and corrupt due to wealth. Warrior lifestyle was abandoned as was in the Caliphate. The arts, crafts, entertainment, music and decadent lifestyle was prevailing among Umayyads. The difference between a rich and a poor has clearly been seen in Umayyads. Along the Indian frontier, warrior settlers revolted against the Umayyads with the help of the Abbasids.

In 750 CE, the Abbasids replaced Umayyads, and Umayyads were completely wiped out. The grandson of Umayyads escaped in Spain and established an exiled caliphate in Cordoba in Spain. There is nothing spectacular Umayyads to mention here in terms of any massive achievements apart from the expansion of the empire.

## **Advent of Abbasids**

In 750 CE, the Umayyads were completely wiped out by the Abbasids. The Muslim empire expansion was gaining strength. Abbasids have to tackle the internal conflicts. The period between 786 CE to 861 CE was known as the golden era of the Abbasids. The empire reached great cultural heights. In the era 813 CE to 833 CE, Mamoon was in power, he put down many rebellions and had fought wars with the Byzantine empire.

Abbasids empire lasted from 750 CE to 1258 CE. By the invasion of the Mongols under the leadership of Chingiz Khan, the Abbasids came to an end. Strange to say, the invading Mongols accepted Islam fascinated by Muslims 'architecture. The Abbasids followed the decadent and luxurious lifestyle, they considered themselves above the principles of Islam. Abbasids built a strong bureaucratic government to rule their empire. Muslim merchants expanded their trades across Africa, the Indian Ocean, and the Mediterranean Sea.

## **Characteristics of Abbasids**

Abbasids built a centralized state with Baghdad as Capital. The absolute power was at the center of the state. The bureaucracy was under wazirs. There was a royal executioner. The revenue in the form of taxes and tribute was collected. The Abbasids were less powerful at a distance and strong at the center and they were not as sophisticated as the Umayyads were. The Abbasids caliphs placed themselves above the Islamic law. They remained remote from the people and instead they were more involved in their decadent lifestyle. There are golden achievements worth mentioning in terms of Science, Mathematics, Medicine, and Architecture etc.

Some of important Khaleefa Haroon-ur-Rasheed, Khaleefa Mamoon-ur-Rasheed and Al-Mansoor. During their time, they built Bait-ul-Hikma (House of Wisdom), which refers to a public academy and a center of excellence for knowledge. Muslims were very much into these houses of wisdom and they made many discoveries. The House of Wisdom was a formal academy. A lot of knowledgeable stuff could be found in this library, but it was destroyed by Mongols. Advancements in education, degree-granting university, advancements in law, Islamic jurisprudence, matters of Fiqh, Asool-al-Fiqh, in theology Imam Ahmad ibn-e-Hanbil who connected people to the Book of Allah (SWT) and the Sunnah. Many of them were

polymaths, Ibn-e-Seena an authority in Philosophy and expert in modern medicine and had written a canon of medicine. Ibn-e-Seena and Ibn-e-Rushd were two authoritative figures in Philosophy. Al-Khawrizmi- famous Mathematician and invented Algebra, Trigonometry, the science of Algorithms and scientific methods. Al-bairuni- famous Physicist and Astronomer. Al-kindi- famous Chemist. In social science, Ibne Khuldoon- a great historian and human behaviorist- his volumes of works on these topics can be found out.

According to Ashfaq Ahmed: 'Degrees are mere the receipt for your educational expenditure, but the true knowledge is seen through your good conduct.' The character is the most important aspect considered in Islam if you lose your character, you lose your leadership and in the sight of Allah (SWT).

The purpose of education is also to make your character best if education is not making you more upright than your education system is not right. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said, 'I have been sent to perfect the good character.'

Allah (SWT) mentioned that He (PBUH) has the best of the character. In Qur'an said,

**"And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds".**  
**[Al-Anbya: 107]**

Muslims were first who created the first maps. Those were very detailed and ancient maps. Muslims discovered coffee to awake for tahajjud and soap for their cleanliness.

## **Europeans Influenced by Muslims Knowledge**

Europeans visited and learned the Arabic language to learn knowledge. They came out of the dark ages, they learned and took books with them. In Europe, people opposed religion due to the orthodoxly and influential nature of the powerful church. Because Europe believed that the religious thoughts were resisting them from advancements and therefore they opposed church and gone through the enlightened era of empirical knowledge. As Muslims, we accept the empirical knowledge, but our primary source of knowledge is divine knowledge. Christian went through downfall and they came out to be more knowledgeable about the advent of secular ideology. People of this era, like Carl Marks, Sigmund Freud, etc., where atheist and anti-religion. Therefore, those who had written books regarding the backwardness of religion. They all were well-versed of only Christianity not of Islam. Whereas, Islam is a more modern religion and accepts modern knowledge.

## **Decline of the Abbasids**

Due to the royal and lavish lifestyle, Abbasid faced their downfall. Their decadent lifestyle and considering them above Islamic law made them vulnerable. When Mongols attacked them, there was no one who would go to perform Hajj. People were busy in their lavish lifestyle. People who do not learn from history, history makes them lessons for the others. Abbasids left the Quran and Sunnah and they died out completely in the history.