

## A STUDY ON THE FIRST KHUTBAH OF AMIR AL-MUMINEEN UMAR BIN KHATTAB (RA)

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### Abstract

Umar bin Khattab's (RA) first Khutbah is a powerful example of his priorities, values, and character as the second Caliph of Islam. The sermon, that was given after taking over the office as the Amir al-Mumineen, includes self-examination, supplication, and a request to Allah for direction in governance. Umar (RA) emphasises his profound understanding of leadership duties by praying for humility, strength, wisdom, and justice. This article examines the sermon's linguistic beauty, textual and thematic depth along with the supplications and moral values it contains.

### Keywords:

khutba, sermon, khatabah, umar(Rali)

## Introduction:

The word Khutbah - خطبة is derived from the root letters of (خ - ط - ب) in Arabic language. Famous lexicographer of the Arabic language - Al-Zubaydi writes:

"الخطبة: مصدر الخطيب (خطب الخطاب على المنبر يخطب خطابة بالفتح، وخطبة، بالضم) <sup>١</sup>"

The *Khutbah* (s.) or *Khutab* (pl.) of early Islamic leaders are vital sources of historical, linguistic, and spiritual insight, offering an easy glimpse into their time's values, culture, and socio-political dynamics. In early Islamic society, these speeches served as essential instruments for governance, education, and spiritual guidance in addition to being rhetorical devices and political instruments. Delivered in eloquent Arabic, they reflect the linguistic richness of the time and serve as benchmarks of classical Arabic prose.

Prophet Muhammad's (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ) teachings, for instance, are some of the most important in Islamic history. His Farewell Sermon, which he gave on his last journey, is notable as an important speech that covers issues of equality, social justice, and following divine instructions. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ) famously stated, "*The most respectable of you in the sight of God is the one who is most fearful of God. No Arab has any excellence over a non-Arab, if not by the fear of God.*" <sup>2</sup> He also emphasised the sanctity of human life, individual rights and responsibilities, and the unity of the Muslim community. The moral and universal

<sup>1</sup> Al-Zubaydi, *Taj al-Aroos*, Volume 2, Page 373

<sup>2</sup> Bijli, HMT, 2023, Proceedings of International Seminar on Proverbs and Wise Sayings in Arabic Literature; P.G & Research Department of Arabic, The College, Chennai. Hamidullah, Muhammad, Muhammad Rasulullah PBUH, 1974, Centre Culturel Islamique, Paris.

lessons in this sermon have been the subject of much analysis and continue to motivate Muslims all over the world.

Similar to this, the leadership philosophies and difficulties encountered by the Rightly Guided Caliphs (Al-Khulafa' Al-Rashidun) are reflected in their sermons. Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, for example, established a tone of accountability and humility in his first speech as Caliph when he said,

فانی قد ولیت علیکم ولست بخیرکم فان احسنت فأعینونی، وان أساءت فقومونی ۳.

"I have been appointed as a ruler over you, but I am not the best among you. Help me if I succeed, and correct me if I fail." His remarks focused on the ethical foundations of leadership and the shared responsibility of governance.

Umar ibn Al-Khattab's (RA) *Khutab* are also noteworthy for their emphasis on justice and social welfare. A very common sentence from one of his *Khutbah*, is the one in which he is reported to have said, "If a mule were to stumble on the bank of the Euphrates, I would've feared Allah asking me about it, why I did not pave the way for it<sup>4</sup>." He was well-known for his unwavering sense of justice.

Umar bin Khattab (RA) took over as the caliph and successor of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (RA) and gave his first sermon on the pulpit in the masjid. In the next section, we will be studying the sermon and its intricacies.

<sup>3</sup>Ibn Kathir, al-Bidayah wa al-Nihayah, Volume 5, Page 248

<sup>4</sup> Governing Lessons from The Second Caliph - <https://medium.com/@a.greish1/governing-lessons-from-the-second-caliph-b33205d21f33#:~:text=But%20Umar%20RA%20took%20this,pave%20the%20way%20for%20it%20.>

## Study of the Khutba:

The sermon begins<sup>5</sup> with Umar (RA) ascending the pulpit and praising Allah, and expressing gratitude to Allah is the basics of any Islamic discourse. He then calls out to the people directly and simply to begin his prayer and says:

<sup>5</sup> Ibn Abd Rabbih, al-‘Iqd al-Farīd, Volume 4, Page 156

"يَا أَهْلَ النَّاسِ، إِنِّي دَاعٌ فَأَمِنُوا"

"O people, I am about to pray, so say Ameen"

This introduction instantly engages the audience, transforming the sermon into a group act of worship. Following which, he supplicates:

"اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي غَلِيظُ فَلِيَّنِي لِأَهْلِ طَاعَتِكَ بِمَا فَوَقَتُكَ الْحَقَّ ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِكَ وَالْدَّارِ الْآخِرَةِ"

"O Allah, I am harsh, so soften me for the people of obedience per the truth for seeking your and the hereafter"

This request demonstrates Umar's (RA) self-awareness and desire to improve his nature. He prays to Allah to enable him to treat the obedient with kindness and gentleness. This also shows the humility he carries after a long companionship with the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم). His desire to strike a balance between kindness and strength in a way that pleases Allah is evident in his prayer. Umar (RA) tries to be kind to people while maintaining his commitment to justice. This demonstrates his profound self-awareness and dedication to developing his moral fibre for the sake of Allah and the Hereafter's benefit.

### Then he says:

"وَارْزُقْنِي الْغَلْظَةَ وَالشَّدَّةَ عَلَى أَعْدَائِكَ وَأَهْلِ الدُّعَارَةِ وَالنَّفَاقِ مِنْ غَيْرِ ظُلْمٍ مِّنِي لَهُمْ، وَلَا اعْتِدَاءَ عَلَيْهِمْ"

"And grant me harshness and severity against your enemies, immoral people and the sinners, without injustice from me to them, nor aggression against them"

These words resonate with the strict nature that he had continued with him, but now it was for Islam. He wanted to continue being harsh to those who disobeyed Allah and his Messenger. He wanted nobody to disobey or do any act

that Allah forbade. He, in fact, felt it was the duty of the ruler to ensure such sinful activities did not happen in his regime. The balance between gentleness for the ones who were obedient and firmness for wrongdoers reflects his sense of justice and leadership.

Additionally, Umar (RA) admits that he has an impulse to be cautious or even frugal, for which he prays:

"اللهم إني شحيح فسخني في نواب المعروف"

"O Allah, I am stingy, so make me generous in acts of goodness"

His wish to overcome any hesitation to spend money on worthy causes is made apparent by this request. Umar (RA), however, didn't want to become generous to the point as to be wasteful.

**He added:**

"قصدأ من غير سرف ولا تبذير ولا رياء ولا سمعة واجعلني أبتغي بذلك وجهك والدار الآخرة..."

"In balance, without excess or extravagance, nor hypocrisy or reputation  
and make me seek thereby your pleasure and the hereafter..."

Umar (RA) and begs Allah to grant him the ability to perform good deeds with generosity. In order to ensure that his generosity is neither excessive nor wasteful, he prays for balance. In his actions, he simultaneously looks for protection from hypocrisy and the desire for fame or reputation. According to Umar (RA), he should only be giving for Allah's sake. His commitment to sincerity and his emphasis on the everlasting reward in the Hereafter are demonstrated in this prayer. The mindset of Umar bin Khattab (RA) encourages us to acknowledge our flaws and ask Allah for guidance in order to find the middle ground in all that we do.

Umar (RA) again shows his humility by admitting his own flaws. He says:

"اللهم إني كثير الغفلة والنسيان"

"O Allah, I am forgetful and heedless."

By making this confession in his sermon, Umar (RA) teaches us the importance of self-awareness. He acknowledges his tendency to forget and asks Allah for help to always remember Him. The most common problem of many conflicts is egoistic thoughts, and Umar bin Khattab (RA) breaks his ego on the pulpit through a prayer in the sermon.

He goes on with his heartfelt dua:

"فألهمني ذكرك على كل حال، وذكر الموت في كل حين"

"So, inspire me to remember You in every state and to remember death at all times."

This section of Umar's (RA) prayer highlights the significance of maintaining a constant connection to Allah. No matter what is going on, he prays to Allah to help him remember Him. Maintaining a relationship with Allah provides one with courage and direction in life. As a reminder of how fleeting life is, Umar (RA) also prays to remember death. A person can avoid wasting time and concentrate on what really matters by thinking about death. Because it reminds us that everyone will eventually return to Allah, it instills humility. People are inspired to lead morally upright lives when they consider death. Understanding that life is fleeting, they refrain from immoral behaviour and make an effort to do what Allah desires. Umar's (RA) dua is an important example of how remembering Allah and death can keep a person grounded and motivated to live a meaningful life.

**He then says:**

"اللهم إني ضعيف عن العمل بطاعتك، فارزقني النشاط فيها والقدرة عليها بالنية الحسنة التي لا تكون إلا بعونك

... و توفيقك"

"O Allah, I am weak in performing acts of obedience to You, so grant me the energy and strength to do so with the good intention that can only be with Your help and success..."

In his prayer to Allah, Umar (RA) acknowledges his weakness in performing acts of obedience and worship. He understands that it takes strength, resolve, and energy to carry out good deeds. He begs Allah to give him the capacity to worship and correctly obey Him. This demonstrates Umar's (RA) humility and awareness that without Allah's assistance, human strength is limited. He stresses that sincere and pure intentions are the foundation of all good deeds. Even having the correct intention is a blessing from Allah, according to Umar (RA).

One of the most important aspects of spiritual growth is the need for self-reflection. Umar bin Khattab (RA) prays in his sermon:

"والمحاسبة لنفسي، وإصلاح الساعات والحد من الشهوات"

"And [grant me] the ability to take myself to account and improve my hours, and being wary of doubts;"

The way that Umar (RA) views personal responsibility is reflected in this prayer. According to him, before a leader or any individual can lead others, they must first work on bettering themselves. In order to turn his life into a sequence of productive hours, Umar (RA) requests the ability to change his behaviour one moment at a time. Umar (RA) asks God to grant him the capacity to examine his

own behaviour and hold himself responsible. He prays to Allah to guide him in making the most of his time and making sure that each hour is used in a purposeful manner. In order to prevent doubts and uncertainties, he also asks for awareness and caution in his prayer. This illustrates his dedication to bettering himself and avoiding anything that might undermine his faith. We learn from Umar (RA) the value of self-control and alertness in both deeds and intentions. In fact, this concept of "محاسبة النفس" has to be generally followed by all Muslims, but it is formally advocated and followed in the circles of the *Sufis*. The *Sufi Silsilahs* encourage the Muslims to regularly assess oneself so that no harm is done to themselves as well as others through us. A great Sufi, Abdul Qadir Jilani (RA) is reported to have said "You must acquire certitude [yaqin] after self-examination [muhasaba], for it is the kernel [lubb] of faith [iman]. Only with certitude can the obligatory religious duties [fara'id] be properly discharged. Only with certitude can one put this world in its proper place<sup>6</sup>."

Now coming back to the sermon of Amir al-Mumineen Umar bin Khattab (RA), he further states:

"اللهم ارزقني التفكروالتدبّر لما يتلوه لسانِي من كتابك، والفهم له، والمعرفة بمعانيه، والنظر في عجائبِه، والعمل

" بذلك ما بقيت؛ إنك على كل شيء قادر

"O Allah, grant me the ability to think and ponder over what my tongue recites of Your Book, to understand it, to know its meanings, to contemplate its wonders, and to act upon it as long as I live; for You are able to do all things."

<sup>6</sup> Malfuzat of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qadir Al Jilani (q) On vigil - <https://ghayb.com/malfuzat-of-shaikh-abd-al-qadir-al-jilani/>

In this part of the *Khutbah*, in his prayer to Allah, Umar (RA) asks for the capacity to think carefully about the Quran while reciting it. In order to understand its profound lessons, he looks for wisdom and understanding of its meanings. His prayer highlights a desire to reflect on the wonders of Allah's words as well as to read them. Additionally, he prays for the courage to live out the teachings of the Quran on a daily basis. By recognising Allah's supreme authority, Umar (RA) demonstrates his dependence on Him for both wisdom and action.

## Conclusion:

We see the beauty of Umar ibn al-Khattab's (RA) humility and spiritual insight in his first *Khutbah* as the leader of the Muslim community. Umar (RA) demonstrates a profound understanding of his own nature and a genuine desire to improve his character in service to Allah and His people through his sincere prayers. Deep themes of generosity balanced with restraint, softness tempered by firmness, and an unwavering commitment to sincerity and self-accountability are all evident in his prayers.

Umar (RA) sought the capacity to exemplify the highest virtues in his deeds and intentions rather than merely asking Allah for strength in leadership. His understanding of the Quran's transformative power is demonstrated by his prayer to think carefully about it and to follow its teachings. His recognition of human weakness, whether in deeds of worship, almsgiving, or time management, also accentuates the beauty of his dependence on Allah for direction and achievement.

This sermon is a timeless lesson in personal development and leadership. Umar (RA) showed that acknowledging one's shortcomings and asking for divine

assistance to overcome them is the path to true strength. His teachings encourage every believer to pursue moral excellence and lead a life that pleases Allah, is based on sincerity and purpose, and is focused on the everlasting reward of the Hereafter.

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