

## Elections and Islam

Election fever in South Africa is running high, and soon millions of people will be casting their ballots to decide who governs the country for the next five years. In this article we intend highlighting the difference between the Islamic form of leadership and leadership as defined by Western, kuffar law. The Shar'ee method of electing a leader differs vastly from that of non-Muslims. In the democracies of the Kuffar that are in vogue today, the masses are called upon to elect a leader of their choice. They do this by putting an 'x' on the ballot paper next to the name of the candidate or individual they believe is the right man for the job. This is called a vote. The party who obtains a large majority of the votes becomes the government of the day.

The major factor that influences the decisions of an electorate as to which political party they should vote for is the benefits of life that the party could or would create. People look at the party which can provide extra jobs and housing, better living standards, increased subsidies for the needy, free education, more health care, reduction in crime rate, and so forth.. All this can be pinned down to basic material benefits. The party that can deliver on its promises in this regard will get the most votes, thus securing enough seats in Parliament to become the legal rulers of the country.

It is thus absolutely clear that the main purpose for voting in today's democratic systems is to secure a comfortable worldly life. There is nothing spiritual or religious about this. It is simply a matter of supporting the side which butters the bread. Such voting is not governed by any moral conscience. There is no religious or spiritual benefit to serve as a motivating factor behind these votes.

For a Muslim, who is bound to look at the situation from an Islamic perspective, electing a leader takes on an entirely different hue. In Islam, if Muslims are able to elect or appoint their own leader of state, it is Waajib (incumbent) upon them to do so. In the ensuing paragraphs some interesting facts of true Islamic leadership are highlighted.

### INSTITUTION OF KHILAAFAT

Government is referred to in Shariah as Khilafat (Caliphate) meaning vicegerency. The individual who is appointed as a leader of state is termed a Khaleefa. Since the leader of a country is entrusted with the noble task of implementing the Law of Almighty Allah, he is considered the vicegerent of Allah Ta'ala on earth. It can thus be gauged how sacred and supreme the office of State-leadership is in Islam.

### THE FUNCTIONS OF ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT

Where this issue is discussed at length in the Books of Aqaa-id, the Ulema of Islam have enlisted the following major tasks that a Khaleefa is required to fulfill:

- Execution of the Islamic Justice System and Penal Code;
- Meting out justice on behalf of the oppressed;
- Establishment of Eid, Jum'ah, and the five daily salah;
- Waging of Jihad against those who impede the spread of Islam;
- Erection of Masaajid and Madaaris;
- Regulating waqf institutions;
- Overseeing the wealth of orphans and widows;
- Providing relief to the poor and destitute;
- Setting up Islamic courts;
- Promulgating legislation which is in the interests of the Deen of Muslims.

These are but a few of the main duties to be executed by a Muslim ruler. Readers can thus gauge the exalted and superior status of leadership, and precisely for this reason has Islam laid down stringent conditions for Khilafat.

### THE KHILAFAT-E-RASHIDA

The institution of Khilafat began from the blessed time of Hazrat Abubakr (radhiyallahu anhu), and continued through the golden era of the four Khulafaa. Hazrat Abubakr was, therefore, the first Khaleefa in Islam. The era spanning the leadership of the first four khaleefas, viz, Abubakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali (May Allah Ta'ala be pleased with them) is termed Khilafat-e-Raashida, or the Caliphate of Righteousness. The Khilafat of Islam dominated the world for over 12 centuries. A decline in Islamic belief and practice, as well as pressure of Kuffar influence, resulted in the Muslims losing their fervour for Jihad, and with it the Khilafat. Most laws pertaining to the election of a leader and government are derived from this golden era of Islam known as the Khilafat-e-Raashid, as we shall outline later.

The Fuqaha have described leadership of state as Imaamat-e-Kubraa (the major imaamat), in contrast to Imaamat-e-Sughra or minor Imaamat which is the imamat of jamaat salah. The Major Imaamat has been ordained by Allah as a representation of the office of Nubuwwat for the safeguarding and management of all Deeni affairs. The establishment of such an office in the Ummat is wajib according to 'Ijmaa' or the consensus of all Ulema. However, the wujoob here is alal kifayah, so if a few assume and subsequently fulfill this responsibility, the rest will be absolved.

### THE OFFICE OF IMAAMAT

In the institution of Khilafat or Imaamat two groups play an important role:

Ahlul Ikhtiyaar or People of Choice

Ahlul Imaamat or the candidates for this high office

The Ahlul-Ikhtiyaar are those equipped with the necessary qualifications, who will elect a leader through mutual consent. The conditions to be found in this group are as follows:

- 1) Moral uprightness and integrity. They should not be people who openly flout the Laws of Allah Ta'ala.
- 2) Knowledge of Islam whereby one is able to recognize the qualifications and requisites for Imaamat in a candidate.
- 3) Wisdom and experience in political matters.

The above three conditions are unique in that they ensure all-round protection for the Ummah. In moral rectitude it is ensured that the individual will be qualified to elect a leader and will do so with utmost sincerity, with the interests of the Ummah at heart. Knowledge of Islam enables one to establish the credentials and qualifications of a candidate and thereby ensure that a suitably qualified man is placed at the helm of the Ummat's affairs. Experience and wisdom in politics ensure worldly benefit.

Readers can thus understand that the system of allowing the masses, most of whom lack good morals and knowledge, to elect a leader is absolutely foreign to Islam. This procedure was created and developed by the West and has no relationship with Shariah.

#### CONDITIONS FOR KHILAFAT

According to the unanimous view of the Ulema, the person elected as a ruler of State must be:

A Muslim male adult of sane mind, knowledgeable in Islamic matters, upright in morals and character, experienced and prudent in political affairs, courageous and brave, in possession of all faculties of physical perception, sound and healthy in body and limb.

#### THE ELECTION PROCESS

In Shariah there are two ways a leader may be elected to power:

Through appointment or nomination of the former Khalifa. This was the way Hazrat Umar (radhiyallahu anhu) was elected. Before passing away Hazrat Abubakr (radhiyallahu anhu) nominated Hazrat Umar (radhiyallahu anhu) as his successor.

Through an election process of a select group. Prior to his demise Hazrat Umar (radhiyallahu anhu) nominated a panel of six senior Sahaaba from whom the new Khalifa was to be elected. One of the six was Hazrat Uthman (radhiyallahu anhu). When this panel met after the death of Ameerul-Mumineen, they unanimously chose Uthman (radhiyallahu anhu) as the third Khalifa of Islam.

To summarize the afore-going:

A leader of an Islamic State shall be elected by a group of such individuals who possess knowledge of Deen, taqwa, experience in political matters, and have the interests of Islam at heart. The number of this group can vary. It can consist of 6 people or 600. The condition is that the person they elect must have the qualifications of Khilafat, as mentioned above. If an outgoing leader nominates a successor, such a nominee automatically becomes the new ruler upon the demise or resignation of the former.

It is thus evident that in Islam it is not necessary for the whole country to vote in order to elect a leader. Essentially Muslim countries are obliged to adopt one of the previously mentioned procedures when electing a ruler into power. This has been standard Islamic procedure since the golden age of the Khilafat-e-Raashida, and continued through twelve centuries of Muslim world domination. At no stage was the concept of democracy or majority vote ever implemented by past Islamic governments. It was only after the curtain had come down on true Shariah based khilafat, that Muslim (not Islamic) governments began adopting Western style democracy. This was predictable, given the heavy Western Kuffar influence that saturated the modernized Muslim at the time.

#### VOTING IN A MUSLIM STATE

Notwithstanding the above, should a Muslim country allow voting en masse and elect a president or prime minister through majority vote, such an individual will become a recognized ruler of the Muslim state. That election process will be upheld. It will be obligatory on all citizens of that country to offer allegiance and obedience to such a ruler, unless he degenerates to the level of kufr, for then he loses his status as a leader.

However, it is wajib or incumbent upon Muslim governments to revert to the age-old Islamic system of electing their rulers, as outlined in the afore-going paragraphs. This was the sunnah of Nabi Muhammed (sallallahu alaihi wasallam). This is indeed one of the major reasons why our Muslim governments lack the muscle and courage to assert their authority on the world scene today. They have discarded not one, but countless sunnats of Nabi Muhammed (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). Our success lies only and only in following the path etched out for us in sweat and blood by the Blessed Rasool of Allah Ta'ala. May Almighty Allah shower his choicest blessings and salutations upon that Noble Rasool.