

Khilafat In Ahmadiyyat

First of all it is important to explain what the word *khilafat* means. We read in the Holy Quran that when God planned to appoint Adam (peace be upon him) as prophet, he said:

انى جاعل فى الارض خليفة

I am about to place a Khalifa on earth. (2:31)

The Arabic word Khilafat from which the word (Khalifa) is derived means: 'he came after' or 'he stood in place of. This implies that God has created man with the purpose of appointing him as His vicegerent on earth to maintain order and enforce law and justice. He created man in the best form to achieve a very high spiritual destiny and He exalted him over all the other beings putting all the other creation in the universe at his service.

For man to be capable of discharging this great and sacred trust, he had first to attain to Divine knowledge and obviously he could not achieve this without a correct conception and comprehension of his Creator. So it was necessary that God Himself should first have given man the knowledge of Divine attributes so that he could recognize his Creator and behold Him and attain His nearness.

To achieve this, God first implanted in man the free will and the needful capacity for the comprehension of His attributes, and then He gave him knowledge of those attributes. He endowed man with great natural powers and creative qualities to make unlimited moral progress and to rise spiritually so high as to become the mirror in which Divine attributes are reflected thus becoming fit to discharge his great responsibility.

But of course man needed the guidance of God to enable him to make proper use of his natural faculties and abilities and for this reason God sent down His guidance to mankind through revelation.

First, God chose a suitable person to be His representative in the world and He guided him to the right path that enabled him to reach a high moral and spiritual station so that He could manifest in his person Divine attributes and become the image of his Creator. Then He appointed him to be His messenger to the people to raise them also to the highest moral and spiritual levels through following his example and to enable them to form a community which as one unit deserves to be the representative of the One God on earth. Then God could appoint this community for the guidance and illumination of the rest of the world.

So the institution of Khilafat is this bounty that God bestows on a nation or a community whose members are following the true Divine guidance properly. He gives them power and dominion over the other nations so that they can maintain order and establish His Unity in the world.

Through the ages God raised many prophets for this purpose. He could never leave mankind in a state of spiritual death. Whenever darkness overcame the world and people lost their spiritual relation with their Creator, God raised a prophet to reform them and He revealed to him His laws or in other words His religion to teach them how to worship Him and have a living relationship with Him and hence raise them from their spiritual death and enable them to attain the highest spiritual levels so as to become a manifestation of Divine attributes and hence deserve to be called the Khalifas or representatives of God on earth.

Those prophets were sent to their own people and the laws or religions which God revealed to them were suitable for their time and circumstances. As man developed through the ages and the horizons of his mind expanded, he required further teachings to guide him.

When man reached the final stage of his development, it was necessary to send down the final universal law for the guidance of mankind for all times to come.

This mission needed the perfect man.

The Holy prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was alone found capable of being entrusted with the revelation of this most perfect and final law because no other man was endowed with those great qualities which were indispensable for the full and adequate discharge of this great responsibility.

With the advent of the Holy Prophet, the Holy Quran was revealed. It contained the teachings of Islam, the complete and perfect religion.

The message of the Holy Prophet was not for a certain group of people or for a particular length of time but it was a universal message addressed to all mankind for all times.

The Holy Quran contains all the Divine guidance that man could possibly need and it is also full of prophecies and promises from God, some of which were fulfilled and others are still yet to be fulfilled in the future.

As Islam is the perfect and final religion, God promised that Muslims would be granted both spiritual and temporal leadership in the world.

In the Holy Quran we read:

Allah has promised to those among you who do good work that He will surely make them successors in the earth, as He made Successors from among those who were before them; and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them; and that He will surely give them in exchange security and peace after their fear; they will worship Me, and they will not associate anything with Me. Then whoso is ungrateful after that, they will be the rebellious. (24:56)

This promise was given to the true believers who do good works. Allah said in this verse that He will make them Successors in the earth as He made Successors

from among those who were before them and that He will establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them. He will give them security and peace after their fear and they will worship Him and not associate any thing with Him.

For the fulfillment of this promise, Allah ordered the believers to observe Prayers and give Zakat and obey Allah and His Messenger in all matters. When they will fulfill these conditions the boon of Khilafat will be bestowed upon them and they will be made the leaders of nations. Their state of fear will be replaced by confidence of safety and security and Islam will reign supreme in the world and above all the Oneness and unity of God will become firmly established on earth.

God made this promise at a time when Islam was very weak and idols were being worshipped throughout Arabia and the Muslims, being small in number, feared for their very lives and yet in the course of only a few years this promise was fulfilled.

Though the promise was made to the whole Muslim nation, the institution of Khilafat was to take a palpable form in the person of certain individuals who would be the successors of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the representatives of the whole nation as if they were Khilafat personified.

The Khilafat of Islam was established in the time of the Holy Prophet and after his death the Muslims elected his first Successor, Hadrat Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) and the Islamic Khilafat continued for some time during which Islam spread not only in Arabia, but in all the known world at that time.

But as time passed, Muslims started to forget the teachings of their religion and corruption found its way into their beliefs. They drifted away from the right path of Islam, and hence they no longer fulfilled the conditions necessary for the continuation of Khilafat among them and hence, they lost this great blessing.

But as the Holy Prophet is now humanity's sole guide for all times to come, his Khilafat must continue to exist in one form or another in the world till the end of time.

The promise of God was bound to be fulfilled. Hence God has continued through the centuries, to raise reformers from among the Muslims. They were like Successors or Khalifas of the Holy Prophet. Their main mission was to reform the Muslims and correct their beliefs which were corrupted through the centuries and guide them to follow the right path of Islam. As the time passed, however, the Muslims' condition deteriorated further. They lost their power and dominion and they became disunited and weak. They fell under the rule of the other nations. They also disagreed among themselves on the true teachings of their own religion. So they needed a special reformer to come and judge between them upon that which they disagreed and to put them back on the right path of Islam. He would

unite them together so that they could regain their strength and power to rise again and bring the true Islam back to the world.

Our age has witnessed this great spiritual reformer or Khalifa in the person of Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah. Being the perfect reflection of the Holy Prophet, God appointed him to revive the religion of Islam and unite the whole world under its banner. He corrected the wrong beliefs of the Muslims and taught them how to have a living relationship with their Creator. He established the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in the year 1889 and thus he planted the seed of the tree of the Khilafat of Ahmadiyya or the True Islam. This is like the nucleus around which all the righteous people will gather. It is not only meant for Muslims but it is meant for all mankind. Its optimum purpose is to unite all the people of the world under the banner of Islam and ultimately to establish the Oneness and Unity of God firmly on earth.

After the death of the Promised Messiah, the Ahmadi Muslims elected his first successor Hadrat Maulana Nooruddin and hence the true Khilafat of Islam continued in the world among Ahmadi Muslims. He was succeeded by Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad, then Hadrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad and we are now, by the Grace of Allah, in the time of his fourth successor Hadrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, our beloved Khalifa (may Allah give him long life and crown all his efforts with success). (This article was published in 1992. Since 2003, we have been blessed with Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad as Khalifatul Masih V.)

Today Ahmadi Muslims are the only people in the world who can claim that they are enjoying the blessings of the true Khilafat of Islam.

The true Khalifas of Allah have some special characteristics. They are appointed through God's own decree in the sense that the hearts of believers become inclined towards them and they voluntarily accept them as their Khalifas.

Through their prayers and missionary efforts, they firmly establish the religion which their mission is to serve. They enjoy equanimity and peace of mind amidst hardships and persecution. They worship God alone and in the discharge of their great responsibilities they fear no one and they carry on their duties undaunted and without being discouraged or dismayed by the difficulties that stand in their way.

Khilafat is one of the most vital Islamic principles, as the Institution of Khilafat in Islam is the main instrument by which God has ordained to fulfil His promise about the great future and the final triumph of Islam.

It is a great Divine blessing. With it there is solidarity, cohesion and unity among Muslims. But of course the Khalifa alone cannot establish Khilafat on earth. To achieve this he needs true obedient followers. If Muslims do not show proper appreciation of Khilafat by giving support and obedience to their Khalifas

they will forfeit this great Divine boon and in addition will draw the displeasure of God upon themselves.

The Holy Quran emphasizes this fact and mentions that for the establishment of Khilafat in Islam, it is required from the Muslims to obey Allah and His Messenger. This teaches us the status and position of the Khalifa in Islam. Being the Successor of a Prophet, he must be given unconditional obedience. His followers are not only bound to obey him personally but it is also their duty to obey his representatives and whoever he appoints to perform certain tasks for the Community.

Disobedience of the Khalifa is tantamount to the disobedience of God who appointed His Khalifa.

The Holy Quran has made this point clear to us when relating the story of Iblis (Satan) who refused to submit to Hadrat Adam (peace be upon him) when God ordered him to do so. In this story the characteristic to submit to the man who was appointed by God as His Khalifa.

In the same way any person disobeying the Khalifa of God or any of his representatives, at any time, will be developing these satanic qualities of Iblis.

It is the duty of every true Muslim to keep close relationship with the Khilafat of Islam through the obedience and service of the Khalifa of the time who is the living representative of God. This will strengthen his own relationship with God. If every Muslim does this, the unity and cohesion of the whole community will be established and it will remain as one strong unit to attract and invite others to join its fold and gradually all mankind will come under the banner of Islam. Thus the Unity of God will be established and the optimum purpose of the creation of man will be fulfilled.

The kingdom and dominion of the world will be bestowed upon the followers of the true Islam and they will become the leaders of mankind. It is God's plan and His decree and no one can frustrate Divine decree. As long as Khilafat will endure among Muslims as an active force, Muslims will march from success to success.

May Allah enable us all to carry out our duties in the best way so that we can enjoy this great blessing of Khilafat till the end of time. Amen.

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