

Obedience to the Institution of Khilafah

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The blessed Institution of Khilafah is a mercy upon mankind and requires our unquestionable obedience in everything good. A sincere study of Khilafah can only begin by us first evaluating our own faith (Imaan) and relationship with Allah (swt). Each of us, to a certain extent, is a Khalifah; the individual is his own Khalifah, the Father is the Khalifah of his household, the Imam is the Khalifah of his assigned region and the Ummah is bound together, through Allah's (swt) Mercy, by Hadhrat Amir al-Mu'minin (aba). Allah (swt) most certainly Guides the hand of the Khalifah and we must sincerely attach ourselves to the institution of Khalifah, for if a believer does not remain obedient to Allah's (swt) appointed leader then how can he hope to remain attached to the rope of Allah (swt).

These statements do not amount to mere rhetoric but are spiritual and temporal realities. We cannot hide from the fact that within the institution of divinely appointed Khilafah each of us has a purpose and individual role to play. Khilafat-e-Nabuwah is not something to be taken lightly; Allah (swt) has made the following covenant¹,

“Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do good works that He will surely make them 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...”

In light of this it is incumbent upon each of us to fully comprehend our responsibilities and refrain from making the error of thinking that allegiance to the Khalifat-e-Waqt will safeguard us from the ills of this world. The Holy Qur'an, Holy Prophet (saw) and Promised Messiah (as) have all clearly set out that a believer's words (*kalam*) must be matched by his/her deeds and actions (*I'amaal*) for them to be of any real worth. In assigning your allegiance to the Khalifat-e-Waqt you bind yourself to spiritual and temporal standards which must be upheld. These obligations certainly demand much sacrifice from a sincere believer but the benefits gained are so immense as to make the sacrifices seem insignificant.

Addressing this issue the famous historian Hadhrat Ibn Khaldun (rh) quite magnificently explains that it is not the Khalifah who should qualify his position because it has already been certified by Almighty Allah through the mechanism of divine appointment; rather, it is in fact the members of the Ummah who must qualify their status and worthiness to be lead by a Khalifah. He expresses this as follows²,

“...a community which consents to be ruled by a Khalifah must be a community which admires and cherishes his way of life. The office of Khalifah “demands perfection in attributes and manners”; and only the community which can recognize and give allegiance to a man of this description is worthy of living under the regime of the Law.”

He furthermore presents us with an intriguing and powerful definition of the pledge of allegiance (*Bay'ah*) which is to be offered by the Muslims to the Rightly Guided Khalifah³:

"It should be known that the bay'ah is a contract to render obedience. It is as though the person who renders the oath of allegiance made a contract with his amir, to the effect that he surrenders supervision of his own affairs and those of the Muslims to him and that he will not contest his authority in any of (those affairs) and that he will obey him by (executing) all the duties with which he might be charged, whether agreeable or disagreeable."

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II (rh) holds the same view as Hadhrat Ibn Khaldoun (rh) and writes in his Tafsir al-Kabir that the concluding words of the ayah of Istikhlaf, *'Whosoever is ungrateful after that, they will be rebellious'* (24:56) signifies⁴,

"...that Khilafah is a great Divine blessing. Without it there can be no solidarity, cohesion and unity among Muslims and therefore they can make no real progress without it. If Muslims do not show proper appreciation of Khilafat by giving un-stinted support and obedience to their Khalifas they will forfeit this Divine boon and in addition will draw the displeasure of God upon themselves"

In essence the key to attaining these high standards of existence is obedience to the Divinely appointed Khalifah *'in all that is good'* which amounts to nothing less than obedience to Allah (swt) for surely He (swt) Says⁵,

"O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger and those charged with authority among you."

This message is reiterated in a famous hadith where the Holy Prophet (saw) is narrated to have said⁶,

'He who obeys me, obeys God; and he who disobeys me, disobeys God, And he who obeys the Amir [i.e., the head of the state], obeys me; And he who disobeys the Amir, disobeys me'.

The above statement *'in all that is good'* is derived from many sources but most commonly associated with the following statement of Hadhrat Abu Bakr (rh) made after he was elected as the first Khalifah in Islam⁷,

'... Obey me so long as I obey Allah and His Messenger. And if I disobey Allah and His Messenger, then I have no right to your obedience. Stand up now and pray, may Allah have mercy on you'

It should be noted that here we find a great sign of humility on the part of Hadhrat Abu Bakr (rh) which he no doubt took from his great mentor, the Holy Prophet (saw). Whilst he is asking people to disregard his orders if he goes beyond

the remit of the Shariah it should be made clear that he would never intentionally commit such a fundamental error as to breach the Shariah. For he, as with all Rightly Guided Khulufah, is under the protection and guidance of Almighty Allah and therefore would not intentionally contravene the Shariah. Commenting on this Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) has said that whilst a Khalifah may well commit a mistake he will only ever be blessed for that mistake because his inborn nature is predisposed to serving Allah (swt) and would thus never permit him to intentionally disobey Allah. This is in perfect conjunction with the following a hadith⁸,

“The reward of deeds depends upon the intention and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended.”

In light of the above statements and injunctions it is incumbent upon us to take a moment to pause and understand that whilst the burden of a Khalifah is great we, as members of the Ummah, play an incredibly important role in the institution of Khilafah. Our success in this role is reliant upon one fundamental point, namely, remaining obedient to Allah (swt) and therefore to His (swt) appointed Khalifah.

The two following sayings of the Holy Prophet (saw) help to further define the level of obedience a Muslim should show to a ruler,

1. ⁹Anas Narrated that the Prophet said, *“Listen and obey (your chief) even if an Ethiopian whose head is like a raisin were made your chief.”*

2. ¹⁰Umm al-Husain (Allah be pleased with her) reported: *“I performed Hajj along with Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) on the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage and saw him when he flung pebbles at Jamrat al-'Aqaba and returned while he was riding the camel, and Bilal and Usama were with him. One of them was leading his camel, while the other was raising his cloth over the head of Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) to protect him from the sun. She (further) said: Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said so many things, and I heard him saying: If a slave having some limb of his missing and having dark complexion is appointed to govern you according to the Book of Allah the Exalted, listen to him and obey him.”*

Hadhrat Ibn Taymiyya (rh) adds more clarification to this issue by citing the following saying of the Holy Prophet (saw)¹¹,

“you must follow my Sunnah and the Sunnah of my Orthodox and guided Khalifas.”

Hadhrat Ibn Khaldun (rh) is so resolute in his firm belief that the Khalifah must be obeyed wholeheartedly he says,¹²

“The obligation to recognize and obey the Khalifah is a ‘legal obligation’ and not rational necessity.”

The necessity in Islam for complete obedience to the Will of Allah (swt) is so important that the Promised Messiah (as) offers us a simply breathtaking exposition of this subject, his demands of a believer are so expressly stated that one is left with no room for ambiguity¹³,

“Obedience to the Creator means that in order to make manifest His Honour, Glory and Unity, one should be ready to endure every dishonour and humiliation, and one should be eager to undergo a thousand deaths in order to uphold His Unity. One hand should be ready to cut off the other with pleasure in obedience to Him, and the love of the grandeur of His commandments and the thirst for seeking His pleasure should make sin so hateful as if it were a consuming fire, or a fatal poison, or an obliterating lightning, from which one must run away with all one's power. For seeking His pleasure one must surrender all the desires of one's ego; and to establish a relationship with Him one should be ready to endure all kinds of injuries; and to prove such relationship one must break off all other relationships.

The service of one's fellow-beings means to strive for their benefit purely for the sake of God in all their needs, and in all the relationships of mutual dependence which God has established out of true and selfless sympathy for them. All in need of help should be helped out of one's God-given capacity and one must do his best for their betterment both in this world and in the hereafter.”

¹ The Holy Qur'an, 24:56

² Al-Muqadimah, Ibn Khaldun, Chapter 3, p.123

³ IBID p.140.

⁴ Khalifatul Masih II, Tafsir al-Kabir, Pg.1870, Ft.2630.

⁵ Holy Qur'an", Ch.4., Vs.60.

⁶ Asad Muhammad, "The Principles of State and Government in Islam", Islamic Book Trust, 2001, p. 39.

⁷ Al-Bidaya Wa Nihayya, 6/306, 306

⁸ Al-Bukhari, Vol. 1, Bk. 2, No. 51.

⁹ Bukhari, Vol. 1, Bk. 11, Number 662.

¹⁰ Sahih Muslim, Bk.. 7, Number 2977.

¹¹ Khan Qamaruddin, The Socio Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyya, p.86.

¹² IBID p.123.

¹³ Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, A'ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 5, pp. 59- 62.