

Islamic Political System

The political system of Islam has been based on three principles, viz., Tawheed (Oneness of God), Risalat (Prophet hood) and Khilafat (Caliphate). It is difficult to appreciate the different aspects of the Islamic policy with- out fully understanding these three principles. I will, therefore, begin with a brief exposition of them. Tawheed (Oneness) means that one God alone is the Creator, Sustainer and Master of this universe and of all that exists in it organic or inorganic.

The sovereignty of this kingdom rests only in Him. He alone has the right to command or forbid Worship and obedience are due to Him alone, none else sharing it in any degree or form. Life, in all its multifarious forms, our physical organs and faculties, the apparent control which we have over everything that exists in this universe, and the things themselves none of them has been created or acquired by us in our own right.

They are the bountiful provisions of god and in bestowing them upon us, no one is as Him. Hence, it is neither for us to decide the aim and purpose of our existence or to prescribe the limits in our worldly authority nor is anyone else entitled to make these decisions for us. This right vest only in God Who has created us endowed us with mental and physical faculties, and provided all material provisions for our use. This principle of the Oneness of God altogether negates the concept of the legal and political sovereignty of human begins, individually or collectively. Nothing can claim sovereignty, be it a human being, a family, a class or group of people, or even the human race in the world as a whole. God alone is the Sovereign and His Commandments are the Law of Islam.

The medium through which we receive the Law of God is known as “Risalat” (Prophethood). We have received two things from this source:

The Book in which God has expounded His Law; and The authoritative interpretation and exemplification of the Book of God by the Prophet, through his word and deed, in his capacity as the last messenger of God. The broad principles on which the system of human life should be based have been stated in the Book of God. Further, the Prophet of God has, in accordance with the intention of the Divine Book, set up for us a model of the system of life in Islam by practically implementing the law and providing necessary details where required. The combination of these two elements, according to Islamic

terminology, is called the “Shari’ah”. There is a specific purpose for man’s existence. This purpose is achieved when man fulfills his function and is missed when man fails to live up to his designated role. In that case, his life will be barren and devoid of any original meaning. Total loss and perdition await everyone who fails to respond to Allah’s call.

This special role relating man to his Creator is subservience to Allah and worship of Him. All aspects of man’s life are based on this consideration. Thus, the meaning of worship must be extended to go beyond mere rituals into all activities since Allah does not only call upon us to perform rituals but His injunctions regulate all aspects of life. The Qur’an develops this theme:

“Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: ‘I will create a vicegerent on earth’” (Qur’an 2:30)

It is this Khilafat on earth which encompasses the range of activities of this human being. It consists in settlement on earth, exploration of its resources and energies, fulfillment of Allah’s purpose of making full use of its resources and developing life on it. In brief this task requires the implementation of Allah’s way which is in harmony with the Divine Law governing the whole universe.

Thus, it becomes clear that the meaning of worship, which is the very purpose of man’s existence and his primary function, is much more comprehensive than mere rituals. The role of Khilafat is definitely an integral part of meaning of worship. The truth about worship comes out in two essential points, namely:

There should be a feeling of absolute certainty and conviction about the meaning of worship of Allah in one’s heart; a feeling that the only possible relationship which holds is one of creator and the created and nothing but that.

It is imperative to turn to Allah dedicating to Him every stir of one’s conscience, every fluttering of the senses, every movement of life. This dedication should be channeled solely to Him and nobody else. No other feeling should have any room left, except in so far as it is construed as part of the meaning of worship of Allah. In this way the meaning of worship is fulfilled. Thus, work becomes one with rituals; rituals one with settlement on earth; settlement on earth like strive for Allah’s cause; strive in the way of Allah like patience in bearing calamities contentedly in the knowledge that they are part of Allah’s plan; all these are instances of worship of Allah.

With this healthy frame of mind, based on the right understanding on man’s role in this universe, man becomes ready to implement Allah’s teaching, as communicated through the message of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

This is exactly what Islam means when it lays down that man is Khalifah (servant) of God on the earth. The state that is established in accordance with this political theory will have to fulfill the purpose and intent of God by working on God’s earth within the limits prescribed by Him and in conformity with His instructions and injunctions.

Purpose of the Islamic State

I shall now place before you a brief outline of the type of state which is built on the foundation of Tawheed (the Oneness of God), “Risalat” (the Prophethood of Muhammad) and “Khilafat” (the Caliphate).

The Holy Qur’an clearly states that the aim and purpose of this state is the establishment, maintenance and development of those virtues, with which the Creator of this universe wishes the human life to be adorned and the prevention and eradication of those evils the presence of which in human life is utterly abhorrent to God. The state in Islam is not intended for political administration only nor for the fulfillment through it of the collective will of any particular set of people; rather, Islam places a high ideal before the state for the achievement of which, it must use all the means at its disposal. And this purpose is that the qualities of purity, beauty, goodness, virtue, success and prosperity which God wants to flourish in the life of His people, should be engendered and evolved.

And that all kinds of exploitation, injustice and disorders which, in the view of God, are ruinous for the world and detrimental to the life of His creatures are suppressed and prevented. Simultaneously, by placing before us this high ideal, Islam gives us a clear outline of its moral system clearly stating the desired virtues and the undesirable evils. Keeping this outline in view the Islamic state can plan its welfare program in every age and in any environment.

The persistent demand made by Islam is that the principles or moral in must be observed at all cost and in all walks of life. Hence it lays down an unalterable policy for the state to base its politics on justice, truth and honesty. It is not prepared, under any circumstance whatsoever, to tolerate fraud, falsehood and injustice for the sake of any political, administrative or national expediency. Whether it be the mutual relations of the rulers and the ruled within the state, or the relations of the state with other states, precedence must always be given to truth, honesty, and justice over material consideration. It imposes similar obligations on the state as on the individual. Viz., to fulfill all contracts and obligations, to have uniform measures and standards for dealings, to remember duties along with the rights and not to forget the rights of other when expecting them to fulfill their obligations; to use power and authority for the establishment of justice and not for the perpetration of injustice; to look upon duty as a sacred obligation and to fulfill it scrupulously; and to regard power as a trust from God and use it with the belief that one has to render an account of one’s actions to Him in the Hereafter.

Fundamental Rights

Although an Islamic state may be set up in any portion of the earth, Islam does not seek to restrict human rights or privileges to the geographical limits of its own state. Islam has laid down some universal fundamental rights for humanity as a whole, which are to be observed and respected under all circumstances whether such a per–

son is resident within the territory of the Islamic state or outside it, whether he is at peace with the state or at war. Human blood is sacred in any case and cannot be spilled without justification. It is not permissible to oppress women, children, old people, sick persons or the wounded. Woman's honor and chastity are worthy of respect under all circumstances. The hungry person must be fed, the naked clothed, and the wounded treated medically irrespective of whether they belong to the Islamic community or not or even if they are from amongst its enemies.

These and a few other provisions have been laid by Islam fundamental rights for every man by virtue of his status as a human being to be enjoyed under the constitution of an Islamic state. Even the rights of citizenship in Islam are not confined to persons born within the limits of its state but are granted to every Muslim irrespective of his place of birth.

A Muslim ipso facto becomes the citizen of an Islamic state as soon as he sets his foot on its territory with the intent to live therein and thus enjoys equal rights of citizenship along with those who acquire its citizenship by birthright. Citizenship has therefore; to be common among all the Islamic states that may exist in the world and a Muslim will not need any passport for entry in or exit from any of them.

And every Muslim is to be regarded as eligible and fit for all positions of the highest responsibility in an Islamic State without any discussions of race color or class. Islam has also laid down certain rights for the non-Muslims who may be living within the boundaries of an Islamic State and these rights must necessarily from part of the Islamic Constitution.

According to the Islamic terminology such non-Muslims are Dhimmee (the covenant). implying that the Islamic state has entered into a covenant with them and guaranteed their protection. The life, property and protected exactly life that of a Muslim citizen. There is no difference at all between a Muslim and Dhimmee in respect of the civil or criminal law. The Islamic State shall not interfere with the personal law of the Dhimmee. They will have full freedom of conscience and belief.

Executive and Legislative

The responsibility for the administration of the Government, in an Islamic state, is entrusted to an Amir (leader or chief) who may be likened to the President or the Prime Minister in the conventional democratic state.

The basic qualifications for the election of an Amir are that he should command the confidence of the *Ablul Hal Wal'aqd* (The Constitutional Body).

They are recruited from among the scholars (of Islam), leaders, and notables who effectively have the duty to carry out this task of appointing the ruler. In this, they do not act on their own personal preferences, but on behalf of the whole nation, being as they are, its representatives. Three conditions must be met for eligibility to membership of this body, namely:

Moral credit (piety and moral standards): To be well versed in religion so as to be in a position to decide upon who deserves the position of Amir. Good and sound judgment leading to a sharp perception of who is most suitable for the role of Amir. The Amir can retain office only so long as he observes Allah's Shari'ah laws. Being himself the primary example of it both in his dealings and conduct, honoring his commitments and being true to his trust; in brief, he should conform to the conditions originally stipulated upon his holding office and will have to vacate his office when he loses this confidence.

But as long as he retains such confidence he will have the authority to govern and exercise the powers of the Government, of course, in consultation with the Shura (the advisory council) and within the limits set by a Shari'ah. Every citizen will have the right to criticize the Amir should he deviate from the straight path, fail to honor the trust laid in him, transgress and tyrannize over people, change his conduct for the worst, freeze the implementation of Allah's penal code, or flouts Allah's regulations in anyway. If he fails to live up to one of the conditions stipulated for his eligibility to the office, the nation has the right to overrule his judgment either by correcting him or by deposing them.

Legislation in an Islamic state will be restricted within the limits prescribed by the law of the Shari'ah. The injunctions of God and His legislative body can make any alterations or modifications in them or make any law repugnant to them. As for the commandments which are liable to two or more interpretations the duty of ascertaining the real intent of the Shari'ah, in such cases, will devolve on people possessing a specialized knowledge of the law of Shari'ah. Hence, such affairs will have to be referred to a sub-committee of the advisory council comprising men learned in Islamic Law. A vast field will still be available for legislation on questions not covered by any specific injunctions of the Shari'ah and the advisory council or legislature will be free to legislate in regard to these matters.

In Islam the judiciary is not placed under the control of the executive. It derives its authority directly from the Shari'ah and is answerable to God. The judges, no doubt can be appointed by the Government but once a judge has occupied the bench he will have to administer justice among the people according to the law of God in an impartial manner.

The organs and functionaries of the Government will not be outside his legal jurisdiction much so that even the highest executive authority of the Government is liable to be called upon to appear in a court of law as a plaintiff or defendant like any other citizen of the state. Rulers and the ruled are subject to the same law and there can be no discrimination on the basis of position, power or privilege. Islam stands for equality and scrupulously sticks to this principle in social, economic and political realms alike.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/islamic-way-life-syed-abul-ala-mawdudi/islamic-political-system#comment-0>