

The good Kings and Queens, and what Muslims can learn from them

Friday Khutba by Dr Zahid Aziz, for Lahore Ahmadiyya UK, 10 June 2022

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ أذكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَعَلَ فِيكُمْ أَنْبِيَاءَ وَجَعَلَكُمْ مُلُوكًا وَآتَاكُمْ مَا لَمْ يُؤْتِ أَحَدًا مِّنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

“And when Moses said to his people: My people, remember the favour of Allah to you when He raised prophets among you and **made you kings** and gave you what He did not give to any other of the nations.” — ch. 5, verse 20

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا ط

“And their prophet said to them: Allah has raised Saul (Ṭālūt) to be **a king** over you.” — ch. 2, verse 247

وَقَتَلَ دَاوُدُ جَالُوتَ وَآتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ ط

“And David killed Goliath [in a battle], and Allah gave him **kingdom** and wisdom, and taught him of what He pleased.” — ch. 2, v. 251

“And Solomon was David’s heir”, — ch. 27, verse 16 وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمٰنُ دَاوُدَ

Islam does not recognise or allow a system of hereditary privilege, in which when an office-holder dies his son or other descendant takes his place merely because of being his descendant. So there is no royalty or kingship in Islam for ruling the country. Despite this, the Quran tells us that God established kingship among the Israelites before Islam. In the first verse which I read above, Moses declared to his people that God has promised to raise among them both prophets and kings. It mentions the example of a prophet, Samuel, to whom God revealed that he should make Saul (Ṭālūt) to be king over the Israelites. Later on, David was made king over the Israelites by God and he was also made a prophet. After David’s death his son

Solomon succeeded him as prophet and as king. So although Islam does not accept the principle of the son succeeding the father to become king after him, but the Quran clearly informs us that some kings were the most righteous of people and Allah Himself had given them the throne of king.

In the story of Joseph in ch. 12 of the Quran, a king of Egypt makes his appearance. The king is shown to be greatly concerned about the welfare of his people and his country. He even has a true dream about a future happening in his country. He appoints Joseph as his finance minister and economic planner because of Joseph's ability and trustworthiness. Under that king there is a system of justice in the country, the property of the nation is safeguarded, and the law is applied to everyone equally and justly. In ch. 27 of the Quran, a Queen is mentioned who ruled over a country neighbouring the country that Solomon ruled over. She is shown to be very wise and always carefully considers the advice of her ministers before taking a decision.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad sent letters to the kings of the various countries around Arabia, inviting them to accept Islam. The Christian ruler of Egypt was one of them. He did not accept the invitation to Islam, but replied courteously and sent some gifts for the Holy Prophet. The Holy Prophet accepted the gifts. He thus treated that ruler with respect. The Christian king of Abyssinia (now Ethiopia), who was known as the Negus or Najashi, is said to have accepted Islam after receiving the Holy Prophet's letter. In any case, the Holy Prophet respected him for providing Muslims with shelter in his country to save them from the persecution by the Quraish.

The Holy Prophet also wrote the same letter to the king of Iran, who is known to us as *Kisra*. It is well-known that this Kisra tore up the Holy Prophet's letter in anger, and that later on during the time of Hazrat Umar Kisra's armies were defeated by the Muslims who then conquered Iran. But it is less known that his grandfather was the first *Kisra*, whose name was Khosrow Anushirvan, and he died just after the Holy Prophet Muhammad was born. He is known as Anushirvan the Just and he brought about many governmental, economic and social reforms in Iran. He belonged to the Zoroastrian religion, what we also call Parsi. Islamic literature contains stories about

Anushirvan's achievements and praises him. In fact, many of his reforms are only known through histories written by Muslims. The Muslim Abbasi *khalifas* based in Baghdad adopted many of his reforms and praised him as "the model pre-Islamic ruler to be emulated by Muslim princes" (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

The point I am making is that, although Islam rejects hereditary succession, yet it recognises that among kings and queens in this hereditary system there were some good and righteous rulers. This brings me to the recent celebrations here in the UK of the platinum jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. At the age of 25 years, she made a solemn pledge to serve her country. People, whether they are royalists or critics of the royalty system, recognise that she has fulfilled her pledge. This is a quality emphasised many times in the Quran. It instructs the believers, right at the beginning of a chapter, as follows: "O you who believe, fulfil the obligations (*'uqūd*)" (5:1). One of the fundamental qualities of the believers is that they are "faithful to their trusts and their covenant (*amānāt* and *'ahd*)" and this is said in two different places in the Quran (23:8 and 70:32). This is given the same importance as prayer by mentioning after this that they "keep a guard on their prayers" (23:9 and 70:34). In a verse which lists the basic beliefs and practices of Islam, and tells us who are the righteous, one quality mentioned is that they are "the performers of their promise (*'ahd*) when they make a promise" (2:177). In another place, the first quality of the righteous servants of Allah is mentioned as "they fulfil their vows (*nadhhr*)", in other words, their promises and pledges (76:7). Everyone acknowledges that Queen Elizabeth has fulfilled this to the best of her ability for 70 years now. She is admired for this by friend and foe, supporter and opponent. As the fulfilling of our vows and our pledges is a fundamental duty placed upon us in Islam, if we adhere to it then people will have high regard for us as well as Muslims.

The Queen is not only the head of state of the UK but also head of the Commonwealth. These are mostly countries which Britain used to rule over at one time. Their populations consist of a great variety of races and religions. She has devoted herself to this world-wide institution and become popular not only here in the UK but all over the world. We all know that Islam regards all humanity as one, and the Queen has

treated all humanity as one, regardless of race and religion. This calls to mind the written advice left by the first Mughal emperor of India, Babar, for his son and successor Humayun on how to rule India. Babar called it his confidential *Wasiyyat Nama*. It is dated the first day of Jamadi-ul-awwal, 935 Hijri, which is 11th January 1529 C.E. Here are some extracts translated into English:

“For the stability of the Empire this is written. The realm of India is full of diverse creeds. Praise be to God that He has granted you the Empire of it. It is but proper that you, with heart cleansed of all religious bigotry should dispense justice according to the beliefs of each community. And in particular refrain from the sacrifice of the cow, for that way lies the conquest of the hearts of the people of India. And the temples and abodes of worship of every community under the Imperial sway, you should not damage. Dispense justice so that the king may be happy with the subjects and likewise the subjects with their king. The progress of Islam is better by the sword of kindness, not by the sword of oppression. Ignore the disputations of Shiahs and Sunnies; for therein is the weakness of Islam. And bring together the subjects with different beliefs...”

Moving on to my next point, the Queen is what is called a constitutional monarch. Unlike the monarchs of old, she has no power to make any laws nor can she compel us to obey her. She can only set an example of good behaviour and encourage others to do good. In this she has been enormously successful. Many Muslims, in fact you could say most Muslims, feel that in order to establish Islam in any country they need to have the power to make laws and enforce them on people. But the life of the Queen shows that you can wield great influence just through your example and behaviour, without having any power in the country. The Queen knew that she had no power and it was impossible to bring back those times when the monarch had real power. So she worked within the means available to her to cast an influence for the good on this country and the wider Commonwealth countries. In a similar way, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, had no political power or rule. Muslim leaders in the past centuries before him did have rule in various places. But what he did have with him was the moral and spiritual force of Islam, and the Holy

Quran and the example set by the Holy Prophet Muhammad. So he used these to the fullest to cast an influence for the good on the world. Others only sit and dream, and say that they want to bring back previous times and establish a state of Madinah again, a perfect Islamic state. Hazrat Mirza sahib taught that we should do our best within the limitations of the times and circumstances in which we live, and be grateful to Allah for whatever opportunity He gave us and do not waste it.

So may Allah enable us to follow this path of realism and not one of fantasy —
ameen.

بَارِكْ اللَّهُ لَنَا وَنَاوَكُمْ فِي الْقُرْآنِ الْعَظِيمِ، وَنَفَعْنَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ بِالآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ، إِنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَوَادٌ كَرِيمٌ
مَلِكٌ بَرٌّ رَوْفٌ رَحِيمٌ-
