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# A Critical Analysis of Khilafat-e-Rashidah in the Modern Perspectives

Zamir Akhtar Khan*

**Abstract**

*Present democratic ways of thinking lead people to an inquiring study of the institution of Khilafah in Islam which emerges as a unique religio-socio-politico-economic system while meeting the electoral aspirations of the people and at the same time giving religious sanctity to the office of Khilafah. Commoners are however likely to meet with some criticism of Khilafah and these have been mainly classified into five categories by the scholars along with an appraisal of these objections. It is hoped that while the following discourse may lead many to a better understanding and appreciation of the institution of Khilafah, it may help others, particularly the Muslims, to establish and then guard the institution zealously and to give it their unstinted loyalty which it really deserves. The younger generation may derive special satisfaction from the present dissertation and draw fruitful conclusions from the concise narrative which lavishly quotes from history, authentic/ authoritative sources i.e. the Holy Quran, the traditions of the Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him) and his companions and scholars of repute who followed in the annals of Islam to-date.*

**Keywords:** Khilafah, Khilafat-e-Rashidah, Islam

## The Institution of Khilafah: An Introduction

*"Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do good deeds that He will surely make them successors (rulers) in the earth as He made successors (rulers) 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 not associating anything with*

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> *Me. Then whoso is ungrateful after that, they will be the rebellious".*[1]

Before proceeding with the exposition of criticism against Khilafah, it is important to bear in mind that the institution of Khilafah is the heavenly means of sustaining the unity of Islam and fostering its Socio-political and ethico-spiritual strength. The growth and power which Islam and its followers gained during the times of the Khilafah of Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Omar need no mention. During the times of Hazrat Osman certain rebellious elements attempted to destroy the institution of Khilafah and kill its occupant, its jugular importance was brought home by Abdullah bin Salam, an ex-Jewish scholar who had embraced Islam, in his address to the crowds in the following words:

> *"Hearken ye to my words! The Sword of Allah is still not unsheathed. The angels of heaven have made this town of the Holy Prophet, their abode. Fear God and abstain from creating hardship for Osman. If you are bent upon taking his life, then beware! The heavenly angels will desert this town and the divine sword will be drawn and will remain unsheathed till the end of days".*[2]

The companions of the Holy Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), held the firm belief that Khilafah was a guarantor for the growth and power of Islam and its followers, without which its unity could not be preserved. How prophetic were the words of Osman when he warned the mutineers:

> *"If you succeed in killing me, you shall never be able to remain united, nor able to offer your prayers or face the enemy in unity".*[3]

**The Meaning of Khilafat-i-Rashida**

Generally, Khilafat-i-Rashida is understood to mean the period of succession to the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be

upon him, beginning with the Khilafah of Abu Bakr in the 10th year after Hijrah and ending with the Khilafah of Ali in the 40th year. However, from a saying of the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, reported by Huzaifa, it can be construed that Khilafat-i-Rashida consists of two eras-the first as mentioned above and the second to occur in later days. The Holy Prophet may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, is reported to have said:

> *"Prophethood shall remain among you as long as Allah shall will. He will bring about its end and follow it with Khilafah on the precepts of prophethood for as long as He shall will and then bring about its end. An unimaginative kingship shall then follow to remain as long as Allah shall will and then come to an end. There shall then be a cruel rule which shall remain as long as Allah shall will and come to an end upon his decree. There will then emerge Khilafah on the precept of Prophethood..."*[4]

The Holy Prophet said no more.

**The First Era of Khilafat-i-Rashida**

From this prophecy of the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, therefore, it is clear that the Khilafat which would come into being after him would consist of two eras-one would follow immediately after his death and between the other would intervene a period of repressive, oppressive and cruel regimes. The Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, defined the span of the first era as well. Safina reports that she heard the Holy Prophet say: "Khilafah shall reign for 30 years and then there shall be monarchy"[5] This is exactly what happened, in that the first Khalifah was Abu Bakr, the second Omar, the third Osman and the fourth Ali, who were elected to their august offices by consultative means of one description or

another and covered a span of thirty years as prophesied by the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

**The Second Era of Khilafat-i-Rashida**

From the citing of Huzaifa mentioned earlier, it is clear that the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, had prophesied about the second era of Khilafat-i-Rashida and had said that after the first era a long period of unimaginative, oppressive and suppressive regimes would intervene before the dawn of the second era. It is significant to note that the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, specified no time limit for the second era, and this, coupled with the words that "the Holy Prophet said no more" occurring in Huzaifa's report could well be construed to mean that the second era shall last for a long time, or until the end of this world. This is certainly the view of Shah Ismail Shaheed who was one of the great thinkers and scholars of Islam. After a lengthy discourse in his book "*Mansab-i-Imamat*" he writes:

> *"Khalifah Rashid is a person who holds the office of Imamat and effervesces divine prudence. Whosoever is bestowed with this office, therefore, is a Khalifah Rashid irrespective of whether he lived in earlier or present times or comes into being in later days . . . It is not correct to say that Khilafat-i-Rashida was confined to the period of the first four Khalifas, or to its second era alone."*[6]

The two eras of Khilafat-i-Rashidah were described by the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, as `Khilafah on the precepts of Prophethood' and he enjoined upon believers to: "Follow in my footsteps and in the footsteps of Khulafa-i-Rashidin who were fully guided" [7]

The exaltation of Khilafah to Prophethood's precepts and so much exhortation of believers to adhere to the institution was necessary because through Khilafah is not only righteousness secured, and the mission of establishing the unity of Allah, preserving Islam and consummating its beliefs accomplished, but it also leads to the spiritual and temporal growth and strength of the believers, that is, the establishment of just socio-moral order in this world.

**Criticism of the Institution of Khilafah**

It is natural that equally detractive forces should come into play and these tend to impede the blessing of Khilafah through various obstacles. Through doubts and machinations, criticism and propaganda they try to cause disturbance in the minds of believers and force them away from their goal. History testifies that this type of opposition has been there even during the time of Khilafat-i-Rashidah. The Khulafah were attacked not only by outsiders but also by those professing to be within the fold of Islam but nevertheless have obviously been contaminated by wayward western philosophy and shallow permissiveness and democracies. Some non-chalant hypocrites to whom any discipline is virile also adorn these galleries. These attacks are of various descriptions, but today we shall confine ourselves to only five of the most important allegations and try to give a realistic appraisal of them.

**Collective Khilafah rather than Individual**

The first criticism of Khilafah is that the relevant verse in the Holy Quran uses plural nouns e.g. "Allah has promised to those among you who believe" is plural, "That He will surely make them Successors (rulers)" is also plural and so are the rest of the, prepositions used in the

verse,[8] indicating that Khilafah is a collective institution rather than an office for an individual.

This misconception arises out of ignorance about the Quranic usage and actual illustrations of Allah's practice in the past which show that quite often promises uttered for a nation are accomplished through individuals. For instance:

> *"And remember when Moses said to his people.'0 my people, Call to mind Allah's favour upon you when He raised prophets among you and made you kings, and gave you what He gave not to any other among the peoples.*[9]

Here the address is made to the people as a whole who are reminded of the blessings of having been made kings and prophets, yet it is known that not all the people had been so exalted and there had always been a large populace of ordinary working people. It proves therefore that promises made in a collective sense are deemed fulfilled through individual beneficiaries who are representatives of their people. This conforms to the interpretation of the Holy Prophet and his companions, may Allah be pleased with them, as well. The Holy Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), is reported to have said: "I urge you to fear Allah and to listen and obey your leader even though he may be a Negro slave" [10]

Thus, the person who is exhorted to be followed here is described as an individual leader or Emir. At the time of Abu Bakr's ascension to Khilafah there was an argument between the two factions of the community-Ansar and Muhajireen-and it was suggested that each one should have their own Emir. This was strongly resisted by Omar and other dignitaries amongst the companions who reasoned that a sheath was never big enough for two swords. Omar is also reported to have

reminded the people of a saying of the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, forbidding the appointment of two Emirs at one and the same time. As a result, Abu Bakr was elected Khalifah to the Holy Prophet as an individual and this was held to be conforming strictly to the letter and spirit of the Quranic verse on Khilafah. In addition, the verse itself provides support for this interpretation where it says*:* "He will surely make them successors upon the earth as He made successors from among those before them… "[11]

That is to say, if in olden times a corporate body was given the responsibilities of Khilafah, one should expect the same pattern emerging now, but if it were individuals who succeeded as Khalifas in the past, the same system would continue henceforth. The words "As he made successors" have therefore removed all doubts about the authenticity of individual Khilafah and banished the idea of having a corporate body as Khalifah for good. In another place, the Holy Quran states:

> *"And consult with them on all important matters, but when you have made up your mind then place your trust in Allah".*[12]

That is to say, consultation with individuals or bodies thereof is necessary but once the Prophet has made up his mind, he should proceed with implementation of this decision, placing his absolute trust in Allah. The Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, is reported to have said that this verse was a blessing for his people so that anyone who complied with it would meet with success but whosoever disregarded it would perish. It means therefore that the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, did not regard this verse as applicable to himself alone but applied it to his successors as individuals, as indeed the word `Shavir' indicates. A similar wording was applied in regard to the collection of Zakat or poor tax: Allah addressed

the Holy Prophet saying "Take Zakat from their Wealth"[13] Upon the death of the Holy Prophet, some people refused to pay this tax saying that the instruction to collect it had been given to the Holy Prophet and as he was no longer alive, the instruction had lapsed.[14] But Abu Bakr, the first Khalifah, refuted this interpretation and ascribed the injunction relating to the collection of Zakat as applicable to the successors of the Holy Prophet as well.

In addition, we have proof in God's Own doing for the establishment of individual Khilafat instead of a corporate entity. If He had intended a corporate body to succeed the Holy Prophet, He would have allowed this to happen, but what we witness is the fact that despite tendencies to the contrary, an individual was chosen as Khalifa.

At the same time, it should be borne in mind that the addressing of the Khilafat's promise to the people collectively and the usage of plural nouns in the verse has significant meanings. Firstly, it was intended to convey the fact that Khilafat would not be confined to one or two individuals but would extend to a considerable number of individuals from amongst the followers and the institution would continue in operation up to the last day. Secondly, it was intended that the believers should realize that the office of Khilafat was not an individual's hereditary right but was to be bestowed upon a deserving individual through popular election latently supported by Allah's hand.

**Individual Khilafah vs. Dictatorship**

The second criticism of Khilafat-i-Rashida is that if it means an individual Khalifa, it is likely to lead to dictatorship, for the accumulation of vast powers in one individual's hand, without the corresponding checks and balances available in a corporate body, is susceptible to abuse. This criticism arises out of lack of knowledge both

of the institution of Khilafah and its distinctive characteristics and of the real stature of those who occupied this office in the past.

**Distinctive Features of Khilafah**

The special features which distinguish Khilafat from monarchial sovereignty and other powers are given below:

In Islam, Khilafah has seven distinctive features:

*i).* *Election/Consultation*: Allah says in the Holy Quran: "Indeed Allah orders you to bestow trusts upon those best suited to them".[15] Here the word used is "trusts", but since it occurs in the context of government, it means the trust of government. The method of elections has been left to believers to decide. As Khilafat in those early days was political as well as religious, it was decided by the believers that the election/consultation should be held by the companions of the Holy Prophet, who knew the faith well, and also, the person who was well versed in it. It is possible to have different rules and procedures regarding elections/consultation, according to different times, and had Khilafat continued after the life-time of the companions they would certainly have given consideration to the devising of relevant methods. The point however is that Khilafat is elective/consultative and the method of election has been left open to believers.

*ii).* *Shariah:* A Khalifa is subservient to Shariah (Law). He can reject the counsel of his advisers but he cannot ignore the laws of Shariah. Thus, although he is a constitutional head, he is not absolutely free.

*iii).* *Consultation:* In addition to the control of Shariah, he is subject to consultations as well. In all important matters he is bound to

consult his colleagues and to follow their advice as far as possible. In brief, where Shariah law is available compliance is obligatory; & where Shariah is silent, consultation is compulsory.

*iv).* *Morals:* Since a Khalifah is the religious head as well as the leader of obligatory prayers, he feels morally and sub-consciously obliged to lead a righteous path but this situation does not apply to a secular political leader, whether elected or not.

*v).* *Equality*: A Khalifah is equal to other fellow beings in human rights. He can secure his rights through the judicial system just as people can obtain their rights from him through the same process.

*vi).* *Highest Righteous Position:* As he is a component of the religious machine, a Khalifah has to be Righteous of highest degree, though not infallible. Otherwise he is liable to bring about disastrous consequences. In such situations he is assured of Allah's succor and help against adversaries. This unique position may not be required for any other type of leader.

*vii).* *Just and Fair to all:* He is not to align with any party and his position is that of a father. Allah says: "When you adjudicate, do so with justice" i.e. a person in the position of Khalifah should exercise complete justice, leaning neither to an individual nor to a party.

**Distinction between Khilafah and Dictatorship**

It is evident from the foregoing that Khilafah is the end result of an elective/consultative process which has not been defined but left open to suit the prevailing times. Then the person elected has been made subject to the laws of Sharia with the obligation to abide by every one of its

injunctions. At the same time it has been made necessary for him to take counsel from his colleagues on all important matters which have a national bearing and to follow their advice as far as possible, departing there from only in the case of absolute conscience, in which event he can proceed with his own decision placing his trust in Allah. He has his own moral standards to control him, for he is the religious head and leader of obligatory prayers for believers. His mental and sub-conscious frame so composed keep him on the right course under spiritual guidance from Allah. Again, he is equal among fellow human beings as far as individual rights are concerned and this position is hardly applicable to other leaders. He can sue and be sued like any other person.

Having looked at the personal attributes of Rashid Khalifas and having examined the electoral procedure and also having studied the Quranic teachings on the subject and the sayings of the Holy Prophet, it is clear that the seven distinctive features enumerated above are found in full in the institution of Khilafah. These features do not make it possible for a Khalifah to become a dictator nor is it possible for the system to degenerate into a catastrophic instrument for its people. Indeed the rulers who are bereft of these distinctive features are liable to the evils of dictatorship who feel free to do whatever they will to the utter disregard of law and order and thus lead their people to death and decay. But Rashid Khalifas who are under the laws of Shariah and under obligation to seek counsel from their colleagues become a shield for their people and bring about comfort and prosperity. This is why Abu Bakr once told the people of Medina that they would be consulted in every matter and nothing would be done without their unanimous consent.[16]

Omar is also reported to have said:

> *"O' people, you have certain rights against me which I shall enumerate and which it is for you to secure from*

> *me. It is your right that I should not misuse any of the taxes or booties which may be bestowed upon you by God. It is your right to_ obtain satisfaction of your rights from me. It is your right to enjoy my protection . . . and that I should look after your families like a father when you are absent on wars".*[17]

Osman once addressed his people as follows:

> *"Hearken, I am a faithful follower rather than an innovator; apart from following the Quran and the precepts of the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, I pledge myself to three promises before you. First, I shall follow the procedures and systems agreed by you before my Khilafah. Secondly, I shall seek your advice in regard to any practices for which no procedure has already been agreed upon. Thirdly, I shall control myself against exercising penal proceedings against you unless they are fully sanctioned by the Law of God and the precepts of the Holy Prophet"*[18]

History fails to find any rulers and dictators rising to similar high morals and making such candid pledges.

**The Necessity of Obedience to Khilafah**

Since a Rashid Khalifa follows the footsteps of the Prophet in order to complete his mission, to expand his following, to create unity and strength of his people and personally bear the noble characteristics enumerated in the foregoing, it becomes essential that he should be followed faithfully. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said:

> *"Anyone who follows my Emir shall be regarded as having followed me but anyone who disobeys my Emir shall be regarded as having disobeyed me".*[19]

**Difference between Khalifah Rashid and a Dictator**

The big difference between a Dictator and Khalifah Rashid is that while the former is more concerned about interests of his personal power, the

latter is mostly busy in the welfare of his people, and while the world is asleep, he supplicates before his Lord for their well-being.

It is certainly not possible for any dictator to show this type of intimate concern for his people, nor to have the desire of suffering nightly inconveniences in prayers for them. This is because the institution of Khilafah belongs to spiritual realms along with material life and is bound by the seven special features making it impossible for dictatorship to creep in or evil consequences to crop out.

**Election Procedures under the guidance of Allah**

The third criticism of Khilafat-i-Rashida from the so-called democrats is that how can an elected Khalifah be regarded as having been chosen by Allah? As is known, after the demise of the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him; his companions gathered together at Banu Saida's place and elected Abu Bakr as the first Khalifah after considerable discussion. For the Khilafah of Omar, Abu Bakr had various consultations with appropriate people, and similarly the third and the fourth Khalifas came to their offices through various electoral methods. To say therefore that they were chosen by Allah is, for opponents, very difficult to understand.

**Indirect Selection by Allah**

There is no doubt about the accuracy of the argument but we must not forget that the result of elections is in fact indirect selection by Allah who guides the minds of electors to accord with His wishes. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, has directed his followers not only to follow his own footsteps but also those of his Rashid Khalifas who are duly guided by the teachings of Allah. Had their election not had the approval of Allah, the Holy Prophet

would certainly not have given such an assiduous instruction for the obedience of Khalifas. As the Khalifas were supposed to follow Quran & the Sunnah, Prophet's demand from the Ummah to follow them should come as no surprise.

**Allah's Hand in indirect Selection**

It is by no means against the terminology of the Quran to describe something as having been done by God even though it might have been physically performed by human beings. At the time of the battle of Badr, it was the small palm of the Holy Prophet's hand which threw a handful of dust towards the enemy and which rapidly developed into a sandstorm through the powers of God. "It was not you who threw the dust but it was Allah who threw it".[20]

The subsequent development of the dust into a sandstorm supports the fact that the throwing of a handful of dust by the Holy Prophet had the full approval of God resulting in the complete annihilation of the enemy which was then at least three times the strength of the believers.

**Allah's Hand moves in the Shadows**

In the same fashion, through the elective powers of His believers, Allah manifests His choice and subsequently reinforces His approval by lending support and help to His chosen one and by showing various signs through him. For this reason, even though a Khalifa may be a physically weak and fragile person, he succeeds in his assignments with flying colours, all through the Grace and Mercy of Allah. There should be no difficulty in understanding this phenomenon but for those who require convincing through tangible arguments, we would venture to quote

Quranic verses and their authoritative interpretations from the Holy Prophet, his Companions.

**Khilafah ascribed to Allah**

A study of the Holy Quran reveals that Khilafat has always been shown to emanate from Allah, whatever description it might take. In the Holy Quran, there are four types of Khilafat and each one of them has been ascribed to Allah."0' Dawood, We have made you Khalifa on this earth" [21] Dawood was a Prophet chosen by God, but at the same time God had appointed him as Khalifa. Secondly, the people of a Prophet are also described as "Khalifa" in the Holy Quran: “Your Lord is about to destroy your enemy and make you Khalifas' in the land, that He may see how you act" [22]

Thirdly, the descendants of a people are also described as `Khalifas'. "He is who made you `Khulafa' in the land".[23] In the fourth place, a section of the faithfuls has also been given the name of `Khalifa' e.g.

> *"Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do good works that He will surely make them Khalifas in the earth as he made `Khalifas' from among those who were before them".*[24]

Thus, all the four types of Khalifas have been ascribed to God.

**Quaranic Authority for Khalifah**

From the verses just quoted, it is clear that the Holy Quran lends its authority to, the appointment of Khalifas as successors to a Prophet. Firstly, it is a `Promise' from God to appoint Khalifas, secondly the Arabic words used bear the assertive prepositions of Lam and double Noon, and this is followed by further assertive promises of giving the

Khalifas unusual strength and of transforming disorder into order and peace, that is, the establishment of justice in the State.

**Votes Not Enough**

With such `promise' and `support' from Allah it is a complete mis-reading of the facts that the appointment of a Khalifa merely depends on the counting of votes. With such vehement assertions from Allah in regard to the choice of Khalifas by Him, with a view to manifesting His Power and Glory, it is not possible to ascribe their appointment to any other source except that of Allah. The Will of Allah to be manifested through the choice of people/Muslims.

> *"He who remains steadfast throughout witnesses this miracle as happened at the time of the death of the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, when his Companions were overwhelmed by grief and many of the desert Arabs resigned from Islam. At that time Allah Almighty manifested His power a second time and by establishing Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddiq as the Successor of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, saved Islam from ruin and thus fulfilled his promise: 'Allah has promised those among you who believe and act righteously that He will surely make them successors(rulers) in the earth as He made those successor(ruler) who were before them; that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them; and that after their state of fear He will grant them peace and security".*[25]

Thus, although it were the companions of the Holy Prophet, who had gathered together to elect Abu Bakr as their Khalifa, his appointment was regarded as having been made by God under the authority of the Quranic verse cited above.

### Authority from the Holy Prophet

From the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, also we derive similar authority. Aisha, who was one of the consorts of the Holy Prophet and about whom he had exhorted his followers to learn half of the tenets of Islam, is said to have related as follows:

> *"The Holy Prophet said that he had intended to call in Abu Bakr and hand him a writing for his Khilafah, so that after the death of the Holy Prophet, other claimants to the office might not arise, but then the Prophet did not pursue the idea believing that Allah would not accept the election of any other person besides Abu Bakr as Khalifah, nor would the believers agree otherwise".* [26]

It is clear therefore that since the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, was so confident that his followers (Sahabah) will select the right man for the office of Khilafah and also firmly believed that it was entirely the preserve of God to help his followers to appoint a Khalifah, that is why he declined to issue any writing for the appointment of Abu Bakr to the office.

Similarly, Hafsa, who was the daughter of Omar and was also one of the consorts of the Holy Prophet, is reported to have said:

> *"The Holy Prophet once said that after him, Abu Bakr shall be the Khalifa and thereafter Omar would be the Khalifa. I asked how he knew this and he replied that Allah the Omniscient had told him so".*[27]

Furthermore, it is related by Osman, the third Khalifa to the Holy Prophet, that the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, once told him: "Allah will grant you a robe and hypocrites will try to snatch it from you, but you must never part with it".[28]

The Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, thus gave the tidings of Khilafah to Osman and at the same time warned him of the demands to step down by certain quarters, but

exhorted him to stay steadfast to the office. To the Holy Prophet, on whom be peace, therefore, the office of Khilafah belonged to the preserves of Allah and it therefore commanded an appropriate dignity and decorum.

**The Views of Rightly Guided Caliphs**

Abu Bakr, the first Khalifah also believed in the same way. He is reported to have declared:

> *"Allah has appointed me as Khalifa among you in order that I may create brotherly unity among you and to establish the faith".*[29]

Abu Bakr knew fully well that after the death of the Holy Prophet, the believers had gathered together and unanimously elected him to be their Khalifa, yet he told them emphatically that his appointment derived its sanction from Allah as a sign of mercy upon them from Him.

Omar, the second Khalifah, also had the same belief. He is reported to have declared: "Anyone who needs monetary help, should come to me, as Allah has made me the Treasurer and Disburser" [30]

The third Khalifah, Osman, held the same belief. He is reported to have addressed a gathering saying: "And then God appointed Abu Bakr as Khalifah, and by God, I never disobeyed him nor tried to cheat him".[31]

When the mutineers reached their climax and demanded Osman's abdication from the office of Khilafah, he told them emphatically: "I am not going to part with this robe of Khilafat which God Almighty has bestowed upon me".[32]

Had Osman believed that Khilafat had been won by him through the popular vote, he would have gladly acceded to the demands of the people and left the office at their behest. But he refused to resign the

office because he believed it to be derogatory to the dignity of Allah's office of Khilafah to leave it except in consequence of the Will of Allah. Further it may be underscored that as in this case, a Caliph was holding his office as a true representative of the people, he couldn't be expected to surrender his office on the demand of a handful of rebellious miscreants.

Ali, the fourth Khalifah, held the same belief, i.e., once the people have chosen a person to be their Khalifah, his appointment is then regarded as having been approved by Allah. He is reported to have written to Amir Mu'awia:

> *"The people who have sworn their oath of allegiance to me are the same who swore a similar oath to Abu Bakr, using the same formula as before. Those who were witness to the appointment have no option to retract, those who were absent from the occasion have no right to reject. The consultative voting was effected by Muhajirin and Ansar and once they have agreed to the appointment of a Khalifah as their leader, it attains the seal of Allah's pleasure and approval".*[33]

**Views of Scholars about Khalifas**

Naturally, we are bound by the teachings of the Holy Quran and the Sunnah and must also follow the sayings of the Holy Prophet which he enjoined at the occasion of his last Haj that Muslims follow steadfastly the precepts of his Khalifas.

The scholars of Islam in the past have always held the belief that a Khalifa is appointed by Allah and not by people who, although they hold an election, are nevertheless latently controlled and guided by Allah. Shah Wali-Ullah, Muhadith Dehlavi, one of the top saints and a reformer of Islam of his times has said:

> *"The verse of the Holy Quran that Allah shall make Khalifas out of believers means that whenever Allah*

> *decrees that there should be someone to undertake reformation of people, He casts in the minds of the people to elect a Khalifah whom He pleases"* [34]

It is necessary to emphasize this point at some length for the simple reason that once it is firmly established that Khilafah is established with blessings of Allah, many misunderstandings and unjustified criticisms can be dispensed with without further difficulty.

**Abdication of Khalifah**

The fourth criticism against Khilafah is that according to its principles it is beyond retrieval. In other words, if a Khalifah becomes incapable of discharging his duties he cannot be removed from the office, whereas the demands of good organization require that someone more active should take his place. It should be remembered however that Khilafah is not a mere ruler in worldly sense. He is also a spiritual pedestal and a blessings -from Allah which comes into being as a result of Allah's mysterious schemes and revelations in order to consummate a prophet's mission. Therefore the question of abdication is irrelevant. These blessings do not disappear with the temporary physical incapability of a Khalifah or through his age or incapacity. The Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, instructed Osman not to cast away the robe of Khilafah, which Allah shall bestow upon him, under any pressure from people, and Osman who knew the true value of the office, the importance which the Holy Prophet attached to it, and the dignity which was conferred upon it by Allah, remained steadfast against the demands for his abdication until he lost his life. There is indeed no logic in their abdication and the only way they can leave their office is through their death.

Therefore, if an appointment has the sanction from Allah, there can be no question of interfering with it by man. Islam is a discipline of good faith, so that even in regard to morally/spiritually weak rulers the injunctions are to follow them and cause no disobedience unless there are blatant reasons in justification. Khawarij, the opponent of Ali, thought that he should abdicate but he refused to accede to this demand and took up arms to defend the dignity of the institution regardless of the bloodshed which followed in its wake.

**Prayers in case of Illness or Incapacity**

However, in the event of a Khalifa's illness causing temporary incapacity, one must bear in mind the prayers of Abraham as reported in the Holy Quran: "Whenever I fall ill, He brings about my recovery".[35] Thus, the way out of a Khalifa's illness is not the demands for his removal but incessant prayers for his recovery. Until his recovery next competent person may run the affairs of Khilafah as was done by Abu Bakr during the illness of the Holy Prophet.

**Authority for Khilafah**

The fifth and final criticism is that an approved Khilafah or Imamat cannot exist without the support of a *Nasse Sarih* i.e. an authority directly derived from the Holy Quran or the sayings of the Holy Prophet. In consequence, unless the Quran or the Holy Prophet has mentioned by names the Khalifas who were to follow, they do not have the support of Nasse Sarih (clear authority).

This is a self-contrived argument which is not supported by any authoritative injunction. Khilafah falls in the same category of offices as Prophethood except that the Prophets were directly chosen by Allah whereas Khulafa have to be chosen by the people within the guidance set

in the last Shariah. Allah has given full liberty to the believers for selection of Khulafa so that they make use of their own powers of understanding and reasoning to seek them and thus earn the rewards of their labour. The reason for not nominating a Khalifah is therefore strictly because the appointment has to be made by mutual consultation. "The reason why the Holy Prophet of Islam did not nominate his successor was because he knew that Allah would surely help people to appoint a Khalifah as it was strictly His function" Because of this situation, Allah confirmed in the Khilafah verse of Surah-Noor that He would establish the institution of Khilafat with a view to giving glory and strength to the faith, but did not mention beforehand the names of those who were to occupy this office so that the believers may earn the reward of recognizing them through their own efforts. The absence of their names in the Holy Quran also proves the fact that the Quran also does not think it necessary to do so. The Holy Prophet was in the unique position that had he nominated a person to succeed him, the entire following would have accepted the appointment, but the Holy Prophet did not think it necessary to do so. Indeed a nomination by the Holy Prophet would have saved Muslims from many untoward incidences which eventually took place around this issue, and would certainly have created precedence for the Khalifas to nominate their own successors. But the fact is that such a nomination would certainly have been devoid of God's blessings and would not have carried the approval of Muslims. However since this type of nomination is not acceptable in Islam, the Holy Prophet did not nominate a successor even though he had the names of very prominent and capable faithful devotees on his fingertips appropriate for this office, e.g. Abu Bakr who was the Prophet's companion in the cave during his flight from Makkah, Omar who

enjoyed full confidence of the Prophet for his sagacity and wisdom, Osman who was married to two of the Prophet's daughters one after the other and in whose behalf the Holy Prophet initiated a Ba'it-i-Rizwan,[36] and of course Ali who had been likened to Aaron by the Holy Prophet, may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.[37]

**Hazrat Ali's Precept**

It may be mentioned here that Hazrat Ali also believed that the naming of a Khalifa was not necessary; indeed, he regarded it against the precepts of the Holy Prophet. At the time he, was fatally attacked, Jundab bin Abdallah asked him whether Hazrat Hassan should take the oath of allegiance. Ali replied: "*I neither ask you to do so nor say anything against it, you know it better already*".[38] He is even reported to have added: "*I am leaving you in the same state as the Holy Prophet did*" [39] That is, just as the Holy Prophet had left the question of succession to the believers, so was Ali leaving the matter to be decided by the nation. Hazrat Abu Musa Ashaari has explained this position by saying: "Khilafah and Imamat come through consultation but kingship is attained through the power of sword" [40]

From the above discourse it is clear that the naming of Khalifas is against Islamic precepts, at the same time however the Holy Prophet left certain sign-posts to guide the believers in their effort to find a successor, e.g. as is mentioned in his saying that he wanted to nominate Abu Bakr but then abandoned the idea as he believed that Allah would not accept election of any other person.

**Conclusion**

In the preceding sections the criticism against Khilafat-i-Rashidah has been fully exposed through such authoritative sources as the Quranic

verses, the sayings of the Holy Prophet and his companions and the verdicts of the great scholars. It has also been shown that all arguments against Khilafat-i-Rashidah are baseless and without foundation and that the true teachings of Islam require the believers to accept wholeheartedly the task of establishing Khilafah and to give it their complete and unstinted loyalty. History bears witness to the fact that although the opponents of Khilafah did succeed to some degree in causing confusion and disruption in the ranks of Islam in early ages; they completely failed in their mission of annihilating Islam which continued to grow from strength to strength by the Grace of Allah. The future of Islam is still more glorious and is certainly completely assured as is indicated in the verse of Khilafah in the Holy Quran.

It is expected that the believers will keep the lessons of history in mind and know it fully well that whenever any forces arose to weaken the institution of Khilafah, they might have succeeded to a limited extent for a limited time, but they never did prevail for any appreciable length of time. Whenever believers made use of their instinctive perceptions and resolutely stood up to guard the institution of Khilafah with complete dedication and obedience, they exalted themselves not only in worldly matters but also in spiritual realms.

The future of humanity in general and those of the Muslims in particular is inextricably bound with establishment of Khilafah and allegiance to it which acts like a, protecting shield and leads the way to prosperity and well-being of all. Through Khilafah will the final victory of Islam be gained and through it shall the final success over evil forces be attained. We must earnestly believe that as long as Khilafah remains in our midst, no outside forces shall ever be able to cause us any harm and success shall meet us in every field in fulfillment of the Quranic

promise "Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do good works that He will surely make them Successors in the earth…"[41]

May Allah be with us for ever and may we be regarded as His chosen ones for ever. Amen![42]

All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.

## End Notes

[1] .Surah Noor :55
[2] Allamah Abi Jafer Muhammad Bin Jareer at Tabari, *Tareekh-e-Tabari*, Vol 3, 1982. P. 471,472.
[3] Ibid Page 482
[4] Masnad-i-Ahmad as quoted by Mishqat in *Babul Inzar-wa-Tahzir*
[5] Maulana Fazlul Karim,Al Haj, *Al Hadis* (An English Translation & Commentary with Arabic Text of *Mishkat-ul-Masabih*) Kitabul Fitn, Page10, Hadith No16
[6] Mansab-i-Imamat, pp. 77 and 78
[7] Masnad Ahmad bin Hanbal, Vol. IV p. 12'n.
[8] Surah Noor:55
[9] Surah Maida : 20
[10] Masnad Ahmad bin Hanbal: Vol. IV
[11] Surah Noor: 55
[12] Surah Al-Imran:159
[13] Surat-ut-Taubah:103
[14] Ibne-Khathir Abul Fida Emaduddin, Al Bedaya Wannahaya, Vol.VI Nafees Academy, Urdu Bazar Karachi 1989 page 1153
[15] Surah Nisa : 58
[16] .Tabri, Vol. 1
[17] Al-Farooq Omar by Mohammad Husain Haikel
[18] Allamah Abi Jafer Muhammad Bin Jareer At *Tabari,Tareekh-e-Tabari*, Vol 3 , 1982. Page 446
[19] Imam Abil Hussain Muslim bin Hajjaj, al Qushairi,(204-261 AH),Drul Kitab, Beruit, Page 788
[20] Surah Anfal : 18
[21] Surah Sad :26
[22] Surah Aaraf : 130
[23] Surah Al-Anaam : 166
[24] Surah Noor :55
[25] Surah Noor: 55
[26] Bukhari, Kitabul Ah-Kam, Babul Istikhlaf
[27] Tafsir Qummi, Sura Tahreem
[28] Masnad Ahmad bin Hanbal
[29] Bashir Sajid, *Asharah Mubasharah*, Al Badr Publications,Page 96
[30] Tarikh Omar bin Khatab, page 87
[31] Bukhari, Kitabul Hijrat ul Habsha
[32] Allamah Abi Jafer Muhammad Bin Jareer At Tabari,Tareekh-e-Tabari Vol. V page. 121
[33] Bashir Sajid,Asharah Mubasharah,Al Badr Publications,Page672
[34] Shah Wali-ullah Dehlvi(1114 -1176 AH),Izala-tul-Khifa Un Khilafa-til-Khulafa,Page 77
[35] Surat-ush-Shoara :80
[36] Surat-ul-Fath:10

[37] Ali to Prophet as Haroon to Musa
[38] Tabri Vol. VI 346
[39] Allamah Muhammad Bin Saad, Tabaqat Ibin-e- Saad Vol. III,Seerat-e-Khulafa-e-Rashideen, page. 34
[40] Tabaqat bin Saad Vol. IV p. 113
[41] Surah Noor :55
[42] Surah Al Imran :110

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