

Leadership: Islamic Perspective

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Definition of LEADERSHIP

described as the “process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task”

Alan Keith states that, “Leadership is ultimately about creating a way for people to contribute to making something extraordinary happen”

“a dynamic relationship based on mutual influence and common purpose between leaders and collaborators in which both are moved to higher levels of motivation and moral development as they affect real, intended change.” (Rost, 1991).

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Leadership in Islam

Leadership in Islam is a trust (*amanah*). It represents a psychological contract between a leader and his followers that he will try his best to guide them, to protect them and to treat them fairly and with justice. Hence, the focus of leadership in Islam is on doing good. (Beekun & Badawi, 1998)

Often, it takes the form of an explicit contract or pledge between a leader and his followers that he will try his best to guide them, to protect them and to treat them fairly and with justice. Hence, the focus of leadership in Islam is on integrity and justice. (Beekun & Badawi, 1999)

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Muslims base their behaviour as leader and as follower upon the Word of God as revealed in the Qur'an. They believe that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, has modelled the way for Muslim leaders and followers for all times. This belief is supported when God says the following about Muhammad ﷺ :

وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ (القلم: ٤)

And you stand an exalted standard of character [68:4]

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وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ
دَرَجَاتٍ لِيُبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ
لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (الأنعام: ١٦٥)

And it is He who has made you successors upon the earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees [of rank] that He may try you through what He has given you. Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful. [6:165]

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يَا دَاوُدُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ
وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ **ب** إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَنْ
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ (ص: ٢٦)

[We said], "O David, indeed We have made you a successor upon the earth, so judge between the people in truth and do not follow [your own] desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of Allah." Indeed, those who go astray from the way of Allah will have a severe punishment for having forgotten the Day of Account. [38:26]

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Every one of you is a shepherd and every one is answerable with regard to his flock. The Caliph is a shepherd over the people and shall be questioned about his subjects (as to how he conducted their affairs). A man is a guardian over the members of his family and shall be questioned about them (as to how he looked after their physical and moral well-being). A woman is a guardian over the household of her husband and his children and shall be questioned about them (as to how she managed the household and brought up the children). A slave is a guardian over the property of his master and shall be questioned about it (as to how he safeguarded his trust). Beware, every one of you is a guardian and every one of you shall be questioned with regard to his trust

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‘Abd al-Rahman b. Samura said: The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said to me: ‘Abd al-Rahman, do not ask for a position of authority, for if you are granted this position as a result of your asking for it, you will be left alone (without God’s help to discharge the responsibilities attendant thereon), and if you are granted it without making any request for it, you will be helped (by God in the discharge of your duties).

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Ibn 'Umar narrated that the Prophet (may peace be upon him) said: It is obligatory upon a Muslim that he should listen (to the ruler appointed over him) and obey him whether he likes it or not, except that he is ordered to do a sinful thing. If he is ordered to do a sinful act, a Muslim should neither listen to him nor should he obey his orders.

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Characteristics of good leaders in Islam

➤ Protector

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ إِنَّمَا الْإِمَامُ جُنَّةٌ يُقَاتِلُ مِنْ وِرَائِهِ وَيُتَّقِي بِهِ فَإِنْ أَمَرَ بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَعَدَلَ كَانَ لَهُ بِذَلِكَ أَجْرٌ، وَإِنْ يَأْمُرُ بِغَيْرِهِ كَانَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْهُ (رواه مسلم)

Abu Húráirah nárated that the P'rophet of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: A commander (of the Muslims) is a shield for them. They fight behind him and they are protected by (him from tyrants and aggressors). If he enjoins fear of God, the Exalted and Glorious, and dispenses justice, there will be a (great) reward for him; and if he enjoins otherwise, it redounds on him.

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➤ Servant

The leader is the servant of his followers (*sayyid al qawm khadimuhum*).

إِنَّ سَاقِيَ الْقَوْمِ آخِرُهُمْ

The servant to his people shall be last to be served

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➤ **Belief & submission**

Leadership in Islam is rooted in belief and willing submission to the Creator, God. It centers on serving Him.

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ
الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ [ب] وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ (الأنبياء: ٧٣)

*And We made them leaders guiding by Our command.
And We inspired to them the doing of good deeds,
establishment of prayer, and giving of zakah; and they
were worshippers of Us. [21:73]*

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➤ Sincerity

Ma'qil b. Yaser said I heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) say: A ruler who, having obtained control over the affairs of the Muslims, does not strive for their betterment and does not serve them sincerely shall not enter Paradise with them

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➤ *Taqwa* (godfearing)

The all encompassing, inner consciousness of his duty towards God and this awareness of his accountability towards Him is *taqwa*

Taqwa will restrain a Muslim leader or follower from behaving unjustly - whether to community members, to customers, to suppliers or to anybody else.

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➤ Justice

Justice is a dynamic characteristic which each Muslim must strive to develop whether he is a leader or a follower.

The principle of justice must be observed by all Muslims - leaders and followers alike.

Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. [4:58]

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➤ Promise-keeping

All Muslims - whether leaders or followers - are urged to keep their promises.

Keeping one's word characterizes a Muslim. Breaking one's word is tantamount to hypocrisy. Keeping promises is very important for all, and a leader is not exempted from this important principle.

O you who believe! fulfil the obligations. [5:1]

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➤ Solidness

وروي الترمذي وابن ماجة والحاكم أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال: "أشد أمتي في أمر الله عمر"
"The most steadfast and firm person amongst my nation, in performing the obligations, is 'Umar."

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Abu Nu'aym mentioned in "*Hilyat al-Awliya*" that 'Umar, went out once when it was dark at night; Talhah saw 'Umar entering a house then entered another house.

In the morning Talhah went to that house and saw an old woman, who is blind and crippled. He said to her: Why does that man come to you? She said: He's been taking care of me for this long; he brings me what is good for me and takes away what is harmful for me.

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‘Umar was known for his many words of wisdom and morals. Among them was his saying: *“Judge your deeds before they are judged and weigh your deeds before they are weighed. It is easier upon you to judge yourself today for The Day of Judgment and to weigh your deeds today in preparation for that day.”*

These words urge for us to monitor our deeds closely and to deny our self the indulging of desire in order to protect our self from the harm of this life and in the hereafter.

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“تفقهوا قبل أن تسودوا”

“Seek the knowledge of the Religion before you seek leadership status”.

Which means ask for the knowledge and seek to be learned in the Religion before you ask to become a leader and before you are appointed to leadership

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The leadership of Prophet Mohammad È

- The Prophet Muhammad È used to be called *Sadiq* (the truthful) and *Amin* (the trustworthy)
- Courage & Bravery
- Patience
- Humility
- Wisdom
- Forgiving
- The willingness to seek consultation. Islam stresses consultation in all affairs. Through the Qur'anic phrase *amruhum shura baynahum* [43:38]

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Thank You