

THE LEADERSHIP PROCESS IN ISLAM

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Leadership in Islam is a trust. 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. Given the recent emphasis on ethical behavior in the leadership literature (Kouzes and Posner, 1995), an examination of the moral bases of leadership from an Islamic perspective may provide some interesting insights for the field of leadership in general. In this paper, we will examine what leadership is from an Islamic perspective, discuss the moral dimensions of leadership and uncover the characteristics of leaders and followers as suggested by Islam.

Defining Leadership in Islam

To begin with, Muslims base their behavior as leader and/or as follower upon the Word of God as revealed in their holy book, the Qur'an. They believe that the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (*saw*)¹, has modeled the way for Muslim leaders and followers for all times. This belief is supported when God says the following about Muhammad (*saw*):

*And you stand an exalted standard of character.*²

Muhammad's (*saw*) example, then, is what both Muslim leaders and followers seek to emulate.

According to the Prophet Muhammad (*saw*), leadership in Islam is not reserved for a small elite. Rather, depending upon the situation, every person is the "shepherd" of a flock, and occupies a position of leadership.³ Muhammad (*saw*) is reported to have said:

¹ Abbreviated words of honor and salutations attached to the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*saw*). These words mean: "may God send blessings and salutations on him."

² Abdullah Yusuf Ali. The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary. Brentwood, MD: Amana Corporation, 1989, 68:4. All references to this translation of the Qur'an by Abdullah Yusuf Ali will be referred to as Qur'an.

³ Islamic Scholar Software. Sahih Bukhari (Johannesburg, South Africa: Par Excellence Computers), Abdallah Ibn Umar, hadith 3.733. The term *hadith* refers to the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad (*saw*). All future references to Islamic Scholar Software's Sahih Bukhari will simply be referred to as Sahih Bukhari.

Each of you is a guardian, and each of you will be asked about his subjects. ⁴

In most circumstances in life, Muslims are urged to appoint a leader and follow him. According to the Prophet Muhammad⁵ (*saw*), Muslims must appoint a leader during a trip, select a leader to lead the prayer, and choose a leader for other group activities. Leadership, then, can be depicted as a process by which the leader seeks the voluntary participation of followers in an effort to reach certain objectives. This definition suggests that leadership is essentially a process whereby the leader guides *willing* followers. At all times, a leader must remember that he cannot compel others to do things against their will.

*Let there be no compulsion in religion. [...].*⁶

Leadership roles from an Islamic perspective

According to Islam, the two primary roles of a leader are those of servant-leader and guardian-leader. First, the leader is the servant of his followers (*sayyid al qawn khadimuhum*).⁷ He is to seek their welfare and guide them towards good. The idea of a leader as a servant has been part of Islam since its beginning, and has only recently been developed by Robert Greenleaf:⁸

The servant-leader is servant first...It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. [...] The best test, and the most difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons?

The Prophet Muhammad (*saw*) has emphasized a second major role of the Muslim leader: to protect his community against tyranny and oppression, to encourage God-consciousness and

⁴ Sahih Bukhari, hadith 3.733.

⁵ Henceforth, in this book, we will refer to the Prophet Muhammad (*saw*) as either the Prophet (*saw*) or Muhammad (*saw*).

⁶ Qur'an, 2: 256.

taqwa, and to promote justice.

*A commander (of the Muslims) is a shield for them. [...].*⁹

Whether as servant or as guardian, a Muslim leader may make use of certain bases of power to be effective. Islam recognizes the existence of power, but suggests an etiquette for its use.

Leadership and the bases of power

Power is “the ability to marshal the human, informational, and material resources to get something done.”¹⁰ Five bases of power¹¹ are usually mentioned in the leadership literature; the Islamic perspective of leadership incorporates all five, but views them differently.

1. Legitimate power

Legitimate power is associated with one’s position in the organization. Generally, Islam discourages Muslims from actively seeking positions of authority. Campaigning for a position of power may imply that one is enamored with the position for one’s own advancement or some other self-serving reason. Muhammad (*saw*) is reported to have said:

*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 involved in it), and if you are granted it without making any request for it, you will be helped (by God in the discharge of your duties).*¹²

⁷ Omar Hassan Kasule, Sr. Leadership Module. General theme: Leadership. Workshop 1. In Muslim Leaders’ Forum 98 Handbook. (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Tarbiyyah and Training Center, International Islamic University Malaysia, 1998), 3.

⁸ Robert Greenleaf. The Servant as Leader (Indianapolis, IN: Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership, 1970), 7.

⁹ Islamic Scholar Software. Sahih Muslim (Johannesburg, South Africa: Par Excellence Computers, Abu Hurairah, hadith no. 4542. All future reference to Islamic Scholar Software’s Sahih Muslim will simply be referred to as Sahih Muslim).

¹⁰ M. McCall, Jr. Power, influence, and authority: The hazards of carrying a sword. Technical Report. (Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership, 1978), 10.

¹¹ French, J. R. P. and Raven, B. “The bases of social power.” In Dorwin Cartwright, ed. Studies In Social Power (Ann Arbor, Mich: University of Michigan, 1959), 150-167.

¹² Sahih Muslim, volume 3, 1013.

An exception can be made to this injunction when a person sees a situation in which there is a potential crisis or disaster. Should he have the expertise required to help others in this situation, he may seek a specific position so as to provide assistance. For example, Prophet Joseph (*as*)¹³ asked for such a position when he requested the King of Egypt to be placed in charge of the granaries. A deed, accompanied by the right intention, is within the parameters of Islam.

2. Reward power

A leader who has position power may also control organizational rewards, including pay raises, desirable work assignments, or promotions. The same holds true for Islam. It is noteworthy that Umar Ibn Al-Khattab¹⁴ (*ra*)¹⁵ used to pay state officials high salaries. He wanted to ensure that they would not get tempted by bribes. By treating his appointees equitably, Umar (*ra*) became one of the most outstanding Islamic leaders.

3. Coercive power

Besides controlling organizational rewards, a leader in a position of authority also controls group sanctions. Islam recognizes the legitimacy of coercive power, but suggests that it should not be used to coerce followers towards evil. In fact, the Prophet once said that “obedience (to the leader) is required only in what is good.”¹⁶ Placing emphasis on the role of the leader as servant, ‘Umar (*ra*), was quoted as saying to the people:

*I have appointed over you governors and agents not to beat your bodies or take your monies, but rather to teach you and serve you.*¹⁷

¹³ Abbreviated words of honor and salutations attached to the name of Prophets other than Muhammad (*saw*). These words mean “May God’s peace be upon him.”

¹⁴ Second Caliph in Islam. Unless otherwise noted, Umar Ibn Al-Khattab will be referred to as Umar (*ra*).

¹⁵ Abbreviated words of honor and salutations attached to the name of the four Caliphs of Islam following the death of Muhammad (*saw*). These words mean “May God be pleased with him.”

¹⁶ Sahih Bukhari, volume 9, hadith 259. See also Sahih Bukhari, volume 5, hadith 629.

¹⁷ Muhammad Al Buraey. Administrative Development: An Islamic Perspective (London, U.K.: KPI, 1985), 248.

Expert power

Leaders who possess valuable expertise and information have expert power with respect to their followers who need this information to perform their task. For example, in a prayer congregation, a person may be chosen to lead the prayers because of his knowledge of Islam. There is no clergy in Islam.

Referent or charismatic power

A person has charisma when others wish to follow him because they are attracted by his personality. Born leaders are usually charismatic. Ethical charismatic leaders, such as Prophet Muhammad (*saw*) and all other Prophets (*as*), use power for the benefit of mankind, learn from criticism, work to develop their followers into leaders, and rely on moral standards. A recent, very charismatic American Muslim leader was Malcolm X. Many embraced Islam in the USA after listening to, or reading about, him.

*[Malcolm X's] life showed me something eminently more useful than skilled oratory: what role religion could play as one approached this race-conscious society. He provided an example of how a man could use conviction as a powerful instrument to change the course of life--one's own and others.*¹⁸

Given how Islam views leadership and power, what will ensure that a Muslim leader behaves ethically? The moral bases of Islamic leadership are expected to provide the inner core that guides leaders.

Moral Bases of Islamic Leadership

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

And We made them leaders guiding (men) by Our Command and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers and to practice regular charity; and they constantly served Us (and Us only).¹⁹

To serve God, a Muslim leader is to act in accordance with the injunctions of God and His Prophet (*saw*), and must develop a strong Islamic moral character. This moral character will be reflected by his increasingly strong belief in God as he progresses through 4 stages of spiritual development: *iman, islam, taqwa and ihsan*. Each stage is now discussed in terms of how it affects a Muslim leader's behavior.

Iman

At the core of Islamic moral character is *iman* or faith in God. *Iman* implies belief in the Oneness of God and the prophethood of Muhammad (*saw*). A leader with a strong *iman* will consider himself and all his possessions as belonging to God. He will bow his ego, his ideas, his passions and his thinking to God. *Iman* also implies belief in the life hereafter and in one's ultimate accountability for one's deeds. A leader with a firm *iman* will not dodge responsibility for his actions, and will continuously emphasize good deeds. To reinforce this idea, the Qur'an links *iman* with good deeds no less than 60 times.

Although Muslims consider it desirable to appoint a leader with *iman*, it may not always be possible to find such a person. An organization may have to choose between a strong Muslim with weak leadership skills or a strong leader with moderate/weak Islamic understanding. The example of Amr Ibn Al 'Aas is to be remembered here. He had been a Muslim for only four months when he was appointed by the Prophet (*saw*) to a key leadership position. This issue was

¹⁸ S. Barboza. American Jihad: Islam After Malcolm X (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 16

¹⁹ Qur'an, 21: 73.

explained by Ibn Taymiyya in his book *Assiyasah Ash-Shar'iyya*.²⁰ A leader with weak or inadequate expertise can bring disaster to an organization whereas a skilled leader may advance and help the same organization. Even if the skilled leader were not a strong Muslim, his shortcomings can be made up through *shura* or the consultative process of decision making.

Islam

Building upon *iman*, *Islam* is the second layer of the moral personality of an Islamic leader and followers. Islam means the achievement of peace with God, within oneself and with the creation of God, through willing submission to Him. As Maudoodi (1991) points out so well, “*Iman is the seed and Islam is the fruition.*”²¹ Because of his or her *iman*, a leader who practices Islam will never see himself as supreme. Ali Ibn Abu Talib’s (*ra*) letter to Malik al-Ashtar an-Nukai, the new Governor of Egypt, stresses this point in the following manner:

*Malik, you must never forget that if you are a ruler over them, then the Caliph is a ruler over you, and God is the supreme Lord over the Caliph.*²²

Taqwa

As an individual submits to God through Islam, he develops an awe of God. This all-encompassing, inner consciousness of his duty towards Him and this awareness of his accountability towards Him is *taqwa*.²³ As pointed out by Maudoodi, “the essence of *taqwa* lies in an attitude of heart and mind rather than in an outward form.”²⁴ When imbued with *taqwa*, a person’s frame of mind—his thoughts, emotions and inclinations—will reflect Islam. *Taqwa* will restrain a Muslim leader or follower from behaving unjustly—whether to community members, to custom-

²⁰ Naceur Jabnoun. *Islam and Management* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Institut Kajian Dasar, 1994).

²¹ Sayyid Abu A’la Maudoodi. *The Islamic Movement: Dynamics of Values, Power and Change*. Edited by Khurram Murad. (Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1991), 115.

²² A. Behzadnia and S. Denny. *To the Commander in Chief: From Imam Ali to Malik-E-Ashter* (1981), 8.

²³ *Ibid*, 116.

ers, to suppliers or to anybody else.

*God commands justice the doing of good and liberality to kith and kin and He forbids all shameful deeds and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you that you may receive admonition.*²⁵

Ihsan

Whereas *taqwa* is the fear of God and the feeling of God's Presence, *ihsan* is the love of God. This love of God motivates the individual Muslim to work towards attaining God's Pleasure. The Prophet Muhammad (*saw*) describes *ihsan* as follows: "To worship God as if you see Him, and if you cannot achieve this state of devotion then you must consider that He is looking at you."²⁶ The constant feeling that God is watching is likely to prompt any leader or follower with *Ihsan* to behave at his best. The difference between the Muslims with *taqwa* and Muslims with *Ihsan* is concisely explained by Maudoodi with the following example.²⁷ Among government employees, there may be some who perform their duties scrupulously, but who do not demonstrate any additional commitment. Other employees, however, push themselves beyond the call of duty; they are energized, and willing to make sacrifices in the performance of their tasks. Within the context of Islam, the first group of employees are like believers who do what is sufficient and necessary; they are those that have *taqwa*. By contrast, the second group of employees have *ihsan*. These are the Muslim leaders and followers who will tirelessly carry the banner of Islam under the most difficult circumstances.

Based on the above discussion of the four layers of Islamic moral character, leaders and followers may be classified depending on what stage they are at: *Iman*, *Islam*, *Taqwa* and *Ihsan*. The

²⁴ Ibid, 118.

²⁵ Qur'an, 16:90.

²⁶ Sahih Bukhari, hadith 1: 47.

Islamic moral character requires that leaders emphasize the following five key parameters of Islamic behavior: justice, trust, righteousness, the struggle towards self-improvement, and promise-keeping.

(1) Justice.

Justice is a dynamic characteristic²⁸ which each Muslim must strive to develop whether he is a leader or a follower.

*O you who believe! Stand out firmly for God as witnesses to fair dealing and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. [...]*²⁹

The need to achieve a balance and to take a middle road is quite important in a leader, and is stressed repeatedly by God in the Qur'an. He describes those "who will be rewarded with the highest place in heaven" as:

*Those who, when they spend, are not extravagant and not niggardly, but hold a just (balance) between those two extremes; [...]*³⁰

Application of justice to leadership. The principle of justice must be observed by all Muslims—leaders and followers alike. For example, God admonishes Muslims thus:

*God does command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due; and when you judge between man and man that you judge with justice [...].*³¹

This is why the Prophet (*saw*) emphasized that justice must never be compromised by personal affiliations or other considerations.

²⁷ Ibid, 119.

²⁸ Muhammad Umar-ud-din. The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Ghazzali (Lahore, Pakistan: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1991), 241.

²⁹ Qur'an, 5: 8.

³⁰ Qur'an, 25: 67-68.

³¹ Qur'an, 4: 58.

(2) Trust.

This concept of trust stresses the idea of responsibility towards organizational stakeholders, and holds true whether those entrusting something to Muslims are themselves non-Muslims.

*O you that believe! betray not the trust of God and the apostle nor misappropriate knowingly things entrusted to you.*³²

As a core value, trust fits within the overall Islamic etiquette governing social relationships.

Application of trust to leadership. Trust is explicitly linked to leadership in the Qur'an. We refer to the story of Prophet Joseph (*as*). After the king had indicated that he placed great trust in him, Prophet Joseph (*as*) deliberately asked to be put in charge of the granaries and storehouses, and the demanding task of establishing them and guarding them. As one translator of the Qur'an, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, points out, Prophet Joseph (*as*) understood the need to build reserves better than any one else, and was prepared to take on this task himself rather than throw on to another the burden of restricting supplies in times of plenty.³³

Once an individual has accepted to be the leader of a group or organization, he has become their trustee. In a for-profit, Muslim organization, the management of the organization is entrusted with the shareholders' investment. In a nonprofit organization, the management of the organization is charged with watching over the properties in the trust. Consequently, any managerial decision must be balanced with respect to this trust. The concept of trust can be extended to other dimensions of one's work as a leader or a follower. Should one be wasting time or organizational resources in performing one's task, one is violating his/her employer's trust.

³² Qur'an, 8: 27.

³³ Ali, Comment 1716

(3) Righteousness.

Righteous behavior is described as follows:

*It [...] is righteousness to believe in God and the Last Day and the Angels and the Book and the Messengers; to spend of your substance out of love for Him for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask [...]; to be steadfast in prayer and practice regular charity; to fulfil the contracts which you have made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering) and adversity [...]*³⁴

These general attributes will now be linked to the attributes that Islamic leaders and followers should embrace.

Application of righteousness to leadership. Based on the above verses, several moral attributes of righteous leaders become salient:

- They act justly and do not allow their personal feelings to hinder justice.
- They have *iman*,
- They take care of those in need, and do so for the love of God,
- They are steadfast in prayer and practice charity,
- They observe all contracts, and
- They are patient no matter what type of adversity they may be experiencing.

In general, then, organization participants of all faiths are entitled to be treated with basic human decency and dignity and with the maximum of fair play and justice. In an Islamic organization, a leader is expected to be sensitive to their needs.

³⁴ Qur'an, 2: 177.

(4) Struggle within oneself towards self-improvement.

This concept is portrayed very accurately by the Qur'an.³⁵ The Prophet Muhammad (*saw*) stressed the importance of this inner striving to improve oneself:

*God's Messenger (saw) said, "The believers in the world are in three classes: those who believe in God and His Messenger and do not doubt, but strive with their property and their persons in God's cause; the man whom people trust with their property and their persons; and the man who, when he is about to display greed, abandons it for the sake of God, Who is Great and Glorious."*³⁶

The dimension of inner struggle permeates the very progression from *iman* to *ihsan*, and continues thereafter.

Application of the concept of self-struggle to leadership. This principle encapsulates the process of inner struggle towards self-betterment. Leaders and followers practicing this principle are continuously monitoring and evaluating their intentions and actions, and acting to improve themselves accordingly. They work hard at practicing what they say, and encourage others in this struggle for self-improvement.

(3) Promise-keeping.

All Muslims—whether leaders or followers—are urged to keep their promises. They also cannot make promises that are unislamic in nature.

*O you who believe! fulfil (all) obligations.*³⁷

Keeping one's word characterizes a Muslim. Breaking one's word is tantamount to hypoc-

³⁵ Qur'an, 22:77-78

³⁶ Islamic Scholar Software. *Mishkat Al-Masabih*, (Johannesburg, South Africa: Par Excellence Computers, 1996), Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, 3854, Transmitted by Ahmad. All references to *Mishkat Al-Masabih* will be referred to as *Mishkat*.

³⁷ Qur'an, 5: 1

risy.

Application of promise-keeping to leadership. Based upon the above discussion, keeping promises is very important for all, and a leader is not exempted from this important principle.

*I bought something from the Prophet (peace be upon him) before he received his Prophetic commission, and as there was something still due to him I promised him that I would bring it to him at his place, but I forgot. When I remembered three days later, I went to that place and found him there. He said: [...] I have been here for three days waiting for you.*³⁸

Now that we have discussed the bases of Islamic leadership, we need to explore what normative attributes are required of Muslim leaders and followers.

Leader characteristics

The characteristics of an Islamic leader affect his/her behavior, and are congruent with the characteristics of effective leaders identified by Kouzes and Posner (1995). We will now relate the top four characteristics identified by these researchers to the Islamic model.

Honesty: Leaders are considered honest to the extent that there is ‘consistency between word and deed.’ They do what they say they are going to do. In the Qur’an, the Prophet Moses (*as*) is himself labeled as “strong and trustworthy” by one of the damsels³⁹ and the Prophet Joseph (*saw*) is described as one who is truthful.⁴⁰ Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad (*saw*) used to be called *Sadiq* (the truthful) and *Amin* (the trustworthy) during his youth.

Why is honesty and integrity so important with respect to leaders? Although Kouzes and Posner (1987) do not provide the reader with an answer, Islam does. Leadership is more than an as-

³⁸ Winalim. Abu Dawud (USA: ISL Software Corporation, 1996), Abdullah Ibn AbulHamsa.

³⁹ Qur’an, 28: 26.

signment or a job; it is a **trust**—as already pointed out earlier.

Competence: People are more likely to follow a leader’s directives if they believe that this person knows what he or she is doing. If followers doubt the capabilities of their leader, they will be less enthusiastic in accepting directions from him. As suggested by Hollander (1978), a leader who is competent in one situation may not be competent in another. Except in matters where he had received a direct revelation from God, the Prophet (*saw*) would often seek and follow the advice of his companions. As Rahman indicates, ‘This enabled all his men to take part in discussion and offer suggestions and in this way the best solution was found by mutual consultation.’⁴¹

Inspiration: Followers expect their leaders to remain positive about the future no matter how bad the situation may be. The leader must never give up or lose hope. An example of how a leader inspires his followers comes from Abu Bakr (*ra*). After the death of the Prophet (*saw*), Muslims were in shock. Umar (*ra*) was especially distraught. Abu Bakr (*ra*) calmed him down, and then delivered the following address:

*O People, if you have been worshipping Muhammad, then know that Muhammad is dead. But if you have been worshipping God, then know that God is living and never dies.*⁴²

Patience. In the Qur’an, God explicitly identifies patience as one of defining characteristics of Islamic leadership:

And We appointed from among them Leaders giving guidance under Our command so

⁴⁰ Qur’an, 12: 46.

⁴¹ A. Rahman. Muhammad as A Military Leader. (Lahore, Pakistan: Islamic Publications, 1990), 170.

⁴² M. Haykal. The Life Of Muhammad (saw). (Indianapolis: IN, American Trust Publications, 1976, 506-7.

*long as they persevered with patience and continued to have faith in Our Signs.*⁴³

Indeed, like all other believers, a leader can expect to be tested, and he will need to endure. The example of the Prophet (*saw*) and early converts to Islam during the boycott of the Muslims in Makkah illustrates the need for patience.

Humility: A Muslim leader is to be humble, and must never let his ego get the better of him. Umar, the second Caliph, lived in a simple house. He had no bodyguards for his personal security, and walked the streets of Madinah without any escort.⁴⁴ Ali (*ra*), in his letter to Malik Al-Ashtar an-Nukhai, strongly encourages him to remain humble in his new position as Governor of Egypt, and explains to him why pride and arrogance are to be avoided.

*Never say to yourself, 'I am their Lord, their ruler [...], and I must be obeyed submissively and humbly.' Such a thought will unbalance your mind, will make you vain and arrogant, will weaken your faith in religion and will make you seek the support of any power other than God's [...].*⁴⁵

The following story demonstrates how the Prophet (*saw*) exhibited patience and humility when a ban was imposed on the Muslims by others:

*When we complained to God's Messenger (saw) of hunger and raised our clothes to show we were each carrying a stone over the belly, God's Messenger (saw) raised his clothes and showed that he had two stones on his belly.*⁴⁶

The willingness to seek consultation: Islam stresses consultation in all affairs. Through the

⁴³ Qur'an, 32: 24.

⁴⁴ I. Faqih. *Glimpses Of Islamic History* (Delhi, India: Adam Publishers and Distributors, 1988), 96, 107.

⁴⁵ Behzadnia and Denny, 8.

⁴⁶ Mishkat, reported by Tirmidhi.

Qur'anic phrase *amruhum shura baynahum*⁴⁷ and the Prophet's (*saw*) habit of seeking and accepting advice, the limits on the exercise of power have been set both by the Qur'an and the Prophet (*saw*). As Al Buraey points out, *shura* plays a critical role in administration and management, specifically with respect to decision-making; it provides a restraint on a leader's administrative power and authority.⁴⁸

Follower characteristics

Follower characteristics also represent an important ingredient in the leadership process. Just as in the case of their leader, the characteristics of Muslim followers affect their behavior. These characteristics correspond to those of their leaders except for the additional characteristics of obedience to the leader and dynamic followership.

Obedience: At all times, the leader must be obeyed. Ibn Umar reported God's messenger (*saw*) as saying, 'Hearing and obeying are the duty of a Muslim, both regarding what he likes and what he dislikes.'⁴⁹ As Muhammad Asad indicates, after a leader has been duly elected, he may "be considered to have received a pledge of allegiance from the community." As a result, both the majority who voted for him as well as the minority who may have voted against now owe obedience and allegiance. Islam considers obedience to the leader so important that it views any kind of insubordination to be abhorrent unless in very specific circumstances.

Dynamic followership: Although Islam emphasizes that followers should comply with the directives of their leader, it does not condone blind subservience. On one occasion, Umar (*ra*) was suggesting the quantity of dowry to be fixed at the time of a marriage ceremony. What he said was not in accordance with Islamic principle. A lady immediately stood up and said, "O Umar,

⁴⁷ Qur'an, 42: 38.

⁴⁸ Al Buraey, 320.

⁴⁹ Rahman, 75.

fear God." Hearing her sound argument based on the Qur'an, Umar (*ra*) realized his mistake and said, "The lady is right and the leader of the Muslims (himself) is wrong."⁵⁰ Umar's behavior illustrates clearly that followers in Islam are not to be passive bystanders should the leader err.

Conclusion and an example of a model Muslim leader

The Islamic model of leadership emphasizes *khuluq* or behaving ethically towards all--Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Firmly grounded by his faith in God, and mindful of his role as a trustee, a Muslim leader is expected to be just, behave righteously, strive towards self-improvement, and never break his word. He is to consult with others, especially in areas where he is not competent. He is expected to bear adversity patiently, and remain forever humble.

Such exemplary Muslim leaders are rare. One such leader, President Uteem of the Republic of Mauritius, has been tremendously effective in a country where Muslims are a minority. Humble, he has refused to stay at the Presidential palace. He has steadily waged a war against corruption, and has championed the plight of the poorest in his country. He is loved by one and all. He believes that humanity can only grow and prosper by accepting the fact of cultural diversity, by learning about their differences as well as by reinforcing the values that they share in common. For him, multiculturalism can only thrive in an open civic society with the full participation of all. In so doing, Muslims and non-Muslims alike will be implementing a critical Qur'anic injunction, expressed as *li ta'arafuu*—to get to know one another—an injunction addressed by God to mankind as a whole, not to Muslims alone.

*O mankind, we have created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another.*⁵¹

⁵⁰ Shamsul 'Ulama A. Shibli-Nu'mani, Omar the Great: The Second Caliph of Islam. Vols. 1 and 2, 2nd Revision. Translated by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan. (Pakistan: Lahore, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1957). Cited in Al-Buraey, 82.

⁵¹ Qur'an, 49: 13.

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