

CAN DEMOCRACY WORK IN OUR LANDS?

When we look at the muslim ummah today we see that we are plagued by problems that we cannot solve effectively. For example, our lands contain so much wealth yet we are unable to feed ourselves, whereas a country like Britain contains nothing but is able to feed itself many times over. Recently during the coup in Pakistan, General Musharraf stated that the reason for the continued failure of Pakistan to succeed as a nation was due to the failure to fully implement democracy. Certainly, this position is advocated not just by Musharraf, but also by some in the muslim world since we witness the progression of western nations who do implement democracy 100%. This article hopes to examine the validity of such a view and asks whether the muslims can ever implement democracy to the extent of the west.

Before we begin answering this question it is important to know how a nation progresses and solves its problems effectively. For a nation to solve its problems effectively, coherently and consistently it must have a single reference point to refer its problems to. This is because a nation's systems all interact with each other. In other words the solutions or laws that are implemented effect other solutions that are implemented. For example it will be ineffective for a nation to teach the people that adultery is wrong but not punish them for doing so. It is therefore important that the people be united behind a single reference point so that all the problems that a nation faces are referred to a single source of solutions so that there is coherence, consistency and movement in the nation. This reference point is a result of the nations thought about its purpose in life and how this purpose affects the way it lives its life; as this is the most basic question affecting how the human being thinks and acts in life.

We can begin by asking the question what exactly is democracy? Democracy is the system of ruling in which the human beings decide the rules to be implemented in solving life's problems. This is done through a system of voting by the people, with the majority having their decisions implemented. It is important to note that this system of ruling gives man the sovereignty to legislate. At its heart, indeed the very foundation that this western democratic system is based upon, is the secular belief that the Creator of man (that many do not even recognise) has no right to lay down the laws for our life, and that the sphere of the Creator should only be restricted to our rituals of worship. (The democratic system under communism is based on the belief that god does not exist and as a result man must decide the laws of life).

We can now see why the west can implement democracy successfully. Before the west embraced democracy they embraced a thought about how they would live their lives. This transformation from the western nations living oppressed by the church and king to nations living secularly according to the separation of church from daily life is what is historically known as the Renaissance. They have built their democratic ruling system on their belief about their purpose in life (secularism). This allows them to use democracy to solve their problems with no hesitation as it complies with their secular purpose in life. There is no clash between the solutions offered by democracy and their belief about how they should live their lives. There is also no clash between the solutions derived by democracy and the religions embraced by the people in the west as their religions do not offer any solutions for the problems of daily life. Thus there is unity amongst all in this method to live their lives and this adherence to a single reference point is reflected in the coherence of their systems of living. We can see how the west implements the democratic rule successfully, for example in the case of Salman Rushdie who was given protection as a result of their secular belief in the freedom of opinion. Also we can see how the American troops were rallied to fight Iraq under the democratic framework to defend the 'freedom of Kuwait' or rather the freedom of American ownership of the gulf oil. In these examples the democratic decisions made by these governments were successfully implemented by the answerable institutions of that nation. We can wonder what would result if the British policemen who have to defend

Salman Rushdie did not believe in freedom of opinion, or the American troops in the gulf did not believe in personal freedom or freedom of ownership. Would these bodies still move in the same way?

This is in stark contrast to the Muslim's lands in which there is not one single reference point for our laws and thus a clash between the solutions we implement, which results in an ineffectiveness in the ability to solve our problems coherently. For example, in a many muslim countries it is taught through the schools that fornication is wrong, however the democratic laws allow businesses operating nightclubs to open, and the punishment system, through its lack of punishment for the

fornicator actually encourages such behaviour. We witnessed recently the pull out of Kashmir by Pakistani troops - who wanted to expel the occupying kuffar as Islam dictates - due to the orders of a non-Islamic democratic ruler basing his decision on another reference point and thus causing the nation to ineffectively solve its problem. These examples serve to show us the stagnation our ummah finds itself in when it tries to solve its problems, due to its reference to more than one basis. It will be impossible for the muslims to ever implement democracy as the west does since they hold a belief of Islam that provides a problem-solving basis that clashes with the secular basis of democracy. Unlike the religions of the west this belief provides us with solutions and a method of implementation for daily problems and these solutions and method will always be standing between us and any democratic solutions that we may decide to implement. For example if we democratically decided that it was allowed to fornicate, practice homosexuality, and eat pork, would we be prepared to accept our children to one day come home and do these things? Would we be prepared to give our lives for a war to defend the freedom to defame the Prophets if that was democratically decided upon for us? No we would not - and thus we would stagnate as a nation unable to organise our life's affairs. The only way we could accept these solutions and use democracy to solve our problems, like the west, is if we decided that we were going to consciously reject ruling by Allah's (SWT) laws and thus secularise Islam - however this is kufr as Allah (SWT) warns in [TMQ 5:44]

'And those who do not rule by what Allah has revealed are non-believers'

The other option that remains for us to solve our problems coherently, and move together with as a nation, is to comprehensively implement the solutions that emanate from the basis that we already have.

This movement can be illustrated when the muslims at the time of the battle of Badr were faced with a new problem that needed solving. This was whether the muslims should go out on the offensive fighting the Quraysh as the Ansar had given the pledge to defend the Prophet only and did not mention that they would leave Medinah and fight. On this day the muslims referred this problem to their basis (to live life according to the commandments of Allah) and were able to mobilise themselves into a functional unit to defeat their enemies. In the words of one of the spokesmen on that day - Sa'd ibn Muadh:

Sa'd b. Muadh stood up and spoke "O prophet of Allah, we believe in you, and bear witness to what you have vouchsafed to us and we declare in unequivocal terms that what you have brought is the Truth. We give you our firm pledge of obedience and sacrifice. O messenger of Allah, you set out of Medina with a different objective but Allah ordained otherwise. Do what ever you deem fit. Cement relations with whom you like; and sever them with those whom you dislike. Make peace with those whom you prefer and fight against those whom you look upon as enemies. We will remain on your side under all circumstances. You have every right to obtain out of our belongings as much as you like and spare for us whatever you desire. We would look upon the portion accepted by you far more valuable than that which you spare us. We will obey you most willingly in whatever you command us. If you order us to go to Bak al-Ghimad (a place in Yemen according to some and according to others, the farthest point in the Hijaz), we will show no reluctance and by Allah, Who has sent you with the Truth, if you were to ask us to plunge into the sea we will do that most readily and not a soul will stay behind. We do not grudge the idea of encounter with the enemy. We are experienced in war and are trustworthy in combat. We hope that Allah will show you through our hands those deed which will please your eyes. Kindly lead us to the battlefield in the Name of Allah".