98134 - Concept of democracy in Islam

the question

I heard that the word democracy is derived from Islam. Is that true? What is the ruling on promoting democracy?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Firstly:

Democracy is not an Arabic word. Rather it is derived from the Greek, and it is a composite of two words: demos, meaning the masses or the people, and kratia, meaning rule. So what is meant is the rule of the masses or the rule of the people.

Secondly:

Democracy is a system that is contrary to Islam, because it gives the power of legislation to the people or to those who represent them (such as members of Parliament). Based on that, in democracy legislative authority is given to someone other than Allah, may He be exalted; rather it is given to the people and their deputies, and what matters is not their consensus but the majority. Thus what the majority agree upon becomes laws that are binding on the nation, even if it is contrary to common sense, religious teaching or reason. In these systems legislation has been promulgated allowing abortion, same-sex marriage and usurious interest (riba); the rulings of sharee'ah have been abolished; and fornication/adultery and the drinking of alcohol are permitted. In fact this system is at war with Islam and its followers.

Allah, may He be exalted, has told us in the His Book that legislative authority belongs to Him alone, and that He is the wisest of those who issue rulings and judge. He has forbidden the association of anyone with Him in His authority, and no one is better than Him in ruling.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“So the judgement is only with Allah, the Most High, the Most Great!”

[Ghaafir 40:12]

“The command (or the judgement) is for none but Allah. He has commanded that you worship none but Him (i.e. His Monotheism), that is the (true) straight religion, but most men know not”

[Yoosuf 12:40]

“Is not Allah the Best of judges?”

[at-Teen 95:8]

“Say: ‘Allah knows best how long they stayed. With Him is (the knowledge of) the unseen of the heavens and the earth. How clearly He sees, and hears (everything)! They have no Walee (Helper, Disposer of affairs, Protector, etc.) other than Him, and He makes none to share in His Decision and His Rule’”

[al-Kahf 18:26]

“Do they then seek the judgement of (the Days of) Ignorance? And who is better in judgement than Allah for a people who have firm Faith?”

[al-Maa’idah 5:50].

Allah, may He be glorified and exalted, is the Creator of all things and He knows what is good for them and what is in their best interests of rulings. Human beings vary in intellect, attitude and customs, and they are unaware of what is best for them, let alone what is best for others. Hence in societies that are ruled by the people in terms of legislation and laws, one sees only corruption, immorality and disintegration of the social fabric.

It should be noted that in many countries this system has changed into something that has no

reality behind it, and it is mere slogans by which people are deceived; in fact the real ruler is the head of state and his helpers, and the people are suppressed and have no say in anything.

There is nothing more indicative of that than the fact that when this democracy produces results that do not suit the desires of the rulers, they crush it underfoot. Cases of election fraud, suppression of freedoms and silencing of the voices of those who speak the truth are well known to everyone and do not need further proof.

This is very clear in many countries and does not need any proof.

It says in Mawsoo'ah al-Adyaan wa'l-Madhaahib al-Mu'aasirah (2/1066):

Representative democracy:

This is one of the democratic systems in which the people exercise authority through a council of elected representatives of the people. In this system the people retain the right to exercise some aspects of authority directly by various means, the most important of which are:

1. The right to propose laws, which is done when a number of people propse a law in general terms or in detail, which the parliament will then discuss and vote upon.

2. The right to a referendum, whereby a law that has already been approved by Parliament is presented to the people so that they can have their say.

3. The right of objection, whereby a number of voters defined by the Constitution have the right to object to a law within a certain period after it has been passed, which will result in taking the matter to the people for a general referendum; if the people agree with it, it will be promulgated, otherwise it will be annulled. This is included in most modern constitutions.

Undoubtedly democratic systems are one of the modern forms of shirk, in terms of obedience and submission, or in legislation, as it disregards the authority of the Creator, may He be glorified and exalted, and His absolute right of legislation, and regards that as one of the rights of created beings. But Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“You do not worship besides Him but only names which you have named (forged), you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority. The command (or the judgement) is for none but Allah. He has commanded that you worship none but Him (i.e. His Monotheism), that is the (true) straight religion, but most men know not.”

[Yoosuf 12:40]

“Say (O Muhammad SAW): "I am on clear proof from my Lord (Islamic Monotheism), but you deny (the truth that has come to me from Allah). I have not gotten what you are asking for impatiently (the torment). The decision is only for Allah, He declares the truth, and He is the Best of judges.”

[al-An ‘aam 6:57].

End quote.

Thirdly:

Many people think that the word democracy means freedom! But this is incorrect because freedom is one of the by-products of democracy. What we mean by freedom here is freedom of belief, freedom of decadence, and freedom of expression, and these also have many negative impacts on Muslim societies, because matters have gone so far that aspersions are cast upon the Messengers and the messages, and upon the Qur’an and the Sahaabah, on the grounds of freedom of opinion; and wanton display and uncovering are tolerated, and indecent images and movies are propagated on the grounds of freedom. Many such things are happening, of which there is a long list, all of which are playing a part in the corruption of the ummah, morally and spiritually.

Even that freedom for which countries are calling by means of democratic systems is not absolute. We see whims and desires, and vested interests, behind the limitations on those freedoms. At the time when their systems tolerate aspersions upon the Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and the Qur’an, on the grounds of freedom of expression, we find that this freedom is denied when speaking about matters such as the “Nazi Holocaust of the Jews”! In fact

anyone who denies this Holocaust is treated as a criminal and put in prison, even though it is a historical matter that may be denied.

If these people really are promoting freedom, then why do they not let the Muslim peoples choose their own path and religion? Why did they colonize their lands and play a role in changing their religion and beliefs? What do these freedoms have to do with Italy's slaughter of the Libyan people, or with France's slaughter of the Algerian people, or with Britain's slaughter of the Egyptian people, or with America's slaughter of the Afghan and Iraqi peoples?

According to those who promote it, freedom may be subject to several restrictions, including the following:

1. The law. Man does not have absolute freedom to drive in the opposite direction to traffic in the street, or to open a shop without a license, and if he says "I am free," no one will pay any attention to him.

2. Custom. A woman in their countries – for example – cannot go to offer condolences to the bereaved wearing a bathing suit. If she says "I am free", the people will look down on her and throw her out, because it is contrary to custom.

3. Public taste. One of them – for example – cannot eat and pass wind in front of people, or even burp! The people will look down on him even if he says, "I am free."

Furthermore, we say:

Why shouldn't our religion restrict our freedom, as their freedom is restricted by things that they cannot deny? Undoubtedly what is taught by Islam is that which is in people's best interests. If a woman is forbidden to make a wanton display, or if the people are forbidden to drink alcohol and eat pork, and so on, all of that is in their best interests, physically and mentally, and for their general welfare. But they refused to restrict their freedom if the injunction comes from religion, but they say "we hear and we obey" if it comes from human beings like them or from a (man-made) law.

Fourthly:

Some people think that the word democracy is equivalent to shoora (consultation) in Islam! This is a mistaken notion for many reasons, including the following:

1. Shoora has to do with new matters that arise or with matters that are not explained in detail in the texts of the Qur'an or Sunnah. With regard to the "rule of the people", the people may discuss what is well-established in religion, which may lead to refusing to acknowldge the prohibitions on that which is forbidden, and to forbidding that which Allah has permitted or made obligatory. So the sale of alcohol is permitted according to these laws, as are fornication/adultery and riba (usury), but these laws put pressures on Islamic organizations and the activities of those who call people to Allah. This is diametrically opposed to sharee'ah, so what does this have to do with shoora?

2. The majlis ash-shoora (consultative committee) is to be formed of people who have a deep knowledge of fiqh, Islam and sharee'ah, fahm, and have a high level of piety and good character. So no one who is of bad character or foolish, or is a disbeliever or atheist, is to be consulted or involved in the shoora process. As for the democratic councils of representatives, they pay no attention to any of the con ditions mentioned above. The representative may be a disbeliever, or of bad character or foolish. What does this have to do with shoora as prescribed in Islam?

3. Shoora is not binding upon the ruler; the ruler may give precedence to the view of one member of the council that is supported by proof, and prefer his view over that of the other council members, whereas in the case of representative democracy, the agreement of the majority becomes legally binding upon the people.

Once this is known, then what the Muslims must do is be proud of their religion and trust that the rulings of the Lord are best for them in this world and in the Hereafter, and they should disavow systems that go against the laws of Allah.

What all other Muslims must do – rulers and ruled alike – is adhere to the laws of Allah, may He be exalted, in all their affairs. It is not permissible for anyone to follow a system or methodology other

than Islam. One of the indications of their acceptance of Allah as their Lord, Islam as their religion, and Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) as their Prophet and Messenger, is that the Muslims adhere to Islam outwardly and inwardly; they respect the laws of Allah and follow the Sunnah of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

We ask Allah to honour us with Islam and to cause the plots of the traitors to fail.

And Allah knows best.