

by Imam Zafrullah Domun

Main points: Election in Mauritius. Water Shortage and the need for prayers. How a Muslim should vote. Meaning of the end of the year. What is the need for religion.

After reciting the *Tashahhud*, the *Ta'uz* and the first chapter *Al Fatiha* of the Holy Quran, Imam Zafrullah Domun said:

As you are all aware on Wednesday next, general elections will be held in Mauritius. More than 900,000 electors are eligible to vote for 62 seats in the parliament. It is in elections that the voters exercise their right to choose whomsoever they please to represent them. This right to vote is taken quite lightly by many people especially those who are disgusted with politicians and the young ones who are almost unaware of our history. The first time elections were held in Mauritius was in 1886 and even at that time only a handful of people who possessed a certain amount of immovable property were given the right to vote. Women were not allowed to vote at that time in England or even in the USA. They had to fight for it. Many women in the USA were even imprisoned and engaged in hunger strikes because they protested and demanded their right to vote. Eventually this right was given to them around 1918. In Mauritius all those who could read and write and who were above 21 years were allowed to vote for the first time in 1948. But universal suffrage was granted only in the following election. This is a long and fascinating history and our young ones should read it so that they might value why it is important to vote. It is a right and you should use it.

Unfortunately throughout the world most politicians have nothing to commend themselves. They all tell you that they are the servant of the people but when you see their behavior once they are in office, you will notice that they serve their own selves and they do not care at all about the real needs of the people. What I have just said applies to many countries around the world including the so-called bastion of democracy like the British. You will recall how recently all parliamentarians in England misused public funds for personal ends. Even in Mauritius many such examples can be given where those who have exercised power have misused public funds for their own ends or have not been careful with these funds as they should have been. You will easily recall how year in and year out the director of audit continues to decry the waste of government funds in his reports. This is not a recent phenomenon. This has been going on since independence. It seems that it will continue.

Politicians have not solved the problems of the people. I remember I was a small boy in the early 1960s and we had problems of water in Rose-Hill. I remember how my mother woke up early to store some water for use during the day. At around 4 pm we again had to line up to fill our vessels from one tap that was giving us just a trickle of water. That was

about 50 years ago. Recently we again saw ourselves in a situation where many people here in Pailles and at many other places around the country did not get enough water to manage. The conclusion is simple. Politicians have not been able to solve the problems of water in this country but they do not shy from prestige projects. From what I have gathered from articles in newspapers we lose about five Mare Aux Vacoas reservoirs of water every year because of defective pipes. To replace these pipes will need an investment of around 10 billion rupees. With the billions that have recently been injected in road development which have yet to bring benefits investment in replacement of water pipes should have been a priority which has eluded our politicians. This is just an example from memory that I have given you. If you read the papers you will easily know what changing your life in hundred days has meant for most Mauritians!

Since we are speaking about shortage of water we should recall that Allah says in the Holy Quran about Hazrat Nuh (as). Addressing Allah he said among other things:

**‘And I said, ‘Seek forgiveness of your Lord; for He is the Great Forgiver;
‘He will send down rain for you in abundance,
‘and He will grant you increase of wealth and children, and will cause gardens to grow for you and will cause rivers to flow for you.
‘What is the matter with you that you hope not for greatness and wisdom from Allah?’**

In times of shortage of water we should remember this verse and the last one in Sura Al Mulk(ch67) where Allah says: Say, ‘Tell me, if *all* your water were to disappear *in the depths of the earth*, who, then, will bring you *pure* running water? Since these days most of our reservoirs are almost half full we should pray to Allah that He fills all of them so that all Mauritians should have plenty of water all year round. Remember politicians can be effective to some extent. They may replace defective pipes. But rain falls only with Allah’s permission. History is witness to the fact that when good Muslims pray for water Allah will send it. These days it is a duty for all of us to pray so that Allah may send us rain in an adequate measure for our cattle and our vegetation. May Allah listen to our prayers and grant our requests as He is the answerer of prayers. Anyhow this was an (aparté) about water.

Coming back to our subject of election, in the Holy Quran Allah says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَتِ
إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا ۗ وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ
أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا
يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٥٩﴾

Translation:

“Verily, Allah commands you to make over the trusts to those entitled to them, and that, when you judge between men, you judge with justice. And surely excellent is that with which Allah admonishes you! Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.” (4:59)

So as good Muslims what should we do in the light of this verse of the Holy Quran? In this election there are a record number of candidates. But there are only two main blocks either of which will most probably form the next government. We should give our vote to those whom we think will best serve the interests of the country. The record card of the individuals forming these two main alliances can be easily assessed and make a decision in the light of your assessment. Your decision should be arrived at on what you think about the individuals not what they tell you to think about them. This is a matter for your own conscience. In arriving at your decision you should not allow yourself to be influenced by what is known as propaganda. Although originally this word “propaganda” had a rather positive meaning but these days it has a bad connotation. One meaning of propaganda is as follows: "the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist." When you communicate with a propagandist the conversation is usually one way. Your point of view does not count. It is usually the propagandist view that counts. He wants you to think like him and in his interests. In public rallies this is what happens. You just listen to a speaker and he tries to influence you to think as he thinks. But he is most interested in persuading you to give him your vote. He does not give you anything. He just needs your vote. One should refrain from allowing oneself to be influenced by these people. One should learn to exercise one’s critical thinking skills in order to make good decisions. Anyhow this is a process and we need to perfect ourselves as we move along the journey of life.

You know, politics is a matter that is too important for a country to leave it only in the hands of politicians. People who are motivated to be of service to others should get involved in politics and try to get themselves elected. Such people should then work for the betterment of the whole society. If such a system existed we would have seen progress everywhere not only just in the growth of GDP. So while we wait for such a new breed of politicians to make themselves known we should each one play our part and vote for the best candidate that we think will be good for all Mauritians and not for a small clique. May Allah help all citizens of Mauritius to make the right choice on Wednesday next so that they might not have to be sorry later on.

Now we will move on to something else. Another year will end soon. It just marks the passage of time. It reminds us that time is short and that our end is fast approaching. As long as we have the time we should continue to seek forgiveness from Allah and we should continue to do our best to seek all the ways that will make us near and dear to Him. This is a serious matter. Let us not be of those who fritter away their time in doing futile

and fruitless things. There are plenty of good deeds that can be accomplished before one dies. Let us all use the available time that we have left to please our Lord and not to harm any human being. May Allah help us all in this matter.

We will close with an extract from the writings of Hazrat Masih Maood (as). Although we might have heard this before, it is always useful to be reminded of these words and these instructions. He says:

“There are many religions in this country and religious rivalry is sweeping the land like a storm, but I have realized, through deep reflection and continuous revelations from God that all this contention springs from the single fact that most people have lost their spiritual faculties and do not fear God. Heavenly light, which helps to distinguish truth from falsehood, has gone out from almost every heart, atheism is gaining ground day by day, and, while tongues utter the name of God and Parmeshwar, hearts are growing more and more inclined towards agnosticism. All this is easily testified by people’s practices which are far from what they should be. They do profess a great deal but never practice what they preach. Here I do not mean to question the sincerity of anyone who privately leads a life of piety, but, for the most part, people have failed to attain the object for which religion was made essential for mankind. Most people do not care for the purity of their hearts, true love for God, sympathy for mankind, and higher morals, such as meekness, kindness, justice and humility; and have no regard for purity, piety and righteousness, which is the soul of religion. Alas! Even as religious rivalry grows, spirituality only continues to decline.

The purpose of religion is that people should recognize the True God Who created the world, love Him so much that every other love should grow cold in their hearts, be kind and compassionate towards His creatures, and strive to attain the utmost purity. This purpose is being neglected in this age and most people are practically following some form of atheism. They do not seem to be aware of the existence of God, and it is this lack of awareness that causes sin to be committed with more and more audacity. It is plain that unless we possess true knowledge about something, we cannot understand its worth and can neither love, nor fear it. All forms of love and fear and appreciation are born out of awareness, and the major cause of the profusion of sin in this age is man’s lack of awareness about his Creator. The sign which distinguishes a true religion from others is that it opens up for the believers many paths to knowledge and awareness about God, which causes them not only to desist from sin, but, when they have seen the beauty and glory of the Divine, to fall in love with Him so completely that to them even a moment of separation seems worse than the torments of Hell.

Deliverance from sin and love for God is undoubtedly the highest object of man’s existence, and forms the true happiness that is also called Bliss. Conversely, every desire that goes against the will of God, and every life spent in the pursuit of such desires, is like the fire of Hell. The question now arises as to how man can find deliverance from such an infernal existence. God has told me that salvation from this abode of fire depends solely upon true and perfect awareness of Him. The lure of carnal passions, which is destroying faith like a flood, can only be countered by

something equally powerful. So, in order to attain salvation, we need perfect knowledge and complete awareness of God, as only diamond can cut diamond. It doesn't require a lot of arguments to show that only true God-realization—*Ma'rifat*—can inspire love or fear. (Lecture Lahore)

Incha Allah we will continue next time.