

Ques: What are the Al-Ghazali's prerequisites for becoming a Khalifah?

### 1. Introduction:

Al-Ghazali was a Sufi, theologian, and philosopher of the Ash'arite school of thought in the Middle Ages. At his time the Muslim world was in a crisis. The caliphate was divided into sectarian lines. Al-Ghazali presented the need for a central Muslim Khalifah and refuted the Hellenistic or Greek-influenced philosophy in Muslim world. In the realm of political philosophy, Imam Ghazali states that the Khalifat is a divine state that "is regulated and ruled not by reason but by the Shariah or divine law. He therefore rejects the philosophers' right to examine the nature of the caliphate. The imam or Khalifa should devote himself to religious and spiritual functions because he is the "Shadow of Allah" on earth. He should therefore, be modest, simple, and just a fountain of justice and responsible for the well-being of his people. Al-Ghazali's prerequisites are widely accepted as moral guidelines for choosing leaders in the Muslim world.

### 2. Context of Imam Ghazali's Theory of Khalifat:

Every theory has a background associated with it. Similarly, Imam Ghazali's political theory cannot be explained without considering the condition of the Muslim world at that time. Several factors were involved in the

Islamic world in his time

### a. Deteriorating Abbasid caliphate

Firstly, the Abbasid caliphate was in a state of shambles & had lost all political influence in al-Ghazali's time. The caliphate was now only a pseudo-religious office, without any political influence.

### b. The established Seljuk sultans in the east

Secondly, the Seljuk sultans were the real rulers of the eastern regions of the Islamic world. Al-Ghazali recognized their supremacy and declared the sultanate or the sovereign power of the sultan or khalifah as the protector and defender of the caliphate, an institution that he considered necessary for the unity of the Islamic world.

### c. The Emergence of the Fatimids caliphate

The challenge of the Shia rulers of Egypt the Fatimids, was a threat to the Abbasid caliphate.

### d. Attack of the European crusaders

Another danger had appeared, in Palestine and Syria i.e. in very heartland of Islam.

It was the attack of the European crusaders or the Christian warriors of the Cross.

They had established the Kingdom of Jerusalem and threatened to invade other Muslim lands. It was in such conditions that al-Ghazali put forward his theory of a caliphate and khalifah as the defender of the unity of the Islamic world.

### 3. Prerequisites for becoming a Khalifah or Imam

The following are prerequisites for becoming a Khalifah in Islam according to Imam Ghazali

- 1) He must have the courage and ability to wage jihad i.e. Holy War
- 2) He can efficiently perform the duties of governmental administration known as Kifaya
- 3) He should know about performing jihad. In this respect al Ghazali says that the imam should take help from the ulema or religious experts.
- 4) He must be pious, indeed, piety is an important characteristic of the political position of Khalifah
- 5) He must be Adil and do justice
- 6) He must have studied Shariah.
- 7) He should be practicing the religious virtues of charity, piety, humility and compassion
- 8) He should be able to reconcile the factions and prevent the Muslims from fighting among themselves

### 4. Contemporary relevance

As of today, there is no functional imamate of Muslim Ummah in the world. However, Muslim leaders all across the world are still partially selected or elected on the prerequisites envisioned by Imam Ghazali.

For example in Pakistan a predominantly Muslim society people do incline toward religious figures in politics and vehemently vote for them.

The underlying thought process is the same as Muslims appreciate a pious Islamic figure as a leader.

Imam Ghazali stresses the importance of Khalifah so that he can put the Ummah

together. Since the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the 20th century, the modern world has been plethora of conflicts among Muslim countries. The Saudi bombing of Yemen and the Gaza blockade by Egypt are some recent examples. Had there been a Muslim Khalifa, Muslim countries would be united which proves al-Ghazali's stance of Muslims having a Khalifah every time.

### 5. How Imam Ghazali's Khalifa is different from other Khalifa

Imam Ghazali's Khalifa is "Khalifat al-Allah" rather than "Khalifa for Rasool". The pious Caliphs who succeeded the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) and not vicegerents of Allah on earth. This is also a point of criticism of al-Ghazali's philosophy of Khalifah.

### 6. Contribution of Imam Ghazali's Philosophy to Islamic political thought

Imam Ghazali was the first to indicate Sufism formally into Dharmic discourse. His philosophy had a massive impact on succeeding Muslim as well as Christian philosophers, especially **Hume, Dante, and St Thomas Aquinas**. His theory of education laid the grounds that fostered education in the Islamic Golden age.

### Conclusion:

lastly, Al-Ghazali was called "Hujjat al-Islam" meaning "proof of Islam" for his remarkable work in Islamic theology. He is rightly attributed as the Mujaddid of the 12th century.

because of his efforts to revive the true spirit of Islam. Imam Ghazali emphasized the need for a Khalifah for uniting the Muslim Ummah. He defined Khalifah as someone who has expertise in both religious and worldly affairs. He is just, pious, humble, alim, Adil, a reconciler and a propagator of Shariah. He uttered the importance of a Khalifah to counter internal and external threats to Muslim Ummah. In short Al Ghazali is called the Mujaddid of the 11th century because of his efforts to revive the true spirit of Islam.