

Taking the Status of a Person into Account to Appoint him as Imaam

Q: Salaah-234: We are still busy building a Masjid and have only a Madrassah. The teacher at our Madrassah is also the Imaam and he also bathes the deceased. He is however a beggar and begs for food to eat. Some people say that it is totally Haraam to follow him in salaah. Is there anything wrong in him being the Imaam?

Answer: It is not the personal status of a person that is taken into account when appointing an Imaam but what needs to be considered is whether the person is the best from the rest so that he is able to lead the salaah correctly. What also needs to be considered is whether more people will perform salaah if he is Imaam or whether the number of followers will decrease. Therefore, if a person is regarded as one of low social standing but he excels all the others in piety and Deeni knowledge and people respect him for this, it will be correct to follow him in salaah. In fact, him being the Imaam is not even Makrooh. However, if the people have no respect for him on account of his actions, it will be Makrooh for him to be the Imaam because the number of followers will decrease on account of the lack of respect people have for him.

Fataawaa Aalamgeeri (Vol.1 Pg.83) states that the reason for appointing the best person as the Imaam is so that the number of Musallis can be increased. The best of people to be Imaam is the one who knows most about the Shari'ah, who recites the Qur'aan with the best Tajweed, who is most pious, whose beliefs are correct, who hails from an honourable family, who is good-looking, who has a high social standing, who has excellent character and wears clean and tidy clothing. People will want to follow him and the number of Musallis will therefore increase with him as the Imaam. Hadith states: "If you wish that your salaah reach the highest levels of acceptance, you should appoint your learned ones as your Imaams so that they could serve as messengers between you and your Rabb.

The Imaam should therefore be the best of the community who must not be guilty of any act that causes people to look down upon him. Of course, when only a Faasiq is available to be an Imaam then salaah in Jamaa'ah must not be forsaken because better than performing salaah individually is to perform behind such a person. And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

Fatawa Rahimiyyah vol.2