Excerpt: His Highness the Aga Khan on the Imamat

**ITV:** Your Highness, if a complete stranger who had no idea who you were or what you were, came up to you and said, 'What you do for a living?' What would be your reply?

**Aga Khan:** I would say that my role is -- I am the Imam -- the hereditary Imam of the Shia Muslim community; the international Shia Muslim community.

**ITV:** And that your influence in the world is?

**Aga Khan:** I am responsible for guiding the interpretation of the faith for the Ismaili Muslims and advising them on issues of everyday life that they bring to me or that the Imamat as an institution has to decide upon....

**ITV:** What do you think of are the qualities that you'll look for when it is your turn to appoint your successor?

**Aga Khan:** I think I would hope the next Imam has a thorough and deep understanding of the faith which he has to represent and lead in its interpretation. I think he must have a good understanding of the issues which the Ismaili community and the countries in which they live will have to be addressed and that is essentially the countries of Asia and Africa. He will have to have a good understanding of the forces that are at play and that are likely to be at play. Therefore, he is going to have to be well equipped to deal with the leadership office....

**ITV:** One of the myths surrounding you is that some people in the
West think of you as a living God. Not only is that not true, it is also blasphemous.

*Aga Khan*: Absolutely. I mean as you know the faith of Islam was revealed at a time when the Arabian continent was idolatrous and idolatry, all forms of idolatry, are totally prohibited by Islam. It is certainly true to say that the Western World doesn’t necessarily understand the theology of Shi’ism nor indeed the theology of many mystical sects whether they are Shia or Sunni or Christian. Mysticism, in its, in its essence is difficult....

*ITV*: Are you a democrat?

*Aga Khan*: Insofar as a [sic] institution can be democratic, yes. There are areas where in the interpretation of faith, democracy cannot, cannot play. But in the choice of leadership, in consultation on decisions, I do seek to consult as widely as possible.

*His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1985 Independent Television (ITV) Interview (London, United Kingdom)*
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/3134/

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