

AGAINST RELIGIOUS INTERFERENCE IN STATE AFFAIRS OF PAKISTAN

By Shahid Rizvi

With all my respect and reverence to the great personalities of Holy Prophets, their efforts to reform the society, this article is based on the reality that like all other things in nature – and society is a part of nature – religion is born, blossoms and dies in the time span. There is nothing in nature, which can survive forever. Everything is how much strong and compact it may be shatters during the course of time. Idea is one of the most stubborn things but it also has to change in conditions. There have been thousands and thousands of religions in the world, but today only a few are known and the rest have been obliterated and washed by the time. The prophet who proclaimed these religions could not live more than a man's natural age.

Harmful effects

All religions have been outmoded, outdated and have become impracticable. In fact they have become very harmful as the influence of the rituals, traditions, customs and the world outlook they produce retard the mind and thinking the suited to the modern age.

Secondly, as is seen the domination of religion cannot be effected unless it accompanies the worst kind of violence, rupture of human dignity, violation of human rights, degradation of population and forcing of rituals on the public. The torch bearers of religion who want its renaissance are only the fundamentalists, extremists, terrorists as is happening in Algiers, Afghanistan, Egypt and many other countries. These groups hold guns to make people obey them. Certain countries are encouraging their activities and protecting them. These countries are already barbarians as far as human rights are concerned.

It is high time that people get rid of religious influence in social life, economy and politics of the country. The part religion has played in devastating our country is too obvious. The two-nation theory on the basis of religion was a sentimental stake, which had succeeded. It was a game played by the British to keep India divided for Britisher's interest. The plan was fulfilled by the part of society, which was mostly feudal and, Muslim under the spell of being successors of Mughals, were attached with it and were implicated in it under the false notions. The theory already proved a gimmick with the separation of Pakistan into Bangladesh, and also by the Muslim population left behind India. The interest of Muslim countries often at war with each other, also show that there is no single nation called Muslim nation. The interests of Muslim residing in Bharat do not coincide with those of Pakistani Muslims. The religion based theory of nationalism do not meet, and in fact has never met the test of time.

Based on a nation that never existed

Right from the day Pakistan was created, the boom ranging slogan was that Pakistan was created on the basis of Muslim nationhood, a nation that never existed. The creation of the country was never existed. The creation of the country was later purported to be establishing an Islamic state. (History did not mention of a political state in Islam. The Holy book of Muslims – Quaran has not mentioned at any place the basic principles and functionalities of a state, and as a matter of fact, no religion has ever mentioned the principles of governance. In fact the rights of

citizens are not determined by their belief. No state can deny the right of potable water, or health care to any citizen because he is Hindu or Jew or Christian.

There is no mention in constitution, sovereignty, and rules for functionaries, franchise rights of citizen etc in Holy Quran and Hadiths. The rules of governance in a Muslim state were first formulated during the period of Abbasiad caliphate. Moreover the dynamic concept of eternal change of Allama Iqbal resulting in 'Ijtihad' which was meant to change with religious tenet according to the change in time, was never accepted by the clergy. Although if it had been accepted, the fate of Islam would have been no better than present day Christianity which has allowed homosexuality in the name of and in fact to check the going down numerical strength of the followers). It was claimed that the constitution should be a religious one and a 'qardad-e-maqasad' was formulated and interested in the constitution.

Religious parties were given free hand

The religious parties were given a freehand to try, in fact use force, to modify the social life according to their own concept of Islam. In economic field, it was claimed that feudalism and jagirdari was God-bestowed and was Islamic economic system as explained by Maulana Mudodi and many others and that the principle was dormant and could not be changed. It was said that God has created man into groups of rich and poor landowners and tenets, slave owners and slaves, workers and entrepreneurs, and the inequality in society is not man made and cannot be removed.

In politics subjectivity, pessimism and unconditional obedience was made the order of the day for the common people who were denied any say in the affairs of the country. The masses were cowed down. In social life the conditions created by the mullahs and the religious clergy was more devastating. The small vicinities were virtually ruled by mohallah molvis.

The women are still considered by majority of the population as half human. Shariat scholars still hold the evidence of woman as half value against man. Women are treated as sinful and unreliable. Education more than rendering by hearth the Holy Quran, have been denied to girls. In education deenyat or religious tenets were compulsory. Believe it, there are still religious schools (madarassahs) which keep their teenage students enchained. The boys were made to believe in deenyat that everything in the universe made of matter is destructible and has an end.

No solutions for the present day

The dilemma is that the boys have to believe in science, which says matter is indestructible. Where do they go? They cannot disbelieve religion, which is the principle order of the society. For the whole of their life, the educated people have to face this confusion in more complexity. For many long years people here did not believe that man has reached moon. This psychology of the nation kept it backward and damaged its intellect, progress and development as a nation. Moreover all the energies of the nation were consumed in discussions how to find out solutions of the present problems through Islam. Obviously we did not dare to go outside Islam, which has fact no solution at all for the present day.

All religions are in better conflict with the present day social reality. Modern society is not prepared to accommodate the tenets and commandments of any religion. The society has developed in a secular way, which is now its natural development, and its norms are neutral and discerned with religion. In social life intermingling of the population following different religions, inter-marriages and social mix up is very common today. In a secular society the religion is to be a personal affair and is not concerned at all with the state.

Neither the present Day State nor any state in the past had religion as its base for governance. (The spiritual center and the state center were always separate except for a few rare occasions of historical compulsion. These occasions also, if minutely scrutinized, would show that religion and state affairs were kept separate. Majority of the Prophets of God were not kings neither they objected to the way the monarchs went in their era). In the circumstances prevailing today the State cannot quite naturally support or second a religion, including the sectarian beliefs because

there are more than one religion and each religion consists of more than 72 sects. There has never been a single religious state in civilized history.

Religions products of specific eras

In the history of social development each religion has been a product of certain specific era. All religions were founded on one or the other down trodden social forces. Every religion was the voice of the lower classes of the society who were deprived of human rights and suffered from exploitation of the upper or well to do classes of a given society. In this sense the religion were against exploitation and extortion in the particular sense of that period. The history of religious thought proves it without any doubt. Take for example Buddhism. It was a revolt against the tyranny of upper caste upper classes based on Hinduism against the lower strata i.e. Shoder. The teaching of Bhudda were that everyone can reach God through his own devotion an prayers and there is no need of middleman (a Brahmin). It was against Brhaminism. The teaching of Jains was that no one has a right to harm anyone. Jainees cover their nose with a thin clothe so that small insects in the air are not killed by their breathing which goes to show that they were against hurting anyone. Christianity was an agitation of slaves against the rulers and Christ was resurrected by the preaching equality and supporting the slaves. Islam was reaction of Qurasish against the supremacy of Jews and medusas who were making Arabs their slaves in debt and dominated the trade and wealth in Arabia. It was also a revolt of slaves against the slavery and inhuman treatment meted out to slaves.

All these religions having born under the same circumstances have many similarities. The teachings are common. Basis of all religions is ethics. Speak truth, don't be cruel to anybody, don't cheat anyone, all who belong to the same religion are your brothers, be honest, pray to God and every individual is answerable to God and responsible for his action, help others etc are the common teachings in all religions. There is the basic idea of establishing society on ethical norms.

Fear of an Almighty

Since the religions were born in the age when the laws of nature were not known to man, the activity of human beings was controlled and disciplined by the fear of an Almighty and a fear of the Day of Judgement when the Almighty will give the appreciation for good work and punishment for evil doing, and this appreciation or punishment will go on forever never ending in time. The fear of forces out of human control turned in the fear of an unseen God. This is that time helped in creating discipline and order in the society. All the religions, in different stages, preach about an existence of one Creator. Even in the old witchcraft, the small gods submitted to one God. In Hinduism thousands of idols represent the Gods who were answerable to Vishnu or the Creator. Christianity had the same idea translated into God, God's son and the devil. Before Islam, the Jews already had a concept of God who talked to their apostle. Islam therefore, developed the authority of God who sent His message through angel and not direct i.e. bigger authority. Islam being the latest of all religions developed the authority of God in a more sophisticated and complicated way.

The process of knowledge develops unceasingly. It brought to human beings the understanding and comprehension of the laws of nature. The man learned how to use the forces of nature for his benefits and how to control them. The life, universe and all its 'tilasmat' laid bare before the eyes of scientists and philosophers and before the common man through them. The man gained more and more confidence to exploit and mould the nature according to their wishes. The science and technology not only gave power to exploit natural forces but also made man superior and dominant. Whatever man needs for his living comes from nature.

The difference in the old and modern society is that earlier man had to live on what nature itself gave him, now it lives on whatever he forces nature to give him. The innumerable fields of science and technology developing through the process of knowledge and experiments have

empowered man to create artificial raw material, artificial clouds and rains, and powers to control himself in upper sphere.

To create a democratic society

The knowledge gained by man gradually has also worked into molding the society which, according to changing times, changed into different systems of governance. From a tribal system onward parliamentary democracy has been highest development in the political history. The society which developed with the industrial revolution and afterwards has the highest form till date.

The society is based on equality of man, no discretion between sex, color, caste, religion etc., liberalism, expansion and development of knowledge, no interference with other's beliefs consistent progress, no bias and prejudice against new ideas, an elitist society laminating with knowledge and reason, and more important the adult franchise i.e. government by the elected representatives of the people for the people. This concept of democracy envelops the climax of the development of whole social life. Institutions, government or otherwise, trade, business and industry, agriculture, education, habitation, civic amenities, culture and civilization, customs and traditions, ways and manners, political and non political systems are all included in this way of life which is called democracy.

To create a democratic society, a vast educational network to create awareness in the masses is essential. All the institutions whether political, economic, social or educational have only one aim – creating awareness among the people. Primarily this awareness is concerned with their right as a citizen. The first democratic right is a person is that he is not subjected to exploitation by any other man. Right to live respectably, right to shelter, right to civil amenities, sanitation, hygienic conditions and potable water, right to education and knowledge, right to be treated on equal footing. Right to have a proper job are all basic human rights. Democracy ensures freedom of expression and freedom of association.

Parliamentary form of government best suited

The parliamentary form of government is the best suited to democracy. We in Pakistan have every of political and economic system except slavery, which the history has seen. We have tribal system, feudal systems both jagirdari and zamindari, and small land owning system of so called free tenants. The roots of all these systems are maintained through the religious thought in the country. The impact of the system is such that even the most progressive tribal sardars are in essence traditional tribal sardars. It is because the tribes' elders under the influence of religion and century old traditions do not approve elimination of the tribal system. Second reason is that their areas have not been developed by the government. The obsolete and dead systems of land owning in agriculture are widespread over 70 percent area of the country. Thus over 70 percent of the population is the grips of orthodox conventions and morbid customs. These conventions and customs have their root cause in the religious influence. Sindh has a tradition of karo kari besides a custom of marrying a girl to Holy Quran. These are all approved by moulvis. Tribal are more rigid in conservatism. Punjabi tenant and NWFP rural and urban poor are not different. In view of the religion and clergy playing havoc with the country, and because it is heavy impediment in the progress and development of the country to become a moderate state, it is necessary to put the correct picture before the people and help build a secular atmosphere in the country. The secular atmosphere in its turn will strengthen the democracy.

No religion is eternal

There is no denial to the fact that the religion cannot provide a solution to the present day problems. Like every other thing in nature and in society, religion is also born under specific conditions and in a specific era, gains power and youth, become old and then dies out. Hundreds

of religious systems in the history have been born and washed away. Anas had a different way of worship and living. Daravadians had different and aborigines of Australia and Africa had something different. Their beliefs and ways of worship and living are no more alive. Only the few last religions have their influence and following. No religion is eternal as each one was to be replaced with some different commands. The last few religions i.e. Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, being most recent, have a spiritual hold on the people. As far as practical following is concerned, the system is Buddhism and Christianity is more or less dead. The reforms continuously being made in Christianity to conform the religion to the needs of modern society has left no religion in Christianity. Buddhism is seen alive only on Buddha Janti, the festival on the birthday of Buddha. Islam being the latest religion has a few practical ritual aspects but devoid of any spirituality. The five-time prayers, Friday prayers. Fasting in Ramazan, Eid festivals, celebration of birth of the Holy Prophet, saints, etc., is dwindling in spirit and quantum both. The nation cannot pick up a few hundred pious people from among who are real Muslims practicing ethical values. This aspect has given a duality of thought to people – believing in honesty and practicing otherwise.

The case of women

We take a few cases for example.

Look to the case of women. Religion says that women should be subordinate to the husband so much so that she shall bow down before him. It is a way to pressurize women, in fact women with all social factors behind her - prestige of home, children, household and a backing of society against cruelty etc., - is a very powerful half better. Married or unmarried women have its own strength in the society. When one tries to devoid her of the respect, she in most cases retaliates and destroys the fiber of the society.

Children mostly favor their mother and man is left alone. Instead of giving respect and equality to the women which she obtains by force, religion want to degrade her and fails. In inheritance a girl has half share against full share of the boy. It goes to prove that Islam does not encourage women to take part in economic activities of the nation contrary to the fact that some very notable ladies of Arab, one of whom Hazrat Khadija, wife of the Holy Prophet, were engaged in trade and business, and a very high status in society. It is not acceptable in the present society.

The case of interest

In the case of interest, Interest is forbidden in the Islam. An earning on investment is interest when the investor is a sleeping partner. Whatever name you may like to give the process, the essence remains the same. When we talk of profit and loss sharing account, we practically mean profit sharing account and no loss. If you talk of the sharing of loss and show a loss on the accounts of the clients, the bank will have to be closed. So it is just cheating yourself.

You are using the name of Islam to hide real facts and befouling the people around. We all know that if interest is taken out of the society, the whole economic and financial life. We believe that whatever happens is by the will of God. We have been condemning those people like Moatezilla who believed in man's independent activity. We on the other hand believe that God will reward and punish on the day of judgement. How on earth the man can be punished for no crime of his own if his actions are under the will of God. This duality of thought is inherent in us. More confusion arises when we accept ourselves as sinners while accepting that nothing happens without the will of God. In fact we do whatever is in our interest in practical life and do not care for the teachings of religion i.e. honesty, truth etc.

The case of property

We cheat defraud, take bribes and kickbacks, tell lies for the whole day, do corruption, womanizing and all sorts of social evils and every one of us makes full effort to degenerate the

society into a filthy being, but also make a show of our zeal and anxiety in prayers. It is our national character made up of the fiber of religion clashing with the modern times.

In the landowning systems, the verdict of Islam allows crop sharing and also jagirs and absentee landlordism in the lands and gardens. These forms of land ownership are against all natural justice. Tiller is devoid of his more than half crop and in some cases full crop living all the year long on loans from landowner. These forms besides being highly exploitative, are also a big hurdle in increasing agricultural production. These forms have to be wiped out in all cases. The resisting force against real reforms in agriculture was the coalition of jagirdars and religious clergy and due to their political influence the national exchequer doesn't get revenue of 52 billion rupees yearly.

In Islam private property is a sacred thing. If it applies to agricultural land, there can be no effective change in land ownership.

73 sects in Islam – and no consensus

Islam has no inherent system of reforms to make the religion conforming to the changing society. Even the small reforms are resisted. There are 73 sects in Islam and each one has developed from a little difference in ideology and thinking. In other religions, they do not pressurize any one if any one doesn't go to church or mandir. Marriages between followers of different religions is a common thing today. We still remain busy in finding a spouse of the same caste and creed, and waste a major part of our life. The recent Saima case proved that we still do not allow the girls to chose their mate and insist that Wali's consent is necessary for a woman. Thus the responsibility of girls' marriages lies on the shoulders of parents, which is not the case in most nations. A false shame having its roots in the religious notions dominated our behavior.

Another most objectionable thing in all religions is that calls upon the followers, without exception, to firmly believe in superstitions, ghost, witches, bad and evil spirits and the powers these have to harm the people. To counter bad spirits, religion ask for orthodox belief in good spirits and miraculous powers of saints, faqirs and pirs and their mazars, amulets, spell, etc. Ghosts and evil spirits as well as good spirits and miraculous powers of saints and faqir are all absurd and non existence things and have been invented for vested interests, business purposes and keeping people enchanted. In the present society of light and reason and scientific knowledge, nothing can be believed to exist which can not be proved to exist by experiment. Belief is an idea accepted it is proved. Reflection and mirages cannot be taken for reality. These theories of Dark Age make people resistant to open mindedness, liberal thinking, gaining knowledge and learning and it keeps the people enchanced to the old order. The worst effect of such concepts result in paralyzing the society. These absurd beliefs are inalienable part of spiritualism, which is the kernel of religion out of this false and destructive charm.

There is no set of Islamic laws for which there is a consensus among all Muslims. There are 73 sects and all have vast differences on the question of shariat. Except for the basic five principles, on one issue one sect agrees with the other. Many times this debate has been initiated in the country without any result. Every one insisted that he is correct and all others are wrong. These differences concern the every day life. For example a sect believes that hands of a thief should be cut off in all cases. Another sect says that hands should be cut off from elbow. Another sect says that hands should be cut off from the wrist. Another one says only thumb should be cut off. These differences appear in each and every issue concerning life and also what will happen after death. On important matters the differences are more serious. The interpretations of Muslim history is different with each sect. According to the belief of a sect the opinion regarding different khalifas and kings of different dynasties differ. When all the efforts to reach a consensus on Islamic laws failed, it was said that the law of the majority sect should be the basis of the constitution. If the principle of majority is to prevail what is wrong with democracy – majority of the people – which has no discrimination against any of the sects or religion. In democracy and secularism only one set of law will be applicable and all citizens would be equal in the eyes of law.

Do we need religion at all?

The religion as is proved from the Holy books and many great Muslims scholars' writings has no system of governance and political state. History also shows that out of more than lakh prophets, only a few could get political power. The whole teachings of religions were to reform the social structure of the society. The kernal of teachings was ethics and social behavior. This factor is common in all religions. Presently the awareness and knowledge in the society is so widespread that every man knows about the human rights. Whatever ethical fiber a religion has is not more than the human rights values of the present society. Human rights values are the concern of everybody. Every one knows how to behave neighbor, how to treat relatives, speak truth and never to cheat in dealings etc. And much better than dogmatic approach of religion, every one knows how to treat women and what consequences arise from maltreatment. Apart from the aspect of practicability of human rights, which are bound by the historical, cultural, traditional, mass awareness and social bondage and grow with civilization, the consciousness of human rights is the most important factor of the society. The human rights actually surpass religions' values in many ways. Take for example freedom of expression. In democracy every one can change your belief and religion without having the threat of being exterminated. One how leaves a religion or even a sect does it at the risk of his won and family's life.

In the wake of the present facts and prevailing conditions, the question arises whether we need any religion at all. The answer is that the religion has become obsolete and redundant effects on the society and is now exerting anti social, anti people and undemocratic effects on the society and has marred its development.

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