

5. Is The Islamic Social Law Practicable And Constant?

You, noble reader, may say to yourself that the former remarks are true, and if the view of Islam in creating a worthy and proper society is the most progressive and has the most solid foundation which is far superior in those respects to the communities created by the progressive and civilized nations of today:

1. Why is it, then, not practicable?
2. Why was it not put into practice except for a short duration?
3. How could Islam which could not maintain its own community, transform the governments of Caesars and Shahs?

The Islamic government was turned into an empire, committing deeds much more heinous and tragic than the former empires. But western civilization is more progressive and their laws are firmer and more reliable.

One would say that the western nations have based their social modes and laws on the will of the nation, the needs of nature, and the wishes of the majority, for usually it is impossible to secure the consensus of all on one matter. Even in the natural order of things, the same causes of and factors in bringing about phenomena are likely to be valid in the majority of cases, but not in all.

Moreover, when various factors are opposed to one another, and each factor intends to affect another in an opposite manner, the one which possesses a majority can do so, not the minority, and not all are influenced.

Now that this is the way of natural causes, how apt would it be to base the body of society from the viewpoint of aims, methods and prevalent social laws on the foundation of the majority's will. This is the basic logic of civilization.

The theory of religion in the present world is no more than a fancy and a dream, which does not go beyond the stage of theory. Religion is considered by them as a mental invention with no goal.

Modern civilization has found its way in every country, and has acted as the guardian of power, happiness, moral refinement of individuals, purity and removal of all moral villainies. The villainies which have been destroyed by civilization are those which society never approves of such as falsehood, treason, oppression, unfairness, meanness mingled with crime and so on.

The above remarks are in short some of the points which agitate the minds of some of us Orientals who engage in discussions, particularly students and scholars who are interested in social and intellectual arguments and are inclined to study such matters. But we apologize for saying that such an argument is improper, and that its profounders have misunderstood a view which is closer to the truth.

To clarify this matter, we give an answer to each of the above points.

1. It has been said that the social mode of Islam is not practicable in the world, while the present ways of civilization under the existing conditions are practicable.

The meaning of this statement is that the present conditions of the world are unsuitable for the injunctions which Islam offers. This is obvious but it leads us now here. For, all the goals which prevail in the world have been without a precedent, and have appeared later, and the occasion of their appearance has been when all the conditions have been opposed and unfavorable to them, and have wholly rejected them and driven them away.

Former ways which have been prevalent have risen to stand against new ways and disputed and struggled against them. Very possibly new aims have been defeated at the beginning of their movements, and reappeared again and again, until they were victorious and found a place and domination for themselves.

Some of these aim to have been overthrown and destroyed, since conditions have not yet been favorable to them.

History supports this claim in all the religious and worldly goals, and even in democratic and communistic aims¹.

The Qur'an says:

"Ways have come before you and gone. Wander about the earth and see the end of those who denied the truth and considered it falsehood. Chapter 3: 137"

"There have been traditions before you and gone. Look around the world and see the end of those who uttered lies." Chapter 3: 136.

This saying of the Qur'an refers to these same historical examples, and says: A way which accompanies the denial of God's verses cannot have a good end.

We conclude, therefore, that if a course is not compatible with existing human conditions, there is no reason to believe that the course is wrong and corrupt. But this in itself is a natural principle which is established in the world in order to supplement and complete new happenings which occur, following the various actions and reactions and opposition of various natural factors.

Islam is no exception to this law from a natural and social point of view, but it is exactly like other schools in the fact that it sometimes develops and sometimes retreats, and like them it is dependent on factors and conditions.

Today that Islam has penetrated the hearts and minds of over four hundred million people, it is not weaker than the time of the call of Noah, Abraham and Muhammad².

Each of these divine men began their call when the world knew nothing but corruption and ruin. Gradually their mission effectively took root and appealed to the human heart. They revived and joined together and their firm ties have not been loosened up to now.

Muhammad rose at a time when he had only one man and one woman (Ali-bin-Abi-Taleb and Khadija) to support him, but other people joined him one after another. Those were truly hard and unpleasant days, until God aided them and turned them into a community in which piety and goodness ruled over all the individuals in it.

There was a short pause in this state of social goodness, but after the death of the Prophet, riots raised their heads and there occurred events which diverted the movement from its original course.

Nevertheless, this small sample, in spite of its short life, did not take long to spread over east and west within less than half a century, and so transformed history that we notice its great vestiges up to the present day. These vestiges are eternal.

The social and spiritual discussions which are carried on concerning precise speculative history cannot but confess this truth that the factor and origin of all the changes in the contemporary world have been the rise of the Islamic way³.

But unfortunately European debaters, on account of their religious prejudices or for political reasons, have failed to discuss the influence of the rise of Islam on human society in a satisfactory manner. If a well-informed debater wishes to express a fair opinion, how can he allow himself to call the movement of the new civilization a Christian movement, and consider Christ as its leader and banner-bearer?

Whereas Christ himself affirms that he is concerned only with the spirit and not interested in physical

matters, or government and politics⁴.

It is Islam which calls for gregariousness and alliance and is concerned with all human social matters without exception.

Can such negligence by learned Europeans have any motive but extinguishing the light of Islam, and putting out the fire which it has kindled in the hearts? All these are done unfairly and they intend to present Islam as a racial objective, which has no consequence but racial differences. But it is God's will to make His light perfect.

In short, Islam has proved its competence for giving people a happy life, and will guide them to this goal. A faith which had such an advantage cannot be called a hypothesis which is incompatible with human life. Such an aim can never despair of the guardianship of the people's worldly affairs, for its final goal is true happiness.

Profound inquiry into the conditions of beings leads us to conclude that mankind will eventually attain the final goal which he has always sought. Then Islam will rise with all its reality, and undertake the total tutelage of human society.

According to this view, God has given this promise in the Holy Qur'an:

"God promised those who believed and performed good deeds to let them act as successors on Earth." (An-Noor, 24: 55),

O you who believe! whoever from among you turns back from his religion, then Allah will bring a people, He shall love them and they shall love Him, lowly before the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, they shall strive hard in Allah's way and shall not fear the censure of any censurer; this is Allah's Face, He gives it to whom He pleases, and Allah is Ample-giving, Knowing. (Al-Maaida, 5: 54)

And certainly We wrote in the Book after the reminder that (as for) the land, My righteous servants shall inherit it. (Al-Anbiyaa, 21: 105)

and several other verses.

Another aspect which has been neglected⁵ is that in principle the social mark of Islam is to follow the right in thought and action, while that of modern civilized society is to follow the vote and will of the majority.

These two standards cause a difference between the two aims of the existing societies in general, that is, the society created by Islam, and the society created by civilization. The goal of the former is true happiness for each individual, that is, a man should observe moderation against the exigencies of his own powers.

He should provide for his physical needs but to the extent of not being diverted from the way of knowing God and devotion to him, and care of the body should only be the prologue to knowing God.

This way will make man happy in every sense of the word, for all his powers will have attained happiness.

This is the greatest comfort, even though we cannot understand this objective as we should, on account of the disorder in the Islamic education of our society. For Islam has envisaged such an objective for the final happiness of man. Therefore we see that this religion has based its laws on the observance of reason, a reason which is created to follow right and truth. Islam has strictly forbidden all things which corrupt the common sense.

Islam has placed on the Islamic society the guarantee for carrying out all deeds, morals and Islamic education, in addition to the duties the Islamic government has concerning the execution of political decrees and Islamic bounds.

Such a way is not compatible with the wishes of all people, but Islam intends to get rid of this defect which we notice in the carnal desires of the lustful etc.

Islam envisages control of sensual desires, debauchery and brutality.

Islam must endeavor hard to propagate education, so that it brings about a change in people's minds in order to control their own natures and lustful desires. This is not confined to religious training. Man requires such an effort, a proper exercise and constant supervision in all his advancements.

This is the purpose of Islam, but the aim of the modern civilization is the exploitation of matter. It is clear that such an aim and philosophy is accompanied by a sentimental life which is subordinate to desire, whether this desire accords or not with what is distinguished by intellect and reason.

Such a life follows the intellect, only where there is no opposition to its aim, that is exploitation of matter.

This is the secret of the fact that the enactment and execution of laws must be in accordance with the wishes of the majority. The civilized world can only guarantee the execution of those laws which are related to deeds, but has no authority concerning ethics and true and deep-rooted education. The people are free in their beliefs and in following any morals and ways of education, and to accept or reject them, so long as they do not disturb the course of the law, in which case they are checked.

A requisite for such a system is that the society must become accustomed to the wicked deeds of just and anger which are compatible with its wishes, and as a result it approves of many things which are berated by religion. This system plays with perfect obstinacy with moral virtues and exalted religious teachings under the pretext of liberty and lawful freedom.

Another requisite for the above statement is that the way of thinking should be altered, that is, it should

move away from the channel of reason and enter the channel of sentiment and emotion. Thus, what is considered dissoluteness and immorality according to reason, may seem to be virtue according to desires and sentiments, and may wrongly be called manliness, affability and cheerfulness.

The living testimony of this matter is the conditions which are prevalent in Europe now, the relationship between young people, men and married women, girls, women and dogs, men and their children and near relatives, as well as the conditions which exist in night parties, dances and other things which had better not be specified for the sake of modesty.

To such people the things which are ordinary and habitual may seem strange and comic, or vice versa. All those are due to a difference in the way of thinking and understanding, which as we said is the result of adopting a different way for obtaining perfection.

As you see in these sentimental objectives, no use can be made of reasoning except to that extent that it paves the way for exploitation and pleasure, for, the only goal which nothing can oppose is this, and nothing can hinder it unless it is of its own kind, that is, pleasure.

You observe even that the prevalent laws permit suicide and similar other deeds. In short, human passion has the right to every kind of fancy and whim except that which causes inconvenience to social whims⁶.

If you reflect on this difference properly you will see why the way of western society seem more agreeable to the human palate than the mode of a religious community. What must be pointed out is that it is not only the mode of western civilization which agrees with people's taste so as to conclude that we should prefer only the western civilization to religion. But all the modes from the oldest human times until now which have been customary with the people of the world, have had a similar course, whether they belong to the periods of living in tents, or being mingled with civilization; i.e. when a religion is presented to them for the first time, they prefer older modes to the religion which calls them to the right path, for men are quite subservient and humble before material idolatry.

If you ponder over this matter as it deserves, you will realize that modern civilization is derived from primitive idolatry, except that it has assumed a social form from an individual one, and a complete form from a simple one. Our statement that the Islamic mode is based on the principle of following the truth and not according to temper is most obvious in the Qur'an.

"He is the one who sent His Prophet with guidance and religion of right."

(At-Tawba, 9: 33)

And Allah judges with the truth; and those whom they call upon besides Him cannot judge aught; surely Allah is the Hearing, the Seeing. (Al-Ghaafir,40: 20)

Except those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience. (Al-'Asr, 103:3)

Certainly We have brought you the truth, but most of you are averse to the truth.

(Az-Zukhruf 43:78)

The Qur'an says: Agreement with the whims and wishes of the majority leads to corruption and ruin, and they must not be followed.

"The majority disapprove of right, and if God followed their wishes, of course heavens and earth, and everything in them would be ruined." (Al-Mu'minoon 23: 70-71)

The Qur'an affirms that events will follow one another, and corruption will become more intense every day.

"Thus the word of your God became binding for those who were corrupt, for, they did not believe." (Yunus 10: 33)

The Qur'an has many verses about truth matter, refer to chapter Yunus (10), where the word truth has been repeated more than twenty times.

They seem to conclude therefore, that it is true that Islam is not a practicable creed at present, but the question arises; "Why is it not so?"

The answer was given in the previous lengthy discussion that the secret is that the goal of Islam is true happiness on the basis of knowledge and reason, while the aim of civilized society is material exploitation. Those explanations have shown which of the two objectives is in the real interest of human society.

2) It is said that following the majority is the natural need of the world, and that there is no doubt that nature obeys the majority in its manifestations. This does not mean that natural factors and effects are always effective, but that their influence is witnessed often and in most cases when they meet no obstacle. Nevertheless this fact does not cause the necessity of the following truth to be annulled or to be contrary to it. As this principle itself is an evidence of truth, how can it annul itself?

To explain this matter, you should pay attention to the following points:

(a) External matters which are the roots and bases of human theoretical and practical beliefs are in their creation and variety of changes subject to the system of cause and effect.

This system is something constant and permanent, which allows no exception. All learned and clear-sighted scholars are unanimous on this point, and the Qur'an too, testifies its truth⁷.

Therefore external events are constant and permanent, and admit no violation. Even the events which occur often, and of which we are aware to some extent through conjecture, are constant and permanent in their majority ⁸ (namely, that a vestiges appear with frequency).

For example, it is a self-evident fact that fire causes a rise in ambient temperature. This physical

property of fire can always be deduced as true. (So it is clear now that all external affairs are subject to the system of cause and effect, and as this system is a permanent one, external events too are thus constant and permanent.

(b) Man by nature follows something which he considers somehow or other to be real and external. (Man does not only obey what does not exist. He may err about the point of existence and non-existence, but he will eventually follow what he considers as permanent).

Man is by nature a follower of truth, and even those who deny the existence of decisive knowledge (who say that man can never gain a final knowledge on any subject) will humbly admit something you tell them about which they have no doubt.

We conclude therefore that man follows truth.

(c) As you saw, truth is an external matter which man believes humbly and follows in practice. But man's mind and understanding are the means that guide him to the exterior, like a mirror in which something is reflected.

Now it has become clear to you that being true is a quality and something which exists externally in a permanent or frequent manner, and not a property of knowledge and understanding. In other words it is a quality of what is known, not knowledge. Being true means a permanent or frequent event in nature, where the destination of frequency is permanence.

Therefore, a permanent event is truth, and a frequent event is in the same way truth related to the outside. But the views and beliefs of the majority are not always true. (For as we said: truth is an objective reality and is subjectively affected by one's knowledge and understanding).

If the views and ideas of the majority correspond with reality, then they are true, and if not then they are false. Therefore it is not right that man should be humble before it, and if he realizes it, he will not feel humble.

If you are certain about a matter, but everyone contradicts you, even though you may yield to them you have not become humble, but not have yielded because of fear or shyness or another factor, and not because the words of your opponents are true in themselves and acceptable.

The best expression which shows that the views of the majority are not always true or necessary to be obeyed, is the following verse from the Qur'an:

"The Prophet has brought the truth, but most people have a version to it."
(Al-Mu'minoon, 23:70)

If the view of the majority is based on truth, then it is impossible for the people to dislike truth or oppose it.

It is clear then that following the majority on the basis of the needs of nature is wrong, for the law of majority is external, to which knowledge belongs, not knowledge and thought themselves. Man must in his movements and resolutions follow the majority opinion, that is, he should base his behavior on the well-being of the majority (and see what deeds and conduct are mostly to his interest). The Qur'an has followed this way in its legislation and in the interest of legislation.

The Qur'an says:

"...Allah does not desire to put on you any difficulty, but He wishes to purify you and that He may complete His favor on you, so that you may be grateful.."(al-Maida, 5:6)

The Qur'an says:

"...Fasting is ordained for you as it was for your predecessors, so that you may be virtuous."(Al-Baqara, 2: 183)

You notice then, that the injunction is based on the majority rule of results and benefits.

We conclude therefore, that following the view of the majority is not the natural need of the world.

3) It is said:

"Present civilization has guaranteed social happiness for progressive countries, and has purified individuals, and removed the vices of which society disapproves."

This statement is not free from error and confusion.

By social happiness they seem to mean that society should dominate others from the view point of population and power and rise high in profiting from material resources.

Dear readers, we have repeatedly stated that Islam does not consider this belief to be happiness, and a discussion based on reason confirms the view of the Qur'an.

Human happiness is a combination of material and spiritual happiness. Such happiness does not only offer man material blessings, it adorns him with moral virtues and true divine teachings. The happiness of body and spirit guarantees man's happiness in the world and the next.

According to Islam, becoming engrossed in material pleasures and neglecting spiritual happiness are nothing but misfortune. Truthfulness, purity, honesty, cheerfulness and similar other qualities which are observed among individuals in progressive nations have surprised some people, but in this matter, they have mistaken the truth. The reason is that many of the oriental thinkers, who discuss this, are unable to think socially. Their thought is individualistic.

What each of us sees before him is that he himself is a human being who is independent of everything

else, and is not connected to them in such a way as to destroy his independence. But this way of thinking is quite wrong.

Each of us in life has no thought but securing his own profit and warding off his loss.

Consequently he has no occupation but his own affairs, and that is what is meant by individualistic thinking.

The result of such a thought is to compare others with oneself, and as one considers oneself separate and independent, he also thinks of others as independent. If such a judgment is correct, it is correct only by an individualistic standard. But he who has a social way of thinking realizes that what he sees before him is that it is only a part which by no means is independent and separate from society.

He considers his own interests as a part of social interests. He thinks of social benefit as his own benefit, and social evils, as his own. In short, he considers every condition and peculiarity of the society as his own, too. Such a man has a different way of thinking.

In his relationship to others, such a man contacts none except those who are outside his own group, and pays no attention to those within it⁹.

An example clarifies this point: Man is a combination of many members and powers which have come together to produce a real unity.

We call this gathering "humanity". This whole causes the nature and actions of all the parts to be dominated and absorbed by its independence.

The eye sees, the ear hear, the hand obeys, the leg walks, but they all perform their function for man's sake, since he functions through them and enjoys having them. Each part endeavors to get in touch with the outside, an outside that man wants to contact in goodness or badness. The eye, ear, hand and foot want to do good or evil to those whom a man wants to serve or to hurt.

But how do these members who are under the banner of humanity deal with one another? It rarely happens for one member to hurt another, or cause a loss to each other. This is how the parts of man act when he follows a single course.

The members of human society who think socially have the same way too. If the members consider society as having a single personality, their individual honesty and corruption, their virtue and wickedness, their goodness and evil are the same qualities that their society possesses.

(Social thinking leads the thinker not to separate individual qualities from social ones. The interest of the individual is the same as society's and his corruption is the corruption of society).

The Qur'an has done the same in making judgment about nations, i.e. nations and people like the Jews,

Arabs and former people who were forced by religious or national prejudiced to have social thinking. You can see that the Qur'an blames a later group for the sins of a preceding one, and reproaches those present for the deeds of their predecessors. All this is because one, who has a social way of thinking, must be judged in this manner.

There is a point that should not be omitted that it is only fair that since the society and individual are to be judged, the right of the honest individuals who live in a corrupt society, should not be trampled on; for, even though they live in that society and mingle with corrupt individuals, their hearts are not affected by the corrupt ideas and deep internal diseases which have spread within such a society.

Such men are like superfluous parts in the structure of a corrupt society. The Qur'an too, in its verses of general reproach has made an exception of men of goodness and virtue.

We conclude from the above points that if anyone wishes to judge the worthiness or unworthiness of individuals in a civilized society, and wishes to say that progressive nations are different from others, he should not base his judgment on their internal associations, contacts and private lives. It should base it on their social personality. Social personality in its encounter and friction with weak nations, and in its contact with other social personalities of the world in life is quite manifest.

What should be valid in judging the merit and demerit, and happiness and unhappiness of society, and should be considered, is that the thinkers of oriental topics must necessarily follow this course. And after studying the matter in this way, they are free to be amazed or surprised.

In fact if someone studies with proper deliberation, the history of the social life of civilized nations since the modern European movement, and pays deep attention to their treatment of weak nations and races, he will soon realize whether societies are exhibiting kindness and benevolence to mankind, and are willing to sacrifice their life and wealth in serving mankind and liberty and assisting the oppressed whose right they have violated.

But such a study shows that they have no such intention, other than the enslavement of weak and helpless people.

They carry out their purpose whenever and by all the means they can, one day by force, another day by swallowing and appropriating another land, another time by mandate and protectorate, next time on the pretext of the preservation of common interests, once in the name of guarding independence, then, under the excuse of keeping peace and getting rid of what threatens peace, and sometimes with the cry of defending the rights of the deprived and helpless classes.

In short, they bring down calamity on other nations each day under new names. The peaceable nature of man cannot agree to consider such societies with such peculiarities to be honest or happy, apart from

the verdict of religious judgment and decree of Revelation and Prophethood concerning the meaning of happiness.

How can human nature equip individuals in an equal manner, and then act contrary to himself and annul his verdict? How can he give certain individuals a solid deed to appropriate others, so as to make their blood, honor and property legitimate for himself? How can they pave the way to play with the existence and life—centre of these nations to the extent of getting possession of the mind and will of subordinate people in a manner unprecedented in cruelty, even compared to the men of early centuries?

In all our claims we rely on the history of the life of these nations¹⁰. and the injuries received by the present generation at their hands.

It must be said that the meaning of happiness and goodness, merit and prosperity in the vocabulary of progressive nations is selfishness and unreasonableness¹¹.

¹. One of the most obvious of testimonies of this statement is the fact that democracy, which is accepted today as the only course in the world, assumed a communistic form in Russia after the Second World War, Eastern Europe and China joined this course. Democracy thus suffered a great loss in almost half of human societies.

Four years ago communist countries declared that Stalin, the late leader of Russia, had in his thirty years of rule, diverted the axis of government which had been communistic in Lenin's time to a sole despotic rule. Until today the way has been that after much profane opposition, a number of people have eventually turned to the communist school, while others who had formerly been converted to it, have become apostates and turned away from it. The said school is continually shrinking and extending, and in a state of flux.

You dear readers see how badly democracy has suffered defeat, and assumed a communist form, which in turn resulted in despotism, and how political systems constantly rise and fall. The above example shows how a school or goal must continually fight against unfavorable conditions. History is full of such examples in this respect.

². True religion has existed in all Islamic periods, and Noah and Abraham and other prophets have all been Muslims, as testified by the Qur'an.

³. This humble writer has had no opportunity to refer to the documents, but the reader is recommended to study the 'History of The Islamic and Arab civilization' by Gustav Le Bon, and the 'History of The Islamic Civilization' by Georgi Zeidan and similar books written by the orientalist on Islam.

⁴. Philatus asked Christ "What is your aim in religious propagation?" He answered that he did not regard the matter of government and politics important, but he considered spiritual life more significant than the physical one. This dialogue has been reported in Vol. 3, "Al-Mizan" by the famous American historian Hendrick Willem Von Lon. p.348.

⁵. Referring to the argument that the social method of Islam, contrary to modern civilization, is impracticable.

⁶. As we said, according to such schools nothing can check carnal desires except something of its own kind, and this is true here, too.

⁷. Refer to vol. 1 of "Al-Mizan (and its translation) the section on miracle.

⁸. The remarks in brackets are the translator's.

⁹. Meaning that a social thinker has no regard for his own group, but only considers society important.

¹⁰. Turn the leaves of the newspapers of the past ten years, and see how France, the banner bearer of modern civilization, the progressive liberal France treated the Muslim Algerian Nation.

¹¹. The dear reader must remember that in this discussion our criticism is leveled all the social views of European nations and modern tendencies, but the matter of positive aspects and scientific progress are irrelevant to our argument.

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