

9. The Meaning of Liberty In Islam

The word 'Liberty' with the same meaning that it has today, found common use several centuries ago. The reason for coining it was probably the European renaissance which began two or three centuries ago, but the meaning of word has occupied men's minds since ancient eras, and has assumed the form of a heartfelt ideas.

The natural principle of creation from which this meaning is derived is that man is in essence equipped with will-power. This power enables man to act. Will is a state of mind whose loss causes the loss of comprehension and intelligence, and in consequence destroys his human qualities.

But as man is a social being, his nature leads him to social life and says to him: 'An individual must drop his bucket among other buckets, and let his will and action mingle with the will and action of others'. This way of action enables a man to be modest and humble before the law, which sets limits for the will and action of the people and adjusts all wills and actions. Therefore, the same nature that allows a man absolute freedom of will and action, imposes limitation on that will and action, and restricts the preliminary liberty.

As the reader knows, since present civic base their decrees on material welfare¹ the result is to let nations be free in religious teachings, to be bound by them or not, and immoral matters to choose anything they wish outside the law. In all these spheres the people have liberty and freedom, and that is the meaning of liberty in the eye of civilization.

But Islam, as it was explained, bases its law on the foundation of monotheism first, and on high morals in the second place, and then is concerned with the big and small individual and social deeds of all kinds. So, there is no matter to which man is unrelated or to whom it is unconnected, except where Islamic ordinance have stepped in or where their footsteps are not manifest.² Thus liberty in its former sense has no place in the will and action of people.

Why should man be free in all of them from the bound of worship, serving others that is not God.

This is only one word, but if one ponders deeply over the Islamic methods and traditions and the

practical ways which are recommended and established between individuals and classes of society, and compares the Islamic ways with those of the domineering tendencies and unfairness of civilized societies, including the relations between individuals and their classes, and those between every strong nation and a weak one, he will understand the wide meaning of the statement that freedom of belief means freedom from the limitation of worshipping anything that is not God.

From the view point of injunctions too, Islam has extended itself completely on the subject of well-earned livelihood and moderate benefits of life allowed by God, without going to extremes.

"Say who forbade God's adornment and clean livelihood which were granted to his servants " (al-A'raaf, 7: 32)

"He created for you all there is on earth." (Al Baqara, 2:29)

"And He tamed for you all there is on the earth and heavens." (Al-Jathiya, 45: 13)

It is amazing that some interpreters and debaters of this topic have tried hard to prove that freedom of belief exists in Islam, and relying on the verse "**There is no aversion in religion**" and similar ones, they have argued this point.

The reader can refer to volume 2 of Al-Mizan for a more elaborate analysis of the above verse and its meaning. What we may say here is what we made clear that monotheism is the basis of all Islamic laws, in which case, how could Islam establish the law of freedom of belief? Is this not an explicit contradiction? If anyone says: 'Belief is free in Islam' it is like saying: 'In civil law, people are free of the rule of law.'³

In other words, belief means the appearance of a confirmed understanding in a man's mind.

Belief is not an optional matter, to be allowed or forbidden, or to leave people free or enslaved. What can be forbidden or allowed is the obligation to the deeds which arise from belief, such as inviting to the belief of the convincing people to one belief, and combating the deeds of those opposed to belief. These acts may be forbidden or allowed.

It is clear that if such acts are contrary to the articles of the law which is established in a society, or opposed to the basis of a law, they will certainly be checked by the law.

Islam in all its legislations has relied on nothing but the religion of monotheism. This religion is one which has accepted three indisputable principles, namely, monotheism, prophethood and resurrection. These three fundamental beliefs are those in which people with Holy Books, such as the Jew, Christians and Magi agree.

We conclude⁴ therefore that in Islam there exists another liberty, which is freedom of expression in discussion which will be explained later.

1. The civic laws of the Satanic regime of Pahlavi is meant here.
 2. What is apparently meant is that a verdict is given explicitly there, or a general verdict is issued to include all these cases. The word, 'footstep' apparently means these general verdicts
 3. Monotheism is the basis of Islamic law. So, freedom from monotheism is freedom from law, something which no one can believe.
 4. It became clear that Islam bases all its laws and order, from the viewpoint of belief, on the three principles, and so it cannot grant freedom in them, otherwise the foundation of law would be shaken.
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