

## Discourse Two: Trusteeship and Leadership

We human beings have taken up residence on the earth for ages; we procreate and we live out our lives. Due to the fact that we have chosen social life as a requisite of our own nature, we help each other as much as possible, perform collective endeavors, and pile up the fruits of our pooled toils and each of us benefits from them to the extent of their social weight and character.

Of course, such a method cannot come about without the loss of absolute individual freedom. Persons who become part of a community, take up the method of cooperation and collaboration, and amalgamate their choices with the choices of others cannot be completely free and do whatever they desire.

Even so, human life is not possible without a degree of individual autonomy. Human personalities are the substance of the community and society is its form. The human personality relies on individual volitions and passions and with their dissipation it would surely be destroyed. In consequence, the cornerstone of the society—any type of society imaginable—would be eradicated and its pillars would fall to ruin.

### Individual autonomy

While every human being lives in a social fold—advanced or savage—they each use their intellect in their individual endeavors and make suitable choices through their personal volition.

However, it is common for the individual personality, which manages life using its intellect and volition, to become incapable so that it cannot carry the burden of life to its destination self-reliantly—such as among people with dementia or those with less than adequate understanding and volition. Naturally, others must manage the lives of such persons.

Moreover, the same holds for infants and children until they reach maturity. Others, meaning their elders, must manage their livelihoods and gradually draw them level with mature men and women through education and edification.

Also, in every human society there may be some advantages and benefits that are not under the charge of specific persons and naturally do not have a custodian, such as general mortmain [awqāf-e ‘āmmah] and similar issues.

Above all this is safeguarding and supporting the society that has come into being from a collective of human beings. Because no imaginable society can continue to exist without a series of rules and norms that all or the majority of the people follow, respect, and sanctify. For instance, if in a transaction between two people neither the buyer nor seller is bound by the effects and conditions of the transaction, no sane person would be found performing such a deal.

Equally, there are innumerable other issues with which social humankind organizes its livelihood and regarding these, all or a majority of the society must acknowledge a set of rules and regulations, and sanction their validity. Thus, no society may continue its existence without a series of norms, rules, traditions, and regulations.

Accordingly, having only a series of norms and regulations can never be enough for the continuance of a society because as it has been shown no two humans are similar in their existential constitution—hence, in their intellect, volition, and methods.

Therefore, even though human individuals may be united in their general thoughts, they are unquestionably at variance in details and would surely not make the same choices. As a result of this certain dissimilitude, at the first step each person tends to rush in a different direction bringing about the collapse of common laws and norms.

In addition, as far as the history of human life shows and observation of various human societies with varying methods of government confirms, survival of every society requires an individual or an office whose intellect and volition governs and controls the intellects and volitions of the citizenry and guards and supports the governmental system that has been implemented in the society.

These conditions are manifest in all societies without exception. Humankind, with its God-given makeup [fitrah], is not ignorant of them and does not remain inactive. Willing or unwilling, the people of each society elect an individual or office to oversee them and administrate their affairs.

They ask their chosen—just as a guardian that is the custodian of an orphan, the head of the family, and responsible for managing the affairs of the young family members—to rule over the people as a king or president.

We name this office, according to which an individual or office becomes in charge of the affairs of others and manages their lives, like a real individual, trusteeship [wilāyat]. It has almost the same meaning that we understand from the words leadership and guardianship.

This is the meaning that is addressed in this discourse and the opinion of the holy religion of Islam will

be explicated regarding this matter. However, this matter will be discussed from the viewpoint of the social philosophy of Islam, not in the method of Islamic jurisprudential discussion specific to Shari‘ah jurisprudence.

Those, who are well-versed in Shari‘ah jurisprudence will see that the methods of reasoning in this discourse are significantly different from jurisprudential ratiocination in canon laws [ahkam-e shar‘].

## Domain of trusteeship and leadership

As we have explained, the domain of trusteeship [wilayat] consists of a series of necessary affairs that are not specific to a certain individual in the society and that of which no person is normally in charge.

This can be instances where the “proprietor” does not have the ability to manage its affairs—such as charge of the assets of orphans and affairs of the mentally ill, the interdicted, and similar cases—or where the matter is not essentially related to a specific individual, such as general social affairs related to government (public goods); in other words, the type of affairs that are forsaken due to having no one in charge but are necessary and cannot be set aside.

As we have explained, no previous or present human society, advanced or savage, great or small, was ever ignorant of such affairs. Every society endeavors upon this matter in proportion with its situation and establishes wilayat and leadership. This is the best testimony to the fact that the issue of wilayat is spiritually innate.

All human beings understand through their God-given fitrah that for every necessary thing that does not have a commissioner, a supervisor must be chosen.

Also, Islam, which is a natural [fitrah] religion and its laws and precepts are based upon creation, has not neglected the issue of wilayat and leadership—which is an innate or fitrah issue. By ratifying it, Islam has signed and put into circulation an innate human principle. God, the Almighty, has stated in His divine Book:

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

***“So set thy face to the pure religion of Allah; this is the fitrah (nature) upon which Allah has created humankind. The creation of Allah is immutable. This is the eternal religion, but most people do not know.”<sup>1</sup>***

Explanation: With its awesome vastness and magnitude the wide universe of existence, as it is stated in various holy verses, forms a unitary whole. Its diverse components and aspects from the tiniest particle to the greatest celestial body, and the most multifarious group of stars that form tremendous galaxies all

are existentially related and influence each other.

Hence, in every coming into existence or evolution of a phenomenon, whether enormous or minuscule, each and every component of the world of existence has a share. Of course, humankind is also a part of the world and is not apart from the rest.

Like a raindrop that trickles into an immense river, it is consigned to the effervescence and currents of the river and does not retain in itself any individual autonomy or distinguished drive.

## Creation leads its elements toward perfection

With its general endeavors and movements and dynamism on the course of its existence, this extensive universal organization brings about general evolutions. Moreover, it delivers each of the variety of creatures to the perfection of their beings and leads them to the aims of their existence.

As we can see, through their creation and genesis, every one of these varieties is equipped with a series of abilities and instruments that are perfectly suited to their existential aims and life goals. Only by activities that utilize these abilities and resources may they resolve their existential needs and transform their flaws into perfections.

The best verification of this issue may be found as a general statement in the following verses:

﴿ قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى ﴾

***“He said: Our Lord is He who gave to each thing its creation and then guided it.”<sup>2</sup>***

﴿ الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى \* وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَى ﴾

***“He who has created then given order; and who has determined then guided.”<sup>3</sup>***

From here we can deduce that humans must perpetually know good and evil and their profit and loss through genetic apprehension and existential guidance. This is because humans are non-independent elements inseparable from general creation, and the general nature of creation conveys and leads each of its constituents to its appropriate existential purpose and perfection.

Due to the fact that humankind is a variety that travels towards its life goals and perfection using its intellect and volition, perforce its aforementioned genetic guidance and apprehension manifests in the form of knowledge and thoughts. This has been stated in the following holy verse:

﴿ وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا \* فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا \* قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا \* وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا ﴾

***“By the soul and He who (created it and) gave it order; then, inspired it (with consciousness of) wrong and right. Truly saved are those who purify it. And surely lost are those who corrupt it.”<sup>4</sup>***

It is clear from the foregoing discussion that through genetic inspiration and the guidance of fitrah and constitution, humans are equipped with an array of information and thoughts that guarantee their bliss throughout life endeavors.

By utilizing these thoughts and knowledge, humans attain harmony with the system of creation and do not conflict or clash with the general and perfectionist movement of the universe—which would precipitate the demise of their own perfectionist system. This is the concept that God, the Glorified, has disclosed in the preceding verse, “So set thy face to the pure religion of Allah...”, and affirms that:

First, because the bliss and beatitude of humankind is a genetic reality in their lives, an order must reign over the people that stems from the general creation of the universe and the exclusive creation of humanity.

Second, because the system of creation is constant and established, the perfect religion and lifestyle that springs from it must also be constant and established. It must not be dependent upon passions and desires, change color everyday, and draw it through every cesspool of vileness and adversity and thus afflict humankind with wrong even though it knows the correct path by its God-given nature. In another verse, Allah declares:

﴿...أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ﴾

***“Did you see the person who took his (or her) desire as his god and Allah led him astray in knowledge (that he was not worthy of guidance)...”<sup>5</sup>***

Also, in many verses God notifies that humans must abide by righteousness in their lifestyle not passions and desires. They must accept the judgment of sound reason not the verdict of carnal impulses and sentiments:

﴿...فَمَاذَا بَعَدَ الْحَقِّ إِلَّا الضَّلَالُ...﴾

***“...So what is there after truth save error?”<sup>6</sup>***

Third, because defying the laws and precepts of fitrah is in reality opposition and resistance to the universal system of creation and this great system with its awesome power inevitably contends with these minuscule opposing humans, it shall, like it or not, straighten them upon the conforming path by either destroying or dominating them. Humans opposing religion and fitrah must anticipate a terrible juncture and painful retribution—as is indicated in the verses subsequent to verse 30 of Sūrat al-Rūm.

## Necessity of wilāyat and leadership

According to the general principle that “Islam is based upon fitrah”, concepts essential to fitrah are endorsed in Islam and one of the necessities and clear tenets of fitrah, in the manner we have defined, is the matter of wilāyat and leadership.

It was due to the clarity of the issue that at the time of the Holy Prophet (S) and especially after the hijrah, even though all aspects of wilāyat and leadership were practiced, (such as administration of people’s affairs, appointment of governors and judges, management of charity and mortmain, general education and edification, dispatching missionaries, etc.)

Muslims did not ask regarding the necessity of this principle even though many less important things were asked about including menstruation and donation. There are verses in the Holy Qur’an regarding these issues and the “Saqāfah incident” is the best testimony to this fact.

On the day of the Prophet’s (S) death, before the blessed body of the Prophet (S) was interred, several of the muhājirīn, ansār and sahbāh left the body and gathered at Saqāfah banī Sā‘idah to choose a caliph. They made many suggestions, one saying the caliph must be chosen from the ansār and another saying from the muhājirīn.

Others would say one caliph from the ansār and one from the muhājirīn. Among this group no one came forward to say that there was no need to appoint a caliph or that there was any reason that caliphate was not necessary. This was because by their fitrah everyone understood that the wheel of the Islamic society could not rotate without a spinner and that the religion of Islam has validated the fact that there must be a government among Muslims.

Another attestation to this fact is the following holy verse:

﴿ وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴾

***“And Muhammad is naught but a messenger. Messengers have passed away before him. If he dies or is slain will you turn on your heels? And whoever turns back on their heels will do no harm to Allah and Allah will soon reward the thankful.”***<sup>7</sup>

This verse says: Muhammad (S) is a messenger like the messengers that came before him, propagated the religion, and passed away. He is also temporary and will not remain among you forever. The religion is God’s religion not Muhammad’s. It will not terminate with his passing. He has the function of mediation and messengership. If one day he dies or is killed, will you turn on the religion?

It is evident that this holy verse was revealed with reference to the battle of Uhud and the defeat of the

Muslims due to the sudden injury that the Holy Prophet (S) received from the enemy when it was rumored that Muhammad (S) had been killed.

Subsequent to this rumor, except for a select few, the army of Islam stopped fighting and retreated with the excuse that after the death of the Holy Prophet (S) there is no reason to continue the battle.

God, the Almighty, revealed this holy verse in regard with this incident and addressed Muslims and reproached and rebuked them due to their flight.

It is evident that they did not return to worshiping idols or repudiate prayer or fasting. The only thing they said, after the death of the Holy Prophet (S), was why one should continue fighting? In other words, they decided to abandon a religious duty that needed an administrator (i.e. the Prophet (S)) after his death.

God rebukes them in this regard and speaks not only of the situation of being killed but also of the condition of natural death and declares:

After the death of the Prophet (S), whether by natural death or killing, the tradition that has been created with his appointment must be absolutely preserved and must under no conditions be abandoned because he is no more than a messenger and religion belongs to God and as long as God is God, religion shall remain His.

After the Holy Prophet (S), the system of wilāyat and leadership must endure until the Day of Judgment. The Islamic society must have a standing government. Departments of education, propagation, economy, defense, judicature, etc. must all continue their work.

Clearly this holy verse by necessity gives Muslims authority to carry on their social activities in the same manner as at the time of the Prophet (S). That is to say, the trustee or vicegerent must execute the immutable precepts of religion (which are termed the religious law [sharī‘ah] of Islam), punish offenders in accordance with clear religious instructions, and manage social affairs of the Islamic society remaining true to the best interests of Islam and Muslims by issuing decrees regarding matters that vary according to circumstance.

## **Variable and immutable precepts**

As it is clear from the preceding discussion, rules and precepts that are carried out in the Islamic society are of two types: immutable precepts and variable precepts.

In explanation, we may imagine a man with a specific nationality. He is the head of a household and is responsible to advance the small familial system he has started toward life goals as per his social status. He can, observing prudence, utilize his national rights in the shadow of the inviolable laws of his country, make decisions and enact them.

He can appoint a duty for each of the members of his family or release them from those duties. He can give specific instructions regarding food, clothing, habitation, etc. or cancel them according to expedience. He can call a day off or double the work hours.

He can defend himself and his family against those who infringe upon their property or dignity or he may sit calmly and determine that not engaging in defense is more advantageous, etc. However, he may never violate the mandatory laws of the country nor shirk his legal responsibilities.

Undoubtedly, the rules and precepts that are observed in this small social organization are of two types: first, the mandatory laws of the country that are immutable, modification of which is completely beyond the authority of this organization; and second, mandatory laws that stem from the head and vicegerent of the family, which may be changed according to expedience and the will of the head of the family.

The relation of the office of vicegerent and Islamic government to the religious organization and Islamic society is the same as the relation of the aforementioned head of family regarding the familial organization and members of the family.

The divine Islamic rules and precepts that have been sent down to the Prophet (S) through revelation and that we call Islamic sharʿah and precepts of Allah are immutable laws on the authority of the Book and Tradition. They are unalterable laws and their execution and the punishment of transgressors is the duty of the office of Islamic wilāyat, vicegerent, trustee, or leader.

In the shelter of and compliance to the laws of sharʿah, the vicegerent may make a series of decisions and legislations based on expedience and execute them. Such laws would be mandatory and have similar credence to the sharʿah with the difference that divine laws are immutable and unalterable whereas persistence of legislated laws is dependent upon the expedience that caused them to arise.

Due to the fact that the life of human societies is in continual transition and evolution, these regulations will gradually change and lead to better ones.

Several points may be understood from the preceding discourse, which will be explained in turn:

Point one

As we made clear, Islamic regulations are of two types:

The first type is divine precepts or laws of the sharʿah, which are constant and immutable. They are a series of precepts that have divinely been inspired upon the Holy Prophet (S) as an irrevocable fitrā religion that must be carried out for all time—as indicated in the preceding sūrat (Sūrat al-Rūm 30:30) and also in the Tradition [sunnah] :

«حلال محمد حلال إلى يوم القيامة وحرام محمد حرام إلى يوم القيامة»

The *halāl* (permissible) of Muhammad is *halāl* unto the Day of Resurrection and the *harām* (forbidden) of Muhammad is *harām* unto the Day of Resurrection.

Of course, it has occurred to many modern thinkers (!) that in accordance with the laws of nature and evolution, the human populace is continually changing and so generally, standing regulations must also change with the advancement of civilization.

A detailed response to this criticism and elaboration on the eternal soul of each of the articles of the Islamic *sharāʿah* is beyond the scope of this discourse. However, in short, we must note that regardless of what or how civil laws are, they are nevertheless based on the genetic and real needs of humankind. It is self-evident that all human needs are not variable; rather, we possess a series of real and constant needs.

Among these civil laws there are many instances of constant items such as the necessity of social life, defense of sanctities, personal ownership, necessity of government, and so on. Thus, in every imaginable social order there will always be a series of constants and the constant laws and items recognized by Islam are precepts that are collectively called the *sharāʿah*.

The second type consists of regulations that arise from the office of vicegerency and are legislated and executed in accordance with present expedience. It is evident that the continuance or collapse of these regulations is contingent upon current means and exigencies and will assuredly alter with the advancement of civilization and variation of benefit and detriment. Indeed, the principle of *wilāyat* and leadership of the society, because it is a divine precept of the *sharāʿah*, is immutable.

Point two

## **Is the Islamic society similar to the democratic society?**

The second point is that the Islamic society is not altogether dissimilar to democratic societies in respect to constant and variable regulations. There are also two types of regulations in democratic societies. Constant regulations make up the 'Constitution', modification of which is even beyond the authority of the parliament or senate.

Only the nation may annul an item of the Constitution directly by referendum or by forming a special congress. The other type consists of minor laws and regulations that are legislated by parliaments or senates and are implemented by various departments. These may be considered temporary interpretations of articles of the Constitution and are generally mutable.

Notwithstanding, one must not err and suppose that the method of Islam with its mark of freedom is a democratic or communist method as is seen in the words of some theorist writers. The Islamic method is neither democratic nor communist.

It has a glaring difference in its two types of regulations with the aforementioned societal and socialist methods since the legislator of the constant regulations of Islam is God—Glorious is His name—and the constant regulations of other social methods are spawned by the thoughts of the community.

Also, regarding the mutable regulations of the other systems, the main basis is the will of the nation's majority. The freedom or in other words the intellect and will of the minority of "half the people minus one" is sacrificed to the desire and approval of the nation's majority of "half the people plus one" whether their desire is right or not.

However, the basis of the mutable regulations in the Islamic society, even though they are the result of the conference of the nation, is righteousness and not the will of the majority—they must be supported upon realism not desires and sentiments.

In the Islamic society, the true right and good of Islam and Muslims must be carried out whether it is the will of the majority or not. Of course, in the community of knowledge and piety that real Islam nurtures, the majority will never prefer their capricious desires over truth and righteousness.

God, the Glorious, has divinely instructed humans to adhere to righteousness and truth [haqq]. He introduces it as the only guaranty for humanity's happiness and forbids conforming to any other standard, even though it may not comply with the lusts and desires of the majority or entirety of the people. Consider the following Qur'anic verses:

﴿ فَذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ الْحَقُّ فَمَاذَا بَعْدَ الْحَقِّ إِلَّا الضَّلَالُ فَأَنَّى تُصِرُّونَ ﴾

***"Such is Allah, your true Lord; so what is there after truth save error? Why then do you turn away?"<sup>8</sup>***

﴿ ...أَفَمَنْ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُتَّبَعَ أَمْ مَنْ لَا يَهْدِي إِلَّا أَنْ يَهْدَى ... ﴾

***"Is then He who guides toward the truth worthier to be followed or those who cannot find the way unless guided?"<sup>9</sup>***

﴿ ...هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ ﴾

***"He it is who sent His messenger with guidance and the religion of truth..."<sup>10</sup>***

﴿ لَقَدْ جِئْنَاكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَكِنْ أَكْثَرَكُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كَارِهُونَ ﴾

***“Verily We have brought you the truth; however, most of you are adverse to the truth.”<sup>11</sup>***

﴿ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ \* إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَّصُوا بِالحَقِّ وَتَوَّصُوا بِالصَّبْرِ ... ﴾

***“Surely humankind is in a state of loss; save those who believe and perform righteous deeds and counsel (each other) unto the truth and counsel (each other) unto patience.”<sup>12</sup>***

Some jurists criticize this aspect of the method of Islam and say: “Methods are acceptable and implemented by the people that are compatible with the desires of the majority—something that Islam lacks. Also, in practice, we have seen that the laws of Islam were completely implemented only for a very short time.

However, because the method of democracy respects the desires of the people, it has endured. Democracy has managed the civilized world for centuries and it has been fortified and beautified with every passing day.

The most that can be said about the social method of Islam is that it was a complete method suited to the human society fourteen centuries ago. Now, however, after fourteen centuries of human evolution and advancement it is no longer compatible with the modern global circumstances of humankind.”

## **The role of government in the development or decline of nations**

In reply to this criticism the following must be said:

First: Even though to some extent the positive effect of congruity with the wants of the majority on acceptance of the method cannot be denied, the desires of the majority are doubtless an effect of general education and upbringing. Today, this fact has become axiomatic after plenty of sociopsychological debates.

In the environment of religious piety and theology that Islam creates the majority never abandon sound reason for lusts and desires and never sacrifice truth and reality for wishes and inclinations; in this case, the views of the majority will perpetually be in harmony with truth and righteousness.

In other environments that are shaped in advanced and degenerate societies, the wants of the majority of each society is compatible with the norms and general aims of that particular society. Naturally, initially no method will be compatible with the desires of the majority of the society in which it is implemented.

This is not specific to the method of Islam—all other methods are such. Hence, criticism of the method of Islam for the crime of being incongruous with new age immodest unrestrained education and upbringing is nothing but sophistry—a fallacious argument.

Second: The natural life span of the Islamic method among Muslims did not expire a few years after the time of the Holy Prophet (S). The history of Islam bears witness to the fact that when the holy Prophet (S) passed away, the method of Islam—specifically the Tradition of the Prophet (S)—was abandoned and other traditions were substituted.

Within a very short period, a completely Arab empire replaced the Islamic method and tradition. One cannot say that the Islamic tradition died away naturally, but that it was murdered or martyred.

Also, Islam cannot be considered “unaccepted” because at its advent it was warmly welcomed and over a span of many years it was slowly subdued.

On the one hand, the true method of Islam must be analyzed from the pure Book and Tradition of the Holy Prophet (S) and, on the other hand, the pages of history regarding the shameful and dishonorable methods of governments attributed to Islam must be carefully studied.

Then we can see when and in what Islamic society the true tradition of Islam was carried out—and only then can we say whether the human society or the majority of people will accept the Islamic method or not.

Can it be said that the unfitness of the deeds of Muslims is the best reason for the unfitness of their religious method?!

Nonetheless, we see similar problems in other methods—especially democratic ones. It has been over half a century that we have accepted the democratic regime and government in line with Western civilized societies.

However, we see that our situation is becoming more critical and calamitous with every passing day. Ergo, from the tree that is fruitful and prolific for others we harvest nothing but the fruits of misery and disgrace.

This problem manifests as a question with a very short answer which is that we do not abide by the Constitution and have sufficed ourselves with democracy in name only. Now why is this answer correct regarding democracy but not the Islamic method? Moreover, why is democracy not responsible for the offences of the people but Islam is? This is a question to which others may have an answer—we do not.

Third: If, due to advances in civilization, Islam has lost its social status and the present age is the golden age of democracy which is accepted by the global majority and this will always be so, why, after the World War One, did some democratic societies turn their backs on this preferable method and choose the communist regime?

Everyday democracy loses a base and gives ground. Why has around half the world’s population adopted communism in such a short time?

Is communism the next stage in the evolution of democracy just as democracy was the next stage in the evolution of previous regimes? Furthermore, is democracy, in itself, a stage in evolution?

In order to reach an answer to these questions, we must carry out extensive probes and debates on the issue which are beyond the scope of this article. We can however succinctly note the following:

When we realistically examine the democratic method that is currently implemented in civilized societies of the world and scrutinize its global rationale, we see that what this so-called advanced method has done is that it has taken away the individual aspect from the oppressive tyranny and unrestraint of the Age of Myths and has socialized it:

The injustice, oppression, and obstinacy of Alexanders and Genghis Khāns that were realized through the logic of power are now reenacted en masse by the powerful democratic and civilized nations of the world upon marginalized nations—with the difference that the tyranny and oppression of the past were ignorantly and blatantly performed and thus sooner awakened the desire for vengeance.

This had a more effective role in toppling the oppressive system. However, using technical and psychological principles, modern oppressors expertly execute their work in the veil of reviving truth and righteousness and spreading philanthropy and justice. Whenever a veil is torn and these oppressors become known to everyone, they continue their oppression in a different name: colonization, acquisition, protectorate, support, partnership, humanitarianism, donation, and the like.

Admonitory mementos of democracy from the age of colonization are still apparent in all countries in the Orient! There are still living witnesses such as Algeria, Congo, Korea, and Vietnam. Even now, the French government, “the torchbearer of freedom in the banquet of international freedom (!)”, maintains that Algeria is part of France. [13](#)

Still, the logic of the great and powerful nations regarding the pleading of the oppressed in Algeria for justice is that the issue is internal and outside the jurisdiction of the interference of others.

Ultimately, the results of the global movement of democracy may be summarized thus: democracy in the world may be divided into two categories. One is the group of great nations who are vanguards in matters of civilization (!) and despotic rule of all other nations.

They are sovereign owners of the lives, property and honor of other nations who can do anything they want. The other group consists of backwards democratic nations that are usually branded slaves of those who perform the most shameful of despotic rites in the garb of democracy and world-pleasing liberal laws.

Undoubtedly, a method with such an identity and nature, especially keeping in mind that it has abolished the most important pillar of humanity—spirituality—on the pretext that it has no enforcement mechanism, cannot be considered a stage in the evolution of humanity.

Regarding the aforementioned effects, communism is not much different from common democracy even though they have differences in the method of their world domination.

Calling communism evolution is even stranger because the advancement and evolution of a phenomenon is meaningless without passing through previous stages whereas we see that backward strata and even primitive nations who have never even heard of civilization or democracy welcome this method faster and more enthusiastically than others. Is the emergence of communism a leap of evolution?

The condition that the “dialectic materialist” philosophy specifies does not conform to it!

The truth is that if we regard the matter fairly, our opposers, who attack Islam with democracy, want only the immoderation, indulgence, and carnality from their freedom not social correction, security, and welfare. This is why we learn Western moral perversions so quickly and put them into practice so easily and why rectitude in executing laws that are in the interests of the nation is even rarer among us than the legendary phoenix.

On the other hand, those who support communism are usually underprivileged people who want to take their revenge upon the wealthy and give them a taste of their bitterness, abjectness, and destitution, come what may.

It is clear that such changes cannot be considered social or civil human evolution. The evolution that can be envisioned for individual tyranny (ancient tyranny) and social tyranny (the current method of powerful countries) is that humanity develop on the path of truth, both materially and spiritually, and that the logic of truth take the place of all other types of logic. And this is the method of Islam:

﴿ إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ يُورِثُهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ... ﴾

***“Verily, the earth belongs to God; He bequeaths it to whom He wills among His servants. And the (good) end belongs to the righteous.”<sup>14</sup>***

As we have said, this is a lengthy discussion and we will suffice with what has been said to prevent further diversion from our main aim. However, consider the preceding synopsis meticulously.

Point three

## **Is Islam silent regarding government?**

The third point is that the rules and regulations that are issued by a leader are generally alterable and depend upon expedience of the time and therefore they are not part of the shar‘ah; however, the issue of leadership and government is not thus.

Leadership is something that no society can do without regardless of the circumstances. All humans understand a society's need for a leader in even the smallest of societies. Thus, leadership is a constant and invariable natural decree. It is something by which all social methods—tyrannical or lawful, savage or civilized, great or small, even the family social unit—are supported.

Also, Islam, which is based upon nature, establishes humanity's god-given nature as the reference of the generality of its laws. Axiomatic truths never invalidate the laws of nature and will never challenge the credence of leadership, the necessity of which can even be understood by a child.

The fact that various aspects of humanity's social life require an administrator is a general truth understood through human nature. As previously mentioned, Qur'anic verses that base religion upon nature are sufficient in proving that leadership is an immutable religious issue; in other words, leadership is an article of the shar'ah.

Furthermore, the Holy Prophet (S) personally headed the Islamic community. He would appoint supervisors for all aspects of the lives of Muslims, such as governors for cities, judges for settling disputes, missionaries and teachers for spreading the religion and educating the people, officials for gathering assets of the public treasury, and battle commanders. Historically, when he left Medina for a few days for a battle, he would appoint an overseer to govern the people in his absence.

After reviewing this tradition and the fact that according to the exact words of the Qur'an and the belief of the Prophet (S), Islam is global and eternal and has thousands of social and public aspects that require supervision, how can we believe that the Prophet (S) could refrain from addressing the issue of leadership?!

Is it possible that he explicate obvious life issues such as eating and drinking and insignificant matters that occur naturally such as excretion, giving hundreds of instructions regarding them, but turn a blind eye to the issue of leadership—which is the soul that keeps the society alive? Many verses in the Holy Qur'an verify this issue some of which are as follows:

﴿...النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ﴾

***“The Prophet is more worthy of the believers than they themselves are...”<sup>15</sup>***

﴿إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ﴾

***“Verily your sovereigns are Allah and His Prophet and those who uphold ritual prayer and give alms while bowing down (in prayer).”<sup>16</sup>***

﴿... يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ﴾

***“O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Prophet and those among you with authority...”<sup>17</sup>***

﴿... وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ﴾

***“And some men and women of the believers are supervisors and sovereigns of the others; they enjoin to good and forbid from evil...”<sup>18</sup>***

Some have mistakenly translated “wilayah” in these verses into friendship or aid. These people have done no more than strip the word of its true meaning.

Point four

The product of the foregoing discussion is that leadership is an element of the shar‘ah and thus, like other items of the shar‘ah, it must be kept alive in the Islamic society for all time. Of course, as such, the Muslim populous is responsible for upholding this office although at any given time a limited number of people actually occupy the position of leadership.

Now we must see whether or not Islam has designated that individuals manage the society as they desire or see fit. Of course, it is evident that specific groups have been described in Islamic shar‘ah as having a limited amount of leadership and there is no controversy regarding these. For example, the leadership (guardianship) of a father towards his young children and the leadership (guidance) of all Muslims toward one another in enjoining good and forbidding evil are limited.

The Sh‘ah believe that the Holy Prophet (S) chose Amr al-Mu‘minin, ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a), for this office—the office of Imamate—and after him, eleven of his noble descendants in succession.

In order to substantiate their belief, the Sh‘ahs—as opposed to the Sunnis who deny this fact—bring evidence of logic, many Qur’anic verses, and substantial traditions from numerous firsthand Sunnī and Sh‘ah narrators. Having been said, citation of this extensive evidence is beyond the scope of this discussion and can be found in many other works.

## **Leadership in the Age of the Imām’s Absence [‘asr-e ghaybat-e imām]**

It is important to say that this Sh‘ah-specific belief does not mean that the Islamic society is left leaderless in the absence of an imām—such as the age in which we now live—to scatter and stray like a flock without a shepherd.

This is because we have reasons that validate the necessity for the office of supreme leadership and the necessity for appointing individuals to this position. It is clear that persons are separate from office and in the absence or death of an officeholder the office is not terminated.

How can one imagine the annulment of this office while it has been proven through natural foundations? Invalidation of this office would be invalidation of nature and invalidation of nature would be invalidation of the very existence of Islam.

In addition, there are many commandments regarding types of punishment in the sharʿah—the perpetuation of which the Book and Tradition affirm. The leader is responsible for the execution of these laws. Nevertheless, leadership endures in the absence of an imām just as it exists in their presence.

Point five

Is leadership associated with all Muslims, just people [ʿudm], or modern so-called jurists [fuqahā]? At the advent of Islam, a person was named jurist who knew all religious sciences consisting of principles, applications, and ethics not just applications as is currently popular.

Also, if the third case is so, does it belong to any jurist with enough authority so as to become inviolable? Or does it belong to the most learned jurist? These issues cannot be covered in our current discussion and must be resolved in the field of jurisprudence.

In respect to the subject matter of this article, however, we can conclude that human nature affirms the need for leadership in any society in order to preserve its interests. Islam goes hand in hand with human nature. From these two premises it is deduced that a person who is foremost in religious piety, prudence, and knowledge of prevailing circumstances is chosen for this position. There is no doubt that ruling officials must be the elite of the society in wisdom.

Now we must attend to whether an Islamic society encompassing many regions, nations, and races—as it does today—must be guided under a single leader and government; ruled by various governments according to region and nationality; or ruled by several governments united under a central administration or something similar to the United Nations.

There is no decree in the Islamic sharʿah regarding any of these and this is as it should be. This is because the sharʿah can only guarantee invariable religious matters and the method of government may vary with the changes brought by the advancement of civilization.

Therefore, we can say that in every era the method of Islamic government must be selected using the following articles of Islamic sharʿah:

Muslims must do their utmost to achieve unity;

Every Muslim must observe the interests of Islam and Muslims;

The boundaries of the Islamic nation are beliefs not natural or conventional borderlines.

An important issue here is that an Islamic leader or government may never transgress, regardless of administrative methods, the Traditions of the Holy Prophet (S), and his methods of leadership must be put into practice in the Islamic society.

In view of the fact that leadership is an invariable in the Islamic society and is thus an article of the sharī'ah, God must determine how it is carried out. God, the Almighty, has endorsed the Prophet's (S) methods in many Qur'anic verses and has not given Muslims leave to deviate from them.

﴿...لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ﴾

***“Surely you have in the Prophet of Allah a fine example...”<sup>19</sup>***

There are many traditions from the Ahl al-Bayt in this regard. A reliable hadīth from the Prophet (S) states that:

«من رغب عن سنتي فليس مني»

“Those who deviate from my Tradition are not part of me (my nation).”

Explication of the traditions of the Holy Prophet (S) requires a separate discussion; however, the following is a short outline of the matter.

First, in Islam there is no distinction other than piety, and all class distinctions are null and void. Even though social classes such as master and servant, employee and employer, and men and women are preserved, everyone is equal and there is no discrimination. We must only unquestionably bow down before the magnificence of God. Consider the following Qur'anic verses:

﴿قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَا مُسْلِمُونَ﴾

***“O People of the Scripture! Come now to a word common among us and among you; that we not worship any save Allah and not associate aught with him and that none of us take others as lords beside Allah. And if they turn away, say: Bear witness that surely we are Muslims (those who surrender to God's will).”<sup>20</sup>***

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْتَقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾

**“O people! Verily, we have created you from a man and a woman and have made you into various races and tribes so that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you before Allah is the most God-fearing. Indeed Allah is All-knowing, All-aware.”<sup>21</sup>**

Second, everyone is completely equal before the law and not even the least bit of exception is made. Note the following verse:

﴿... لَيْسَ بِأَمَانِيكُمْ وَلَا أَمَانِي أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا يُجْزَ بِهِ﴾

**“(Honor before Allah) neither abides by your desires nor the desires of the People of the Scripture; whoever does evil will be requited accordingly.”<sup>22</sup>**

Third, decrees issued by the leader are issued by council and in the interests of Islam and Muslims.

﴿وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ...﴾

**“And consult with them in current affairs. After you make your decision put your trust in Allah. Verily, Allah loves those who put their trust in Him.”<sup>23</sup>**

It is plain to see that this holy tradition cannot lead to disadvantage in any society and thus it is immutable—a constant ruling of human nature that Islam endorses.

In addition, this tradition itself is derived from the performance of the Holy Prophet (S) and all acts of the Prophet (S) are executable.<sup>24</sup>

1. Sūrat al-Rūm 30:30.

2. Sūrat T̄ H̄ 20:50.

3. Sūrat al-A‘l̄ 87:2–3.

4. Sūrat al-Shams 91:7–10.

5. Sūrat al-J̄thiyah 45:23.

6. Sūrat Yūnus 10:32.

7. Sūrat al-‘Imr̄n 3: 144.

8. Sūrat Yūnus 10:32.

9. Sūrat Yūnus 10:35.

10. Sūrat al-Saff 61:9.

11. Sūrat al-Zukhruf 43:78.

12. Sūrat al-‘Asr 103:2–3.

13. This article was written before the independence of Algeria. [Persian edition]

14. Sūrat al-A‘r̄f 7: 128.

15. Sūrat al-Ahz̄b 33:6.

16. Sūrat al-M̄idah 5:55. It is established that “those who uphold ritual prayer and give alms while bowing down in prayer” refers to Al̄ ibn Ab̄ T̄lib (‘a) who gave away his ring to a poor person while bowing in ritual prayer. [trans.]

17. Sūrat al-Nis̄’ 4:59.

- [18.](#) Sūrat al-Tawbah (or Barā'ah) 9:71.
- [19.](#) Sūrat al-Ahzāb 33:21.
- [20.](#) Sūrat al-ʿImrān 3:64.
- [21.](#) Sūrat al-Hujurat 49:13.
- [22.](#) Sūrat al-Nisā' 4:123.
- [23.](#) Sūrat al-ʿImrān 3:159.
- [24.](#) Extracted from “Marjaʿiyyah wa Rawhāniyyah”.

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