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Introduction: Contention In Society is The Basis For Mankind's Perfection

Contention in society and contrasting ideologies are the basis for mankind's development. Contrasting ideologies are not only the sources of mankind's development, rather opposing forces, the foundations of the universe's order, are considered sources for the advancement of the world. If these opposing forces in nature were absent, the order of the universe would fall apart.

Opposites in the solar system and the stars that rotate around each other are the guardians of the system's order. The gravitational force of the sun and the centrifugal force are the reasons for the harmony that exists in the world. Were these opposites to become defunct no trace of life would be left nor would progress be possible.

Such is also the case with microbes, which are spread out in the environment. They provide the most valuable service for man at the same time as being at war with man. This is because they strengthen our white blood cells' defense vis-à-vis internal and external dangers. If such an enemy was not in our environment, if man lived for some time free from all microbial infections, he would be incredibly fragile when faced with physical hardships. He would lose his ability to resist different ailments. These enemies are similar to vaccines in that they strengthen our cells to fight against disease.

The basis for human development is polarity and competition. A rival lays all of his enemy's faults on the table before him, and, since the smallest mistake will be used to the enemy's advantage, man is forced to improve himself.

Sociologists believe that opposing parties and criticisms are what cause progress in human civilization. A critique warns man and displays his faults. It gives him the ambition to change his life, to make his life better.

Societies without oppositional parties or rivalries are similar to glasses of water equally filled. Instead of allowing the water to flow, such a society forces it to remain stagnate, water becomes unsanitary by

doing this.

Factories and cultural organizations that do not have a competitor stay in their place, they are unable to improve and attain levels of excellence. On the contrary, organizations that have competitors concentrate on expanding their goals, ideas and personnel to be able to surpass their antagonist and take a step, or even steps, forward.

Abilities will not blossom in a society where appropriate competition and fundamental differences are removed. They will not thrive in societies where all of the wealth is in the hands of the government, where individuals work only to the ability of their bodies and intellects and where their salaries are just enough to cover their basic needs. An innovative or mentally active spirit will not blossom in these conditions.

Carnal desires (*nafs ammarah*) are the basis for the intellect's and the spirit's improvement. They are the basis for man's sense of self-preservation and for his spiritual progress. If there were no carnal desires in man, he would not be able to reach high spiritual ranks, obtain Allah's satisfaction or achieve eternal bliss.

The devil (*shaytan*), using his evil powers, is waiting to ambush mankind. This is how he misguides humanity. Man knows about this adept enemy and prepares his spirit to fight against him. Man tries to strengthen his spirit with piety, the power of resistance and restraint, because of his comprehensive knowledge of this foe. Sometimes he is able to reach so lofty a spiritual peak that he becomes immune from committing sins.

As was mentioned, known enemies and targeted opponents are the basis for man's advancement along the path of spiritual and physical perfection. Man should not be afraid of the presence of such an enemy nor should he consider this enemy dangerous. The human intellect and man's love of self prepare him to combat this rival. In this battle, one must not satisfy oneself with physical and spiritual weapons, equal to those of his enemy's; instead he must try to equip himself with weapons more powerful than those of his opponent.

In addition to these enemies there are unfamiliar enemies as well. They are imposters, those who pretend to be one's friend, but beneath this façade they are more dangerous than wolves or any other predator.

They take advantage of the intimacy and comfort one assumes with a friend. Apparently, they are caring friends, but in actuality, they are enemies. They insist on their being trustworthy and their ability to keep secrets, but in reality, they are spies and traitors. They are conscious of human strengths and weaknesses. Staying away from these unknown enemies is extremely difficult, if not impossible.

These enemies are the hypocrites, whom the Qur'an discusses in various chapters. An independent chapter was even sent down regarding hypocrites. The Commander of the Faithful (a) related the

following from the Prophet (S) about those adversaries: “I have never been frightened of any country taking of Islam. I only worry about one group of people, the unbelievers who pretend to be Muslim, the two-faced hypocrites. They have eloquent speech, but in actuality, they are the Muslims' enemies. They are with you in their words, but, in reality, they would never take a step with you.”¹

Two Surahs That Stand Out From The Rest

The author has decided to choose two surahs from the Qur'an to sincerely, in straightforward language, comment upon. They were chosen because of special importance that the hypocrites played in Islamic history. These two surahs explain the relevance and reality behind hypocrites more than any other chapters do. The goal of this effort is for the children of Islam to become more aware of their heavenly scripture.

These two surahs are:

Surah at-Tawbah (Repentance, n 9). A commentary on this surah has been published as a series of articles in the magazine “Lessons from the School of Islam” (*Darshaye az Maktab Islam*). Now, with the will of Allah, it is being published as a book.

Surah al-Munafiqun (Hypocrites, n. 63). This surah has revealed the intentions of this group. It has also gone on to mention every other kind of enemy that Islam has.

The different topics that are covered in this commentary of the Qur'an have also been published in the aforementioned magazine. Now, this commentary is being presented to the reader, with additions, in the form of a book.

¹. Nahj al-Balaghah, 'Abduh, volume 3, page 33

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