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Introduction: Fundamentals Of Evaluation And Criticism Of Writings On Islamic Unity

First Introduction: Necessity Of Thought For Islamic Unity

We are impelled to notice a particular sort of religious thinking named ‘revival’ as we go back a recent century and look into schools of Islamic thought.

These days revivalism is a term applied to opinions and views of many Muslims thinkers.

Most of us are acquainted with this term without having full knowledge of it.

If we want to simply describe this term on the basis of existing writings in this field, we must say that contemporary tendency of thought among Muslims aims at revival of religious system, which they consider either of these two: Comprehension of faith or practice of faith.

Revivalists consider revivalism a necessity towards preserving religion in this new world.

As such, it could be said that all religious revivalists in the beginning intellectually endeavor leaning on the belief that religion is workable in present society. It can attend or mend basic human difficulties, of whatever depth it be, in various dimensions. Therefore, we can depend on it or desire it since it is a need.

But how?!

An immediate question that strikes the mind is how to prove it in practice and display worth and capability.

The real issue, from this stage onward, for this category of new thinkers of religion shall be to reply this query: How it is possible to raise the issue of faith once more in these days of competition that has

gripped human thought? Besides, how to face other schools fraught with consummate ability and respond to all other important ones of the day in a useful analysis. And this is the need.

Hence it is befitting to say that the most important efforts of new religious thinkers can be summed up in one sentence – in the present age, religion renovated by themselves is returned to appear on the social stage in a status of a powerful and energetic school.

Thought of Islamic unity is related to the same category of revivalist thoughts. Such can be understood from what in brief is told about the endeavors of revivalists.

Therefore, it has always been the point of focus of those who desire to tread the path of revival in a way to provide a variety to the outlook.

This group of revivalists is mindful of the extent of influence of faith in individual and social life. Dispute and the fight of religious people and coming into being of divisions among Muslims has become a cause to move towards Islamic unity. This practical revival guarantees a kind of revival in fundamentals of Muslim thought or in the outlook of Islamic theory towards creating a change in social relations of Muslims.

It depends upon the activity of a revivalist as to its kind towards achieving Islamic unity whether by means of a social or cultural movement. Fundamentals of its theory shall differ accordingly.

Basically, a revivalist is a political and social activist. However, he is also an intellectual and cultural activist. He spends his revivalist life in changing the beliefs of individuals of the society by way of presenting theatrical views and spreading them among public.

Of course, a seeker of unity too can adjust himself among various subjects of this group and at the same time exert his efforts in society through propaganda activities.

Second Introduction: Valuable Standards Of Worksheet Of The Thought Of Islamic Unity

A perusal of various indicators of Islamic unity shows that advocates of this theory have utilized different methods for its achievement. Several methods, including occasionally contradictory ones, have found room in the worksheet of revivalists.

Exact knowledge of each of these methods is very much important. Type of practice in behavior and action is more useful than directing the belief of individuals and more important than seeking unity.

As we said, thought of Islamic unity is similar to that of revivalism. Therefore it follows the governing principles.

Hence it seems natural that we too, as Shia analysts, should consider Islamic unity subordinate to principles and regulations pertaining to revivalism and standards of critical evaluation. Accordingly, we must be able to evaluate these values.

In a critical evaluation of Islamic unity, we must treat each indicator independently. We must take the grounds of evaluation of worksheet of revivalism into consideration and set it for evaluation.

From here onward, we shall try to comment in brief about these standards and state our position.

Revivalists in their intellectual endeavors should maintain two important and fundamental rules because of their claim in this respect. A revivalist in the run of his activities is liable to observe:

- First rule: ability and forwardness
- Second rule: originality and sincerity

Though these two rules form the whole, yet through this whole itself difference is apt to appear. This makes the trend of criticism rather difficult. On the other hand, it can be said that through Shia viewpoint in the whole history of revivalism these two real bases give ground to criticism and explanation. A revivalist cannot overlook the deep peeping eye of a critic of Shia society nor be indifferent towards the inquiry regarding the extent of consideration of the rule touching originality.

Because every religious thinker at least in a position of claim is willing to show that his religious thought is pristine and based on original teachings of religion and pure from irreligious conjectures or unauthentic additions. And on the other hand he wishes to attain a strong platform among religions and a stronghold enabling him to answer problems.

Therefore, in the trend of revivalism these two distinguishing indicators should be pursued and sought.

In this analysis whatever we Shias employ under the title of standard of scaling originality and sincerity it is either in accordance with teachings of Quran or Prophet's Ahlul Bayt; in other words beliefs that govern the Shiite school; because the real and true Islam is reflected in teachings of this school alone.

We, Shias, believe on the basis of teachings of the Prophet.

Whoever wants to lay his hand on religious literature or know about teachings of Islam must refer to Ahlul Bayt ('a) after the Prophet. There is no source at all to focus the light of truth of this religion except by direct contact with Prophet's progeny through their teachings.

Any knowledge by name of religion of Islam, or on the whole any thought not supported by teachings of Prophet's Ahlul Bayt, in the end is doomed to deviation and destined to go astray. Ahlul Bayt of Prophet are the only origins to obtain therefrom true knowledge of Islam. Besides, they are the only source to know a thought or a theory as to its being a religious one or in line with teachings of Shia school. ¹ This

is the only way of obtaining religious knowledge, which is knowledge of guidance. This is the only way to trust in correctness of thoughts on display in the name of religion.

Without any doubt, the very root of learnings of true religion is contained in teachings of Ahlul Bayt of Prophet. If any knowledge or information with the label of Islam does not happen to be in line with their teachings, every certitude of it is wrong; it is a waste and rescinded.

Accordingly, if a word about Islamic unity is put in, it should be based on very religion itself. In other words, it should originate from real teachers of religion; that is Ahlul Bayt of Prophet. It must be so according to Shia belief. When this stage is still in dispute and the standard of sincerity and rule towards its achievement is yet unsettled, to enter into another theory; that is activities of revivalism, seems out of place and to no end.

In this criticism and analysis, the standard of truth is the wholesome and absolute application of thoughts without least leniency or a bent towards Shiaism or beliefs contained therein though this school is absolute truth.

The smallest slip or an overlook in application of thoughts of unity with fundamentals of Ja'fari Shiaism of twelve Imams has brought forward the ground that renders short the standard of originality and sincerity. This has further rendered the thought irreligious and without backing of Islam. No saying goes if there had been any deliberate amendment or departure from the basis of this school.

Although we have great respect for those who possess opinion and have moral duty towards critics and analysts, we never give sanction to ourselves to overlook truth or ignore the right being trespassed. In no condition and in no case we shall fall short. We have no right to do so. It does not serve as a platform to reach agreements thereupon for the sake of our or others' interests.

The absolute truth belongs to Ahlul Bayt of Prophet. It is found in their persons and rests with them. Therefore, if we entertain any kind of thought or conjecture in the name of religion, which is not in accordance with this school, it is as though we have trampled truth and rightfulness, which is their concern and tribute, belonging to them alone.

Shias are after originality and sincerity of thought when they confront Muslim revivalism. They are also after the ability or strength in this regard. They believe if they sacrifice one for the sake of other, it will certainly result in shortage. One will lack the other. It will be an incomplete and unconsummated thought. In other words, we are taking refuge in an irreligious conjecture.

Ability or strength alone is not the concern of Shias. Sincerity in religious intention too is necessary. The excessive desire, on the part of newcomers to this thought, to exhibit strength could spoil sincerity and diminish its originality. Likewise, to create strength they might commit some additions to religion, which the true Islam is pure and purged of. As such, the brushstrokes they would apply could reduce elegance of real Islam or effect unwanted and undesired additions thereon making ugly the beautiful. Wrong

feeding in a long run will result in the school losing its very entity. Such will be the consequence of revivalism taking to itself the twists and turns of deviation of belief.

Creating ability without sincerity and pristine originality shall result into a constant fear – not only in issue of Islamic unity but throughout the varieties of revivalism.

The output of revivalists must be a faith. Under pretext of revivalism, faith or religion should not be substituted by some other thought or conjecture.

First and foremost, sincerity and originality must be safeguarded in revivalism. Therefore, the basic difficulty in confronting any type of revivalist thought is the religion to support these thoughts. Without purity and originality there will be confusion. This will be the case with all aspects of revivalism beyond Islamic unity.

To what extent these outlooks have been able to protect the real pillars of religion, remains to be seen. Further, originality of religion must be in association with it so that Shias could take it in account of religious values and call it Religious Thought.

Contemporary revivalists have taken great steps from the position of strength. The originality and purity of religious thought remains uncertain. There are great many questions, which still need to be answered reasonably.

Islamic unity too is not exempted from this rule.

Third Introduction: Familiarity With Writings On Thoughts Of Islamic Unity

When we read the writings and opinions of supporters of Islamic unity, we easily understand the bulk done in this respect. However, very little is done towards classifying and differentiating them scientifically.

Perhaps it is one reason for difficulty one has to face in analyzing their outlook. Further, it gives room to mistake the stand of critic to the effect that he is intentional and deliberate in his motive. Absence of classification between viewpoints stands as a cause in this regard.

To arrive at a correct analysis about Islamic unity depends upon these two packages of information:

- A) Acquaintance with standards of evaluation of output of revivalism. Locating the position in this regard.
- B) Accurate knowledge of various writings about Islamic unity.

We revert to history of contemporary thought while trying to lay hands on the theory of Islamic unity and its application in our social life. We become aware that in the first step we could follow two ways to reach

‘unity’ and to have a discourse thereon.

In other words, there remain two routes to tally towards attaining the aspired Islamic unity. They are:

- One: Political and social movement
- Two: Movement of belief and thought

As mentioned before, both these lines depend on theoretical foundations – unique in their kind. We shall try to comment on the basis of these packages regarding particulars about Islamic unity from the angle of thought and belief.

¹. Shia school stands for the same teachings of Quran and Prophet’s progeny. It does necessarily include all the views of Shia thinkers.

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