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## Man's Role in the March of History

We have said that the discovery of the real dimensions of the role of religion in the march of history and the progress of man depends on the evaluation of the two stable elements of the social relationship which are man and nature.

Now let us see from the viewpoint of the Qur'an about man and his role in the movement of history. In the light of the Qur'anic concepts we studied earlier, it is evident that man or his inner content forms the basis of the movement of history. We have already pointed out that to have an objective is the distinguishing feature of the movement of history.

In other words, the movement of history is a purposive movement. It is not merely related to its past through its cause, but is related to its future as well through its objective. Being a purposive movement, it has a final cause and is forward looking.

It is the future which stimulates the active movement of history. Though the future does not exist at the present time, it is visualized through its mental existence. It is this mental existence which on the one hand points to an intellectual aspect embracing the objective and on the other points to the power and will which push man towards this objective.

Thus the mental existence of an objective which is to materialize in future and which motivates history, shows on the one hand the existence of an idea and on the other shows the existence of a will. It is the blending of an idea and a will that has the power to make future and is a force capable of starting historical activity on the social scene.

Idea and will in fact form man's conscience, and in these two basic elements man's inner content is seen. It is man's inner content that moves history and with the blending of man's idea and his will it can realize his objectives.

With this explanation it may be said that it is man's inner content or his thinking and will which make history move. The whole structure of society including all its relations, organizations and their

characteristics stand on the foundation of man's inner content, and every change and development of society depends on the change and development of this infrastructure of it.

In other words, the structure of society changes with a change in man's ideas and his will. It is obvious that if this base is solid, the structure of society will be strong. The relation between man's inner content and the social and historical superstructure of society is that of a cause and its effect. This relationship recalls the laws as explained earlier in connection with the following verse:

***"Allah does not change the condition of a people unless they change that which is in their hearts."***

This verse says that the social condition of a people is their superstructure. Any fundamental change must appear in the people themselves. All other changes, such as changes in the quality of life, historical condition or social condition spring from this basic change. A

***"change in that which is in their hearts"***

means a change in the inner content of society as a whole, that is as a community or a nation. Society should be like a plant that always bears new and fresh fruit. A change in one or several individuals in a society cannot lay the foundation of the development of society as a whole.

A change in the conditions and the circumstances of a community or a nation is fostered only by an inner change in that community or that nation which should like a tree that bears new fruit every day.

Hence only a change in the inner and psychological content of a nation which on the whole is represented by the spiritual condition of the majority of that nation, is capable of bringing about any basic changes in the historical character of a nation. A change in the spirit of one, two or a few individuals cannot do this.

## **Necessity of Harmony between Superstructural and Infrastructural Movements of Society**

Islam and the Qur'an believe that the process of inner and outer changes should proceed side by side so that man may reconstruct his inner faculties, that is his spirit, his thinking, his will and his inclinations. This inner infrastructure should be in complete harmony with the outer superstructure.

As no superstructure can be visualized without an infrastructure and a superstructure without a strong base will be shaky and liable to disappear, Islam has called the proper reconstruction of the inner content, the major jihad (Spiritual purification), and the reconstruction of its superstructure the minor jihad (Holy war).

Drawing a comparison between the two, Islam says that the minor jihad will have no real significance nor

will it be able to bring about any change in social and historical fields, if it is not accompanied by major jihad.

Therefore these two processes should go on side by side. Whenever they are separated from each other, they lose their real value. In order to lay stress on the significance of man's inner content and to make clear that this inner content is the basic thing, Islam has called its reconstruction the major jihad.

Whenever the major jihad and the minor jihad are separated from each other, no useful inner change can take place. Describing such a state the Qur'an says:

***There is such a man that his view on this worldly life pleases you. He even calls on Allah to vouch for that which is in his heart. Yet he is the deadliest of your opponents. No sooner he leaves you than he tries to make mischief, destroying crops and cattle. Allah does not like mischief.*** (Surah al Baqarah, 2: 204)

Man cannot accept truth and act righteously so long as a desire for a change for the better does not have a firm hold on his heart and he does not rebuild himself from within. Society cannot be shaped in a befitting manner unless man's heart is replete with human values representing truth. Otherwise any talk of truth will be hollow and meaningless.

As such, the most important question is that of the change of heart, which accords meaning to the words and a dimension to the mottos, and determines the goal and the line of action to be adopted to secure it.

So far we have learnt that man's inner content is the basis of the movement of history. It fixes the rules and laws.

## **Importance of Choosing an Ideal in the Life of Man**

Now the question is what this inner content of man is. What is the thing that forms the starting point in the construction of this inner content? How can that thing be discovered?

In fact it is man's ideal that performs this role. It is an ideal that forms man's inner content and moves the wheels of history. It is an ideal that guides the movement of history through a conception which exists in man's mind and is blended with his will and thinking. The objectives which move the wheels of history are organized by an ideal.

We know that man's inner content gives a concrete shape to his objectives and goals on which the movement of history depends. It gives a practical shape to the movement of history through the mentally existing ideas blended with will and thinking. All the objectives around which history revolves, and which concern entire human society spring from the great ideals. It is a great ideal which brings into existence many small objectives and specific questions.

The objectives or the main goals in life are the sole makers of history. In their turn they have a deep foundation in man's inner content, that is the main ideal of his life. This ideal is the corner stone of all his objectives which reverberate it. The higher and the nobler the ideals of a human society, the more befitting and broader objectives are.

Similarly if its ideals are limited and mean, the objectives springing from them will also be limited and mean. Therefore a great ideal is the starting point of the internal reconstruction of human society.

The main ideal of a society depends on its conception of life and the world. A great ideal is formed in the light of that conception, and society can move to realize that ideal in consonance with the spirit of the ideal in question and the conception that it holds of the world and life.

A great ideal is the outcome of a particular way of thinking and a particular mentality. All those who choose a particular ideal, determine their course of an action in the light of it. This course of action may be described as a historical movement.

It may be mentioned that all historical movements have some definite aim and are distinguished from each other by the ideal behind them, which determines their objectives and goals. These objectives and goals keep all the efforts and moves which are made, concentrated on the course, leads to that ideal.

The Qur'an and the religious terminology call such an ideal deity, because it is a high ideal alone which can occupy our full attention and make us comply with all its requirements.

The Qur'an believes that these are the qualities of a deity<sup>1</sup> only. That is why it describes every big ideal and every force that occupies the place of a big ideal, as deity. It is these deities<sup>2</sup> which fix the course of history. Lust and licentiousness are one of these deities. The Qur'an says:

***Have you seen him who chooses for his deity his own lust.*** (Surah al-Furqan, 24: 43)

In this verse excessive lust of a licentious man has been described as his deity.

According to the terminology of the Qur'an and the religion the big ideals are so to say Allah, the real Deity who issues injunctions to man and is his true motivating force. If the influence of something else goes to this extent, it socially and religiously may be called a deity.

## **Different Kinds of Human Ideals**

I. The big ideals the conception of which man draws from the externally existing realities of the world and the living conditions and mental disposition of human society, do not lift man's vision beyond the limited affairs of material life.

When man's big ideal is inspired by the existing condition of society with all its characteristics and limitations, life begins to move in a circle. In other words, it ceases to move forward and becomes

stagnant.

As a result man begins to regard as absolute what he previously regarded as limited and relative. He ceases to have any desire to attain any thing beyond what already exists. He stops making efforts to achieve a higher ideal. In these circumstances the movement of history becomes circular. It does not move forward. The future becomes only a repetition of the past.

The leaders of the limited ideologies do nothing but forestall any change in society. They block the progress of human society by diverting its attention from the absolute to the relative. Hence, the limited ideologies are chosen for two reasons:

The first reason is a sense of attachment to the existing conditions on account of one's becoming accustomed to them, and an aversion to any movement because of one's indolence. From psychological point of view, the development of such a state in society prevents it from moving forward and making progress.

Consequently society carves a god (deity) out of a relative truth which it could use as a stepping-stone for reaching its goal. It begins to look at a relative truth as the absolute truth and chooses it as its supreme ideal and the highest goal. This means nothing but blindly following in the footsteps of others which has been denounced by the Qur'an in many of its verses describing the societies which the Prophets had to face.

These societies believed that their rulers were the supreme ideals. They passed all limits in elevating their rulers, and overlooking the relativity of them, tried to make them the absolute. The Prophets had to face the people who on account of their perverted habits, customs and manners, rejected their call and said:

***We found our fathers following a path. We are guided by their footprints.*** (Surah al-Zukhruf, 43:22)

Materialism prevailed over their minds and hence they went after perceptible objects only. Materialism so much overwhelmed their feelings that instead of being the thinking men they became material beings of very limited thinking. A man, who is engrossed in his daily needs, is always under the influence of material things and cannot see beyond the daily happenings and the material affairs. He cannot rise above these things. See what the Qur'an says about such people:

***They say: 'We follow that wherein we found our fathers.' What! Even though their fathers were totally unintelligent and had no guidance.*** (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:170)

***They say: 'Enough for us is that wherein we found our fathers.' What! Even though their fathers had no knowledge whatsoever and no guidance.*** (Surah al-Maidah, 5:103)

***They said: 'Have you come to us to pervert us from that faith in which we found our fathers so that you may own the place of greatness in the land? We will not believe you.'*** (Surah Yunus, 10:10)

***Do you ask us not to worship what our fathers worshipped? Surely we are in grave doubt concerning that to which you call us.*** (Surah Hud, 11:62)

***Their messengers said: 'Can there be doubt concerning Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth? He calls you so that He may forgive you your sins and relieve you to an appointed term.' They said: 'You are no more than human being like us. You want to turn us away from what our fathers used to worship. Then bring us some convincing proof.'*** (Surah Ibrahim, 14:10)

***They say only: 'We found our fathers following a path and we are guided by their footprints.'*** (Surah Az-Zukhruf, 43:22)

In all these verses the Qur'an has declared the choice of an inferior ideal as the first cause of the rejection of the call of the Prophets by the perverted societies. It explains that primarily because of their materialistic views and intellectual vacuum, these societies were unable to choose a better ideal and were contented with an inferior one.

The second cause of the choice of inferior ideals all over history has been the fiendish domination of the tyrants over human societies. When the tyrants come to power in society, they become allergic to every forward-looking idea and do not like that anyone should be regarded as superior to them. They always consider such things to be a threat to their status and existence.

That is why all over history it has been in the interest of the tyrants to close the eyes of their people to the realities. They wanted their people to regard the inferior condition of their life as an ideal and indispensable one, and to attach god-like and absolute value to the existing condition.

The tyrants try to imprison the people within the framework of their own ideas. They want the people to mould themselves according to their existing condition, not to have any idea beyond that and not to think of changing their existing condition by choosing a better ideal or having a higher ambition. That is the social cause of choosing inferior ideals. This cause is introduced from outside and is not an internal one. The Qur'an has referred to this method of sabotaging the mission of the Prophets when it says:

***Fir'awn said: Chiefs, I know not that you have a god other than me. "*** (Surah al Qasas, 28:38)

***Fir'awn said: 'I only show you what I think and I do but guide you to a wise policy.'*** (Surah al Hijr, 15:29)

Here Fir'awn admits that he presents to his people nothing except his own personal views and that he wants to place them within the framework of his own personal opinion. Thus he admits that he wants to make the status quo and his personal views absolute and indispensable.

It is pharaonic authority which makes an ideal imposed on a society appear to it to be indispensable and

absolute, and forces society to accept it as such. The pharaonic authority regards any change in this policy as a threat to its existence. Listen to what the Qur'an says in this respect:

***We sent Musa and his brother Haroon with our signs and a clear warrant to Fir'awn and his chiefs, but they scorned them as they were a despotic folk. And they said: 'Shall we put our faith in two human beings like ourselves, and whose people are servile to us?'*** (Surah al Mu'minun 23:45– 47)

Fir'awn means to say: "We are not prepared to put faith in the ideal which Musa has put forward, for it will shake the adoration which the people of Musa and Haroon show to us. Therefore it is necessary to maintain rigidly the existing life style of society, which must not be allowed to change at all. Human society must be held under the influence of greed and be authoritatively controlled. That is the only guarantee of our existence and the continuity of our rule."

This was the second cause of the selection of inferior ideals as mentioned by the Qur'an. It is in this connection that the Qur'an has used the word '**taghut**' (devil; false god; tyrant).

The Qur'an says: ***Those who avoid the taghut lest they should worship them, and turn to Allah in repentance, for them there are glad tidings. Therefore give glad tidings to My slaves who hear advice and follow the best thereof. Such are those whom Allah guides and such are men of understanding.*** (Surah al Ankabut, 29: 17 – 18)

Here Allah mentions the most important characteristic of those who avoid the '**taghut**'. He says: ***Give glad tidings to My slaves who hear advice and follow the best thereof.***

That means that those who avoid the **taghut** have a free and open mind. They are not set in a mould from which they cannot escape. To follow the truth is their only goal. They hear what is said to them and follow the best thereof.

They leave no stone unturned to find out and follow the truth. Had they been the worshippers of the **taghut**, they would have done only that which the **taghut** would have wanted them to do. They could not have heard what was said to them and could not have selected the best thereof. They could follow only that which the **taghut** would have told them.

So far we have explained the second cause of following the low quality ideals.

History passes through man's inner structure which determines his goals. The basis of man's goal is his ideals, and his ideals spring from his vital objectives. Every society has its own ideals which determine its course of action and provide milestones on its way of life. There are three kinds of ideals. We have so far explained the first kind of them, which springs from the existing conditions and circumstances of society. Such ideals are always monotonous and boring.

Under their impact history always moves in a circular way, in the sense that it takes the existing

condition and derives the absolute for the future out of it. The Qur'an holds that there are two causes which produce these ideals. The first cause, which is psychological, is people's attachment to the old customs and habits and their indolence and sensuality. The second cause is external. It is the domination of the despots and tyrants over society throughout history.

1. (ilah)

2. (aliha)

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