

Session 38: Confrontation of Western Ideas and Beliefs' with Islamic Laws

The Constitutional Movement and propagation of Western values

In the sketched discussions on Islamic political theory we mentioned some of the influences of Western atheistic culture in our society and dwelt on the contributory factors for their emergence so that our people, especially the dear youth, future builders and inheritors of this revolution, would not succumb to them. Some of the influences that we examined in the past session were freedom and democracy.

Since the beginning of the Constitutional Movement, the freemasons and xenomaniacs borrowed multifaceted and many-sided concepts, such as freedom and democracy prevalent in the West, and promoted them in our Islamic society. Since our people were suffering from the oppression and tyranny perpetrated by the willful and despotic courtiers, they easily responded to the clarion call of freedom. The people welcomed with open arms those who chanted the slogan of liberty.

Consequently, the said slogan was transformed into a populist and universal slogan, and the inclination towards freedom and freedom-loving became generally accepted. Of course, what the people were aspiring for was freedom from the yoke of willful and despotic regimes inimical to Islamic values. However, what the xenomanics and darlings of the West were pursuing was the other dimension of the concept, i.e. freedom from the grip of Islam. By chanting the slogan and promoting the concept of freedom, they were trying to keep the people away from Islam so that they would no longer be attached to Islamic laws, ordinances and values.

Similarly, the people who suffered at the hands of the oppressive regime, khans and feudal lords, hailed the slogan of democracy through which they demanded mastery over their own destiny, and did not want oppressive rulers, capitalists and landlords to chart it for them. This was the acceptable dimension for our society. But those who used to promote this concept in its general sense and invite others to do the same had a different motive in chanting the slogan of democracy, i.e. to remove religion from the

political arena of society, and replace Islamic or religious values with the people's will and demand.

Those who were unaware of this objective of the xenomaniacs and freemasons accepted this slogan completely. But those who were farsighted strongly reacted and putting their lives in danger took on the responsibility of informing and enlightening the people of the conspiracy by showing that absolute freedom and democracy that contradicts Islam and its decrees are condemned and rejected by Islam and its sacred laws.

The "crime" of Martyr Shaykh Fadhlullah Nuri was his opposition to Western democracy and constitutionalism that were heedless of religious or divine values, and his advancement of "religiously legitimate constitutionalism" [mashruteh-ye mashru'eh] vis-à-vis "absolute constitutionalism" [mashruteh-ye mutlaqeh]. He used to say: "We do not accept constitutionalism as absolute. We accept constitutionalism which is consistent with Islamic laws, ordinances and decrees, but others talk about absolute constitutionalism and it is not important for them whether it is consistent with religion or not." To advance their disdainful objective, they sent that distinguished religious scholar to the gallows and made him attain martyrdom on the charge of supporting despotism and opposing constitutionalism. This dispute or clash between the fundamentalists and Islamists, on one hand, and the hypocrites and xenomaniacs, on the other, continues up to now.

Some writers' displeasure at the presentation of ideal freedom in Islam

On one occasion last year, I discussed freedom and democracy and I said that absolute freedom is unacceptable in our Islamic culture and Constitution, and what is acceptable is conditional freedom. As provided in Article 4 of the Constitution, the constitutional provisions, statutory laws, ratified bills, and ordinances issued by concerned authorities are binding provided that they are not inconsistent with and repugnant to the fundamental principles of Islam.

So, even if only one provision of the Constitution is against the general acceptance of Qur'anic verses and traditions, it is not binding as a whole! Our people approved this constitution. As such, it is impossible for the people who have staged a revolution for the revival of Islam and also expressed their desire to protect the position and station of Islamic laws and decrees in the constitution and not to yield to non-Islamic values. These people accept freedom within the framework of Islamic laws and values.

After making this discourse, many newspapers launched a campaign against me, publishing numerous articles accusing me of opposing freedom and democracy and supporting dictatorship and despotic rule. They even said that so-and-so (alluding to me) wants Iran to go back to the period of intransigence prior to the Constitutional Movement! Nevertheless, fair-minded Muslim writers supported my views, arguing that what is acceptable to our society and should be defended is legitimate freedom within the framework of Islamic laws and decrees. Officials of the system also stipulated this point time and again.

Islamic decree on enemy combatants and agents of corruption on earth

We have said that those who talk about freedom as absolute, without limit and boundary, and consider violence as something absolutely wrong, say that one should not resort to violence even against those who rise up against the system and resort to violence. They must be treated with kindness, benevolence and divine mercy. Undoubtedly, their outlook is wrong. If the criminals and violators are not dealt with seriously and decisively, and in case of necessity, brute force or violence is not used, the path will be open for a repetition of riots and crimes. Islam commands that enemy combatants and agents of corruption on earth must be dealt with decisively.

In general, violation of government decrees or resorting to violence is sometimes individual in nature and at times collective in nature. It has a social or collective dimension when an organized group engages in an armed struggle against the government. This group is described in jurisprudence [*fiqh*] as “seditionists” [*bughah* or *ahl al-baghy*]. One of the classifications of *jihad* discussed in Islam is the *jihad* against this group, i.e. war against seditionists. Members of organized groups that stage an armed struggle against the Islamic government must be confronted and made to surrender to the Islamic government, and one must not compromise with them.

There is also a time when resorting to violence against the government or revolt against the Islamic ordinances is not done by an organized group. It is rather an individual movement with one or two persons disrupting order in society, violating public property and honor, or striking fear and terror by the use of hard or soft power. This kind of individual is known as “enemy combatant” [*muharib*]. In dealing with the *muharib*, there is no need for a military expedition. Instead, these individuals will be convicted by the Islamic court and the Islamic state will execute the decree of the Islamic judge.

Depending on the decision of the judge, one of the four decrees determined by Islam for the *muharib* and “agent of corruption on earth” [*mufsid fi'l-ardh*] shall be executed. (1) He shall be sent to the gallows; (2) he will be put to the sword or executed by a firing squad; (3) His right hand and left foot, or left hand and right foot shall be amputated; or (4) he shall be banished from the Islamic land:

إِنَّمَا جَزَاءُ الَّذِينَ يُحَارِبُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا أَنْ يُقَتَّلُوا أَوْ يُصَلَّبُوا أَوْ تُقَطَّعَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ
مِنْ خِلَافٍ أَوْ يُنْفَوْا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ ذَلِكَ لَهُمْ خِزْيٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

“Indeed the requital of those who wage war against Allah and His Apostle, and to try to cause corruption on the earth, is that they shall be slain or crucified, or have their hands and feet cut off from opposite sides or be banished from the land. That is a disgrace for them in this world, and in the Hereafter there is a great punishment for them.”¹

Hence, those who stage riots and insurrection against the Islamic government or system are enemy combatants and agents of corruption on earth, and Islamic punishments shall be meted out to them. Islamic punishments or penal laws have never been abrogated. Those who oppose Islamic culture say that Islamic penal laws or punishments are violent, and generally, any violent action is condemnable. In our discussion related to violence, we have said that just as absolute freedom is not laudable, all violence is not condemnable and reproachable.

In fact, some forms of violence are necessary and permissible. One must deal violently with those who resort to violence, for if they are treated kindly and compassionately, it is actually a green light for them to stage a riot again.

The consequences of the lack of decisive step against conspirators

1378 AHS, there were limited riots in some parts of our country. For certain reasons, military officials preferred to show tolerance to the rioters and did not deal with them decisively. It was this appeasing and flexible treatment of theirs that prompted the rioters to create another disturbance whose scope and extent of damages and losses were far-reaching and unbearable.

If these rioters and agents of corruption on earth are not confronted and the Islamic penalty not implemented on them, there will be no guarantee that they will not riot again under a certain pretext and exploit the university atmosphere. Our dear Muslim students are very vigilant and wary and had no hand in the riots and disturbances. But there are those who exploit the honest feelings of the students and prepare the ground for another riot.

So, if rioters are not dealt with decisively, and in the words of the gentlemen, no violent action undertaken, what is the guarantee that these riots will not be repeated? It must be borne in mind that Islam has set severe penal laws against thieves and other criminals, especially the *muharib*, so that no one dare commit treachery and create disturbance, and be afraid of the penalty they will incur. In fact, the issue of frightening the enemy and criminal contains great wisdom as mentioned in the Qur'an, which the Muslims must pay attention to:

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ وَآخَرِينَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَهُمُ اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُهُمْ...﴿٢﴾

“Prepare against them whatever you can of [military] power and war-horses, create awe thereby in the enemy of Allah, and your enemy, and others besides them, whom you do not know, but Allah knows them...”²

Among the cases in which violence even on the part of the people is permitted is where the Islamic

country is in danger and a conspiracy against the Islamic system has been hatched and the Islamic state alone is incapable of defending the Islamic system. When the Islamic state senses that there is a conspiracy at work against the system, it is duty-bound to take steps. If steps taken by the state are not sufficient, people are bound to rush to the assistance of the Islamic state and defend it.

As witnessed by everybody, after the riots and disturbances staged by rogues, rascals and foreign mercenaries in the month of Tir this year, the system was in great danger and the government forces alone were incapable of deterring and stopping the rioters. Seeing this, the people and the beloved *basijis* rushed to their assistance and promptly put an end to the sedition of foreign agents. Some high-ranking officials of the system also admitted that the disturbance came to an end due to the efforts of the beloved *basijis*.

Thus, if there is a conspiracy at work against the Islamic system and there are solid proofs and decisive evidence substantiating it and there is no option but to resort to violence in order to thwart it, violence becomes indispensable and obligatory. As the Imam said, "Here, taqiyyah [dissimulation] is haram and one must rise up otherwise we will fail to convey the message. When Islam itself is in danger, there is no room for taqiyyah on account of either precaution or fear. One must stand up, to defend the essence of Islam even if thousands of people have to be killed. Therefore, in case some elements have the intention of overthrowing the system it is obligatory upon those who have proof to act by themselves, even if others are unaware of the impending danger or they do not deem it expedient to take any steps. The act of violence here, is also permissible.

I do not mean that in all cases one must resort to violence. I am not a theoretician on violence. Rather, I believe that mercy and kindness are the guiding principle and only in case of necessity and emergency one must resort to violence. My point is that when the Islamic state is established, the Islamic state must act according to the decree of the court or concerned authorities. But if the situation is beyond the control of the Islamic state and in order to protect Islam and the system, the people have no option but to stage a violent uprising, violence is obligatory.

Irresponsible stances against the issue of violence

Following the subjects I discussed about violence, Westernized periodicals called for public mobilization against my words and many articles were published in newspapers. Of course, I personally thank all those who talked or wrote an article in favor or against my words. I believe that not only the examination and criticism of these subjects and discussions in periodicals are not harmful, but they contribute towards the enlightenment and awareness of the people, strengthening their beliefs and making them understand their duties, provided the periodicals do not judge unjustly and publish the complete arguments of both parties.

But unfortunately defective reports are submitted to some officials in which my statements are quoted out of context. As a result, these officials are upset and immediately start opposing me.

I do not expect others to conform to my statements. Neither am I afraid of their opposition. I am performing my divine religious duty. If someone likes my speeches, so be it. If another person dislikes my speeches, I entrust my work to God and am not afraid of the threats and insults. However, I expect those who are proponents of tolerance and acceptance of the ideas of others and exponents of plural and multi-voiced societies to magnanimously listen to my speech with an open mind. In many cases, after listening to all my speeches, they will conform to all my points and if ever they have any reservations, they will react to my points with logic and proof, and not disagree with me by using expressions devoid of courtesy and elegance.

Regrettably, I cannot reply in writing to all those who expressed affection in speeches, newspapers and periodicals and presented a subject in my favor or against me, and in the past two weeks wrote hundreds of articles. At this moment, I cannot also verbally reply to each of them. As such, I shall avoid answering them with the hope that they have taken stances with the intention of seeking the pleasure of, and proximity to, God. We know that it is our duty to discuss subjects needed and favorable to Islam by using logic and proof. I expect those who dislike them to respond to me logically and fairly.

An examination of the synonym of the word “violence” in the Qur’an

At this moment, I deem it necessary to summarize the subjects about violence and its subtopics. Essentially, the word *khushunat* is Arabic and it is also used in the Persian language and literature to mean roughness [*zibri*] or coarseness [*doroshti*] while its antonym is *layn* which means “soft”. In the Qur’an the word *khushunat* is not used as the opposite of *layn* but rather the word *ghalzah* [severity].

Actually, these two words are synonyms. Just as we have many synonymous words in Persian, there are also many synonymous words in Arabic. In the Qur’an, sometimes only one term is used, and at other times, both synonymous terms are used. At times, each of the terms implies a specific meaning. For example, the word *qalb* [heart] means one thing and the word *fu’ad* [heart] means another. Sometimes, these words are used interchangeably. In the Qur’an, the word *ghalzah* [severity] is used as the opposite of *layn* [softness]. For instance, addressing the Holy Apostle (s), God says:

﴿...فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لَئِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ فَطًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَأَنْفَضُوكَ مِنْ حَوْلِكَ﴾

“It is by Allah’s mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hardhearted, surely they would have scattered from around you...”³

In Persian, *ghalzah* is not used to mean “coarseness” [*doroshti*]. Instead, in our culture *ghalzah* is generally used in relation to liquid matters. For example, it is said that so-and-so *shireh* [juice, syrup or milk] is *ghaliz*. Here *ghaliz* means concentrated. The equivalent in Persian of the word *ghalzah* which is

used in Arabic as the antonym of *layn* is *khushunat* [harshness or violence] which we discussed. We said that contrary to what some people say, violence is not absolutely condemnable in all circumstances. In fact, in some cases it is even obligatory.

The Western and Islamic concept of tolerance

Regarding freedom, we said that the concept of freedom used in our political culture and literature was initially the translation of the word “liberalism” prevalent in the West. Similarly, the word *tahammul* which is used as the antonym of *khushunat* is used as the equivalent of the word “tolerance” in English or French. This concept or term is prevalent in Western literature.

There is no objection to use and include in our literature an unambiguous and clear concept or term used in a foreign language, or its equivalent. But the point that must not be neglected is that sometimes these imported concepts have certain conditions, semantic loads and specific values. These concepts are laden with values suitable to their culture. That is, once a word is used in a culture, it is laden with a positive or negative value, but once this word is adopted in another culture which is foreign to the original culture, it will lose its embedded value. On the contrary, it will acquire a new value in the second language. Let us elaborate:

Since “freedom” was adopted in our literature from Western culture and this term has a broad meaning in the West and is even used to mean sexual freedom which is rejected in our society, we have no such concept in our culture, so we are forced to add certain qualifications to freedom while keeping in view our Islamic and national values, to aspire for legitimate freedom within the framework of Islamic values, and to categorically declare that we do not accept absolute freedom. In the same tone, the concept of “violence” in its new sense was adopted in our culture from Western culture.

In contrast to the West which regarded it as absolutely condemnable and reproachable according to the exigency of its culture, we do not consider it as anti-value in its absolute sense just as we do not accept freedom as an absolute value. Instead, we regard violence which is devoid of underlying logic, unjustifiable and against human ethics. We believe that in some cases violence is acceptable, consistent with the dictates of reason, ensuring the interests of society, thereby not reproachable.

So, before adopting “tolerance” from Western culture and presenting it as absolutely desirable in our literature, we must pay attention to its source, investigate its root and see what it means in Western literature; which value—positive or negative—it is laden with, and for what motive it has prevailed in Western culture, and for which motive it is introduced in our political culture and literature. We also have to check whether its meaning has changed or not after its introduction.

The concept of “tolerance” is among the blessings of modern Western culture that gradually evolved after the Renaissance and gained universal acceptance. Today, it is known as one of the distinctive features of Western atheistic culture. (We have already stated that whenever we talk about Western

culture, we do not mean the culture of all people in the West because there are also many monotheistic and religious people there. Instead, we mean the atheistic culture dominant in the West which is also opposed by many.)

In finding the root of the concept of tolerance, firstly, in the dominant culture of the West, all values—including moral, social, and political–legal values—are conventional affairs and have no rational and real root. In other words, values depend on the demands and preferences of people. It cannot be said that a thing, belief or conviction is valuable forever and for all. Rather, according to the Westerners, so long as a thing is accepted by society, it is valuable, and if one day the people's preferences change, the same value turns into anti-value. Secondly, religious beliefs and convictions are also considered as conventional values and a person is deemed free in choosing or rejecting them. They are reduced into a matter of preference only.

People choose the colors of their clothes according to their preferences. For example, a person likes to wear dark-blue clothes, another, black and, a third, brown. A person cannot be reproached for choosing brown or grey because everyone is free to choose whatever he prefers. Similarly, people choose religious values and accounts according to their preferences and demands. One cannot be condemned why he professes a certain religion or why he has no belief in it, or why he slights, rejects or negates a certain religious belief.

Beyond this, if a person sets aside his religious beliefs and chooses new religious values, one cannot condemn him because his change of faith is exactly like a change of preference in choosing the color of his attire!

According to Islam and the Islamic culture, however, religious sanctities and values are much dearer than one's life, property, honor, and relatives. Does Islam allow us to defend religious sanctities? It is true that a certain gentleman who is currently a member of the Tehran City Council permits people to demonstrate even against God, but according to the religious edicts [*fatawa*] of all sources of emulation [*maraji' at-taqlid*] and the consensus of opinion of Sunni and Shi'ah *fuqaha* which is accepted by all Muslims, if a person treats God, the Apostle (s) and the religious sanctities and essentials of Islam with insolence, even in a desert or private place, away from the sight of the authorities and there is no opportunity to turn him over to the police or Islamic court, it is incumbent upon every Muslim to execute him for the crime of insulting the sanctities of Islam.

It was on the basis of this Islamic perspective that the late Imam (‘a) issued the death sentence to the apostate Salman Rushdie which was also affirmed by other Sunni and Shi'ah *fuqaha*. This is our point of departure from Western culture—something which Islam accepts but is rejected by the West.

Religious duty and zeal do not allow us to witness any act of insolence to Islamic sanctities and keep silent. Islam has permitted violence in defending religious sanctity. Since Islam and its sanctity is dearer to us than our lives, wealth and children, we can even risk our lives in defending them. As such, if

somebody slights religious sanctity, one can punish him even if he is most probably arrested, convicted for killing someone and having no “right” to do so and fails to prove the heinous crime of the killed person, and thus be condemned to death under the law of retaliation [qisas]. As his religious duty, he can still punish that wicked and impudent insulter, provided his action does not lead to further corruption.

[1.](#) Surah al-Ma'idah 5:33.

[2.](#) Surah al-Anfal 8:60.

[3.](#) Surah Al 'Imran 3: 159.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/islamic-political-theory-legislation-volume-2-muhammad-taqi-misbah-yazdi/session-38-confrontation#comment-0>