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3. Islam and Specialization

Societies vary in terms of objectives. A society may aim merely at scientific, industrial and economic growth; in which case its leaders place prime significance on the concentration of all energies for the attainment of a more luxurious and prosperous life, deriving the utmost benefit from every possibility to cater for added pleasure and prosperity.

Such a community should therefore, place the highest value on the sciences, and skills, which boost the people's efforts to achieve this objective in the shortest time possible. For this type of society other issues besides the above goal will then be considered secondary and marginal. The main overriding factor will, thus, be economy in general.

Today's global economic structure is of two kinds: first, a capitalistic economic order which grants a certain class access to a luxurious and prosperous life. Second, a socialistic economic system which allegedly aims at equally dividing provisions and wealth among all.

One will notice that these orders are both actually geared to a similar objective that is attaining material welfare and prosperity. The only difference is that the capitalist system exclusively assigns affluence to a certain class while Socialism allegedly tries to distribute wealth among all social classes. Thus, the greatest value is placed on technical, industrial, managerial, commercial, agricultural, and other specialized fields which can turn the economic wheels of a society to meet the requirements of a prosperous material life.

Moreover, even individual artistic creativity will be employed for the advancement of technology and industry. In such societies the specialists in various field, rule over all other walks of life; and social posts are given to people according to their skill and expertise in a particular field. Thus, the moral character of a specialist chosen to handle a certain task in such an environment becomes immaterial and unimportant. It will not be the society's concern to interfere in the affairs of specialists running a bank, farm, factory, or hospital as long as they perform their duties to suit the employer or society. It is not important then whether a specialist is morally degenerated, corrupt, or irreligious.

The logic offered by the advocates of such a policy is that specialists are indispensable to run factories,

to boost the economy, to promote agriculture, etc. As long as they are capable of handling their jobs, one need not bother with their moral and private lives; whether they pray or go to nightclubs, is none of any body's business. Such a reasoning demands that every wise man whose prime objective is economic and material growth should accept and defend this policy. To them, specialization is the only criterion by which people are assigned certain jobs.

According to the advocates of this idea if the technocrat who runs an industrial firm and performs his work better with a nice looking secretary in his office, the latter has to be brought in so as to boost production and increase his efficiency. This was the kind of society which disgusted us before the revolution. Those who suffered from such predominantly economic and material values (or rather anti-values) that ruled our community in the past, will see no more of such a life. What is then the kind of society we are after?

In our ideal society, although a prosperous material life is encouraged and considered essential for man's growth, it is not regarded as the ultimate objective of the society. From this (Islamic) view, a progressive and prosperous material life is merely a means of improvement; it is a means of helping man to develop his capabilities and talents and is not, therefore a goal in itself. Once free from economic pressure man can truly work in a spiritual sphere to assume the exalted position as "*God's vicegerent on earth*" as stated in the Holy Quran.

In such a society, man will actually fall in love with God and not with worldly values. It is only because of one's spiritual values and piety that one will be loved, praised and respected by other members of the society, In such a society, people's hearts will smolder with feelings of elation upon hearing the names of Imam Husain (the third Shi'ite Imam) and his companions because they had sacrificed their lives for the sake of the divine values of Islam. The name of Hussain will remind people of God, His path and *Jihad* (holy war) to defend Truth.

Now, is it possible· for a people who are given to inferior desires and worldly affairs instead of sublime religious values, to feel the ecstasy experienced by the pious lovers of true heroes such as Imam Husain? So, in a pious society where culture is based upon divine values, the economy, education, artistic talents, etc are all employed to help man in the process of acquiring higher sublime values. In the same society, a factory manager will be chosen, firstly for his moral competence and then, his specialization, because where values rule, man is given preference over machine and not vice versa.

We, as Muslims, cannot aim at a better economy or a better community at the expense of degeneration and human deterioration. A corrupt manager will pose a great danger to the employees in a factory or institution where he will certainly have a corrupting influence. The leaders of a society, even at low managerial or executive level in factories and offices greatly influence people.

Why do you think there is so much emphasis set on the issue of Imamat (leadership) in the Shi'ite school of thought? Why do we, Shi'ites; believe that only those endowed with the sublime qualities of piety be

chosen as leaders? It is simply because the leader's behavior will be exemplary for the people. Thus, every leader, at any level of leadership, is a practical model to be copied by people around him. Therefore the economy, education, art, industry, and all aspects of life must be in harmony with principles of our school of thought so as to enable man to attain material as well as spiritual perfection.

In a society, whose prime target is to assist man in traversing new horizons of exalted values, man's path to perfection should not be obstructed by economic problems. Economy then, is not a goal, but rather a means to open the way for man's complete growth in the realm of spiritual values and morality. Specialization and expertise is of great value, but it is only secondary to man's commitment to Islamic principles.

In an Islamic society, we cannot leave social matters and management in the hands of irreligious people who are subject to base worldly affairs and desires. Religious feelings and commitment to Islamic values are the prerequisites in appointing someone to a certain post in an office, factory, and educational centers of business enterprise. In present governmental institutions, certain questionnaires are distributed among job applicants, according to which one's religious attitude will be evaluated. Some have referred to this process as reminiscent of the age of Inquisitions. Is it really so?

I stress that it is only out of sheer ignorance and a resort to blatant sophistry to accuse our Islamic government of applying inquisitive measures while employing people. How can a Muslim government dedicated to Islamic values, employ non-believers, for instance, to teach in its schools? Those questions were geared mainly to assess religious tendencies and not one's sectarian inclinations.

It is not subscribing to "Medieval" modes of investigation to evaluate ar1 applicant's piety and religious tendencies. Inquisition subjected one to persecution for the mere possession of ideas opposed to those of the ruling class. The word "Inquisition" refers to an era at the inception of Protestantism, when the Catholics, in places where they formed the majority, would torture and persecute people only because their ideas were contradictory to those of the Catholic Church.

Such a persecution is indeed inhuman and we severely condemn it. But it is not inquisition if in our Islamic society we wish to assign social responsibilities to pious and faithful people instead to the corrupt and the irreligious. It is true that in lackadaisical societies where religion and state are separate entities, and the former is considered an individual issue aloof from social, industrial and economic affairs, one is not questioned about his religious tendency.

But the point is, we do not wish to copy such societies, like Hitler of West Germany for example, in their mode of living. We want to lead an Islamic life in this Islamic Republic and must adhere to our own criteria and values. Our people must not surrender to this baseless sophistry. This process of assessing religious competence and tendencies must be backed by all those who desire to live in an Islamic society and those who wish for the Islamization of the social order in this country.

Once again, I would like to point out that it is values we are concerned about and not one's individual

and sectarian tendencies. It is one's values, insight, and proper Islamic views, behavior and ethics which determine one's Islamic piousness. Should I, myself, within the realm of my responsibility, have invited and will do so in the future, (to work with the government) those who are endowed with a proper Islamic insight and faith even if they do not like my person or talk behind my back. I do so because it is not me and my person who should be the criteria of what is right or wrong.

Once, I investigated about a person who disliked me for some reason. After I was sure of his Islamic faith and piety, I invited him to work and even assigned to him important jobs. Later, he gradually realized that I was not the type of person he thought I was, and now he has become a good friend of mine. However, it would not matter if he would not be kind and friendly to me as long as he was capable of performing the job assigned to him.

Therefore, as I said, it is not personal and political tendencies which count in our evaluation of persons. Rather, it is one's piety, faithfulness, and capabilities which concern us. We however will not allow such criteria to be overshadowed merely because of pressures coming from those who accuse us of employing 'inquisition methods' and sectarian interests and those who label and vilify us by way of sophistry, We are determined not to let westernized and eastern (pro-Russia) elements who are totally alien to Islam and the Islamic Republic to reign over the fate of our Muslim people. We are therefore, endeavoring to establish our school of thought and ideology, Islam, for rule in this country. In our ideal society, it is Islam that will be the infrastructure from which all other superstructure institutions will rise. Economy is then not the basic social structure to us, it is merely a superstructure.

Thus, in a society the structure of which is founded on Islam and Islamic values ,the first question asked of those who are supposed to shoulder a particular government responsibility, would be about their knowledge of Islam, their piety, and virtues within the context of Islamic values. It is only after such interrogation that one's expertise and technical competence for the job should be assessed. So, one's religious convictions and adherence to Islamic precepts are prerequisites in assigning one to offices and posts. Indubitably, it will be ideal if we can find a sufficient number of competent and pious people having satisfactory technical knowledge for a certain job to fill in all gaps in this connection.

But the fact is, owing to the materialistic and alien to Islamic culture that ruled our society in the last few decades during the reign of the former corrupt regime, our noble youths had been deviated from the Islamic path. In spite of the fact that they are good physicians, engineers, managers, economists, etc. they are either totally alienated from Islam and are virtually non-Muslims or if they are, they are very weak in faith. What can we do then?

There are a few points to be considered:

Firstly, in the revolutionary society of the Islamic Republic of Iran, we must endeavor to create a powerfully constructive Islamic current, capable of absorbing men and bringing about a deep change in them, a current that can obliterate people's negative characteristics to make room for the creation of

positive and Islamic qualities.

To achieve this, our society should adopt a policy that can attract and absorb men and their talents to join this grand Islamic movement: Simultaneous with this, the society should reject and repulse those who cannot be guided and corrected. The quality of absorption must certainly come first in order to draw and attract the majority of the people. Repulsion and rejection, of course, exist side by side with absorption. There will always be a certain group repulsive to the divine Laws of Islam and will therefore be rejected. This is of no importance as long as we take efforts to absorb and attract the majority to tread on the constructive Islamic track.

Secondly, to make this current prevail in the society, priority should be given to the assignment of pious and competent persons to jobs and posts. It will be ridiculous if we let educated and pious young Muslims be jobless while an impious educated man occupies a certain post. The society must undergo a great change in this respect. Pious, virtuous and qualified persons whether young, old, men, or women should be given priority in all sorts of assignments. This must be established as a rule in our society that privilege and priority are given to piety and that a pious specialist is more valuable in this community. If we fail to establish such a trend in our country, the society shall lose its power to absorb virtuous people and cannot be constructively effective in making virtue and piety prevail.

When in a society, priority is accorded to a specialist who is also pious, others will be encouraged to strengthen their faith and religious convictions. Thus, the management of the society will eventually be in the hands of educated and faithful people. "Educated" here does not necessarily mean those who have graduated from university.

In general, all religious and pious people who are capable of performing a certain job that requires expertise, even if he is a construction worker, must be given preference when assigning people to jobs over those who possess the same technical competence but are not pious. Yes, for the establishment of such values and trends in "Our society, we boldly declare our views and do not care for the hue and cry raised on the issue by Western or Eastern (pro Russia) elements.

The fact is, our people in the past, up to 50 years ago, would practically place preference on the pious and faithful when they assigned people to any job, whether it was a significant or a trivial one. For instance, if they wanted to hire a construction worker for repairs in their houses, they would never give the job to an irreligious person as long as a pious worker was available. But regretfully, this commendable tradition of our ancestors was eventually replaced by nonchalance and indifference and gradually was brushed aside in the name of modernism and un-civilization

Today, however, we explicitly declare that our return to traditional norms such as placing value on piety, will be indicative of our seriousness and sincerity in our Islamic beliefs. It means that we will never forego our principles even if we are labelled narrow minded by those inclined to alien ideologies.

Thirdly, we must adopt a principle of relativism in assigning people to posts; that is, if there are not

enough pious and educated experts around, we should still look for those whose moral and religious convictions are relatively more commendable than those of the others. In other words, we must not relinquish this principle only because there is not an adequate number of fully competent pious specialists. In any case, we should abide by this principle according to the relative degree of the individual's piousness, moral allegiance and commitments. We, therefore, should strictly observe the principle of giving priority to the faithful and pious while assigning people to jobs to the extent of preferring those with the least degree of piousness over people with no faith at all.

Certainly, it would be ideal if we could have an adequate number of pious educated people and specialists. But now that we do not have enough of those people around, we should still observe this precept as much as possible even on a relative basis and must never adopt an "open-door policy" in this connection. That is we should never let faithless and impious specialists assume positions just because the society is at present suffering from a lack of pious and faithful specialists.

Fourthly, if because of expediency we are compelled to temporarily employ non-Muslim specialists and experts, we should only do so within the framework of the existing requirements and needs. Measures must also be taken to safeguard the places where they work from the plight of .their impiety and faithlessness. It should be noted that according to the Divine Laws of Islam it is absolutely forbidden to eat the flesh of the dead or carrion.

But still if one is compelled out of necessity to eat it to survive, instead of dying of hunger, there will be no sin in eating that flesh. The places where such experts work should be then safeguarded against probable dangers that might be posed to the Muslim environment as a result of the impiety of the foreign experts and specialists.

Regarding the employment of experts from religious minorities such as Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians and Sabeans, it is permissible as it has been prescribed in our Islamic constitution law, as long as they do not openly offend Islamic laws and principles. Moreover, the Muslim employees working with these people should never look at them as models and note that they have different religion's convictions.

Non-Muslim experts, as has always been in practice in the past, can work freely in the Muslim community; and as lawful citizens of the Islamic state their vocations and honor are preserved and protected by Islamic laws. The Muslim society has never shown any willingness or tendency to discriminate against Jewish, Zoroastrian or Christian physicians as long as they do not openly violate Islamic rules and laws. If such non - Muslim experts can be described religious, according to their own faith, then they will pose no danger to the Islamic community.

Now, it should be noted that what I have discussed so far concerns social positions. In other words, when it comes to individual posts no one can prevent any citizen of the Islamic Republic from establishing his own industrial workshop in co-operation with a group of his co-thinkers. The discussion presented thus concerns the assignment of people to governmental offices, organizations and private

institutions established by committed Muslims. So, if other groups and persons establish their own manufacturing units and work competently to produce useful goods, the outcome of their efforts and their commodities will be utilized by the Muslim community in an ordinary and natural manner.

Fifth, in order to make our society advance towards an ideal community comprising committed Muslims endowed with an adequate amount of expertise and specialization in various fields, efforts must be taken to ensure that all schools, educational and technological institutions and other centers of learning in the country are kept attuned with Islamic tenets. In other words, all organs involved in educational and training activities, should exert unsparing efforts in bringing up students who are not only strong in their Islamic faith but are also technically capable and qualified.

It is of vital importance that the first principle be given priority over the other four and that is, a constructive and powerful current and trend should be formed in the Islamic Republic so as to absorb all technically qualified and specialized persons towards the Islamic faith and its sublime values– a current that can bring about a revolution within the inner self of every individual. One should never argue that a particular person has not been a good Muslim in the past and should, therefore not be absorbed into the Muslim rank, such a person may not have been a faithful man, say, until this very yesterday.

But today he, too, should be given a chance to build himself up under the aegis of this constructive and powerful Islamic current that has swept across our revolutionary community. You should all behave in such a manner that the glitter akin to Islamic order and management attracts all eyes and attention. It is in this way, you can rest assured, that our society will be able to draw and absorb more and more of such elements day by day.

Now, a question has been brought up as to whether or not a committed Muslim should ever accept a job for which he lacks the required expertise and qualifications. The person who has asked this has concluded that our discussion on specialization and the school of thought (ideology) has been fruitless and absurd because a true faithful man will accept a job only when he has the capability and sufficient amount of knowledge to do it. It is out of question that a faithful Muslim will never undertake a job which he is not capable of doing; but the gist of the problem lies somewhere else.

In spite of the fact that such issues (like the matter brought up in this question) carry substance in their essence, it is still obvious that they are being mentioned only in a bid to serve a false cause. I would like to ask the questioner what conclusion he wants to derive through this question. Did anyone who insisted on faithfulness and commitment to Islam, ever say that a good Muslim should accept a job even if he is incapable of handling it? What we simply want to say is that in assigning people to jobs, a good Muslim whose degree of expertise in a certain field is seventy percent should be given priority over a faithless one or a Muslim who is not committed to faith but whose degree of expertise in the same field is eighty five percent. We explicitly declare here that the former is unreservedly preferred over the latter when assigning people to jobs in the Islamic Republic.

Why is it so? It is simply because we are certain that as a result of our great Islamic movement, any insufficiency in technical fields will soon be eliminated from the ranks of committed Muslim technicians and specialists in the future. On the other hand, those whose degree of expertise is 90 or85 percent but have no faith in Islam or, if they have their own brand of Islam and do not believe in this Islamic Republic, Revolution and its line of thought, these will never lay their expertise at the disposal of this revolution and its line of thought. They only want to interfere in our affairs and infiltrate every organ.

However, the Muslims and the Ulama who worked for this revolution and offered sacrifices in its path, will not allow this and will never be deceived. Regarding these anti-revolutionary sophistries, we will discuss and expose them to the people. I, as a brother of yours and as an individual will continue to bring to light ambiguous issues as long as I am alive. With your help, we will clarify these matters and analyze them.

You, brothers and sisters who hear my utterances, analyze the ideas and when you realize that you sincerely believe in them, strive and endeavor to spread and support them and enlighten people and youths. We never said we were against specialization and expertise. Nor did we ever say we opposed knowledge and science. These are baseless accusations against us and our cause.

I, along with others who have been assigned to this or that office, have spent a lifetime promoting education and training. A great part of our lives has been spent in establishing educational institutions while simultaneously observing the limits set by religion and piety: What are these accusations being raised against us today?

This Mr Raja'i, whom you call a product of the Islamic school of thought, meaning that he is a Muslim, militant, revolutionary and a committed prime minister, is a competent and prominent teacher of mathematics. How can one accuse us of not attaching enough value to specialization and say that religion is indifferent towards expertise? People (like Raja'i) cannot be labelled with such accusations.

Who are these rumor-mongers fabricating such false accusations? What do they say? One of their objections regarding the present cabinet is that its members are old. Is it that these officials just appeared out of nowhere in this society today and are thus unknown to the people? It is true that Mr Raja'i was not known nationwide until two years ago. But a sufficient number of people know him well enough and recommended him to the nation, which now trust him. His cabinet is indeed a cabinet of experts and specialists. Its energy Minister, Dr. Abbaspour, was a prominent engineering professor before becoming a minister. How can then one claim that specialization has been ignored in this cabinet?

The Post and Telegraph Minister, Dr. Qandi, has a doctorate in Electronics. You are well aware that today's mass media and telecommunication is a complex electronic conglomeration. He is then quite specialized for his post. His sole defect too, is that he is a Muslim and not a Westernized gigolo, which if he had been, some would have certainly considered him a ‘specialized’ minister.

Its Oil Minister is engineer Tundgouyan whom may God bless and release from the clutches of the Ba'athist enemy (Tundgouyan was taken captive while inspecting oil pipelines in the war stricken province of Khuzistan). He is an engineer, an oil specialist and has been appointed oil minister. His only fault (in the eyes of opponents) is that he comes from a deprived class and not from among the 'elite'.

Regarding the Economy Minister, Dr. Nourbakhsh too has a doctorate in economics which he obtained from a U.S. university. His defect (according to his opponents) is that he is not inclined to any ideological line other than Islam. The Health Minister is Dr. Manafi, a committed and reputable specialist whose only crime, as those of other members of this cabinet, is his Islamic convictions. He is a man whose appearance and inner characteristics depict him as a Muslim.

Dr. Bahonar who was recently appointed Minister of Education and Training by Mr. Raja'i and who has been approved for this job by the president is an expert in education in which field he has toiled for about 20 years. He is a thinker, writer and a teacher. His fault if at all is that he is an *alim*, a man committed to Islam and not a nationalist.

The Science Minister, Dr. Arefi, is a university professor and a physician. He was the chancellor of Tehran University for some time and has now been appointed to the post of Science Minister. How can then one ever argue that these ministers are not experts and that this cabinet has paid no heed to specialization? I truly do not understand such remarks.

How can it be construed that this cabinet is tending towards a revival of the age of the incompatibility of religion and science? Itis exactly the opposite. The lives and behavior of the members of this cabinet have crystallized into the inseparable relation between religion and scientific specialization.

Oh, youths and intellectuals! Note that we declare these social realities to you sincerely and explicitly. We stress these points again and again and are humbly at your service. Bring in all seriousness any objection you might have on any of the issues I have discussed. If we find that it is we who are making mistakes, we will amend them. And if you are in error then we will explain the issues further until you grasp their meaning correctly.

We constantly advocate growth and sublimity. We wish our industry, economy, agriculture, animal husbandry, commerce and everything progress, but in a way conforming to our school of thought, Islam. This is the only condition (conformity with Islamic tenets) which we demand. We do not want progress, welfare, economy, industry, and agriculture if they do not attune with Islam. Commerce, for instance, should advance but not at the expense of more deprivation of the oppressed.

No, we wish that ah artisan's talent be utilized to improve welfare, bring about prosperity and solve the problems of this nation and community but not in selfish pursuits of stuffing his own pockets. The commercial talent of such a man can be used against Islam if he thinks only of his own interest. Yet, the same man will be serving Islam and Muslims if he thinks of the interests of the society as well. The same is true with engineers, physicians, managers and all other specialists and experts.

Today, we have meticulously and clearly discussed the principles regarding the issues of our (Islam) and specialization from theoretical and ideological points of view. On the basis of such an insight our cabinet members are practically looking for people both pious and specialized to assume administrative positions. I should like to stress again that it is not only university graduates or other special groups who can be refined to as specialists.

To us an academic degree can only serve as a proof of one's training and education in a certain field. But if we come across a person who is endowed with knowledge, experience, skill, practical specialization and intellect but is not a university degree holder, we will consider him a specialist and will certainly invite him to work.

Brothers and sisters! I hope to always remain a friend and a humble brother of yours and all the people of Iran. I wish to employ my competence and efficiency solely in the service of God and his people if Allah grants me such virtues. I hope none of such qualities ever give way to the slightest amount of pride and arrogance on my part. May I remain a humble Muslim servant endeavoring to win God's grace and satisfaction.

I hope, by God's help and our great love for men of God, and under the aegis of our affection for God and the glimmer of such a sublime love. We all ever remain in the path of salvation.

One of the men of God whose love we have cherished in a most sincere way with all our hearts throughout history is the Third Imam Hadhrat Hussain Ibn Ali (peace be upon him). We hold him in highest esteem as a lofty example of a true man of God. Each year, particularly during the first ten days of Muharram, culminating on Ashura (the anniversary of Imam Hussain's martyrdom) our society commemorates his martyrdom. Thus, our community becomes elated with the memory of Hussain, and is transformed into a Hussainite society, everywhere you go now you see slogans and mottos written in his name.

May God grant us success to help this Islamic Revolution advance in a path decreed by God, a path which serves the interests of our nation (Ummah).

We hope God will help us overcome flaws in ourselves which may contradict the objectives of our Islamic ideal and path. May He cleanse us of all impurities. May God help us all to assist our leader, Imam Khomeini, in the cause of this revolution. I myself would like before any other thing, to always refer to the Imam as a master (professor) and teacher. He has been and is both a master and a teacher to us.

In any talk I hold with him and on all occasions, I feel his erudite characteristics and realize how a sublime insight and lofty stature which are characteristics of a man of God, crystallize in him at all times of hardship and moments of crisis. Such a teacher–student relation between the Imam and myself has always had a constructive and positive effect on me. I have always loved him more as a teacher. I hope his teachings will leave indelible effects on all of us and our society. The Imam is indeed an exemplary leader committed to the school of Islam. He is an example of an Islamic leader with strong Islamic

commitments and a sublime Islamic insight.

May God preserve this exemplary personality for us, and may our society, even after the Imam, remain in the line of the Imam and on the path of Imamat. May it always benefit from such leaders.

May we always have in mind the presence of our 12th Imam in occultation, Hadhrat Mahdi, whose successors are Muslim jurisprudents such as Imam Khomeini. May we always look upon the twelfth Imam as a criterion in choosing our leaders.

I hope that these living Ashura ceremonies will prevail in these divine centers established in the name of Imam Hussain, with the same simplicity, sincerity, and purity.

May our society never lose the essence of the divine culture which it has found in Alavite and Hussainite culture. Amen.

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