

Good News

...And give good news to those who do good (to others) - HQ22:37

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The True Conception of the State in Islam

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The State was originally intended to ensure liberty and justice for man and protect him from the oppression of his more powerful neighbours, but with the advancement of the material civilization its tendency is more and more to deprive man of his freedom, to enslave him, and to become an instrument of oppression instead of being a check on it.

Material benefits have so obsessed the views of the civilised world that God and religion have been relegated to the corner of oblivion and the higher values of life utterly neglected. The Western States may not be one in their lip-professions so far as the supreme authority of God is concerned, but, strangely enough, they are one in worshipping the two new gods which material civilization has created in place of the One God Whom it has dismissed as a thing of the past. ‘The Nation’ and ‘the State’ are the new idols before which the civilised man has fallen prostrate. And along with the old – perhaps the oldest living - god, Mammon¹, Materialism has its own Trinity in place of the Trinity of the Church. The gain of economic advantages or the acquisition of wealth being the sole consideration of the civilised man; he is prepared to make any sacrifice that is required of him to gain this end, in the name of the State and for the

¹ Associated with the greedy pursuit of wealth

love of the Nation. 'Wealth,' the 'Nation' and the 'State' have thus the highest place of honour in the heart of the civilised man and he worships these idols. The desire to bow is there in human nature, and if men will not bow before their Maker, they must bow before things of their own making. Unworthy objects of worship have, however, led humanity to ruin and the worship of Mammon and its two associates, the Nation and the State, through which alone access can be had to the chief idol of the 'Trinity of Materialism,' is even now leading civilisation to sure destruction.

The State was needed to stop the aggression of man against man, to protect the weak against the strong and to ensure justice between man and man. But where do we find the civilised State? The State in the West, whether it is labelled as a Democracy or as a Fascist or Bolshevik (Communist) State, stands for expansion, for aggression and for oppressing the weak that are considered unfit to take care of themselves.

It is not Machiavelli alone with whom 'consideration of justice or injustice' carries no weight, and 'every scruple must be set aside' when the safety of the State is at stake. Even those who condemn him are following in his footsteps; they go in fact a step further, as the expansion of the State is as much of a

duty with them as its defence. With the gold of the world in their possession and with their bombs and bombers, they claim that they have got an additional right of expanding themselves to bring more and more economic advantages to their own people. To march into another nation's country becomes a duty to them when that nation is too weak to defend itself; falling on it like a bolt from the blue so that it should not be able to take any measures of self-defence is a happy performance. Aggression is the very essence of the civilised State. The weak have no rights; the rights only belong to those who have the might; who have the strength to command respect and attention; so that if a weak neighbour does not pay attention to the word of a powerful State, it may be wiped out of its existence. This mentality has been developed by every Western nation, so that every State strives to outvie others in its armies and armaments. And the result is the deadly conflict of the different States and a burning passion to destroy one another.

The responsibility for this state of things rests entirely with the materialistic conception of the State. Every State must necessarily be invested with power with which it may stop aggression and oppression and protect the weak, dealing out fair justice to all. The advance of science has increased this power a

thousand-fold. On the other hand, the materialistic outlook on life has made man more unscrupulous in the use of his power against fellow-man and with the advancement of the conquest of nature, the conquest of self which alone serves as a check on tyranny of man against man, has been retarded and thrown to the background. The result is the increased powers of the State which must necessarily be exercised through individuals are being used more for the enslavement and destruction of man than for his deliverance from tyranny and for upholding the cause of truth and justice. It has been rightly remarked that while science has given man powers fit for the gods, to their use the civilised man brings the mentality of a savage. The State, instead of being helpful in increasing human happiness, for which it was originally meant, has become the greatest menace to human happiness, the individual being so enthralled by this idol, that willingly or unwillingly, he is working as part of a machinery for the destruction of humanity.

Concept of the State in Islam:

It is to remedy this evil that Islam requires the vesting of State authority in the hands of men who are God-fearing before all. The head of the State in Islam is called an *Amir*, lit., *one who commands or rule*, and an *Imam* lit., *a person whose example is*

followed, i.e., a person who stands on a very high moral plane.

On his death-bed, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) gave an indication as to who should succeed him as the head of the Muslim State by appointing Abu Bakr, admittedly the fittest man, to lead prayers for the Muslims in his absence. For a long time this practice was continued, and the head of the State led the prayers. Righteousness – fear of God and regard for other people's rights – was as necessary a qualification for the ruler as fitness to rule. Spiritual force alone could enable a man to control the powers which temporal authority gives him, and which in the absence of such a force are often in danger of being abused. The early Islamic State organization, which combined the offices of the spiritual and temporal head of the community, was, therefore, the most perfect which the history of statecraft can show. The head of the State considered himself responsible to God, in the first place, for the exercise of his temporal authority. His responsibility to those who elected him was secondary.

There exists a misconception in some quarters that the Islamic State was a theocracy. The head of the Muslim State never considered himself as a representative of God on earth but as a representative of men who had chosen him to serve them. He certainly considered

himself responsible to God for every act that he did in the exercise of his authority.

Perhaps history cannot show a greater conqueror than Umar, the second successor of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). A conqueror and administrator at one and the same time, yet he would not stop even one of his lowest subjects rebuking him in public. “Fear God O Umar!” said the man repeatedly; and when some people wanted to stop the man, Umar himself intervened, saying, “Let him say so; of what use are these people if they do not tell me these things?” This monarch of four kingdoms visited a famine-stricken camp at night *incognito*, and when he found a woman without no food to give her children he rushed back to Medina, a distance of three miles, and took a sack of flour on his back to feed the destitute woman and her children. When a servant offered his services to carry the load, he simply replied, “In this life you might carry my burden for me, but who will carry my burden on the Day of Judgment?” Yet when this great servant of his people was lying on his death-bed and a young man praised his great services, he said, “Enough young fellow! It is sufficient if the evil I may have done in the exercising of my authority is neutralized by any good I have done.” It is such a mental attitude alone which can make men fit for ruling their fellow-beings. But such

a mentality is created only by a strong faith in God and a feeling of one’s responsibility to God.

It was such a responsible government that Islam created, government by men who realized that above all things they were responsible to God for everything which they did. The men to be honoured – and entrusting a man with command was certainly doing him honour – were those who paid the greatest regard to their duties (Holy Quran 49:13), and it was such men that were to be placed in authority over others. This is made clear in the Holy Quran:

God commands you to make over (positions of) trust to those worthy of them. – 4:58

Everyone who was entrusted with authority in the State organization was told he was a ruler in his own sphere, and that he was responsible to God for those placed under his trust. Ibn Umar says he heard the Messenger of Allah (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) say:

Everyone of you is a ruler and everyone of you shall be questioned about those under his rule; the king is a ruler and he shall be questioned about his subjects; and the man is a ruler in his family and he shall be questioned about those under his care; and the woman is the ruler in the house of

her husband and she shall be questioned about those under her care; and the servant is the ruler so far as the property of his master is concerned and he shall be questioned about that which is entrusted to him. –(Bukhari 11:11)

The ruler or head of the State is thus, along with all those who hold any authority over others, placed in the same category as a servant. Just as a servant is entrusted with certain property for which he is responsible to his master, those entrusted with State authority, in whatever position they may be, are entrusted with the care of the people and guarding their rights; and for the proper discharge of the duties they are responsible, in the first place, to the real Master who is God, and then to the people who have entrusted them with this charge. A right mentality of the different parts of the State machinery is the first necessity of a good State organization, and the greatest stress is therefore laid on this in the **Islamic conception of the State**.

The Quranic verses and the Hadith quoted above show further that hereditary kingship is foreign to the conception of the State in Islam. Nor is it an autocracy, as uncontrolled authority is not vested in the head of the State. Speaking of the great qualities of Muslims, their reliance on their God, their shunning of all kinds of

indecenty, their forgiveness, their keeping up of prayers, the Holy Quran says:

And their rule is by counsel among themselves. – 42:38

So much was the principle of counsel to be adhered to the Prophet himself was enjoined upon in the Holy Quran to take counsel with his followers in affairs of State:

Pardon them and ask protection for them and take counsel with them in affairs of State. – 3:158

The Islamic State is thus a democracy in the truest sense of the word. The first successor to the Prophet was Abu Bakr, who was elected as head of the State by agreement of all parties, and so were the three successors that followed him. Why the State organization was needed and what the constitutional position of the head of the State was, was explained by Abu Bakr in his very first address:

You have elected me *Khalifa* (successor to the Prophet as temporal head of the State), but I claim no superiority over you. The strongest among you shall be the weakest with me until I get the rights of others from him, and the weakest among you shall be the strongest with me until I get all his rights...Help me if I act rightly and correct me if I take a wrong course...Obey me so long as I obey

God and His Messenger. In case I disobey God and His Messenger, I have no right of obedience from you. –(Al-Bidaayah wan-Nihaayah (6/305,306))

The people's responsibility to the State is to respect its laws and obey its order so long as they do not require disobedience to God and His Messenger; orders of the State which involve disobedience to God shall not be obeyed. It was considered an act of great merit, an 'excellent *jihad* ,' to speak out the truth in the presence of an unjust ruler. But active opposition to constituted authority or rebellion against it is not allowed, 'unless you see an act of open unbelief in which you have a clear argument from God.' – (Bukhari 93:2) In such an extreme case, the *Khalifa* may even be deposed. The head of the State was a servant of the State, who was paid a fixed salary for maintenance out of the public treasury, like all other public servants. He had no special privileges, and in his private capacity he could be sued in the court like any other member of the Muslim community. Umar, the Great, ruler of four kingdoms, appeared as defendant in the court of a magistrate. Among the orders given to his provincial governors was this, that they shall be accessible at all hours of the day to those who had a complaint to make, and that they shall not keep a door-

keeper who should prohibit people from approaching them. And further that they shall make themselves accustomed to leading hard lives. The head of the State carried on the administration with the help of ministers, all important State affairs being decided by a council.

Those entrusted with carrying on with the work of government, including the head of State, were required to work for the good of the people:

There is not a man whom God grants to rule people, then he does not manage their affairs for their good but he will not smell the sweet odour of paradise – (the Prophet Muhammad, Bukhari 94:8)

They were required to be gentle to the people, so as to make them rejoice on account of the State management, and were forbidden to do anything which might cause aversion. They were enjoined to lead simple lives and to be accessible to those who needed their services, to be God-fearing, to tax the different class of people according to their capacity, to provide for those who could not earn, and to have as much regards for the rights of the non-Muslims as for those of the Muslims. The State was not only required to maintain uncared-for families, but also to pay the unpaid debts which were contracted for a lawful need.

As regards relations with other States and the questions of peace and war, the motto of the Islamic State is a *defensive war* and a *generous peace*. War was a natural human condition but the principle was laid down in the clearest words that there should be no aggression. It was in defence only that permission was granted to the Muslims to fight:

And fight in the way of God against those who fight with you and do not exceed this limit. –

Holy Quran 2:190

And on another occasion:

Permission to fight is granted to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed. –
22:39

This does not leave the slightest doubt that Islam does not allow for aggressive war; neither does it allow a war for expansion, nor a war for prestige. It only allows war when a State has been attacked. And even then, if the enemy offers peace, peace must be concluded. The enemies of Islam attacked the Muslim State to annihilate it. ‘They will not cease fighting with you’ says the Holy Quran, ‘until they turn you back from your religion if they can.’ -2:217. Yet even if such an enemy desired peace, the Muslim State should not refuse it:

If they incline to peace, do thou incline to it and trust in God – 8:39.

The proposal of peace might be insincere; it might be made to gain time and prepare for another war; but even then peace must be preferred:

And even if they intend to deceive thee, then surely God is sufficient for thee – 8:39

The Muslim’s faith in God was an assurance to him that if the enemy made another war, he (the enemy) would again be defeated and would have to beg for peace.

Such a war was a mercy; it was a mercy at its start because it had to be fought in self-defence – people were to be saved from the aggressor who was out to annihilate them; it was a mercy in the end because it had to be stopped when the aggressor sued for peace – safety of the oppressed being the object, not the annihilation of the aggressor. It was a mercy for the non-combatants, who in civilised warfare are greater victims of the tyranny of war than even the combatants, as there was an express prohibition against the killing of non-combatants. Not even the aggressors were to be annihilated, because annihilation was not the only means of stopping the aggression. At times a generous peace was a better corrective than annihilation. The attempt to annihilate a people would only fan the fire of revenge among the vanquished, while a generous peace might bring about a change of heart.

Hence it was that Islam did not allow the rejection of an offer of peace even by an aggressor.

It was in this generous spirit that the Prophet treated his own enemies. For twenty-one years he suffered unimaginable tortures at the hands of his foes; he and his faithful band of followers were persecuted most cruelly; even when they fled from their homes and found a haven of peace in distant Medina, the powerful warriors of Mecca attacked them in their new homes. Three times did the enemy attack Medina with strong forces to annihilate the small Muslim community that had found shelter there. Yet when the time came to punish the brutal aggressors who were at the mercy of the Prophet and his followers at the conquest of Mecca, they were greeted with a message of love:

This day there shall be no reproach against you – (Prophet Muhammad)

This generous treatment brought about a change of heart in the erstwhile bloodthirsty enemies, turning them into fast friends. It is such a peace that the world needs today, but only a State based on the broad principles of Islam could offer such a peace.

There exists a misconception regarding *jihad*...It literally means *the exerting of one's power in repelling an*

open enemy or the struggle against evil (in general terms or one's own self)

In the terminology of Islam it is used in both these senses, being applied to the purely missionary activities of a Muslim and his defence of his faith in a physical sense. The first duty, the duty to invite people to Islam, is a permanent duty placed upon all Muslims of all ages, while the second is a duty which arises upon certain possible circumstances. The Holy Quran and Hadith call attention to both these duties in the clearest and most forceful words under the name of *jihad*. A *jihad* – *jihad-an kabir-an*, or a mighty struggle – by means of the Holy Quran must be carried on against the unbelievers we are told:

Strive hard against them (*jahid hum*), a mighty striving (*jihad-an kabir-an*) with it (i.e. The Holy Quran) – 25:52

Islam's greatest *jihad* is, therefore, not by means of the 'sword' but by means of the 'Holy Quran,' i.e. a missionary effort to carry the message of Islam to all nations. Hence it is laid down that there should always be among Muslims a party to invite people to Islam:

And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and these it is that shall be successful. – 3:103

Fighting was undoubtedly allowed but it was expressly allowed only as a defensive measure against those who took up the sword to annihilate Islam, as already shown. The sword could not be used to force Islam on others; compulsion in religion being forbidden in clear words:

There is no compulsion in religion
– 2:256.

There is not a single instance on record in the Prophet's life in which an expedition was undertaken to convert a people to Islam; nor was a single individual ever required to confess the faith of Islam at the point of a sword. Speaking of the fighting with Persia in Umar's time, and quoting Umar as saying: 'I desire that between Mesopotamia and the countries beyond, the hills shall be a barrier so that the Persians shall not be able to get at us, nor we at them,' even an antagonistic writer like Sir William Muir admits that, 'the obligation to enforce Islam by a universal crusade had not yet dawned upon the Muslim mind.' If such an idea was unknown to the Muslim mind in the lifetime of the Prophet or during the Early Caliphate, it certainly is NOT Islamic.



We strongly condemn all forms of human right violations; all forms of injustices, and the wanton abuse of the environment. We condemn all forms of aggression especially the ruthless killings of all innocent parties in the name of Religion or State!

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