

The Divine Cultural Revolution

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In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Lord, open my breast, and ease for me my task. Unloose the knot upon my tongue that they may understand my words. May peace be upon the Messenger, the trustee and the firm rope of Allah, our Master and lord, the last of prophets, Abul Qasim Muhammad (S); and peace be upon the immaculate Imams from his household. May peace be upon us and the righteous servants of Allah.

Man is a cultural being. Many thinkers regard man as an economic being more than anything else, and thus base all estimations on this judgement. Actually man is a cultural being. He creates a specific culture and desires to live with it. A human culture, however, has its roots and various dimensions. It has economic, emotional, spiritual and instinctive dimensions as well, which include his need for food, clothing and shelter, his craving for love and affection, his ambi-tion for power and status, and his quest and pursuit of God.

If we carefully study the culture of an individual or of a society, we shall notice all these elements in it. Some of them may, however, be more conspicuous in certain societies. In some societies, religious and spiritual tendencies are predominant and play a decisive role, while in others the economic trends serve the same purpose. In some of the societies, ambition for power and position is displayed and in others the love for carnal pleasures is distinctly exhibited. In certain societies the aesthetic strains are more distinguished, while in others the tendencies of mammonism are more pronounced.

But what are the main factors responsible for influencing the human life and determining the character of his collective' culture? Which are its primary components and what form do they take in its constitution? What are its sources and what are the factors that determine the direction of its evolution?

The morality and behaviour of every individual are manifestation and expression of the collective entity which is culture. It is the sum- total of our outlook, behaviour and norms. For this very reason, a person's world-outlook, i.e. his attitude towards the world and towards the purpose of its creation, is regarded as the infrastructure of his behaviour. Some cultures regard man as a material being and consider the universe as a sheer material entity. According to this view, the human beings are born in this material course to grow, to live, to get old and die, or die before getting old.

On the contrary, there is another view which holds that man's existence is more comprehensive than his physical existence, which is confined to a limited span of time between life and death. According to this view, the present life is only a phase of his existence, which transcends the limits of physical death. These different views cause people to differ in their outlooks regarding the problems of everyday life. What is it that gives real meaning and purpose to human existence and is also relevant to our cultural revolution? What is the philosophy of life and the philosophy of being and becoming from the Islamic viewpoint? These are, of course, a series of familiar problems which I aim to deal with in a methodical way in order to reach the desired conclusion.

As Muslims, we believe that this physical and phenomenal world is the manifestation of the Creator of nature and matter. It is the manifestation of the creative fountainhead of life, God, the Source of all being, that exalted sublime Being, that infinite Power and that tremendous magnet that constantly attracts and aligns all being scattered through space and time. Any failure to harmonize themselves with His power transforms beings into meaningless insignificant and wandering non-entities. In the case of human beings the relationship of man's alignment and union with Divine Essence is dependent upon man's choice and his self-consciousness.

It is God who is the reality of being and the meaning of existence. Everything is meaningful only in the light of God's existence. To speak of a world without God, is like speaking in absurd and meaningless terms. Such is the view of a believer in God's existence, of a Muslim and a 'natural man' regarding his relationship with the universe and its Creator. This is the conviction of a Muslim who believes in the Quran, in the Day of Resurrection and the Day of Judgement. The Quran equally emphasizes both the worldly life and the life after death. According to the Quran, man's existence is subject to a lengthy course. Obviously, a person with such an outlook cannot plan his life within the framework of physical life and death, while planning his future; a realistic and foreseeing person makes schemes and plans. In the early five or six years of his life, he does not possess any plan regarding his future and merely lives in the present. It is about the age of thirteen or fifteen years that men attain enough maturity to think about their future and become aware enough to cogitate upon their future and prepare themselves to face it. This is the time when a person of foresight plans and programmes his life keeping in mind his wants and needs.

However, the span of life in this world is just a section of man's real life, though most of the time he is engaged in the matters of this transitory life. The acts performed in this life are indicative of the life in the other world which is certainly much more long than the life in this

world. Isn't it here, in this life, that he should decide what he would do in the next, just as he does during his school-years? Usually, one decides about his future profession during his school days. This phenomenon bears but a faint similarity with the process of equipping oneself for the life after death-the life in eternity. The thing which is common for both the courses is to live with the remembrance of God and His love, acquiring the peace of soul and spiritual bliss with God's light in one's heart: Those only are believers who when God is mentioned, their hearts quake, and when His signs are recited to them, it increases them in faith, and in their Lord they put their trust. (8:2)

And

In God's remembrance are at rest the hearts of those who believe and do righteous deeds. (13:28) His remembrance transforms all mental worries, anxieties, fears and tensions into .peace and tranquility

The Theme of Discussion

Whatever has been said till now was meant to be a background for our discussion regarding the philosophical understanding of the most sublime dimension of our social and cultural revolution. In this regard, the `remembrance of God' is the most important doctrine that can assist and promote our aims in the most effective way. The `remembrance of God' should be reinforced in our personal as well as in our social lives. To do so is both very easy and difficult.

Easy, since we believe more or less in God. We are not completely alienated from God. The ritual prayers that we offer, at morning, noon and at night, are after all an evidence of the commitment between us and God. For, if it were not, we would not have offered our prayers when we are all alone and there are no parents, wives, children, or neighbours to remind or to reproach us. We do say our prayers, both when alone and in the presence of other people. So, it is because of the importance of the `remembrance of God' in our lives that we say our prayers regardless of whether anybody is present to see us or not. Even this much of faith is enough to benefit our existence. We should augment this asset by adding to it His remembrance and love so that it may give light and warmth to our existence. It is evident that a materialist isolates himself in the darkness of ignorance of God's existence-a darkness where the rays of the Divine light do not touch him and he remains severed from God and His sacred remembrance, rendering his own life meaningless and absurd, or at least lacking in meaning and light. Those who have studied and keenly observed the circumstances of our times may have noticed that nihilism is the natural fate of those who imprison their lives within the walls of materialism.

Our cultural revolution should lead our society through the enlightened path of God's love, so

that the Divine light may illuminate the life of every one of us and influence our behaviour in a profound and creative way. This is a very difficult task and requires a lot of will-power, endeavour and vigilance. It is essential that the cultural revolution should carve out a programme for the followers of every age-group and design a plan to provide the grounds for .their intellectual and spiri-tual development

The Cultural Revolution

The cultural revolution is a very complex and complicated process. It is not so simple as it is imagined. It needs a lot of industry and dedi-cation on the part of all those who are concerned: the university teachers and students, the religious leaders and thinkers, the planners and intellectuals, and in short all the followers of the path of God, to determine the starting point so that the rest of the way should be determined by traversing this path and through unceasing effort.

The cultural revolution is not a simple enterprise to be accom-plished in a short time. The cultural revolution is a revolution which needs to be launched and advanced with great care and dedication. It cannot progress and advance automatically by itself without any application of effort on the part of its participants. The participants, the human individuals, are themselves not any automatic, mechanical beings. One of the most crucial mistakes committed during the century of scientism was the assumption about man that he is a fully automatic machine. Specially ever since the automatic and self-regulating machines have been invented, this view has gained currency. This type of thinking dominated the human minds nearly throughout this century of scientism. Anthropology was regarded as the study of a complex machinery with sensitive delicate wires. But fortunately, since the last thirty or forty years, this attitude is gradually changing. The thing which was regarded as a super-automatic, complex and delicate machi-nery was discovered to be the human body alone, and the body an insignificant fraction .of the whole human existence

Man an Unknown Being

Of course, it is understandable that those aspects of human life that resemble those of biological organisms could be, to some extent, compared with the complicated mechanism of a super-automatic machine. But these are not the only things that constitute a human being. Man is not a human being just because of these physical characteristics. It is culture which fashions a real human being. When we arrive at this point, all sorts of evaluations and estimations based on physics or physiology regarding man break down totally; since they have failed to offer an acceptable understanding of the human being. During the last forty years the

human sciences have come to the conclusion that man is as yet an unknown being. Perhaps one of the best books on this subject to appear during the recent decades is by Alexis Carrel entitled *Man: The Unknown Being*. A prominent physician and a product of the age of scientism, he believes that man cannot be defined in the terms of scientific criteria or formulae. Not even the most advanced discoveries of empirical sciences such as physics, biochemistry and biology can satisfactorily explain human existence. He goes even further and says that these scientific disciplines are inept even in the treatment of his physiological ailments, where it is not possible to ignore his spiritual strengths. His being evades the criteria forged by science. Yet, a cultural revolution can open new venues for understanding of this elusive being which is man.

However, one cannot be sure that he will follow this secure route of assured salvation without any interruption if he is left to himself. Now we can properly understand the meaning of: "Guide us in the straight path", that we recurrently utter at least five times a day. I remember, during the early days of my youth, very involved discussion used to be held on diverse subjects among the people of younger generation. It was approximately thirty-six or thirty-seven years ago that the problems of ideological significance like materialism, Marxism and ancient Iranian notions became topics of our hot discussions.

The subjects varied over a wide range, more vast and richer perhaps than those discussed today. Since, after a long spell of repression and restraint, an era of independence and freedom had begun which nevertheless lacked any kind of experience of struggle and conflicts that occurred during these last eight to ten years preceding our revolution.

That is why the questions that were asked and answers that were sought varied over a wide range. During those days, as a devout Muslim youth, I was sometimes involved in fiery discussions with other youths. At times we had ardent and excited debates. One of the questions that were often, raised was regarding the verse: . (Guide us in the straight path). It was asked, what does it signify that we every day repeat it in our prayers: guide us in the straight path? Is it not that we are Muslims?

If Islam is the straight path, are we not already on the right path being Muslims? If God has shown us the right path, what is the point in asking Him to guide us in a straight path? Does it not imply doubt in the way we follow? Why do we then believe in Islam and say prayers? Since the very act of saying prayers implies the fact that we believe in Islam. I remember how some people used to make improper remarks and gave inadequate explanations. They used to give misleading and immature replies which themselves may lead to dire consequences causing .serious deviations and misunderstandings

Mans Need for Constant Guidance

It is a fact that the notion of "Guide us in the straight path," has not only been formulated for the purpose of uttering it in every prayer, but because man is always in need of Divine guidance. Why? Because human life is not similar to the highly automated cycles of a machine or a computer that work according to certain predetermined designs or programme. Man, on the other hand, is ever in the process of making choice and selection, and this condition requires a constant guidance. Man is a perpetual seeker and explorer, and an explorer is ever in need of a guide.

Who can be a better guide than Allah whose guidance can lead man through the complex intricacies of worldly life, and invigorate and revive in him the consciousness and awareness that can warn him of dangers and remind him of his duties. It is of course possible that some people may become overly conscious in this regard to imagine that whatever they do is wrong and harmful. This is sickness, not awareness. We need to be alert and conscious, not suspicious and whimsical. Being whimsical and hesitant can prove to be harmful to the same extent as the correct thinking can prove to be beneficial. It has repeatedly been emphasized in the Quran through various verses, that the prophets were sent to deliver the people from the clutches of ignorance and forgetfulness through self-realization and remembrance of God.

The Quran cautions man about the dangerous and hazardous path that he has to tread. Therefore we need to revive, restore and to preserve in ourselves the sense of consciousness and responsibility towards our duties which springs from our quest of God by means of this cultural revolution. We have to achieve a state of permanence of this form of consciousness, which is of course not an easy task. In order to make the difficulty of this task more comprehensible, I shall give a few examples. A person who interprets all problems of life in a state of alienation from God and evolves a set of attitudes and perspectives, he may advance in life without any apprehension or fear of the consequences. But it is not possible for a Godfearing person to adopt any of these attitudes as unmindfully and without examining the consequences.

There are certain people who adopt a policy of pursuit of comfort and convenience. As children they grow up with this attitude, and as grown-ups they prefer to lead a safe and secure life free from all pains, hardships and dangers. This type of outlook is typical of a person whose main aim is to avoid pains and troubles. But when a person having commitment to God tries to evade his duties towards God, his conscience ceaselessly reproaches him for his irresponsible behaviour.

His conscience calls him to face all kinds of difficulties for the sake of objective and demands

for the sacrifice of his well-being, his property or even of his life: he should be too ready and willing to sacrifice everything in order to execute God's will. His inner voice demands that he should not be afraid of getting hurt or being killed, and that he should embrace the idea of sacrificing his life for the sake of God. Each time we pay a visit to the hospitalized youths, wounded or crippled for the sake of our revolution or on the war-fronts, we are surprised and filled with admiration on seeing them. Their radiantly happy faces reflect their inner joy, while we know they suffer from severe pain and unsound physical condition. Those brave warriors of Islam, lie on their sick-beds greeting us joyfully with smiles' on their pale faces, though they might have been restless with pain. I remember once I went to pay a visit to one of these high-spirited heroes of our Islamic Revolution. He was a middle-aged fellow. Obviously the wounds sustained by him were extremely painful, but his face was bright and peaceful. The Quranic verse reads: Those only are believers who, when God is mentioned, their hearts quake, when His signs are recited to them, it increases them in faith. (13:28) It should be remembered that although he (the wounded warrior) was overwhelmed with pain and the fever caused by his inflammatory wounds was so high that he could hardly open his eyes, yet his face was happy and beaming, reflecting his inner soul.

What was actually active within him that caused his soul to over-power his ailing body? It was actually his thriving faith and trust in God and the belief that God watches him and his deeds. His behaviour was not under the control of a desire for comfort. It shows how the domination by a Divine culture transforms the human behaviour, and that too in such a distressing condition of physical pain and torment. Such a human being cannot be made to drift from the path of God to some other path.

The people who are on the other side are of peevish and reckless nature, who cannot live if they do not quarrel. Such a person is ever looking for an opportunity to pick a quarrel. It is almost impossible for him to remain peaceful without clashing with someone. There are certain people and their number is not few who knife others and get knived and severely injure themselves, but they little care about their pains. The wounds they suffer, bitterly hurt them, but they overcome the pain on account of their extraordinary love of "heroic" exploits. A hero and a scoundrel both resemble in many ways. Both act in the midst of danger. Great dangers do not alarm them. But call back the anti-social rogue to return to the path of God, to sheathe his sword and lay down his knife, and submit to duty. When he was in the dark regarding his duties towards God, he had a certain line of action and operation, and was quite happy and content with his unmindful, callous way of life. But now that he has committed himself to a certain ideology and a specific cue, he has become careful and knows well what should be his

.appropriate and fitting course of action. Now he possesses full awareness

The Conscious Choice

Dear sisters and brothers, the greatest pain a human being under-goes is the strain of making a free and conscious choice; when one finds himself in a state of hesitation regarding various problems and enigma-tic situations that need to be attended according to God's directions. It is the time when one has to abandon his reckless non-commitment to tread the sublime path of Islamic culture and adopt a painful life of choice and awareness. A reckless ruffian indifferent to comforts, who would easily abdicate his health, his limbs, even his life to satisfy his craving for adventure would be overwhelmed with the pain and agony of choice characteristic of a worthy warrior.

It becomes still more difficult when, like Ali (A), he has to choose his course of action upon the chest of his enemy, with a bare sword in his hand. The same moment he resolves to cut his throat, within seconds an incident occurs which no automatic and the most sophisti-cated warning system could have predicted. What should be done? His opponent insults him by spitting in his face. What should be done? The angry and revengeful as well as a victorious man within him commands to chop up the rival's head without any delay, but a more conscious and honest choice guided and directed from above admonishes him and tells him that drawing the sword for the sake of quenching the personal thirst of revenge does not suit a man brought .up in the Islamic culture and tradition. He gets up and sheathes his sword

Islam's Goal

The aims and objectives of a common politician are known to everyone. He is after a high political position, social status and power. He is ambitious to the extent of indulging in any sort of crime in order to achieve his selfish ends. He would not refrain from any crime, intrigue or murder in that fiendish direction. Whatever he does is aimed at the same purpose. He hatches plots and conspiracies and takes advan-tage of every opportunity to defeat his rivals. He tries to demolish his rivals through all sorts of tricks, strategies and conspiracies with the help of his allies until either defeating the rival or facing defeat himself. His aims and ends are clear. If you try to trace the causes of various political clashes that oc-curred for the sake of power and status, throughout history, from the times when battles were fought with the most primitive weapons to the present days of modern propaganda warfare, you will notice that the mobilization of forces and resources had the common purpose of power and aimed at bringing the enemy to his knees. However, if these ques-tions are posed to the politician: What is my power for? What would I do with the office I so much cherish? These questions would negate

the assumption that power is an end in itself. It would imply that power and position is not a means to satisfy his lust for wealth and riches, but a means to realize the Divine ideals before which every human being is accountable.

When one reaches such a position he is expected to be careful and watchful of his every step. He is constantly in need of Divine guidance. Before taking any step he has to first carefully consider how to confront the opponents. How is he to fight them? Should he speak to them? Should he crush them? Should he be kind or harsh with them? Should he gain their heart? Should harsh and abusive words be used, or whether they should be subdued through kind and affectionate words? The purpose is not whether harshness or mildness with enemy would end in his vanquishing and increase of one's power; the criterion now is not power but adherence to a Divine duty.

To subjugate or to destroy the enemy is not the goal in the Islamic culture; it is educating and instructing of an enemy. No such constraint exists for a person who is merely involved in a power-struggle and who is not committed to the ideals of God, since, he is mainly interested in defeating the enemy. But for one who believes in the Divine logic, the end is that an enemy should be delivered and educated to follow the right path not to crush him into obedience and .surrender- but to guide him into obeying God

Divine Presence

If we are committed to Divine duty in all our choices, we should be extremely cautious in our ways, behaviour, tactics and strategies. You will acknowledge that this is an extremely difficult task that requires constant guidance from God and inspiration from our Divine school of thought. An individual holding a responsible position in a Divine society, must be perfectly conscious of God's guidance while performing his duties: He is constantly in need of this Divine guidance and the Divine light through the source of Islam, to show him the right path and to guide him in a right way of performing his duties. He is likely to be contacted regarding business matters for various purposes by different people: a close friend or a neighbour may approach him. From the point of view of ordinary prudence, his course of action may be clear: he does a favour to a friend or a neighbour. But as an honest and sincere Islamic administrator, he is expected to act in an equitable and impartial manner. He should treat everyone equally. Equity and impartiality should be his criterion . To him, friend or stranger, kin or alien, neighbours and others, countrymen and foreigners, the people speaking the same language and those. speaking other languages, the people sharing the same religious faith and those having a different faith, all are equal and the same. He should not differentiate among them except in certain cases, and that too within the framework of Islam. Man should always

contemplate and judge his actions, not by means of ordinary social norms, but through the Divine humanistic standards, in order to fulfil the Divine ideal. We should always verify and judge ourselves according to it. This is the Divine philosophy ruling over the lives of the dedicated citizens of the Islamic Republic, who have aligned themselves with this Revolution. Now we can see for ourselves how far we have succeeded in our attempts and to what extent this philosophy has been actualized in our lives. How far have our youths advanced in this ?direction of functioning according to the will of God, and how far they still have to go

A Caution

Here I have a word of caution for the young and the middle-aged persons, who constitute the bulk of the active generation, never to assume that you cannot change yourselves on account of age. Accord-ing to the logic of the Quran, no one is ever too old. One of the most sublime Islamic principles regards man as a being who is always in the process of becoming. From the very first day of his life to its last, a man is always in the process of development and change; a state similar to that of an ever-changing fluid. The Quran says in this regard: Say, 'O my servants! Who have been prodigal against yourselves, do not despair of Allah's mercy; surely Allah forgives the sins altogether, surely He is the All-forgiving and the All-compassionate.'

(39:53)

Thus, it is desirous of all the middle-aged and the elderly people to be active and determined in the support of the cultural revolution, and resolved to cultivate the manners and attitudes according to the Divine system. Their behaviour and the relationship of the people with one another, everything, should be according to the Divine spirit and con-genial to the sense of Divine duty and God's remembrance. And if it is felt that our condition has not improved much, and old faults still persist here and there, we should admit that our inner cultural revolu-tion has not progressed to the desired degree of profundity.

Indeed, if the cultural revolution with its philosophical dimension, and its dimensions of consciousness and world outlook as its basic elements, is expected to advance, it should lead the individual and society, both, in the direction of the Quranic and Islamic ideal. Instead of contemplating everything in the selfish and narrow terms of personal conformity and discord, or dignity and indignity, people should attune themselves to evaluate their life, choices and deeds in the broader pers-pective of the Quran and Islam. They should erase such imaginary .pre-sumptions from their minds as were prevalent during the pre-revolution days

Perpetuation Of The Revolution

If we examine the extent of the advancement of our revolution, we shall notice that we still

have a very long way to go. In fact it would be found vital for the life of Islam and the Revolution that it should continue perpetually and indefinitely into the future. The economic, civil, administrative, military, and other such problems should be given supplementary and secondary importance. Our main and principal aim should be to maintain our administration, politics, our armed forces, our production and commercial activities, export and import in subordination to the Islamic ideal. Everything should be subordinated to the Islamic essence, to Islamic consciousness and the Islamic perspective. If we neglect the sovereignty of the Islamic world outlook over all the aspects of our existence, our revolution is likely to fall into jeopardy.

The Most Important Dimension Of The Islamic Revolution

Which is the most important and the principal aspect of this revolution? The answer is: the cultural aspect.

This revolution, fortunately, started as a cultural movement. It was due to the reason that in the last few years we had successfully changed this aspect of our collective entity and our political system. Other revolutions do, of course, begin with a certain specific cultural note; but this Islamic Revolution of ours has surpassed all other revolutions in this regard. We may rightfully attribute its victory to the predominant Islamic spirit of self-sacrifice and wish for martyrdom among our people.

As long as this had not happened victory was impossible. Will it not be a great tragedy if this revolution, which is the result of a cultural movement, should transform itself into something other than what it was at its birth? Unless we guard it with great care this victory can any time change into something else.

It is our responsibility that every one of us should resolve never to lose the sight of the main thread of our cultural movement. I hope, with every day that passes, we will find ourselves more and more advanced in this direction. I hope we shall utilize the alchemy of God's remembrance to transform our behaviour and manners, speech and thought, morals and sensibilities, everything, in the direction pointed out by Islam, the Quran, the sunnah, and the Islam of leadership that inspired our constitution.

Insha' Allah.

.Wa al S'alaam