

Secular Democracy and Its Philosophical Underpinning

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The new concept of democracy as being necessarily secular is advanced by statesmen in Western countries in which no trace of religion must be seen in any government institution. Religion can neither interfere in legislation nor law enforcers rule in the name of religion. This is why young women in Islamic hijab are banned from entering public schools because the entrance of a person with a religious symbol means that the state supports him or her. Indisputably, this new concept is totally anti-religious. Instead of the label "democracy" used for it, it is appropriate to call it "anti-religion dictatorship" because it does not allow individuals to practice their religious beliefs and affairs in society and prohibits the practice of religious obligations in government institutions.

This method and approach, devoid of any philosophical foundation, has been advanced by the anti-religious politicians with the aim of thwarting the spread of religions, Islam in particular, in Western countries. Under the pretext of advocating democracy in countries affiliated to them including some Muslim countries, they are trying their best to adopt this approach. An example of this can be witnessed in Algeria and Turkey.

In order to prevent this approach from acquiring the image of true dictatorship and be promoted in the frame of a moderate and peaceful democracy, a philosophical underpinning has been considered to mitigate tension with religious elements. The so-called philosophical justification is as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that all human beings are one, and so to speak, have no class distinction. Permission to observe religious rites in government institutions would be a kind of privilege accorded to religionists, whereas, all human beings must be treated as equals! But this question remains unanswered: Why do they allow other social groups to do whatever they want and behave and wear attires in whatever fashion they like but deny the religionists the prerogative to wear special attire or cover their .hair (the hijab). This is actually a denial of freedom and negation of the rights of some citizens

Fallacy in the philosophical foundation of secular system

This is how they justify what they are doing, but there is a profound fallacy in it for all citizens to be equal in citizenship is not a corollary of the equality of all human beings in humanity. The equality of all human beings in humanity is an issue which Islam has upheld before and more

,than the rest. As God says

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ...

O mankind! Indeed We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most God-wary among you..."

The Qur'an categorically negates distinction and superiority between human beings, presenting them as children of the same parents, siblings without any distinction and superiority. This issue has never been mentioned in any other heavenly scriptures in such an eloquent manner. As Muslims, we also believe that all human beings are equal in humanity and humanness has :no first or second class. As Sa'di say

بنی آدم اعضای یک دیگرند که در آفرینش زیک گوهرند

The children of Adam who are of one essence in creation are parts of one another.

However, this does not mean that all human beings in all countries equally enjoy the legal rights of a citizen. As a principle in international law, it has been accepted throughout the world that citizenship has its peculiar conditions, rights and merits. A person might migrate from his country of origin and live for many years in another country which might benefit a lot from his services but he would not be granted citizenship in that country because of particular laws and rules. Even if it is granted it might be a second class citizenship which does not accrue all the privileges of a native. This fact exists everywhere in the world. We do not have first and second class human beings but we may have first and second class citizens, and this is something which is also accepted in Islam.

We must be vigilant and aware that Western states present their dictatorship as "democracy" in order to realize their wicked motives. We should not be deceived by them. Advancing the new theory about democracy is actually a kind of dictatorship that deprives the Muslims of practicing their religious obligations in those countries. This is while the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has stipulated that religion is free and all people are free in performing their religious obligations. No condition is made in the Declaration that religious symbols and practices should not be observed in government institutions, but whenever they want, the

politicians interpret the law in their favor and talk about war in the name of peace and violation of the rights of others as protection of human rights. Everyday we witness their oppressive and .deceitful acts on a global level

Advancing democracy in the sphere of management

Three meanings of democracy have been mentioned, all of which are related to political philosophy, but some writers who portray themselves as “intellectuals” claim that in essence the concept of democracy has nothing to do with political philosophy for it is related to the domain of management. The simple reply to these individuals is that a survey will make it clear that there is no book of political philosophy in which democracy is not touched.

If the concept of democracy is not related to political philosophy, why is it extensively discussed in all political philosophy books? The secret behind this claim is that recently, liberal thinkers and writers of the West have presented a new definition of democracy to keep it out of the political vocabulary and insert it in other realms of social sciences. They have asserted that democracy is meant to limit the power of the ruler and foster compromise among opposing groups and encourage conciliation among parties and groups, and it is not only related to administration but also applicable to management. For example, if there is a difference of opinion among managers of a company or among their subordinates, they must arrive at a consensus because persistence of this difference of opinion will not be beneficial for the company. So, in order to advance the interest of the company, they have to consult one another and finally arrive at an agreement, or uphold the majority decision. They call this the ‘democratic’ method.

Democracy is now a way of removing differences within an organization. Given this definition, democracy in its general sense is taken out of political philosophy and introduced in the sphere of management. Governance and administration is actually also a managerial task on a grand scale, but it has a specific domain and in order to expand the concept of democracy, they assert that whenever there is conflict between two groups a reconciliation in the above manner will be based on democracy. The explanation for this is that in the conflict between two groups, one group may dominate the other by force and impose its view. Certainly, this approach is undemocratic. But if they agree and finally uphold the majority opinion, that means putting democracy into practice.

We do not oppose the coinage or expansion of a scientific term, but it must not be forgotten that this concept is originally related to the realm of politics and extended to other domains. In social sciences, there are many similar concepts which were initially used in one field and after

extending their meanings, applied in various contexts in other fields. For instance, the concept of “strategy” is used commonly in all fields. Basically, this term means “leading an army” [sawq al-jayshi], used in military science, and “strategist” is the one who is in charge of planning and commanding the war. The area where an army encamps or stays or where an attack will commence is called “strategic area”.

Later on, this concept was gradually adopted by other sciences and is now used, in political discussions as “strategic policies”. Even in training and education and different types of management, “strategic issues” are tackled. For instance, we have provisions of the constitution that are “strategic” in nature such as the article that emphasizes the necessity of adapting laws of the country to Islam. Yet, it is astonishing that sometimes some elements talk about the Constitution as if it is above the Qur’an and divine revelation. At times, they also oppose it as if it is of no value to them at all.

Wherever the Constitution deals with honoring the will of people, they do not allow even the verses of the Qur’an to state anything against it; the Prophet (s), infallible Imams (‘a) and the Imam of the Time(‘a) have also no right to oppose it! But the provision of the Constitution which stipulates that all existing laws in the country must be compatible with Islam is forgotten and to oppose it is declared lawful. They say, “The basis is the people’s vote!”

Is it not enshrined in the same constitution that laws to be enacted in the country must be compatible with Islam? So, if some thing is haram according to Islam, how can you afford to declare it lawful by citing the Constitution? Considering this constitution emphasizes the observance of Islam, how is it that it is free to insult sanctities and essential laws of Islam by invoking freedom of the press? The press is free within the framework of law, and not beyond it. When Islamic law regards it obligatory to honor religious sanctities and not to slight laws of Islam and mock God and the Prophet (s) as it will be tantamount to apostasy, law on freedom of the press cannot declare such a thing lawful. The Constitution is originally codified to .expound the concept of an Islamic Republic