

Islam and Human Rights

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Abstract: *In this divine system, human-beings on the one hand seek their own rights while on the other hand feel responsible before God and their fellow-beings. Therefore, considering the inseparability between social responsibilities and rights of others, the subject of responsibility, aside from being a divine pivot with fortified rational backing; it enjoys lofty value due to its role in safeguarding individual rights in the society. from the viewpoint of Islam, human-beings are classified into six main groups, In all the above types or groups, the merit is human development and perfection.*

Considering that the basis of rightful divine religions is

enabling the human souls to achieve growth and perfection in their respective field of pure ‘*fitrat*’ (innate nature), God the Glorified, has conveyed the primary principles of these innate rights to all the human-beings via religion.

In this divine system, human-beings on the one hand, seek their own rights; while on the other hand ,feel responsible before God and their fellow-beings. Therefore, considering the inseparability between social responsibilities and rights of others, the subject of responsibility, aside from being a divine pivot with fortified rational backing; it enjoys lofty value due to its role in safeguarding individual rights in the society.

In explanation of this matter, we can say as follow:

1. to claim that one is in the right but without acceptance of responsibility is a contradictory claim because right and responsibility are two sides of one coin ;and the reality of one right and observance of others needs are inseparable issues.

2. from the innate divine aspect, we believe God to be the source of all existences and He is the Creator and Master of all the human-beings and the world. He is the Master of the universe.

And the human beings have been created equally. The only criterion proving one’s virtue(s) over others is piety and lofty human values:

“O people! Surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most pious (careful of his duty).”

On the other hand, two vital and authentic traditions have come down that lay down the basis of man's universal visage vis-à-vis mutual rights.

The holy prophet (s.a.w.a.) says: "The people are all like God's family and the most beloved amongst them, before God, is the one who is most beneficial to God's family."¹

In the second tradition, the holy prophet (s.a.w.a.) says, "Anyone who hears someone crying for help and seeks assistance but the latter does not respond, then he is not a Muslim."²

Taking into account the above-mentioned traditions and other aforesaid points in divine verses and traditions, we perceive as follows:

The main aim of the noble prophets has been to remind the people about this lofty reality that not only they should establish spiritual relationship with one another and consider themselves as organs of one body but also strive on the path of "*rational life*", a life that is steadfast on the pillars of divinity and servitude. The invitation of divine prophets too has been steadfast on the pivot of "*divinity of God*" and "*servitude of His obedient*."

"And certainly We raised in every nation an apostle saying: Serve Allah and shun the Satan."³

Considering that from the aspect of creation, God is the Master and Sustainer of human-beings, from the viewpoint of divine legislation too, He possesses full authority and command i.e., the right of sovereignty belongs solely to God and those to whom He has vested authority comprising of the immaculate prophets and Imams. All are responsible before the divine commandments; moral and legal values that are fixed by the Almighty God are steadfast and their bounds and limits are specified by God. In other words, divinity of divine legislation is the result and

¹ Al-Kafi: Mohammad-ibn-Ya'qub Kulaini, Vol 2, page 164

² Ibid

³ Nahl (16):36

offshoot of divinity of creation Therefore, none but only God possesses the right to legislation and lawmaking.

According to the divine religions, acceptance and implementation of these very principles and rules come down in the ‘*Shariah*’ (divine laws) are the factors leading to man’s progress and perfection.

On the basis of this very acceptance or non-acceptance and considering the individual trait that each one, possesses, from the viewpoint of Islam, human-beings are classified into six main groups:

First group: Human-beings who have not reached the stage of personal growth and development, lack any acquaintance, culture and deed save that which is merely related to his or her natural life.

Second group: Human-beings who have to some extent set on the path of growth and gained some degree of acquaintance, culture and action. Besides, they have accepted the social life along with its requirements, regulations and they keep respect for their fellow beings.

Third group: Human-beings who have gone beyond the second class and perceived that this life and the world they live in cannot be interpreted without relying on the world beyond this one while reason and their innate nature demands that this life and the world they live in must be interpreted and explained. For this reason and for ensuring man’s relation with the world beyond, it is this very world of existence that, aside from fulfilling certain actions in governing the natural life, it places certain duties and responsibilities as well.

Fourth group: Human-beings who are inclined to one of the divine religions like Jewish, Christianity, Zoroastrianism etc and have accepted and act according to that particular religion.

Fifth group: Muslims who aside from believing in all the divine prophets and faith in the original text of Abraham’s religion, have accepted and act upon the religion brought by Mohammad-ibn-Abdullah (s.a.w.a.) on behalf of God. As per the verses of Quran, this religion is called “Islam”.

Sixth group: People who have flourished in Islam and have attained the degree of “*Taqwa*” (piety) and earned the merit of values pointed out by the holy verse as follows:-

“Surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most pious (careful of his duty).”¹

In all the above human types or groups, that which is proof of merit is human development and perfection. Thus, the greater the appearance of features of development and perfection in the above categories the greater would be the values possessed by people of that category. The basis of “*Taqwa*” (piety) and virtue concerning values extends to all the above types of people. Anyone who follows the invaluable principles and fundamentals of life, is better than a person who does not follow that principles even though he may claim to believe in Islam.

If human-beings strengthen their “*Aql*” (reason) and “*Vijdaan*” (inner sense) and accept the Islamic beliefs by virtue of those two aforesaid divine powers and perform good deeds, they have then set themselves on the path of rightness.

“So whoever submits, these aim at the right way.”²

For this reason, God too places all the required contingencies and His favors at his disposal.

“He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth, and He directed Himself to the heaven, so He made them complete seven heavens, and He knows all things.”³

On the one hand, God equips him with the power of ‘reason’ so that he correctly utilizes His bounties and remains a manifestation of

¹ Al-hujarat (49):13

² Al-Jin (72):14

³ Al-Baqarah (2):29

God's attributes and perfection; and on the other hand acts as a guide and leader on behalf of God.

It is worthy to mention that reliance on mere 'reason' (or intellect) will pave the way for unlimited freedom and would isolate religion, thus leaving no place for duties and responsibilities! This is because in such an atmosphere, man is a 'researcher' and not a 'duty-bound' creature, so much so that he is not even responsible before his Creator. Unfortunately, such a reflection springs from the west!

Amongst the forerunners of this movement are "Garasius" and 'John Lock' we discussed about them under the topic of rights.

In their reflection, and particularly in John Lock's reflection, phrases like "God's Will" or "Divine law" can be found though by law of nature they mean law of reason. Besides, they reckon reason's duty to be revelation and interpretation in Divine Will. They claim that 'reason' enjoins how a civil society should be formed and to what extent are the rights, limits, and boundaries in that society.

In this way, as per their beliefs, 'reason' replaces divine and natural laws where the most vital consequences of such reflection is excess in intellectual self-sufficiency and unlimited freedom. This is while intellect, in spite of all its credibility and capability fails to perceive all the elements that lead to man's prosperity.

Thus, the most important result from this reflection and thought particularly John Lock's thought, is galloping freedom such that "*Rusu*" too while perfecting John's reflection says:

"Man steps into this world freely and he should live freely too. Undoubtedly, life in a society limits an individual's freedom; but this limitation is lawful to such extent that it supports his own consent."

However, we should declare that absolute freedom has not only failed to serve a ground for man's prosperity and assure him of his true rights and needs but has rather turned into an unjust rule and tyranny over the people.

A slight pause over man's self-love, which is from his innate and true desires, leads us to this conclusion that if man's freedom is not controlled under the auspices of religious teachings , moral values, owed legal orders then his reason and intellect would come under the influence of self-love (and its branches particularly sentiments, anger and lust) that would not only make him commit any type of treason but he would even try to justify his acts in a rational and intellectual manner!

The holy Quran and traditions put stress that man separated from 'Vahy' (divine revelation) is bound to prepare the ground for his own, as well as his society's destruction.