

Islamic State And Its Responsibilities: The Unity Of Spiritual and Temporal

Riffat Hassan

A human being's religion and his politics, have, hardly ever, if at all, been totally separated, although the drift towards secularization has widened the gulf between the sphere of belief and the sphere of action. In Islam, however, the connection between religion and politics is a very intimate one. Islam does not only describe humanity's relation to God, but also lays down a definite scheme of social and political behavior to be adopted in view of that relation. Islam believes in the ultimate unity of a human being's spiritual and temporal life. As Iqbal says, "The ultimate reality, according to the Qur'an is spiritual, and its life consists in its temporal activity." (*Lectures on the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p.155).

In Islam there is no question of giving unto God what belongs to God, nor unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar, since there is no bifurcation between a human being's spiritual and material life. In Islam the Creator and the universe, spirit and matter, Church and State are all organic to each other. The Qur'an unites religion and state, ethics and politics in a single revelation. In Islam, contends Iqbal, "It is the same reality which appears as the Church looked at from one point of view and the State from another. It is true to say that the Church and the State are two sides or facets of the same thing. Islam is a single unanalyzable reality which is one or the other as your point of view varies." (*Lectures*, p.154). If there is a separation between religion and politics, only oppression can result:

*Jalal-i-Padshahi ho key jamhoori tamasha ho;
Juda ho din siyasat say to reh jati hay Changezi.
(Bal-e-Jibril, p.62).*

Had it been possible to separate the spirit from the body, then it would have been possible to separate the Church from the State. But in Islam the religious order and the temporal order are inalienably linked. To conclude, as Europe had done, that religion was the private affair of the individual, and had nothing to do with his public life, was to deny that spirit and matter were organic to each other. Islam concerned as it is, with the total life of a human being, cannot confine itself exclusively to its spiritual or temporal aspect. Islam is, in the words of Iqbal, an "individual experience creative of

a social order. Its immediate outcome is the fundamentals of a polity with implicit legal concepts whose civic significance cannot be belittled merely because their origin is revelational. The religious ideal of Islam, therefore, is organically related to the social order which is created. The rejection of one will eventually involve rejection of the other." (*Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*, p.167).

As we all know, Islamic ideology was the pivotal factor behind the Pakistan Freedom Movement. Muslims of all denominations united to struggle for an independent homeland where they could practice the Islamic way of life. In India, Islam had been in danger of being crushed out of existence due to lack of freedom and opportunity. It was essential for the continuance and well-being of Islam in India that the Muslims were allowed to preserve their cultural and religious entity. In 1937, Iqbal had written to the Quaid-e-'Azam, "the enforcement and development of *Shari 'ah* of Islam is impossible in this country without a free Muslim State or States." (*Letters of Iqbal to Jinnah* , p.18).

Pakistan came into existence so that the destiny of Islam could be fulfilled in the subcontinent. Therefore, it is obvious that the religious responsibilities of the State of Pakistan are inescapable and indisputable. These responsibilities form not only an ethical, but also an historical necessity. Pakistan came into existence not just for the sake of the good life, but - more specifically - for the sake of the Islamic way of life. This fact constitutes one of the most important elements of our socio-political consciousness.

Historically, as well as according to the Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1963 (I of 1964) Section 3, Pakistan is an Islamic Republic. As Muhammad Asad has pointed out, an Islamic State may be regarded as a "theocracy" if by this term we mean a social system in which all temporal legislation flows, in the last resort, from what the community considers to be Divine Law. (*The Principles of State and Government in Islam*, p.21). But "theocracy" must not be identified with the endeavor – so well-known from the history of medieval Europe – to invest a priestly hierarchy with supreme political power. The reason for this is simple. In Islam there is no priesthood or clergy and consequently, no institution equivalent to the Christian Church. "Since every adult Muslim has the right to perform each and every religious function, no person or group can legitimately claim to possess any special sanctity by virtue of the religious functions entrusted to them. Thus, the term 'theocracy' as commonly understood in the West is entirely meaningless within the Islamic environment." (Muhammad Asad).

Responsibilities

The Islamic State, then without being a “theocracy”- in the usual sense of the word, is deeply religious in character. This statement in fact, is tautologous, since – by definition – as Islamic State is one which finds its basis in the tenets of the creed. Viewed philosophically, all the political responsibilities of an Islamic State are at the same time its religious responsibilities since politics in Islam stem out of the Qur’an and *Sunnah*. The domain of religion is, of course, larger than that of pure politics since religion aims at the transformation and guidance of a human being’s inner and outer life, and – in the words of Iqbal – “is not a departmental affair; it is neither mere thought nor mere feeling, nor mere action; it is an expression of the whole man.” (*Lectures*, p.2). Although – as has been said before – in Islam religion and politics are inextricably woven together yet for the purpose of analysis one may distinguish between functions and duties which are mainly religious or mainly political. Within the short space of this paper it is not possible to discuss in any detail the religious responsibilities of a State such as Pakistan. One can only make an attempt to refer briefly to those fundamental ideas and principles which it is the prime duty of an Islamic State to uphold and propagate.

Enforcement of the *Shari’ah*

It is almost self-evident that the foremost responsibility of an Islamic State consists in enforcing the ordinances of the *Shari’ah* in the territories under its jurisdiction. This obligation has been stressed by the Qur’anic verse (Surah 4:59) “Those who do not judge by what God has revealed – those indeed are the evildoers.” Hence, as Muhammad Asad has pointed out, “no State can be deemed genuinely Islamic unless its constitution contains an enactment to the effect that the laws of the *Shari’ah* bearing on matters of public concern shall form the inviolable basis of all State legislation.”

It follows that although it is necessary and legitimate to supplement the *Shari’ah* stipulations relating to matters of public concern by temporal, amendable laws, such laws would be invalid if found to contravene any stipulation of the *Shari’ah*. It is the responsibility of the Islamic State to ensure that its constitution lays down explicitly that no temporal legislation or administrative ruling, be it mandatory or permissive, would run counter to the letter or the spirit of any *Shari’ah* law, for the Qur’anic verse (Surah 33:36) says quite clearly “Whenever God and His Apostle have decided a matter, it is not for a faithful man or woman to follow another course of his or her own choice.” Also relevant here is the *hadith*, “Hearing and obeying are binding on a Muslim, whether he like or dislikes the order – so long as he is not ordered to commit a sin; but if he is ordered to commit a sin, there is no hearing and no obeying.” (*Al-Bukhari and Muslim, on the authority of Ibn ‘Umar*).

Jihad

This Islamic way of life has not only to be established and practiced but it has also, in many cases, to be defended. The word “*jihad*” is derived from “*jahada*” which means “he strove or exerted himself,” namely, against any thing that implies evil. Applied to actual warfare the term “*jihad*” has been used in the Qur’an exclusively to denote a war of defense – defense of a human being’s freedom of religion, of his country, and of the liberty of his community (Muhammad Asad). While an Islamic State is not allowed to indulge in wars of aggression, it is one of its greatest responsibilities to defend not only its physical boundaries also its ideological frontiers from the onslaughts of disruptive and destructive forces.

One of the ideas which is of the utmost importance for an Islamic State is the idea of *Tauhid* which has very profound and far-reaching philosophical implications. The Prophet of Islam (pbuh) translated the principles deriving from God’s Unity and Sovereignty into terms of actual living, and it is very important obligation of the Islamic State to make it possible for its citizens to become the living embodiments of *Tauhid*. What does *Tauhid* stand for in empirical terms? We shall now be examining – very briefly – some of its more important implications. The principle of *Tauhid* as embodied in the *Kalima* (“*la ilaha illa Allah*”) has two parts – “*la*” signifying negation, and “*illa*” signifying assertion or affirmation. Human life advances by means of the dialectical tension between negation and affirmation. It is by saying “No” to the factors which constitute evil and by saying “Yes” to the factors which constitute good that one reaches the highest stage of development. This first stage is of negation and this stage is of great importance, for as Soderblom has said, “Without ‘No’ there will be no proper ‘Yes’. For then all that denies and destroys, degrades and delays what is right and good would be allowed to remain un-attacked and un-abolished. That is why a ‘No’ is necessary in the moral warfare of the individual, in the evolution of religion and in the history of the race.”

The deep truth emerging from the opposition of “*la*” and “*illa*”, referring to the rejection and destruction of evil and the creation and fostering of good, also finds an expression in the famous *hadith*, “If any of you sees something evil, he should set it right by his hand; if he is unable to do so, then by his tongue; and if he is unable to do even that, then within his heart but this is the weakest form of faith.” (*Muslim on the authority of Abu Sa’id al-Khudri*). It is a responsibility of the Islamic State to enable the citizens to practice both “*la*” and “*illa*” – to remove wrong and promote goodness.

World Unity

Another important implication of *Tauhid* is the internationalism implicit in it. The unity of God becomes a formative element in the unity of humankind. As Iqbal points out in his Lectures, "Islamic culture finds the foundation of world-unity in the principle of *Tauhid*. Islam as polity, is only a practical means of making this principle a living factor in the intellectual and emotional life of mankind." (*Lectures*, p.147). Thus the brotherhood of Islam transcending all barriers of race, colour or nationality, is directly derived from the idea of *Tauhid*. Halide Edib has observed with insight, whatever political creed the Muslim may belong, his ultimate loyalty must be to the One God Who cannot be symbolized by material objects or by ideas." (*Inside India*, p.93). It is an important responsibility of the Islamic State to see that the spirit of fraternity and internationalism deriving from the principle of *Tauhid* is actualized.

The idea of the unity of God is also applicable to the unity of the mind and body. The West stressing the physical at the cost of the spiritual has been led to blind materialism and a loveless civilization wherein the soul of a human being feels suffocated. On the other hand, those modes of thinking which negate or undermine the importance of the physical, lead to an unhealthy mysticism and asceticism which is fundamentally antagonistic to the dynamic spirit of Islam. It is the responsibility of an Islamic State to ensure that the development of its citizens is not lopsided. In other words, beginning from the principle of *Tauhid* it must not cater exclusively to the material or spiritual wants of an individual but must aim at the recognition and preservation of the wholeness of life, and at the creation of an atmosphere wherein the whole person may prosper and realize his potentialities both in the physical and spiritual sphere.

According to Iqbal, "The essence of *Tauhid* as a working idea is equality, solidarity and freedom." (*Lectures*, p.45). Islam does not recognize the tyrant overlordship of either the sceptred monarch, or the surpliced priest. It is democratic in spirit and it is the responsibility of the Islamic State to guarantee certain fundamental democratic liberties, such as freedom of expression and religion, equality before law, the dignity of individual effort and enterprise. Furthermore, the Islamic State must carry out the Qur'anic ordinance embodied in Surah 42:38, namely, "Their (the believers') communal business is to be transacted in consultation among themselves," or, in other words, to ensure that the legislative powers of the State are vested in an assembly chosen by the community specifically for that purpose. (*The Principles of State and Government in Islam*, p.45).

Justice

The concept of justice finds very wide connotation not only in the Platonic discourses but also in Islamic thought. The Qur'anic verse Surah 3: 110 reads, "You are the best community that has been sent forth to mankind (in that) you enjoin right and forbid wrong and have faith in God." Thus, the prevention of injustice and the establishment of justice on earth are the ultimate objectives of the social message of Islam. (Muhammad Asad). What is just becomes, in the broadest sense, synonymous with what is right and should be done. The philosopher of Islam Iqbal would undoubtedly say that it is the responsibility of an Islamic State to create an atmosphere in which a human being can do justice to himself, i.e., to actualize all his potentialities and attain to the vicegerency of God on earth.

Justice consists in the enjoining of right and the forbidding of wrong. It consists in removing of outstanding disparities and the recognition of fundamental rights. It is responsibility of the Islamic State to make the Law of Islam the law of the land in order that equity may prevail. It must also arrange the affairs of the community in such a way that every individual, man, woman, and child, shall enjoy the minimum of material well-being without which there can be no human dignity, no real freedom, and in the final analysis, no spiritual progress. This does not mean complete social or economic equality but only that "in an Islamic State there shall be no soul-grinding poverty side by side with affluence; secondly, that all the resources of the State must be harnessed to the task of providing adequate means of livelihood for all citizens; and thirdly, that all the opportunities in this respect should be open to all citizens equally, and that no person should enjoy a high standard of living at the expense of others." (Muhammad Asad).

Poverty in the midst of plenty negates the very principle of brotherhood which lies at the centre of Islam. The Prophet of Islam (pbuh) said, "The Faithful are to one another like (parts of) a building – each part strengthening the other." (*Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Musa*) and it is a serious responsibility of the Islamic State to arrange social and economic relations in such a way that every individual shall find as few obstacles as possible and as much encouragement as possible in the development of his personality. (*The Principles of State and Government in Islam*, p.33).

The idea of justice - justice towards Muslim and non-Muslims alike – by which the concept of Islamic State stands or falls, confers upon an Islamic State the responsibility of enabling the Muslim men and women to realize the ethical goals of Islam not only in their beliefs but also in the practical sphere of their lives, and of ensuring to all non-Muslim citizens complete physical security as well as complete

freedom of religion, of culture, and of social development. (*The Principles of State and Government in Islam* , p.33).

Education

The Islamic State is, before all, an educative State. Like Plato, Islam also considers the State to be an organ for the intellectual, spiritual and moral education of the people. The Qur'an and *Sunnah* are full of injunctions relating to the acquiring of knowledge since without knowledge a human being cannot shape his own destiny or that of the universe. The Prophet of Islam (pbuh) was constantly praying for greater knowledge and two of his famous sayings are: "If anybody goes on his way in search of knowledge, God will thereby make easy for him the way to Paradise," (*Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurayrah*), and "Search for knowledge is a sacred duty imposed on every Muslim man and woman." (*At-Tirmidhi, on the authority of Abu Umamah al-Bahili*). In Iqbal's viewpoint, "All search for knowledge is essentially a form of prayer" (*Lectures* , p.91) since he who seeks knowledge seeks to establish connections with ultimate Reality.

According to the Qur'an there are two sources of knowledge, namely, the inner consciousness of man ("*alam-e-anfus*") and the outer world of nature ("*alam-e-afaq*"). The former is related to conceptual and intuitive modes of knowledge and the latter to empirical study. It is the responsibility of an Islamic State to make it possible for its citizens to acquire knowledge of both internal and external reality. Education must be made not only accessible but compulsory so that every citizen is able to think and act in an enlightened way. According to a famous maxim, "Knowledge is power," and a State from which ignorance - both, in temporal and spiritual sphere - has been eliminated can never be lacking in strength.

Having looked at some of the more important religious responsibilities which - ideally speaking - out to be discharged by an Islamic State, one is entitled to the question: how far has Pakistan fulfilled its obligations as an Islamic State?

So far as the constitution of a country is indicative of the way in which it shall be governed, one can safely state, not without gratification, that the present Constitution of Pakistan contains as principles of law-making and policy, provisions adequate for ensuring that an Islamic way of life will be maintained in the State. The first principle of policy as laid out in the Constitution is "No law shall be repugnant to the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in Holy Qur'an and *Sunnah* and all existing laws shall be brought in conformity with the Holy Qur'an and *Sunnah*." This means that in Pakistan

no such law can be passed which runs counter to existing *Shari'ah* injunctions or contravene the spirit of Islam. This constitutional safeguard embodies a clear recognition of the fundamental character of the State of Pakistan. To preserve the Islamic way of life in the country, the Constitution makes special mention of four duties. These duties are :

“1. The Muslims of Pakistan should be enabled individually and collectively, to order their lives in accordance with the fundamental principles and basic concepts of Islam, and should be provided with facilities whereby they may understand the meaning of life according to those principles and concepts.

2. The teaching of the Holy Qur'an and *Islamiyat* to the Muslims of Pakistan should be compulsory.

3. Unity and the observance of Islamic moral standards should be promoted among the Muslims of Pakistan.

4. The proper organization of *Zakat*, *wakfs* and mosques should be ensured.”

Propaganda

It must be pointed out here that in the last decade considerable progress has been made in the direction of the propagation of Islamic knowledge and that the department of *Auqaf* has done much for the cause of Islam in the country.

Most of the principles of policy given in the Constitution deal with responsibilities which find their origin in the religious consciousness. The spirit of Islam which transcends bias of all kinds and which recognizes the equality and dignity of all human beings, permeates many principles of policy. The second principle which preaches national solidarity states: “Parochial, racial, tribal, sectarian and provincial prejudices among the citizens should be discouraged”; the fifth principle advocates that “steps should be taken to bring on terms of equality with other persons the members of underprivileged castes, races, tribes and groups”; and the sixth principle lays down that “the opportunity is to be given to people of all areas and classes to participate in the national life.”

The spirit of that social justice which forms such an important part of Islam, irradiates several principles of lawmaking and policy. For instance the Constitution lays down quite unequivocally that “all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law,” that “no citizen otherwise qualified for appointment in the service of Pakistan shall be discriminated against in respect of any such appointment on the ground only of race, religion, caste, sex, residence or place of birth,” that “any section of citizens having a distinct language, script or culture shall have the right to preserve same.”

Islam, deeply concerned as it is with the national and spiritual welfare of the people, is undoubtedly the chief inspiration of some principles of policy such as the ninth one which reads: “The well-being of the people, irrespective of caste, creed or race, should be secured :

- (a) by raising the standard of living of the common man.
- (b) by preventing the undue concentration of wealth and means of production and distribution in the hands of a few, to the detriment of the interest of the common man; and
- (c) by ensuring an equitable adjustment of rights between employers and employees and between landlords and tenants.”

To make sure that the atrocities bewailed by Dickens are not perpetrated in an Islamic State, the eighth principle of policy lays down that “just and humane conditions of work should be provided and children and women should not be employed in vocations unsuited to their age and sex and maternity benefits should be provided for women in employment.” To preserve the humanitarianism of Islam the twelfth principle of policy states that “the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing, education and medical treatment should be provided for citizens who, irrespective of caste, creed or race, are permanently or temporarily unable to earn their livelihood on account of infirmity, disability, sickness or unemployment.”

Keeping in mind the great importance of education in Islam, one feels encouraged to see that the seventh principle of policy states that “Illiteracy should be eliminated, and free and compulsory primary education should be provided for all, as soon as practicable.”

In order to maintain a truly Islamic way of life, the Constitution also lays down provisions which discourage practices which are disallowed or frowned upon by Islam. The eighteenth principle of policy deals with the elimination of usury; the nineteenth and twentieth principles state that prostitution, gambling, drug-taking and the consumption of alcohol is to be discouraged. Untouchability has been abolished by the Constitution (First Amendment) Act. 1963.

One of the most important responsibilities of an Islamic State is in relation to minorities, and the third principle of policy of the Pakistan Constitution lays down that the legitimate rights and interests of the minorities should be safeguarded, and the members of minorities should be given due opportunity to enter the service of Pakistan." The Constitution confers upon the citizens the right to profess, practice and propagate any religion and upon all religious denominations and sects the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious and educational institutions. The Constitution further states that "No person shall be compelled to pay any special tax the proceeds of which are to be spent on the propagation or maintenance of any religion other than his own." It is to be noted here that in consonance with the tolerance and compassion inherent in Islam there has been no religious persecution of minorities in Pakistan as may be witnessed in India and in many other countries. In fact the West as a whole is still struggling to solve the problems created by differences in race, colour and creed.

The Constitution of Pakistan also makes provision for promoting Muslim universalism and world peace. The twenty-first principle of policy states that "the bonds of unity among Muslim countries should be preserved and strengthened, international peace and security should be promoted, goodwill and friendly relations among all nations should be fostered, and the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means should be encouraged." In the last decade Pakistan has achieved a good deal in the direction of creating harmonious relations with other Muslim countries. The RCD pact and the Indonesia-Pakistan Economic & Cultural Co-operation Pact personify the keenness of Pakistan to actualize the spirit of Islamic internationalism which is not to be sacrificed at the altar of political exigencies.

Not only has the Constitution of Pakistan embodied in its principles of policy and lawmaking the essentials of the Islamic ideology, it has also set up two special institutions to help the Muslims of Pakistan to order their lives in all respects in accordance with the principles and concepts of Islam. The Advisory Council of Islamic Ideology and the Islamic Research Institute are organizations which are of fundamental

importance in an Islamic State since on them rests the responsibility of interpreting, elucidating and elaborating the principles of Islam.

“Islamic State and Its Responsibilities, The Unity of Spiritual and Temporal” in *The Pakistan Times*, October 20, 1968