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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HIJRAH

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The event known as the Hijrah took place in the thirteenth year of the prophet hood of Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and the Muslim calendar and indeed the Muslim era in history begins with this event. It really sets us thinking why is it that the Muslim era does not begin with, for example, the date of the birth of the Prophet or the date on which the Revelation began, or even the day when the Prophet's death occurred and he departed from the world of mortals, or from the day when the Muslims re-entered Makkah and established the suzerainty of Islam.

When we look at different civilizations we find that such moments have been chosen to signal the inauguration of their calendar, but not so with Islam. Why is it that the Hijrah has been chosen to be the date of the inauguration of the Muslim era in history?

First of all, in ordinary historical or cultural terms, what is it that the Hijrah signifies? For this we must look into the course of events leading up to it. For the first three years of his mission, the Prophet carried on his work almost silently depending on personal persuasion. This was followed by the open dissemination of the message when the Prophet called all the people around him to the path of Allah. Some people responded to the call, others were indifferent. Some opposed him and this opposition was often expressed in severe persecution. Things became more and more difficult. The struggle was intensified and the tensions were multiplied. The Prophet suffered for the cause for which he was now working. And the few who had really accepted his call and challenged the established order of the time also suffered but carried on their struggle.

After about 13 years, it was realized that the sons of the Makkah soil were no longer responding. Instead echoes were coming from places far and wide and the Prophet intensified his efforts to spread the message to the tribes outside Makkah and to other important political and cultural centres in the area. In a city quite far away from Makkah about 400 miles hope was kindled when contact was made with some of the inhabitants. The Prophet waited for God's permission to change the centre of activity. And when this permission came he and his companions moved to the new centre and there established Islamic society and the Islamic state. Within a period of 10 years, not only the entire Arabian peninsula submitted to Islam and accepted it, but Islam's contact with the major civilizations of its time—the Byzantine and the Persian—had begun. These were challenged and in the ensuing encounter the new order emerged successfully. Keeping this rapidly moving train of events in view, one can analyse and try to find out what is it that makes the Hijrah a real focal point, a real turning point in the history of the time, indeed in the history of all times. It would be possible from this standpoint to discern the real approach of Islam to the problems of the world, the problems of life, the problems of society and the problems of civilization. In a way the key to the understanding of these problems in their entirety can be found in this one event—the Hijrah.

Now, we ought to make it clear that in Islam, the Prophetic mission does not merely mean the presentation of a new vision of some kind of saintliness and piety and virtue. Piety and virtue are the essence of existence, but not that type which abandons the world and seeks glory in some kind of personal spiritual transformation. The real test of virtue and piety lies in the spiritual transformation of the individual and the society and in changing the course of events in such a way that human life is purified

and enriched with moral excellence, with taqwah. Unless this kind of transformation in the entire social structure takes place, the prophetic mission is not really realized. That is why the mission for which Muhammad, peace be upon him, came, and for which all prophets came, according to the Qur'an, was the socio-cultural transformation of human society, and the bringing of Man into line with the guidance given by God so making him successful in this world and the hereafter.

Orientalists and western historians who try to study the life of the Prophet and the history of Islam with a vision of some kind of individualistic type of religion, where piety has nothing to do with the socio-cultural life of the people, fail to understand the significance of this event. Among them there are many who would go to the extent of saying that the Hijrah in a way is a symbol of the tragedy of Islam because the Prophet, peace be upon him, was transformed into the statesman. In fact, even before the Hijrah, Muhammad the Prophet, peace be upon him, was never a prophet without being a statesman. And after the Hijrah he was never a statesman without being a prophet. It is the blending and the integration of these two which was in every phase a distinctive and unique feature of the Prophet's life. This has to be kept in view in analyzing the establishment of the New Order in the providing of guidance to mankind not only in verbal communication but as it is embodied in the historical working out of events, in the Prophet's living example. This example had to be set since Muhammad was the last of the Prophets and there would be no one coming after him to set the record straight. This was the real mission of the Prophet.

Keeping this mission in view, one must try to discern the essentials in this early phase of Islamic history. The universal message had been presented by the Prophet, peace be upon him, and was being disseminated in all possible ways.

A group of persons, the cream of the society, those whom even their worst enemies acknowledged to be men of character, courage and integrity, men of greatness, accepted this call and became its standard bearers. They faced the trial of the times and gave an example of steadfastness and perseverance. They braved all persecutions and nothing could stop them. Such is their example. But for the student of history, keeping that mission in view, there seems to be certain unsettled problems. In these 12 years of strenuous and ceaseless effort, the character and integrity of these people had been fully established and vindicated, but as the message was universal, they still had to be tested on one count, and here lies, the real clue to the historical role of Islam.

Casting a glance at human history one finds that from the earliest civilizations to modern times, there have been two idols or false gods which have always been worshipped and which have always been responsible for disorder and persecution (fasad) in human society. They have been racialism, or the worship of race, or the identification of man on the basis of blood, and regionalism the identification of man on the basis of territory. As some historians have said, racialism and regionalism have been cankers eating at the vitals of civilization in almost every phase of human history. Now the universal message which the Prophet Muhammad had presented and the unique practical example which his companions put forth, did not, despite the passage of more than a decade, demonstrate fully that they were free from any attachment to racialism or blood relationship, or free from attachments to territory or their place of birth. These two idols had yet to be smashed and then only could the universal role of the Prophet and his companions be fully vindicated. The Hijrah is the event which demolishes for ever these two idols. After the Hijrah, if a wife had not fulfilled this command of God and the Prophet, the bonds of wedlock were broken. And further the entire world witnessed that when a final battle between Truth (Haqq) and Falsehood (Batil) took place, the sword of the father was against the sword of the son. Blood ties could not in any way be the cementing source of their relationships.

In its place there was only one relationship—the ideological relationship, the universal relationship, the relationship of consciousness of faith and belief which Islam gave. With the Hijrah people were asked to leave their hearths and homes, their kith and kin, their dear and near ones, their parents, their children. There is the example of a person with his wife and single daughter. They had settled themselves on the camel's back to move to Medinah, and then men from one tribe came and would not allow her to go. People from another tribe came and said that the daughter belonged to their tribe and although she might be his progeny, they would not allow her to be taken away. And the man replied that they could take both of them if they so wanted, but he had to fulfil the will of Allah. This is the vindication of the principle of tearing asunder the idols of blood relations and racialism. The place they were asked to leave was not only their birthplace, but the first place for the worship of God that was built under the sun. It was this place that they were being asked to leave, and leave only for the sake of a principle, for the religion, to please the will of Allah.

It is known of the Sahabah who had migrated that their feelings of attachment for the place was such that they would come out and pray for the day when they could just catch a glimpse of the Ka'aba. This was their attachment to the place.

But then what is demanded is a universal role, where worship of or attachment to territory was to have no consequence. This principle of abandonment had to be vindicated and when it was, it marked the dating of the beginning of the supremacy of Islam. It is on this crucial occasion that the people of Medina, the Ansar; asked the Prophet whether when he was successful he would return to Makkah and leave them. His reply was that his life and his death would be with them. The Prophet remained in Medina, and was buried there. Despite the conquest of Makkah and the establishment of suzerainty, the center of gravity did not change. The idols of regionalism and racialism which have brought disasters to mankind from time immemorial were broken with the Hijrah, and the new universal principles for which Islam every phase a distinctive and a unique feature in simple and historical terms. This is the most important aspect. As the objective was to establish the supremacy

of the new social order and ideology, what was needed in that phase was a center, a place where the movement could have a foothold, and from where it could be translated into reality, practiced and demonstrated to mankind. The Hijrah also signifies the inauguration of the era of the establishment of the principles of Islam in social and cultural terms. That is why within the first year the first constitution of Madinah was framed. The Prophet went to Madinah not as a refugee; he went there as the Prophet and the ruler—as the man who was to decide the destiny of this new city state. Actually it is a misnomer to call it a "flight" and an injustice to history to call it a migration. This is not to say that migration in historical and sociological terms is a bad word. There have been many phases of human history which have arisen through migrations. After Prophet Nuh, whatever civilization that had been anywhere in the world it was because of migration. In the Indian sub-continent, the entire 4,000 years of history owes itself to a particular migration. But leaving all that aside, the real historical significance of this is not conveyed by the word migration. And that is why the word Hijrah is preferable to any of its English equivalents.

Another important aspect of Hijrah is that it is not merely an event of historical significance, but one which has a spiritual and social meaning as well. One finds that in the last analysis, the Hijrah is a kind of a process of identification. There are the negative aspects which we have described above and also the very positive aspects the discovery of the divine in human existence at the individual level as well as on the social and historical plane. In Hijrah not only does one refuse to be associated with any of these batil concepts but one is positively identified with the will of Allah. That is why the Prophet, when asked by the sahaba which was the best Hijrah, replied that the best of Hijrahs is the Hijrah away from that which displeases the Lord. Thus, when remaining in Makkah, the first place of worship under the sun, involved

displeasure of Allah, Makkah was to be abandoned. The historical event then is motivated by a concept, the concept of man's identification with God's will, the submission of all personal wishes (hawa) to the guidance (huda) of Allah. Acceptance of the huda and identification with God becomes a Hijrah. Each one of us, who in any given situation refuses to follow that which displeases Allah, perform an act of Hijrah. A hijrah from God's displeasure to God's pleasure. This is the principle of identification, the concept which emerges from the idea of hijrah.

This sort of identification takes place at a highly individual level, the level of man's spiritual and mental existence. Hijrah is primarily a mental concept, a highly individual concept, where one abandons that which displeases Allah and accepts and adopts that which pleases Allah. This is the root, the essence, the life of Hijrah. If a place forces one to live in sin, in disobedience of God, it has to be left. Take the example of economic life. If because of economic associations, one is forced to adopt something which displeases Allah, that something has to be abandoned. According to the Qur'an this is hijrah, and there are many verses where it is so described. Questions like these are put: Then why don't they migrate? Why don't they perform the hijrah? Isn't God's earth vast and wide? For those who perform the hijrah for Allah's sake, it has been promised that they would find God's earth bountiful; they will find treasures of material well-being, of economic resources waiting for them. Hijrah is here undertaken for economic motives as well. In our Qur'anic accounts, it has been stated that angels would ask some people why they carried on a particular type of existence. And they would reply that they were living under persecutors, because of whose tyranny they were forced into a wrong way of life. The angels would then ask whether God's earth was not wide enough for them to move. Hijrah in this case is tied up with an existing political situation, with migrating from a place of persecution and tyranny for the purpose of identification with the Divine will. And this occurs again and again in the Qur'an.

In each of the aspects or motives for Hijrah social, economic or political-the crux is one of identifying oneself with the Divine, accepting His pleasure and abandoning His displeasure.

Without going into the legal aspects, there are in the science of Fiqh (jurisprudence), discussions about the problems of Hijrah in peace and war, in conditions of tyranny, for economic reasons and so forth. But what must be emphasized is that wherever one is, whatever one's station in life, and whatever be the period and the situation, the test is the identification with God's pleasure and the Divine principle and disassociation from that which destroys one's spiritual or ideological personality. This is the basic concept which emerges from the Hijrah, from this historic event which inaugurates the Islamic era in history.

THE CONTEMPORARY Islamic resurgence represents an important phase of the Muslim ummah's self-awakening and self-expression, which the West has failed to understand.

"Fundamentalism" has deep roots in the theological history of western Christianity. The minority groups in the US, who have tried to get back to a literalistic, understanding of the Bible, have been the products of a uniquely Christian-situation. Fundamentalists in the Christian context may be looked upon as a religious and political nuisance. Unfortunately, both old and contemporary Christian writings perceive Islam, the Islamic world and Islamic movements, deliberately or unconsciously, in terms of categories which derive from Christian history and are totally unhelpful for the comprehension of Islam, Islamic history and the Muslim people.

"Fundamentalism" apart, there is also a question whether Islamic resurgence is a single phenomenon, or it comprises different responses to a variety of political situations.

Islamic resurgence is unique as well as universal, because in Islam there is unity with diversity, and variation that leads to unity. Islam is a universal religion. There is nothing like "Arab Islam", "Pakistani

Islam", "Iranian Islam" or "Turkish Islam". Within the Islamic universalism there is unity but not uniformity.

There are certain distinct features which are common everywhere, but they never exhaust the richness of the movement. For example, Arabic is the language of the Quran and the Prophet, but not necessarily the language of all Muslims. Although every Muslim learns at least some Arabic, it is not less "Islamic" to speak in other languages and to use them as instrument for developing ideas which conform to Islamic norms.

Three phases Islamic resurgence has passed through three distinct phases. The first was when the Muslims realized in the 17th and 18th century that they were no longer the centre of the world. In the process of confrontation with the West, the Muslims began to realize that they were a declining power. This was symbolised by the decline of the Ottoman Empire. The Mughals in India had also passed their peak. Muslims began to realise that they had to revitalize their society to face the challenge from the colonial powers. Islam became the rallying point to fight the invader. Although it was primarily a political and economic fight, the religious "motive was the real source of strength of the whole process.

Muslims are also self critical. They re-examine the manifestations of social life and go back to the first principles, as expressed in the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet. This may involve disregarding some of those symbols which have become a part of the religious tradition: for example, certain customs or even certain details of jurisprudence and going back to the roots.

This return to the sources acts as a liberating force. Within Islam it initiates an invigorating, dynamic process. Going back to fundamentals does not produce "fundamental Inspiration in their fight against imperialism, Mustafa Kemal fought for Anatolia with the Quran in his hand, because this was, the only language his people understood. In the Indian subcontinent we Muslims realized that if we had to accept the British voting system, leading to majority rule, we had to have a place where we were numerically strong enough to defend our values and principles. Hence the movement for Pakistan.

After independence, Muslims found themselves in the hands of leaders who were the products of a colonial educational system. Under the leadership, the Muslim world adopted certain western political and economic institutions, for example, the nation state, sometimes with a more capitalistic character, sometimes a more socialistic one. In Egypt, the Wafdist leadership believed in a secular state of the French type. Nasser leaned towards the East European socialist model. Reza Shah of Iran and Mustafa Kemal of Turkey were pioneers of westernization and secularization in Muslim lands. They thought that the affairs of society could be conducted by the secular leadership in the light of the western models of modernization, while Islam would be helpful in keeping the people together, keeping them calm and spiritually satisfied, with a limited and well-defined place in their lives. But this did not work.

People are now rediscovering Islam as a source of civilization and culture, a factor which ought to be influencing the shape of society.

The contemporary phase involves moving away from a slavish imitation of western models and becoming discriminating in what we use or adapt. In many ways we can benefit from the western experience, but we do not intend to become instruments for the imposition of alien cultures.

Of course, not all Muslim countries have the same attitude towards western culture. Those countries which were pioneers of westernisation are now in the vanguard of Islamic resurgence, while in the countries which seemed to be lagging behind and stuck to their traditions are people who are still the most enthusiastic about western prototypes and models.

Development

: There is also confusion on certain choices such as development, technology and others which are used to build up commercial prosperity and human development. Development and teleology - yes. But the real Issue is what type of development, in the pursuit of which objectives? Is it going to be more economic development or total human development - economic, social, moral, ideological leading to the establishment of a just social order? We want to go ahead in a much more creative way than our recent predecessors. We can accept the nation state as a starting point, although it is not the Muslim ideal. It constitutes the present day reality and we do not want to dismantle political systems in an arbitrary manner. We want to bring about a greater sense of unity in the Islamic ummah, greater cooperation and increasing integration between the different Muslim states. Under Islamic idealism, every nation state would gradually become an ideological state and the SA

To compartments, based on the assumption that the economy and technology could be allowed to develop independently of the ecological dimension. Man must rediscover the inherent relationship between his values, his faith and the structure of society.

Once this revolutionary outlook is awakened in man, he would be a different man from the homo-economics of modern civilization. He would work for the advent of a new civilization.

A question is also posed for developing a common Islamic ideology with regard to private property. - Contemporary Muslim thinkers have been debating the question of private property for 50 or 60 years. I would not say that we have reached a consensus but I do believe that we are moving towards one.

Field of economics

An overwhelming majority of Muslim thinkers feel we should have neither private property of the capitalistic type nor private ownership of the means of production, the absolute right of a proprietor to dispose of property as he wishes nor the socialistic system whereby all means of production are nationalized with consequent danger to human freedom and initiative. Islam's most important contribution in the field of economics lies in changing the concept of ownership.

No one has the right to destroy property. If misused it can be taken away. If it is not needed it must be passed on to others, or handed to the state as the trustee of society. This limitation on property is, I believe, uniquely Islamic. Apart from this, the general consensus among Muslim economists is that the dominant form of ownership should be private property and enterprise, supplemented by social vigilance, social regulation and, wherever necessary, limited public ownership.

In the contemporary world, choosing the right form of government is amongst the greatest challenges facing the Muslims. This is an area where we can learn, with caution, from the western experience. I see no objection to representative democracy, though in an Islamic system there would have to be significant modifications. The philosophical foundations of western democracy, i.e., the absolute right of the individual to decide his own values, the alleged sovereignty of man, we reject absolutely. Muslims first of all accept Allah as their Lawgiver, beyond that they enjoy a limited freedom to run the affairs of state in the light of those values, by means of consultation.

About the party system. some Muslims purists have argued that there is no party system in Islam. I believe in a multi-party system, but the rules of the game need to be modified. The principle should be that, though a person belongs to a political party, in an Islamic society - all the parties should believe in submission to the Quran and the Sunnah.

Politicians would not be bound by party discipline on ideological issues or be obliged to vote with their parties on questions of conscience. Self-candidature would also be prohibited because the idea is that the community in Islam must govern itself according to a system of collective consultation in