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RESEARCH ARTICLE

STUDIES IN ISLAMIC POLITICAL THOUGHT: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION ON THE MISSION OF MAN EARTH.

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Abstract

The main business of history according to the Muslim worldview is to bring all mankind to Islam. That mission, that business, has not, after 1400 years of the coming of age of humanity, been completed. Suffice it to say however, that it will not be considered as late if we take into consideration the length of time between Prophet Adam and Muhammad and the number of prophets that followed in between them. This paper attempts to trace the origin of man and the very purpose of his creation as expounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet. It also traces human history vis-a-vis Allah's promise in the Qur'an, chapter 2 verse 38 in which Allah promised to keep sending guidance to humanity right from its inception to the end of time - a phenomena that enjoys wealth of references in many parts of the Qur'an. Authentic Islamic sources opined that there were 124,000 prophets sent to mankind from Adam to Muhammad. Each was sent to his community and at different period in history with the exception of Muhammad (S.A.W.) who was sent, as a seal of the prophets, to all mankind. Sometimes the career of one prophet may terminate before the appearance of another. At times a particular prophet may finish his career and survive to witness the coming of another prophet as it occurred between Ibrahim and Lot or between Musa and Shu'aib. These prophets, many as they may appear to be, were sent principally, with messages from Allah, as He promised, according to the Glorious Qur'an, in order to guide mankind to Sirat al-Mustaqim - The Right path.

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Introduction:-

Man was first created, and comfortably lived, in Paradise where "neither the pangs of hunger nor ill ailment would ever be experienced". In this abode of peace, man was leading a life of harmony, abundance and fulfillment. As it is often the Sunnah of Allah, and to establish His position as the Nourisher, The Sustainer as well as The Law Giver, and given the infancy of man and the fragility of man's brain, Allah gave Adam only one command "do not come near (eat) this tree: meaning, do not taste the fruit of this particular tree.

In other words, Adam is given the privilege to enjoy all the uncountable bounties in paradise but is exempted from tasting the fruit of only ONE particular tree. Yet Satan lured him and made him to eat that tree and by so doing

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violated that fundamental, singular, though weighty commandment of Allah and thus loses the tenancy of that enviable abode: Al-Jannah. Adam regretted deeply his singular act of disobedience to Allah and rushed humbly and sought Allah's forgiveness. The great God of Mercy, The Most Beneficent, The Most Merciful, forgave Adam and warned him to be mindful of Satan and desist from disobeying divine commands. It is here that Islam is at par with Christianity.

Allah has forgiven Adam of his sin and therefore he is untainted. That is Islam. In Christianity however, for that singular act of disobedience, Adam, indeed all mankind is tainted and therefore carry a mortal sin, the expiation of which ended only with the sacrifice of Jesus who came to die in order to save mankind (with his blood). This is the Christian concept of original sin. Therefore, if one believes in this theology and accepts Jesus as the Saviour, then he is acquitted and salvaged from this mortal sin.

The tragedy of this spiritual melodrama is captured in the beautiful image of a child. Young, beautiful, innocent and fragile as the child may appear at birth, it will be unjust to taint such an innocent soul with crime or sin; worse still it is unfair to continue to sit in judgement against such a weak being and regard him as a carrier of a mortal sin till death do him part. As a challenge to this absurdity, Islam frees humanity from such a spiritual, though universal, bondage. The prophet of Islam, Muhammad (S.A.W.) once said:

Every child is born a Muslim; it is only his parents that turn him into a Jew or a Christian.

Having forgiven Adam, and having warned him against Satan and his evil solicitations, the Almighty Allah sent him to the planet earth in order to serve as His vicegerent, His Ambassador, His representative, an overseer over the flora and fauna and all what exists on it. Allah promised to send him guidance from time to time heeding which, will enable mankind to have an easy passage back to his original residence.

Al-Jannah. Even here on this planet, where he is sent with this mission as a vicegerent of Allah, Man has to lead a life of perpetual struggle before he could earn a living; and he must learn to put up with the vicissitudes of life: conflict, rivalry, hatred, jealousy, envy, mistrust, cheating, dishonesty, adulteration, corruption, selfishness, treachery, betrayal, disloyalty, and dare-devil-skull-daggers. All these will be littered on the footpath of life and man must tread with caution towards a successful attainment of this great historical mission.

This is where Islam differs from all other man-made theologies, system or civilizations. It is only Islam, perhaps more than any other civilization that could answer the four fundamental questions of life - who am I? Where am I coming from? What is the purpose of my being here? And where do I return to? It is in answer to the questions that man could comprehend the very essence of his mission on this earth. From the Hellenic civilization with its grandeur and intellectual prowess down to the present western materialist civilization, none of these great civilizations has been able to answer, with adequate satisfaction, these fundamental questions. Even where such answers have been provided the missing element has always been: the belief in the hereafter. Neither the Greek Civilization nor its heir-apparent (western civilization) subscribe to the idea of an afterlife. William Shakespeare, whose European ancestry is still doubtful, who is alleged to have a Persian background and who authored many English plays to his credit, while speaking about death, has this to say:

But that the dread of something after death, The undiscovered country, from whose bourn, No traveller returns, puzzles the will And makes us rather bear those ills we have Than fly to others that we know not of?

Perhaps this may be considered, as one of the closest a western mind ever did come at something near after life. Even in Christianity, the belief in afterlife is rather brief, often unintelligible and for the most part bordering on the absurd. Even the concept of the mission of man is rather blurred in Christian literature. What future has a mortal sinner? How does he redeem himself from damnation? Why does Christ have to suffer such a heinous fate to salvage humanity despite his enviable status "WalliyazBillah" as the "son" of God? It is this spiritual incoherence which renders the Christian theology rather watery.

Coming back to this great promise of Allah: to guide mankind to attain a successful passage back to Aljannah, the sequence of the message came in tune with the gradual mental growth (and by extension, mental maturity) of the human race. No wonder the number of the prophets was many and the span of human career on this planet spread over a long period of time just as Allah Has said in the Glorious Qur'an:

Ye shall surely travel From stage to stage

(Qur'an: 84 verse 19)

If during the time of Adam, the human brain could find one commandment too many, by the time of Musa Alaihis-Salam, humanity was man enough to stomach Ten Commandments. Is it any wonder then, if in the time of Muhammad, humanity is old enough to take the complete DEEN from Allah? As a matter of fact, after sending 124,000 prophets, the human race is matured enough to take, in totality, all the commandments of Allah Subhanahu.

It is here and then that the message of Allah is completed and it rests on man to struggle for the attainment of the great historical accomplishment: that of attaining the pleasure of Allah and accepting Islam as the way of life and the only means, the surest passage back to Aljannah.

Taking into consideration the career of this teeming number of prophets - 124,000, the central theses of their mission could be deduced thus:

1. That Allah is the sole Creator Nourisher, Protector and Preserver of all creations.
2. That He alone deserves to be worshipped and none should be *associated with Him in whatever way and in whatever form. (Where stands the Christian dogma of trinity)?
3. That mankind has been created purposely to worship Allah and by so doing Allah promised to reward every good action and penalize every bad one.
4. That Allah is conversant with the weaknesses of human beings; the fragility of their mental faculties and their tendency to lean on the wayward side, as such He promises to forgive all those who turn to Him in repentance, overlook minor offences and judge with justice over all creatures.
5. That the afterlife is real and is coming, and there is no doubt about it. It is in the hereafter that Allah will reward His righteous servants for their good deeds on this earth by housing them permanently in AL-JANNAH (Paradise). It is also in the hereafter that Allah will judge the transgressors by confining them in the hell fire - a tormentous abode befitting those, who, in this life, rebelled against Allah by violating His Shariah thereby causing dissension on this earth.
6. That the human family comprises of the male and the female, the young and the old, the weak and the strong, the rich and the poor, the believer and the non-believer, the learned and the ignorant, the leader and the led. Man is stronger over woman. A husband is a leader in his household. He is enjoined to be just and fair to members of his household; the learned should educate the ignorant, the leader to rule with justice and fairness, the rich is to support the poor, the strong is to protect the weak. This is the law of Allah in social relations. And all cases, injustices must be shunned.
7. That the family is the primary unit of human civilization and it is only through the institution of marriage that a stable, virile and purposeful family could be raised. Moreover it is only through marriage (the Islamic way) that the family institutions and by extension the human society could be safeguarded. Only then, such aberrations as rape, fornication, adultery; promiscuity, adult as well as juvenile misbehaviour could be checked, fought and controlled. Any society where these aberrations are prevalent could hardly enjoy the security, harmony and social stability that the institution of marriage reserves for the family and the society at large.
8. That Allah Has set out certain rules and regulations to guide human conduct so that peace, justice and harmony could reign in the human society; the sum total of these enactments is called "the Shariah - a path leading to a watering place". It is the strict and total observance of the Shari'ah which earns a community "The pleasure and acceptability of Allah and it is this which ensures the permanent enthronement (prevalence) of peace, justice, harmony, blessing, protection and bounties of Allah SubhanahuWata'ala."
9. That Allah has created the whole universe in order to compliment the life of mankind. The sun provides man with tremendous sources of energy, the moon and stars lighten his path at night, the rains bring forth pasture for his animals and give his seedlings luxuriant fruition. Rivers and oceans serve as means of communication to haulage his needs and by extension provide sustenance to him by harvesting a lot of its products. All these wealth and bounties are to be utilised with moderation without wastage, plunder or extravagance; and Allah promised to increase these bounties manifold so long as mankind remain ever thankful to Him for this ninnah.
10. That the price of transgression is great and fatal and none rebels against Allah or His ni'ma and in the end triumphs. That folly, avarice and intransigence are, in the final analysis, mere exercises that often end in futility. That human desire (except that of winning Allah's pleasure) is always insatiable and there is no end to what the human whims can covet. That meaningful life is one spent in the worship of Allah and services for the well being of humanity;¹ and any effort done outside these, is vain and fruitless.
11. That the **ni'imah** of Allah whether of life, health or wealth is to be enjoyed in two ways. The possessor of the **ni'imah** or bounty to enjoy it for his benefit with a sense of moderation and fair play and to dispense it for the

- use of other fellow human beings with fairness and justice.
12. That leadership is important in all aspects of human existence and the starting point begins with 3 people on a journey. Such a team must select a leader from among them who will take charge of their affairs with justice and fairness. This is what makes government imperative and fundamentally necessary in Islam. Under no circumstance should a Muslim community stay leaderless, and a leader must be obeyed as long as he the injunctions of Allah and the Sunnah of Allah's (S.A.W.). Even where such a leader falters, obedience is fundamental as the consequences of rebellion will put religion, life, property, honour and intellect in serious jeopardy. For fear of such occurrence, allegiance to such a leader is binding.
 13. Finally, that capital punishment is reserved for certain inimical crimes like robbery, manslaughter, adultery, sodomy and transgression (**fitnah**) because of their serious repercussion on the human society. Failure to do so puts the human community in harm's way. The capital nature of the punishment should under no circumstance deter the leader, the government or the judge from executing the law.

Simply put, the messages brought by this teeming number of Prophets were to guide mankind in both spiritual and mundane affairs, here and hereafter; (All, what is needed from the human family is to wholeheartedly obey these laws so as to win Allah's pleasure and acceptance. Where such is disregarded, then the consequence is disastrous and distasteful.

Conclusion:-

In conclusion, this is the mission of man on this planet as fully explained in the message of the 124,000 Prophets sent by Allah from the time of Adam to the Prophethood of Muhammad. This message which came piecemeal with the gradual development of the human personality took thousands of years to deliver; spanning over the career of man on this planet. That the final message came 1400 years ago; but total as it is and comprehensive as it may appear in treating human issues, it is indicative of the fact that a historical realisation of the purpose of this mission is still incomplete as humanity is still grappling to come to terms with itself as well as the very purpose of its mission on this planet.