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SECULARISM'S COMPATIBILITY WITH ISLAM IN LIGHT OF HOLY QURAN AND SUNNAH OF HOLY PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH)

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ABSTRACT

The quest of compatibility between Secularism and Islamic values is a long political as well as religious debate. But if it is judged with a moderate perspective, we can conclude that the both secularism and Islamic state can survive hand in hand with each other's. Intact, the concept of state secularism which is about drawing a line between religious affairs and political matters can be used as a rebuttal against terrorism. The extremist behavior of certain religious organizations particularly the ones with militant theology possess treat to prominence of peace practices in Islam. These organizations seek political power using religious card with an agenda to dismantle the importance of religion. The idea of secularism turns out to be beneficial to Islamic values since it allows religious liberty and freedom of conscious but only if the secularism is dealt with moderation. Because if extremist behavior is involved even in secularism, there remains no difference between secularism and non-secularism which ultimately leads to the rigid constitutional principles like Laicite. In contrast to pure secularism, State secularism does not disadvantage any individual and at the same time it protects religious minorities and maintains the Islamic Peace prospect as well. The key to successful Islamic state in today's era is to maintain an understanding between religion and politics and keep moderation between the two which is possible by practicing state secularism.

Confrontation of Islam and western ideologies is almost as old as the religion Islam itself. But since we live in a global village and adherents of Islam (Muslims) make up the second largest religious group in the world, they ultimately had to settle with western settlements. As a

result of merging people who are historically related but ideologically distinguished, certain socioeconomic, political, geographical and regional agitations emerged among masses. These situation ships raised questions about whether Islam can be compatible with Western ideology of secularism or not? It also emphasis on the fact that extremism shown in the name of religious Islam does not reap any benefits to the state.

What Is Secularism?

Secularism is a term used in political philosophy which considers a line between man's religious as well as political affairs and focus on dealing with worldly affairs on naturalistic basis rather than involving religious in every aspect of life. Following are some of the broader definitions of secularism:

a. Reception of the term secularism is legitimate by its including an enormous number of people who are not skeptics, and joining them for activity which has secularism for its item, and not secularism. On this ground, and in light of the fact that by the reception of another term, an immense measure of hindrance from bias is disposed of, the utilization of the name Secularism is viewed as worthwhile. ¹

This definition clears a misconception of secularists being atheists as well and presents the subject matter of secularism.

b. Secularism is any development in the public eye guided away from supernatural quality to life on the planet. As a response to middle age propensity, secularism, at the hour of the Renaissance, displayed itself in the improvement of humanism, when individuals started to show more interest in human social accomplishments and the conceivable outcomes of their satisfaction in this world. ²

This definition of secularism reflects the history of its beginning and how religious matters affected human affairs and when people started working towards human developments and achievements, they understood the importance of distinguishing between both religious and worldly affairs and so the term "secularism" erupted.

c. In a supportive investigation of the term, Jeremy Rodell distinguishes three center standards of secularism: institutional partition, opportunity of conviction and no separation on grounds of religion. These circumstances consider 'contending ideas of easy street' to be sought after in the public arena. ³

All the above-mentioned definitions of secularism focuses on maintaining a moderation between both religious and political matter. It does not mean that a person cannot offer his religious duties. In fact, it actually means that one can have a freedom of belief and practice of his/her religious duties.

Islamic Perspective of Secularism

In Muslim World, the ideology of secularism has been a very controversial concept mainly because of its notion of separating state affairs entirely from religion. This is the reason that secularism is often perceived as an agenda persecuted by foreign powers to eliminate the basis of Islam and importance of religion. But this ideology is not true. Traces of state secularism can be seen in the early periods of Islam as well. Islamic values talked about moderation between religious as well as political affairs.

Secularism and Holy Quran

As per Mansoor Alam (who excuses "hard secularism" from thought as a strategy for Muslim legislatures), Quranic refrains that obviously and unambiguously" support opportunity of religion by relegating to the Prophet the occupation of "passing on the message of Allah" to humankind instead of forcing Islam on them; and that give every individual moral obligation "for his/her own demonstrations and deeds".⁴

Holy Quran clearly denies imposing religion rather it focuses on attracting people towards religion by showing them the example of morality and ethical values of Islam. Following are some of the verses of Holy Quran that enlighten the concept of secularism.

Allah Almighty says:⁵

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ

And those who have responded to their Lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend.

This verse of Holy Quran discusses an important yet fundamental quality of believers; that they handle their affairs with consultation. It means that it is prohibited in Islam for a single person to decide and implement orders on others irrespective of their choices and preferences. The ways of solving affairs without consultation is not only a method of ignorance but it also leads to the violation of rights of people as well as the violation of law prescribed by Allah Almighty.

When an individual tries to dominate his/her own choices on other peoples' choices, it means that he/she wants to usurp the rights of others by selfish means. It also means that the person considers himself/herself superior to others. Either way, it is not appreciated in Islam, that is why consultation is given great importance.

The principle of consultation as enshrined in amru-hum shura baina-hum by itself demands five things:⁶

1. The individuals whose privileges and interests connect with aggregate matters, ought to have full opportunity to offer their viewpoint and they ought to be kept appropriately educated regarding how their issues are being led.
2. The individual who is to be endowed with the obligation of leading the aggregate undertakings, ought to be named by individuals' assent.
3. The individuals who are named as counselors to the top of the state ought to be, for example, partake in the certainty of the country, and clearly individuals who win delegate positions by concealment or by consuming riches, or by rehearsing misrepresentation and extortion, or by deceiving individuals can't be viewed as partaking in the trust in the genuine sense.
4. The guides ought to offer viewpoint as indicated by their insight and confidence and heart and they ought to have full opportunity of such articulation of assessment.
5. The exhortation that is given by an agreement of the counselors, or which has the help of most individuals, ought to be acknowledged, for if an individual (or a gathering of people) acts freely and follows up on his own impulses, even subsequent to hearing the guidance of others, conference becomes unimportant. Allah doesn't say: They are counseled in their issues, however says: They lead their undertakings by shared meetings.

Kind of freedom of expression these above mentioned points talk about are valued and protected by the ideology of secularism. Secularism provides every one the right to express themselves within certain boundaries. It's all about drawing a fine line and knowing your limits of expression when it comes to religion and politics. It does not mean at all that anyone can pass blasphemous lines in the name of freedom of expression. Infact, the mere purpose of Islamic secularism or state secularism is to protect the sacred values of Religion from extremists and pro religion groups. It all comes down to the understanding and perceiving secularism in its true sense.

In another verse of Holy Quran, Allah Almighty says; ⁷

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۚ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۚ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ
فَقَدْ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Let there be no compulsion in religion, so as for the truth stands out clearly from falsehood. So whoever renounces false gods and believes in Allah has certainly grasped the firmest, unailing hand-hold. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

In another verse, Allah Almighty says, ⁸

فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا ۗ إِنَّ عَلَيْكَ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ

But if they turn away, we have not sent you 'O Prophet' as a keeper over them.

Both of these verses clearly state the tolerance towards religions and freedom of expression. It highlights the fact that Islam has always been the religion of peace and harmony. It is modern western agenda that has been trying to put

forward a false image of Islam in form of extremists and terrorist groups around the globe. On the other hand, if we study the concept of Islamic secularism or state secularism, it becomes clear that Islam teaches us religious tolerance and respects all the other religions.

Secularism in form of Religious Tolerance in light of Sunnah of Holy Prophet (PBUH).

Life of Holy Prophet (pbuh) is a source to follow in life. Holy Prophet pbuh guided believers about every aspect of life. Religious intolerance which has become an important concern of modern world has also been highlighted in the life of Holy Prophet pbuh.

It is narrated that:⁹

قيل يا رسول الله أي الإيمان أفضل؟ قال الصبر والسماحة، قيل فأَي المؤمنين أكمل إيماناً؟ قال أحسنهم خلقاً

It was said to the Prophet, “O Messenger of Allah, whose Islam is best?” The Prophet said, “The patient and tolerant.” It was said, “Which believers have the most complete faith?” The Prophet said, “Those with the best character.”

Best character does not involve assassinating characters of people belonging other religions and kill in the name of religion. It involves treating them in a righteous manner and show no discrimination based on someone's religion. These are the teaching of Holy Quran and Sunnah of Holy Prophet (pbuh) in its true spirits, not the ones showcased by western media to put Islamic values and cultures at the backend. We can see the same but multiple examples of social and religious tolerance in the era of righteous companions of Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

It is narrated in Tabari that:¹⁰

غن الطبري صالح عمر رضي الله عنه أهل إيلياء بالجابية وكتب لهم فيها الصلح لكل كورة كتابا واحدا ما خلا أهل إيلياء بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم هذا ما أعطى عبد الله عمر أمير المؤمنين أهل إيلياء من الأمان أعطاهم أماناً لأنفسهم وأموالهم ولكنائسهم وصلبانهم وسقيمتها وبريئتها وسائر ملتها أنه لا تسكن كنائسهم ولا تهدم ولا ينتقص منها ولا من حيزها ولا من صليبهم ولا من شيء من أموالهم ولا يكرهون على دينهم ولا يضار أحد منهم

Tabari detailed: Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be satisfied with him, wiped the slate clean with individuals of Jerusalem at Al-Jabiya and in that he composed a solitary pledge for each town other than Jerusalem: for the sake of Allah, the Charitable, the Kind. This is conceded of safety by the worker of Allah, Umar, the authority of the dedicated, to individuals of Jerusalem. He concedes them wellbeing for their lives, their property, their houses of worship, and their crosses, for their evil, their solid, and their whole local area. Their holy places won't be involved, crushed, or diminished in number. Their holy places and crosses won't be profaned and neither whatever else of their

property. They won't be forced to leave their religion and not a single one of them will be hurt.

Even though Hazrat Umar a.s was famous for his anger among Muslims and Non-Muslims, He was an example of Justice and equality among his people. His teachings about prevailing equality among masses be it Muslims or Non-Muslims is remarkable which can be proven in light of above mentioned narration of Ibn e Jareer. This religious tolerance is a great example of Islamic perception of secularism.

Passive and Assertive Secularism. Which one's acceptable in Islam?

Every single terminology a person goes through involves two sides and faces. One with extremism and the other with moderation. Same is the case with secularism. There are two major types of secularism; one which can be considered as an Islamic Secularism in fact in its true sense, it can be the only way towards a peaceful society. On the contrary, the other side of secularism which involves extremist behavior which ultimately ruptures the true image of Islam which preaches morality and harmony, justice and peace.

The US, France, and Turkey are mainstream expresses that miss the mark on true religion and have general sets of laws liberated from strict control. The French and Turkish states have restricted understudies' headscarves in government funded schools, while the U.S. has permitted understudies to wear strict images and clothing. In France and Turkey, the prevailing philosophy is "self-assured secularism," which plans to avoid religion from the open arena, while in the U.S., it is "detached secularism," which endures public perceivability of religion ¹¹.

It is very clear that the results of assertive feminism are not very much favorable for state affairs as well as people of any society. It results in sectarian division and anarchy among masses. It portrays an extremist behavior toward religions and since we know that maturity of the worlds' population believes in some sort of religions, this type of secularism leads to the destruction of a peaceful state system.

On the other hand, passive secularism gives a freedom of expression to the people of state yet draws a line between religious and political affairs. In this way, no one can use Religion card to start violation and everyone gets to follow their religious norms and values as well. This type of secularism is somehow compatible with the teachings of Holy Quran and Sunnah of Holy Prophet (pbuh).

Modern Muslim World and Secularism

Unfortunately, in the past two centuries, Muslim world has served as nothing but a collateral damage in both World Wars. As a result, roots of Muslims weakened and Western propaganda prevailed. Seeing Muslims in such vulnerable conditions gave chances to western powers and they used secularism as an agenda to devalue Islam and Muslims.

Ultimately it led to extremist terror groups led by Muslims. This act of some ignorant people created a violent atmosphere around the world specially in western countries and as a result, Islam was branded as a religion of terror.

History books, particularly by the Orientalists, as to introduce the image of the Muslims as holding the Qur'an in one hand and the sword in another, subsequently suggesting that any place the Muslims went, they gave just two decisions to the vanquished individuals: Islam or passing. In any case, more serious history specialists would challenge this misshaped image of Muslims. There is no rejecting that Muslims in Center East and Asia vanquished terrains of different people groups however they didn't force their religion over them. There is a reasonable differentiation, ever, between, "the development of Muslim state."¹²

If we somehow managed to look at the disposition of the Muslim rulers towards the minorities living subject to their authority during the nineteenth hundred years with the demeanor of the Europeans and the Americans towards their minorities, one might say that the record of the Muslims would be vastly improved" and "the development of Islam" as a religion.

On the issue of tolerance towards the minorities, Rodheric H Davison writes:¹³
" It could as a matter of fact have been contended that the Turks were less severe of their subject individuals than were Prussians of the Posts, the English of the Irish, or the Americans of the Negroes - There is proof to show that in this period {late nineteenth century}, there was resettlement from free Greece into the Ottoman Domain, since certain Greeks tracked down the Ottoman states more liberal expert (than their own Greek government).

CONCLUSION

In light of above mentioned arguments, it can be said that Passive secularism or state secularism can be compatible with Islam. In fact, it can be a major solution to all the blasphemous comments being passed by pro religious groups because secularism teaches us moderation and the practice of secularism on state level is all about knowing the value of religion and political affairs but both in their own places. No one should merge these two but it does not mean that the person cannot practice his/her religion. In fact, it's quite the opposite. People who support secularism know how to maintain their religious values and how to deal with state affairs at the same time. Secularism also protects minorities and thus maintains peace and harmony in the state. All of this can be obtained if and only if we understand the true meaning of secularism in light of Holy Quran and Sunnah of Holy Prophet (PBUH). Otherwise, no system can improve the state system in any way possible.

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