ISLAMIC POLITICAL SYSTEM IN THE MODERN AGE: THEORY AND PRACTICE

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The book under review is a serious and scholarly study of Islamic political concepts. It contains ten chapters. The first chapter, an introduction to the subject, discusses many important points relating to the research on Islamic Political System. It also surveys the literature on the Islamic subjects in the West and the Communist countries, and advises the researchers to be on guard while dealing with such literature. The author remarks that the works of Western Orientalists have been written with different motivations and a major part of the early contributions to the Oriental studies has come from the Christian missionaries who were interested in the propagation of Christianity in Asia and Africa. Hence much of this literature is "polemical and is directed to vilify Islam."

According to the author the researchers in the field of Islamics by Soviet Orientalists are directed to exert political pressure through an ideological assault on the neighbouring Muslim lands. They endeavour to persuade these peoples that Islam and Communism are not only compatible but in substance represent social upheavals of a similar nature.

The author draws the attention of those who try to understand the nature of Islamic political institutions in the past or to evolve new ones in the present age or in the future to a very significant and basic point. He says that in order to have a correct view of Islamic institutions, the basic religious philosophy of Islam should be clearly understood. He advises the researcher to make a distinction between the ideational foundation of the Islamic society and its formal super-structure. This in his opinion, would enable them to grasp the equation between the Islamic society at different stages of its evolution.

The author makes two basic points. Firstly, Islam is like a human body whose various systems are not quite independent, but are well integrated and connected with and influenced by one another. For instance, the circulatory system of a man is connected with and influenced by the digestive, respiratory and other systems of his body. Similarly, the social, economic or political systems of Islam are not quite independent of one another. Thus the Islamic political system has relations with the beliefs and the moral and economic systems of Islam, and it cannot be understood unless Islam is studied as a whole.

Secondly, Islam generally gives principles and laws which are eternal, immutable and in harmony with human nature, and advises Muslims to prepare their framework of life within the limits of these principles and laws.
The author directs the students of Islamic political thought not to look upon his subject matter in a vacuum, but to examine the ideas and institutions in relation with their environment and background, social realities and political situations as was done by the Muslims of the early period of Islam in particular, and of the later periods in general. They had evolved their institutions or borrowed some of them from other nations, keeping in view the fact that they should not be based on principles contrary to Islam.

The second chapter deals with key political concepts in the Qur'an. In this chapter an attempt is made to interpret Islamic political concepts and to reconstruct the classical and medieval notions of Muslim political theory for the modern age. In this chapter we come across some serious mistakes as well. For instance, the author says that in the vocabulary of modern Arabic, the term Dawlah is used for state, but we do not find any Qur'anic term for state. He remarks that "in the text of the Qur'an the term Dawlah occurs, but it is not used in the sense of the state, but rather it is used figuratively to mean wealth (although literally it means something which changes hands in the sense of commodity of exchange'). The author tries to justify the use of this Qur'anic term for state. So he says: "Perhaps it was in this figurative sense that the term came to be used for political authority, which does not remain in one hand". In this connection it will be interesting to note that the term Dawlah does not occur in the Qur'an. The word with which the author was confused is Dīlah which means "circulation" or "a circulating commodity". The verse and its translation in which the word Dīlah appears is as follows:

That which Allah giveth as Spoil unto this messenger from the people of towns, it is for Allah and the Messenger and for the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, that it becomes not a commodity Circulating (DULAH) between the rich among you. (59:7)

In the third chapter the author investigates the origin, development and theoretical implications of the concept of Ummah (Muslim community) which according to him constitutes one of the key political concepts of the Qur'an. In a later section he also surveys the efforts of the Modern Muslims thinkers to apply this concept in the peculiar circumstances of modern age. At the end he has tried to present a theoretical reconstruction of the concept of Ummah as the basic concept of a genuinely Islamic political theory. He concludes that Ummah was fundamentally a religious community based on a common faith in the oneness of Allah (God), Divine guidance through His Prophet Muhammad, and Divine Laws (Sharī'ah).

The fourth chapter deals with Sharī'ah in which the author discusses the four sources of Sharī'ah namely, the Qur'an, the Sunnah, Ijmā', and Qiyās.

The fifth chapter deals with Caliphate and Islamic theory of Government. The author examines the origin, development, and nature of historical Khilafah in the light of the Qur'ānic text, the Traditions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the juristic literature of Islam and the early historical works in order to reconstruct a rational political theory of Islam. He feels the need of this examination because, as he says, the Muslims have elaborated the theory of the Khilafah as a pivotal concept of Muslim political thought.
and because the leaders of the great political reform movements of the 18th and 19th centuries considered revitalization of the Khilâfah essential for the political resurgence of Islam in the modern age.

The sixth Chapter deals with \textit{Shûrâ, Ijtihâd and Ijmâ'} in the early Islamic State. According to the author, these terms are taken in the wider sense of procedures of decisions making within the framework of the \textit{Shûrâ} process in the early Islamic state. In this wider sense, the terms \textit{Ijtihâd} and \textit{Ijmâ'} cover the whole range of social, political, economic and legal activities.

The seventh chapter which is entitled 'The political system under the pious Caliphs' is a brief discussion of the period of early Caliphate. Among other things the author describes the structural as well as substantive changes through which the process of \textit{Shûrâ} with \textit{Ijtihâd} and \textit{Ijmâ'} and undergone during the period of early caliphates.

The eighth Chapter deals with the basis of political obligation in Islam. In this Chapter the author investigates the basis of political obligation to the \textit{Khalîfah}. He also examines as to under what circumstances the \textit{Ummah} has the right to revolt against a Muslim ruler. In this connection he studies the concepts of \textit{Baghâ} (Rebellion) \textit{fasâd} (corruption), and \textit{Fitnah} (Civil strife). At the same time he examines the term \textit{khurûj} (uprising) as a form of Jihad against unlawful exercise of political authority by the rulers.

The title of ninth and the last Chapter is "The integration of the Muslim World, Problems and Prospects". In this chapter the author states at the every outset that the haphazard and the hasty attempts to bring about the political integration of the Muslim world either on federal or associative or unitary or diplomatic basis are destined to fail. In his opinion, the groundwork for achieving this objective has to be prepared by promoting inter-state cooperation within the Muslim world in the economic and social spheres. Problems and Prospects." In this chapter the author states at the very outset that the haphazard and the hasty attempts to bring about the political integration of the Muslim world either on federal or associative or unitary or diplomatic basis are destined to fail. In his opinion, the groundwork for achieving this objective has to be prepared by promoting inter-state cooperation within the Muslim world in the economic and social spheres.

It is evident from the above discussion that the book under review deals neither with the Islamic political system in any country in the past or in the present, nor does it suggest such a system for the modern age. It mainly deals with the Islamic political concepts. Therefore, the name of the book is not in harmony with its contents. It would be appropriate to name it as 'Islamic Political Concepts'.

The author however, emphasizes the need of evolving Islamic political system for the modern age. But the procedure that he suggests for this purpose is ambiguous and rather misleading. His statements in this regard create the impression that the author does not believe in the superiority of Islamic political system over the modern democratic one, and that he is doubtful about the practibility of Islamic political system in the modern age, and, therefore, he advocates that the Islamic political concepts should be re-interpreted and the Islamic political institutions be moulded in such a way that they become
coherent with the modern democratic framework. To illustrate this point two statements from different pages of the book are quoted here.

"Besides these early sources, there are available a good many original treatises of medieval Muslim writers of law, politics, and history. These works should be re-examined in accordance with the principles of modern political science. This would facilitate the urgent task of re-interpretation of medieval Muslim political theories and institutions according to the requirements of modern times (P-4)."

"The need of the present day is that the Islamic Community should once again galvanize its intellectual potentialities in an organized manner with a view to restore the process of Shura, Ijihad and Ijma' within the framework of modern democratic government."

The book which consists of 358 pages is nicely produced. There are, however, some errors of proof-reading; for instance on page 10, line 13 the word evolution is printed as evolution. The price of the book is Rs. 160/- which seems to be rather high for Pakistani reader. A less expensive edition should also be published so that the book may be accessible to the general readers of our country.

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