

# A NOTE ON MUQADDIMAH IBN KHALDUN

A Paganish Philosophy of History.

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The pivotal point in introducing the Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of history is the miraculous part played by "Group Feeling", Ibn Khaldun's "Muqaddimah" was certainly a great work not of its own times only. It was a great achievement in the field of philosophy for all times to come. Yet it is also true that similar esteemed jobs have been done by thinkers of different ages. We cannot believe a certain theory to be true just because it was most imaginative, nicely treated, beautifully presented or that it came from one of our own clan. We as Muslims would only believe that truth lies in whatever has been revealed to us by God Almighty and explained and presented by the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) or whatever can achieve testimony of these two sources.

We believe that in his "Muqaddimah" Ibn Khaldun has not truly characterized the meanings of "عصبيته" group feeling, whereas the Holy Quran has distinctly spoken about it. The Quran says that the prime most hurdle in the path of those who have been presented the "Call" (دعوة) to prostrate to the One Almighty and believe in the authority of the Prophet (peace be upon him), is العصبية الجاهلية a group feeling based upon untrue and unhealthy norms. Thus the very idea of group feeling has been stated to have more than one connotation. A group feeling which leads to the right

path is the only desired one. This type of group feeling can also be named as (حمية) (Hamiyyah) a term that connotes much higher values.

The group feeling Ibn Khaldun has spoken of, is based "on lineage or place and culminates in the establishment of royal authority". Now we as Muslims know that those group feelings which generate the ideas of آباء پرستی (worship of kinship) are the abominable one. Again, a group feeling that persuades a man to stick to the culture and ideology of his own tribe or sect (be it right or wrong) is the greatest hinderance in the evolution of moral values. No change in the ideology of a people can take place if they are not willing to change their cultural pattern.

Thus it is evident that عصبية "Asabiyyah" should have been dealt with by Ibn Khaldun, just as it has been treated by the Quran. By ignoring the real significance of Quranic concept Ibn Khaldun made certain other misjudgements as well He talks of religion as a dynamic force that makes the group powerful. In fact Ibn Khaldun should have talked of Ideology and not Religion. He should have talked of Faith as the basic dynamic force Yet another and the basic fact that Ibn Khaldun ignores in the character of religion to nullify all the prevelant groups and evolve a unique group of its own.

Ibn Khaldun talks of "enthusiasm" as "when the enthusiasm dies" but he cannot pin point the root cause of its death. It is not, so to say "reliance on others, urbanization, getting accustomed to easy and luxurious life, gaining control over substantial amounts of wealth" etc as enumerated by Ibn Khaldun. It is none of these, yet it is all of them at the same time. In fact it is the idea of supreme value that matters. It is the goal that counts. If you have before you a goal which you achieve, you will definitely feel pleased after achieving it. This can be observed in so far as worldly affairs are concerned. But if the goal is a higher one, one that is constantly going under the process of an evolution, you will never be able to get it not to talk of

getting the pleasure of satisfaction. You will illuminate your abilities, broaden your horizons and zealously make the best use of your qualities to get nearer to your goal, thereby never leaving your enthusiasm to weaken; never of course permitting it to die.<sup>188</sup>

یہ کائنات ابھی ناتمام ہے شاید  
کہ آرمی ہے دمام صدائے کن  
فیکوں<sup>189</sup>

This universe is perhaps still not complete for every moment, Things are being ordered to 'become' and they are 'becoming'.

زشرر ستاره جویم ، زستاره  
آفتابے  
ہر منزله ندارم کہ بمیرم از  
قرارے<sup>190</sup>

I leave the spark for a star and from the star I pass on to the sun. I have no destination before me to stay at for if I stay, I die.

It is here that we see the most tragic scene of our past and we come to know how *عصبیة جاهلیة* has ruined us. How the group feeling caused damage to the glorious state of Islam and how the luxuries of life weakened the structure of values actually within a very short span of time, the goals were changed. Materialism took charge from spiritualism. Worldly concerns

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<sup>188</sup> Bal-i-Jibreel/Kulliyat-i-Iqbal, p. 28/320.

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<sup>190</sup> Payam-i-Mashriq/Kulliyat-i-Iqbal, p. 127/297.

overruled higher values and the result is evident. In the words of Ibn Khaldun:

"Excessive sedentary culture and the consequent luxury brings about corruption, decay and finally destruction. This is the lesson of History".

The rise of the first Islamic regime was not based upon **عصبية** جاهلية. It was based on Religion, an ideology nay on a faith and faith alone. The norm prescribed by Ibn Khaldun "Nobility and prestige are the results of personal qualities" did nothing to do with our 'faith'. The decay started when a tribe who had a very strong group feeling, accepted Islam as its religion at a time when there was no alternative left. Chieftain of this tribe could not get sufficient training from the great source of inspiration,) **معلم** **عصبية** اخلاق (peace be upon him). When their real and the most abominable **عصبية** جاهلية unveiled itself, not long after the death of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), the great catastrophe started taking place. Now there was no more faith, no more ideology-Whatever was left was the ancient paraphernalia of tyranny, injustice and pleasure seeking.

The rival groups became a prey to another. This was the outcome of such a group feeling, i.e. superiority of the clan and kinship. They forgot what the Prophet (peace be upon him) had stressed upon while educating his beloved daughter. They forgot what the Prophet (peace he upon him) had announced at the time of **حجة الوداع** the last pilgrimage **ان اكرمكم عند الله** **اتقاكم** (verily most respected amongst you is he who is the most God fearing). By adopting royal sur-names and royal trappings, Abbasids could not strengthen their dynasty. They weakened their faith and became extinct.

We have got to believe in one of the two things: either we say that *حمية اسلامية* does not and did not need any other feeling for its growth - or - we say that the emergence of an Islamic state was the outcome of a group feeling of Arabs "the tough and courageous Bedouin group" that joined hands in realizing the goal of "Royal Authority".

But how can we choose the second alternative? would not the edifice of Islam tumble down as we dynamite its foundations? Ibn Khaldun just ignores that the emergence of Islamic civilization took place under the flag of faith. It was based upon annihilation of all types of group feelings. Had this not been the fact, that the strong feelings of kinship and lineage could not be demolished. Only once the Arabs had done so and the result was that new vistas opened upon them and in the real sense of the phrase. They took a great leap and turned into *ضمير کن فکان* (The conscience of being).

In general we can say that the standards laid down by Ibn Khaldun in his *Muqaddimah* are true as far as the pagan world is concerned. But things have occurred otherwise too. For Muslims it has been mainly due to the dynamism of Islamic faith. Ibn Khaldun holds that the expansion and power of a dynasty corresponds to the numerical strength of those who obtained superiority in the beginning. Nevertheless with Muslims it was not (and it should not be) a matter of gaining superiority over others. Islam holds *انما المؤمنون اخوة* (verily the believers of faith are brothers to each others). All of them are equal. They have equal rights and duties, hence are to be treated equally.

تو راز کن فکان ہے اپنی آنکھوں پر

عیساں ہوجا  
خودی کا راز داں ہو جا خدا کا  
ترجماں ہوجا  
غبارہ آلودہ رنگ و نسب ہیں بال و  
پیر تیسرے  
تو امے مرغ حرم اڑنے سے پہلے پر  
فشاں ہوجا<sup>191</sup>

You are the secret of being. Disclose yourself to your eyes.

Know the secrets of your self and become a spokesman of God.

O'thee fowl of Haram! Dispose off from your feathers the filthy.

(group feelings) of colour & lineage, before taking your flight.

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) treated all his followers equally.

Bilal-e-Habshi رضی اللہ عنہ was one of the most beloved. Salman-e-Farasi

رضی اللہ عنہ was one of the most honoured. Thus the number of those who

obtained superiority in the beginning did not matter. Those who were few, expanded into many without gaining superiority over each other. So much so

that at the time of فتح مکہ Fath-e-Makkah, no material lust was at work. The

renowned saying of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) goes ازہبوا فانتم

<sup>191</sup> Bane-i-Dara/Kalliyatd-Iqbal, 273473.

الطلاق (Go — for all of you are free!); the superiority gained was only the moral and spiritual one. Blood shedding was not the purpose, show of ruthless force was not the aim.

But alas ! in the course of time the real sense of faith disappeared. Once again the tribes of Arab started playing their satanic game of al-asabiyya. Their group feelings reappeared and they started thinking of gaining superiority over other groups. So much so that for the expansion of their regimes, they even refrained from converting the pagans into Muslims—fearing that, the amount of *جزية* Jizya would decrease. And perhaps there lurked also a feeling that without non-Muslim subjects, the heady pleasure of superiority might vanish.

We are very proud of Mughal dynasty and we own it as if it were a direct descendent of our magnificent early caliphate. Could not we see that not even an iota of effort was made by the emperor for the spread of Islamic faith ? They did not increase the number of Muslims. They could not read the writings on the wall. The non-believers in Indian sub-continent were several times more than the believers. Neither Moghals nor their predecessors, the Lodhies, ever tried to take any lesson from the destructions of the Muslim Society in Spain.

Another principle laid down by Ibn Khaldun connotes that it is easy to establish a dynasty in lands which are free from group feelings. Islam has proved to be the greatest exception to this rule. When we speak of the primitive Arab, the first and fore most thing that comes to our mind is "their tribes" and their tribal scuffles". But Islam spread inspite of most difficult conditions. This could happen only because in Islam group feelings were condemned most vehemently. No Superiority for the 'Arabi' over the 'Ajami' and vice-versa except on account of purity and virtue. No "Qureshi" could be treated as more important than a 'Habashi' only for being a Qureshi. The poor and the needy and also the disabled were shown respect. The Quranic

Sarah **عيس و تولى ان جاعه الاعمى** stands as a minaret of light in the bewildering darkness of racial group feelings.

**عيس و تولى .. ان جاء ه الاعمى- وما يدريك لغله يزكى او يذكر  
فتنفغه الذكرى**

"(The Prophet) frowned and turned away. Because there came to him the behind man (interrupting). But what could tell thee — But that perchance he might grow (in spiritual understanding)? Or that he might receive—Admonition and the teaching might profit him".

Tribal and personal pride was turned into the honour of the Muslim Ummah.

We can, therefore, rightly hold that Islamic Philosophy of History is not simply to derive some conclusions out of the lives of those tribes and clans who could not rise to the sublime heights of morals. Islam on the other hand, demands a radical change and on account of this the very first principle of the history in common stands defeated. A new magnificent edifice has been constructed by Islam on the ruins of group feelings.

After giving a brief account of the -early caliphate in Islam

(**خلافت راشدہ**) Ibn Khaldun goes forward to say:

"Soon the desert attitude of the Arabs and their simple living approached its end. Royal Authority — which is the necessary consequence of group feeling showed itself and with it came its struggle for superiority and thus the use of force."

Thus it seems that according to Ibn Khaldun, Faith did not carry substantial weight in the advancement of Islam. It is strange that Ibn Khaldun, knowing the real meaning and significance of Caliphate **نيابت الهيمه** (becoming representative of God/the vicegerent of God) makes a false statement that "Islam does not censure royal authority as such". We have



already pointed out earlier that a change in the cultural pattern of a people entails a change in their ideology. Islam therefore, creating its own standards in respect of all aspects of life suggested (and of course it was beautifully exemplified) its own form of Government. This form of government had got nothing to do with the group feeling of jahiliyya. The so-called caliphs (except for Khilafat-e-Rashida خلافت راشدہ closed their ears to the God Almighty's call: افحکم الجاهلیہ بیغون الماءہ) (Are they after the jahiliyya order!

Muslims emperors one after the other, went on switching over to Jahiliyya in almost all modes of their lives. It was not a gradual change as stated by Ibn Khaldun. Rather it was an abrupt change and we hold this view-point because of the following:

(a) Islam has put forth clear-cut ideas and the believers are required to show a clear and distinct attitude towards the good and evil Not to mention a form of Government; Islam condemns even assuming the looks of non-Muslims.

(b) Islam has vehemently condemned the act of killing people without moral justification. (قتل مسلم) Qatl-e-Muslim is one of those sins for which there is no chance of forgiveness, Yet we can see that the so-called caliphs did not hesitate in killing of their Muslim brothers just to ensure the stability of their royal authority.

(c) After the death of the fourth Caliph, tyranny, brutality, injustice, lust for worldly wealth, pleasure seeking and what not prevailed in the entire Muslim World. Even the change brought about by the Omer-e-Sani i.e. Omer Ibn Abdul Aziz رضى الله عنه could not live long.

A common Muslim has always had a strong love and devotion for the Sufis صوفیاء Reason being that the early ones of them could not persuade themselves to accept the drastic changes in the life pattern of the ruling class.

They had their own genuine reasons in not accepting the royal dynasties and not becoming a tool in the hands of emperors.

Now if Islam has reached us nearer to truth in letter and spirit, it is through the Sufis and not through the so-called caliphs. One must confess that "Royal Authority has no relation with the spirit of Islam. Any group feeling that kills the spirit of faith within us, is not acceptable to we Muslims.

While presenting the principles of Sociology, Ibn Khaldun does not speak much about higher values. He talks of "what ever is" and not of what should be". Although being a Muslim him-self, Ibn Khaldun does not explain the Islamic principles of Sociology and History.

Ibn Khaldun's history is that of the "creatures of history" and not of the "makers of history". He says that all what took place during the early days of Islam, was nothing less than a "miracle". But he forgets that if were men and not angels who turned the tides of history.

The early Muslims **السابقون الاولون** were the makers of history, They did not accept uncritical the age-old fashions and patterns. These magnificent people rejected all types of "group feelings" and on the strength of their faith, they made possible the realization of supreme values. For them their own values were only Utopia". They accepted the challenge of time and chime **ستيز زمانه تو با زمانه**. They marched forward to attain their own "Destiny" **تقدير**. A change in the value structure was then the pressing need of mankind.

We conclude by quoting Karl R. popper (The open Society and its Enemies)

"There can be no history of the past as it actually did happen; there can only be historical interpretations and none of them final ; and every generation has a right to frame its own".

Nevertheless while making historical interpretations, we must not forget the basic principles of Islam. The past as it actually transpired during the life of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Khulafa-e-Rashedin is **خلفاء راشدين** in fact contradictory to the past as it appeared otherwise. We must not therefore, try to apply the commonly, sought interpretation to Islam. Hence a paganish philosophy of history has got nothing to do with our faith. The basic principle for the formulation of an Islamic Society **امة مسلمة** is not the group feeling of Jahiliyya. The principle laid down in the Holy Quran is beautifully summed up in the following 'Surah' AI-Asr:

والعصبر ان الانسان لسفى خسر  
- الا الذين آمنو  
و عملو الصلحت و تواصو بالحق  
و تواصو بالصبر

"By (the token of) Time (through the Ages) Verily Man is in loss, Except such as have Faith and do righteous deeds, and (join together) in the mutual teaching of truth and of patience and constancy."

Time is always in favour of those who unite themselves (to make an Ummah) on the basis of Truth. Patience and Constancy. This is the basic principle of Islam. A complete philosophy of history (interpretation, course of action and prophecy—past, present and future) has been summed up in this single unique paragraph.