



The West and the Status of Religion in the West

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ABSTRACT

Religion is the only thing which develops human's personality, doings and sayings. Religion impresses the thinking and becomes the source of doings. Nothing has any comparison with the role of religion on human character building. Religion controls every aspect of life including social issues, trading, mutual behaviors, and customs infect every blend. Religion is the only thing which tells before and after the life, even questions which cannot be answered by human brain like where a man lives before the arrival in this world. Where will be going after death and will he be consumed in soil or will there be any new life. If anyone penetrates physically then thinking will be found. These are the religions which provided us the answers. The western considered that their religion was superior as compare to all other religions. They thought that only their religion was true and other all were false. Only their religion had the spiritual value that was not found in any other religion.



Introduction

1. Literal Meanings of West

The word of "Maghrib" is taken from the word "*Gharabah*". In the Arabic language, it is called: Ism *ẓarf-e-Makān*. (*Maqām-e-Gharūb*, *dūbnē ki Jaga*). In the common meaning, it is the place or direction of westing the sun. *Maghrib*, *Al-maghrib*: *ẓarf-e-Makān wa Zamān*, Mufrid; The place of west, direction of Maghrib. Its plural is *maghārib*. That is called: *Jama 'al-Gharbayn*, *ẓarf-e-makān*, (*Tathniyah*). The two points of westing; one point the winter and other point is the summer.¹

In the *Al-Munjad*, the word "*Gharabah*" is used for "prdys". The meanings of "*Gharīb*" in far from the home, stranger, enemy or contradictor. In Arabic, the word of "*Ghurāb*" is used for the crow. The crow has two signs as flown and color, is also the sign of darkness.²

1.2. West Highlight the Direction

In *Al-Mughnī*, the word west is used for the direction of west:

من جهة السياسية في مقابل المشرق المغرب الى المغرب من الغربا، غرب،³

As it is in the Oxford Dictionary that this is not far any special place but it is used for the direction of the west:

"West meant highland areas, later it was spoken for America."⁴

If we talk about the direction, then this word is used at many places in the Holy Qur'ān in the same meanings. e.g.:

"رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ وَرَبُّ الْمَغْرِبَيْنِ"⁵

"[He is] Lord of the sunrises and Lord of the two sunsets"

According to Arnold:

"The west is the area that is consist of the society of the Catholic and Protestant Christians. In other words the west is the Ireland of the Papa's spiritual authority".⁶

In 1395 A. D, after the division of the Roman state in East and west, "the word west is mostly used for the western parts of the Europe."⁷

1.3. West in Dictionaries

In Oxford Dictionary, the word west is written as *Bilād al-Maghrib* and it is used for Europe and America. Where the western civilization is called "*Al-Ḥaḍārat-ul-gharabiyah*"⁸

And in the Webster that in the middle of the 20th century, after the regular beginning of communism in the Europe, the word East was used for communist countries and the western block was used for the non-communist countries.⁹

It is also mentioned in *Al-Munjid* that the word west is used for the north-western countries of Africa in Arabic language. The country especially named *Al-Maghrib* now is called Morocco.¹⁰

Beside this, the west is also used in this way: "By the term "the west", I mean of course the complex political, cultural and religious entity of western Europe of the day."¹¹

2. Geographical Boundaries/ Division of the West

The west is also divided geographically. In English language "the west" is used for Al-Maghrib and it is spoken as the geographically sense. It is spoken for the western side countries of Asia and Turkey "The countries lying west of Asia and Turkey."¹² Besides the boundary of the east boundaries, there is no contradiction in the other boundaries of the west. According to some writers, its east boundaries are attached to the mediterranean. As writer says:

"The Arabic writers used this name for the area of Africa as Berbestan or Africa-e-kochik and the areas consisted of Tripoli, Tunisia, Al-Geria and Morocco. There is contradiction on its division in the east boundaries. And there is no contradiction in the other boundaries. To the North, the boundary of west is attached to the Baḥr al-Rūm. In the west side it is scattered to Baḥr-e-Muḥīt. In the south, it is vast to the dynamic desert. Some people consider its east boundaries to the oceanic and Egypt is considered in its boundary."¹³

It is also said that the countries on which the west is consists of all are situated in the North of the Baḥr al-Rūm. Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal and small countries attached to them and also the island of British are included in the west.

In the Bhr-e-Rōm, in the south of the Sicily cape sorhilwa and in the middle of the cape town of the Tunis about 100 miles (160km) breath becomes the water valley. Because of this, naturally its division is made between the east and west seas. The countries, situated on the east bank of Baḥr al-Rūm are called the east Europe and the countries situated on the west bank of the Baḥr al-Rūm are called the west Europe or only the West.¹⁴

Besides this division, it is called that it is situated in the North Africa that is scattered to the west seashores. As like:

"The West; a greatest state is situated in the North Africa which is in the western direction of Arabic world. It is scattered to the west seashores covering the posts of the Italy. In the north it is to the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. If we see its internal areas, besides the snowy areas, there are greened pains that are scattered to a vast desert in the east side."¹⁵

2.1. West before Christianity

Before Christianity, the Roman Empire was divided in the east and west regions according to its political and administrative needs. These regions were called the east kingship and the west kingship. And when Christianity came here then these regions were divided in the east Christianity and the west Christianity. After the Western Roman Empire, the west was divided in the different independent states.¹⁶

2.2. West in Present Era

In the modern age, all the European countries as the British, Italy, France, Portugal, Spain, Germany and America etc are named the west. In all these countries, the Christianity is common, so the countries having Christian religion are called the west. The west is not unique as geographically but it has its own cultural identity and ideological base. Because of this, the west has its different identity. As J Ronald L. say:

“The word west from a geographical label to a cultural and ideological one.”¹⁷

In the present era, the west has become a thought and an idea. The word east is spoken in the opposite of it. It is an especial way of thinking that is beyond the divine teachings. Syed Muḥammad Salīm writes:

“In the Europe, the Christianity that became popular as the name of Roman Catholic, in fact it is Palusi addition. Pop Paul brought many changes in the Christianity. He included some parts of the Greek and Roman’s believes in it. So that, the common people accept it easily. It was the strange combination of the truthfulness and the falsehood that was prepared by the Pop Paul. In the ideological and practical lives of the western, the teachings of Christianity have the secondary importance. And the denied thoughts of the Greek and the Roman have primary importance.”¹⁸

The western’s thoughts reflect the concept of materialistic and their central point of conversation is materialistic. It is a continuous concept and its roots are attached to the Greek and the Roman’s thoughts and culture.

Syed Abū al-Ḥassan ‘Alī Nadavī says:

“The Western’s thoughts went to the complete and vast materialistic. The materialistic dominated on the thinking, views, psychology minds, moral and collectiveness, knowledge and literature, government and politics. In short, it dominated on the every field of life. The scholars of philosophy and physics started to observe and discuss the universe as there is no any creator, administrator and the ruler of the universe. Except the physics and material, there is no any other power that control and administrates the universe.”¹⁹

3. The Status of Religion in the West

3.1. Importance of Religion

The importance of religion cannot be ignored in any period. Everyone’s religion is important for him. Though anyone who doesn’t keep faith on any religion even that he has one religion, it might be. Religion guides us the way of living and dealings with other religions. Religion can produce peace in the whole world and religion is the only thing which may cause wars at a huge level. In all the grand wars, religion surpasses the geographical and social contradictions. Huns Kung writes:

"Peace is not possible in the world until the peace among the religions."²⁰

3.2. Religion and Human Beings

The religion is the human's natural and essential need and it's proving is that it is a common factor among every nation and generation. Without it, the human life is incomplete. So, it is clear that religion and human are essential to each other. As the saying of God is:

"فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا"²¹

"So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth.[Adhere to] the fitrah of Allah upon which He has created [all] people."

3.3. West and Religion

If we study the human history, every man has the relation with the religion in any reference. The religions which are present in the world have the truthfulness to some extent. It is possible that the clear picture of the religion may be spoiled with the passage of time. If we analyze the western world, they seem to attach to the religion by some references, but this religions attachment sometime became strong and sometime weak. In medieval time, the Europe was suffering in the sin, poverty, illiteracy, dirty, and barbarism. When Islām spread to the Europe, it brought a bright culture, a highly object of life, the abundance of knowledge and the beautiful system of morals. So Europe highly impressed by Islām.²²

3.4. Role of Church

From the middle of the 8th century, the western politics was in the hand of the Church. After this, the church occupied on the western society, they presented the church's values as the social values and used them as their church's purposes. The empires or states began to established and destroyed for the pleasure of the church.²³

The Germans not only accepted the ways of ruling, rules of politics and the state administrations but as the result of the church's efforts, they also adopted the Roman Catholic religion. After being the Christians, the Catholic Church confessed them the western citizens and became them the member of the Christian common wealth.²⁴

3.5. Pope as Ruling Power

There was no any king in the west. The ruling power of the Byzantine king was a formality. The institutions of law the senate of the Roman period was destroyed by the victors of the Germany. Then the all ruling power was in the hand of the ruler. All rulers of the western states were Christians and considered the Europe as their spiritual ruler. The Pope had his own senate Curia. The churches were in everywhere. The clergy of every church has the strong relation to the common people. Being the head of the religion, the Pop had the authority over the king.²⁵

In the Constantinople, built a big church of Saint Ayaşofya and a school was also established to the education of the philosophy of Christianity and the Bible.²⁶

In the 10th and 11th century, the Pops tried to increase their power in the name of the Crusade wars. But due the continuous failure of the Crusade wars, the European people began to fed up from the clergy ship.²⁷

In such conditions, the importance of the Pops declined and the conscious power of the people began to increase. As the result of these conditions, some people became the bright minded not only among the common people but also among the clergies and the religious leaders. Due to such reasons, during the period of 1200-1500, many religious and worldly movements were started on the land of Europe. The main point of such movements was to get rid from the ruling power of the clergies and to protest against the looting of feudal lords. The narrow heartiness, narrow mindedness, demand of grandeur, wish for ruling and love for wealth in the clergy system of the greatest Pop had fed up the Byzantine clergy system in the Constantinople.²⁸

3.6. Christianity and Philosophy

Before the renaissance of Europe, the distorted Christianity and the Greek philosophy have basic importance in the practical system of the society. These two factors combined with the old state system of the Europe were the causes of the political, social and cultural destruction of human beings. The traditional Pop ship and the destructive Greek philosophy were unable to play any role to establish the new foundations of the society. In this way, the human being was suffering in the cruelty. In short, the religion and philosophy were not playing any role for the human demands.²⁹

The western think that only Roman Catholic was the safe religion that secreted the spirit and this greatness was not found in any other church. Beyond the west, the people were uncivilized and uncultured and they had no any respectable value.³⁰

In the west, on the base of Christianity a religion was introduced that was consisting of the beliefs among the western. This religion was not having any relation to the teachings and character of Prophet 'Esā (A.S). From the deep study of the Paul's letters, this concept is not rejected but it is believable.³¹

After renaissance, the views of the western began to change and national views developed. The national states and the national churches were built. Old concept of inter Christian began to end. Due to these views, in the middle age, the west was named as the Christian democratic west and the Holy Roman Empire.³²

And also these are the reasons that the initial law of the west is called the Christian law.³³

3.7. History of Christianity

The history of the Christianity is divided into three periods. The 1st period consists of the old Christianity. It belongs to 1st eight century. In this period, the Christianity stated from the Jerusalem. It was called the state religion in the Rome. After the Roman decline, the teachings of Christianity were continuous and it became popular in the

new states of the Europe. The 2nd period is called the middle period that was continuing for about seven hundred years from 9th century to 16th century. In this period the importance of the Roman church was confessed in the whole Europe. The Christian states of the Europe were considered to be obedient of the Roman Pope. The 3rd period is the present era. It is started from the 16th century and is continuing. In this period, many movement to reform the religion became popular and such movements were also started to limited the Christianity to man and called the religion a personal matter.³⁴

3.8. Scientific Development and West

In the 16th century, Due to scientific development, the west began to judge the religion on the bases of wisdom.

“The rebirth of scientific spirit in the 16th century was widely felt to be a challenge to the church. That spirit witnessed the emergence of rationalism in philosophy as the dominant trend in European thought.”³⁵

If we talk about the past of the Europe, the Europeans were rationalistic in thoughts and astray from the religion in the middle age. Before very long, the Christianity had deprived of its genuine teachings and in its place which was called divine religion, which was the collection of non-wisdom superstitions and some non-natural performances. Besides these superstitions, every new concept was thought the disbelief.³⁶

The abundance of wealth made them lustful, characterless and astray from the religion. It is confessed that the west has done great work in the parts of universe and discovering the great powers of nature to use them for the serving of mankind. Its carriages have reached to the moon. But on the other hand, by the shielding, sexual freedom and astray from the religion it has dropped the man in the bottom of restless hell.³⁷

By involving in the animalism, the Europe started to consider it a development and progress but vitiation was not spread in all fields of the west. There are also some merits to some extent. There are the merits as like action, production, believe in the hard work and the long struggle. So these characteristics are not included in the moral vitiation and animalism.³⁸

3.9. Religious Institutions and West

In the west, the people are also following the religion to some extent. “If we visit the Europe, we see churches and temples at every step. Here and there some religious institutions and the Bible societies are seen. In fact, on which vast scales these institutions and centers are working with sacrifice, sincerity, simplicity, and excitement, the east can learn many lessons from them. In the churches, besides the

timing of the prayers, we see such men and women who are doing meditate in one corner silently.³⁹

The west has pluralism as Farām says:

“In short, in the modern age, the other important thing is religious pluralism or multiple religions and west is forwarding to it. The modern age is proved as the astray from religion. In west, the authoritative of Christianity proved harmful for own self. It itself give great response. These believes did not proved by wisdom and not the western got any spiritual benefits. The intransigence of clergies became the danger for themselves.”⁴⁰

4. Conclusion

As the religious reference, the west was in messy condition. Non-Justice and cruelty were very common and the religious references were used to secret the non-moral crimes. But when the Muslims came to the land of Europe, they affected it deeply. The Christians learnt knowledge and art. In this way the knowledge, art and scientific knowledge developed in Europe. This thing was not pleased the religious leaders and clergies. Mostly people were punished and buried alive. So because of these reasons, there was a great noise in the Europe. The people began to hate clergies and awakening period started here. The religion was got off from every place. Observation and the experiments became the resources of the knowledge. Deny from unseen thing was the proof of bright minded. The personal profit was thought the standard of the moral. The belief of life and death was considered the false. In the legislation, the divine and moral restrictions were considered the Christianity and restriction based on the foolishness. In this way, the whole life was become non-religious and materialistic. The western countries were not so civilized and developed as they are now. The western civilization in only five hundred years is old. In the Europe the period before these 500 years is remember as the Dark Age. The meaning of Dark Age is that there was no light of culture, civilization, knowledge and art.



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