

the man who is dearest to God on the Day of Judgment is the just Imām [leader, king]. Whoever obeys the amīr [commander], obeys you and whoever rebels against him rebels against you." Also other proofs established by reason and report. The learned have given a decision that the status of a just king is greater before God than the status of an interpreter of the Law (mujtahid) and that the Sultan of Islam, the asylum of the people, the Commander of the Faithful, the shadow of God over mankind, Abū'l Fath Jalāl ud-dīn Muhammad Akbar Pādshāh Ghāzī (whose kingdom God perpetuate!) is a most just, most wise king and one most informed of God.

Accordingly if a religious problem arises regarding which there are differences among the interpreters of the Law, and if His Majesty with his penetrating understanding and clear wisdom chooses one side with a view to facilitating the livelihood of mankind and the good order of the world's affairs and gives the decision to that side, that shall be agreed upon and it shall be necessary and obligatory for everyone of all sorts and conditions to follow it. Furthermore, if, in accordance with his own just opinion, he should promulgate a decision which is not opposed to the [clear] text of the Qur'ān and the Traditions and would be for the convenience of mankind, it is necessary and obligatory for everyone to act upon it and opposition to it shall be a cause of hardship in the next world and of detriment in both religious and worldly affairs.

This sincere written statement, for the sake of God and the promulgation of the duties of Islam, is signed as a declaration of the scholars of religion and of the holy lawyers. (Done in the month of Rajab 987 after Hijra [August-September, 1579])

## CHAPTER XVIII

*THE IDEAL SOCIAL ORDER*

Writing in medieval India on the ideal Muslim social order, as on other aspects of the Islamic revelation, was confined to those educated in Muslim religious sciences. Therefore its approach is academic and doctrinaire. This is no crisis-literature; it does not offer practical answers to contemporary social problems, but rather repeats ideas which entered Hindustan from the outside Muslim world. Any correspondence between the ideal categories of Muslim "social" thought and the actualities of the Indian scene is attributable more to the general similarity of the economic order and class structure of Asian society in the pre-industrial age, whether in Hindustan, Persia, or Iraq, than to actual observation of society in India.

The ideal Muslim social order is essentially a religious order. Society is not a venue for individual self-realization, a contrivance for the satisfaction of human wants; the only kind of human happiness which it should make possible is the happiness which comes from obedience to God. Since obedience to God meant obedience to a revealed Holy Law, the Shari'a, Muslim social ideals envisage a conservative order in which repetition and submission are reckoned more worthy than innovation and enterprise. The good society was the old society—that which existed during the lifetime of the Prophet. The modern American hopes and intends change to be for the better; the medieval Muslim believed it to be for the worse.

As has been seen, for the Muslim, earthly society should be so ordered as to make possible the godly life and the welfare of the students of the godly life, the ulamā and the mystics. Harmony is the keyword; man should be in harmony with God, nature, and his fellows. If he is not in harmony with his fellows, his attention will be diverted from God, for then he will be intent upon self-preservation. But harmony depends upon being in his proper place and a man's proper place is that for which his nature fits him. The ultimate whole within which each individual finds his place is not economic, although economic activity is essential to

the welfare of that whole. The ultimate whole is Islamic—the Muslim community defending itself successfully against attack from outside, devoting itself to the practice of the True Faith, and providing itself with a livelihood sufficient both to bear the cost of its own defense and to keep its members alive and active in the service of God.

In India (following pre-Muslim Iranian tradition) society is seen as four main classes—men of the pen, men of the sword, men of business, and men of the soil. The first are guardians of religion and learning, the second are the guardians of those guardians, and the third and fourth are the sustainers of the first two classes. Attempts by any member of any class to change from his class can only, it is believed, result in chaos and disorder. Muslim social ideas are essentially hierarchical and organic. But how was each to be sure of his proper class and function? Indo-Muslim thinkers, adapting Greek and Persian ideas, answered that God had decided the problem at the creation. Social harmony between classes of men endowed with different aptitudes is willed by God.

The ideal social classification advocated by Indo-Muslim theorists of the ulamā class did correspond in large measure to the social stratification, viewed from a Muslim point of observation, in that area of Hindustan under Muslim rule—except that the people of the sword took precedence in practice over the people of the pen and often ignored them. But it was nevertheless very much the theory of a pen-man's utopia which ignored actual social differences in Muslim India—the distinction between Turk and non-Turk in the first century of Muslim rule, between immigrant Muslim and Indian-born Muslim, between hereditary Muslim and converted Muslim, Delhi Muslim and Bengali Muslim, between descendants of Afghan tribes and non-Afghans, between those with light skins and those with dark, between slaves and free men. However, in its picture of a static society in which men performed those duties for which heredity and inherited education had designated them—of soldiers who would not conceive of becoming agriculturists or traders, and of traders who would not think of becoming ulamā or soldiers—the idea was not very far from the actual: a society of small cultivators and traders supporting, with its labor and taxes, a military and learned aristocracy.

The institution of slavery was important in politics, administration and in household economy in medieval India under Muslim rule; it does not figure as an important theme in Indo-Muslim writing on the ideal

social order. Turkish rulers like Qutb ud-dīn Aibak (1206–1210), Iltutmish (1211–1236), and Balban (1266–1287), began their careers as slaves, and slaves from within the sultans' households were often appointed to high administrative and military offices, but no organized system of slave training, promotion and rule, similar to the Janissary system under the Ottoman Turks, existed in medieval India.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, the status of women in Muslim law and thought did not change with the conquest of Hindustan by Muslims, although, in practice, Hindu customary law was influential among certain groups of Muslim converts from Hinduism.<sup>2</sup>

For statements on the social and political discrimination which, ideally, should be enforced against non-Muslims, reference should be made to Chapter XVII.

#### *The Four-Class Division of Society*

The first reading has been taken from a Persian work on ethics written outside India in the second half of the fifteenth century. The work is *Jalālī's Ethics* (*Akhlāq-i-Jalālī*), by Muhammad ibn Asad Jalāl ud-dīn al-Dawwānī (1427–1501). It was popular in Mughal India.

[From Thompson, *Practical Philosophy of the Muhammadan People*, pp. 388–90]

In order to preserve this political equipoise, there is a correspondence to be maintained between the various classes. Like as the equipoise of bodily temperament is effected by intermixture and correspondence of four elements, the equipoise of the political temperament is to be sought for in the correspondence of four classes.

1. *Men of the pen*, such as lawyers, divines, judges, bookmen, statisticians, geometricians, astronomers, physicians, poets. In these and their exertions in the use of their delightful pens, the subsistence of the faith and of the world itself is vested and bound up. They occupy the place in politics that water does among the elements. Indeed, to persons of ready understanding, the similarity of knowledge and water is as clear as water itself, and as evident as the sun that makes it so.

<sup>1</sup>For an extensive discussion of the status of slaves under Muslim law, see the article, "Abd" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (new edition, 1954). No changes in legal doctrine on slavery appear to have occurred in medieval Muslim India; readings from lawbooks used in India have not been given.

<sup>2</sup>See the article, "Āda" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1954).

2. *Men of the sword*, such as soldiers, fighting zealots, guards of forts and passes, etc.; without whose exercise of the impetuous and vindictive sword, no arrangement of the age's interests could be effected; without the havoc of whose tempest-like energies, the materials of corruption, in the shape of rebellious and disaffected persons, could never be dissolved and dissipated. These then occupy the place of fire, their resemblance to it is too plain to require demonstration; no rational person need call in the aid of fire to discover it.

3. *Men of business*, such as merchants, capitalists, artisans, and craftsmen, by whom the means of emolument and all other interests are adjusted; and through whom the remotest extremes enjoy the advantage and safeguard of each other's most peculiar commodities. The resemblance of these to air—the auxiliary of growth and increase in vegetables—the reviver of spirit in animal life—the medium by the undulation and movement of which all sorts of rare and precious things traverse the hearing to arrive at the headquarters of human nature—is exceedingly manifest.

4. *Husbandmen*, such as seedsmen, bailiffs, and agriculturists—the superintendents of vegetation and preparers of provender; without whose exertions the continuance of the human kind must be cut short. These are, in fact, the only producers of what had no previous existence; the other classes adding nothing whatever to subsisting products, but only transferring what subsists already from person to person, from place to place, and from form to form. How close these come to the soil and surface of the earth—the point to which all the heavenly circles refer—the scope to which all the luminaries of the purer world direct their rays—the stage on which wonders are displayed—the limit to which mysteries are confined—must be universally apparent.

In like manner then as in the composite organizations the passing of any element beyond its proper measure occasions the loss of equipoise, and is followed by dissolution and ruin, in political coalition, no less, the prevalence of any one class over the other three overturns the adjustment and dissolves the junction. Next attention is to be directed to the condition of the individuals composing them, and the place of every one determined according to his right.

The four-class classification is found in India in Abū'l Fazl, by whom the learned are relegated to the third position.

[From Abū'l Fazl, *A'in-i-Akbari*, iv-v]

The people of the world may be divided into four classes:

1. *Warriors*, who in the political body have the nature of fire. Their flames, directed by understanding, consume the straw and rubbish of rebellion and strife, but kindle also the lamp of rest in this world of disturbances.

2. *Artificers and merchants*, who hold the place of air. From their labors and travels, God's gifts become universal, and the breeze of contentment nourishes the rose-tree of life.

3. *The learned*, such as the philosopher, the physician, the arithmetician, the geometrician, the astronomer, who resemble water. From their pen and their wisdom, a river rises in the drought of the world, and the garden of the creation receives from their irrigating powers, a peculiar freshness.

4. *Husbandmen and laborers*, who may be compared to earth. By their exertions, the staple of life is brought to perfection, and strength and happiness flow from their work.

It is therefore obligatory for a king to put each of these in its proper place, and by uniting personal ability with due respect for others, to cause the world to flourish.

#### *Social Precedence*

The essentially religious color of the medieval Muslim ideal social order is brought out in the following passage, which purports to be an order by the Caliph Ma'mūn establishing social precedence. The passage is from the *Rulings on Temporal Governments*, by Zīā ud-dīn Barnī.

[From Barnī, *Fatāwa-yi-Jahāndārī*, folios 128a-129b *passim*]

It is commanded that the inhabitants of the capital, Baghdad, and the entire population of the Muslim world should hold in the greatest honor and respect all men of the Hāshimite family who are related to the Prophet by ties of blood, especially the 'Abbāsids to whose line the caliphate of the Muslim community has been confirmed, and, in particular the sayyids whose descent from and relationship to the Prophet is certain. In all circumstances they should strive to reverence and honor them and not allow them to be insulted and humiliated. They should consider the