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ISLAM AND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

The beliefs, and the tendencies of the human society are so widely different that it is practically impossible to confine or define a single system which would represent the human society in the modern age. The development of the new theories and evolution of the old one has resulted in the creation of many problems. Since the inception of the mankind, man has been trying to solve his basic problems and while doing so he gives rise to many others. He formulates certain rules to regulate his conduct, to achieve the ultimate goal of contentment which he much aspires. The shadow of religion or belief is sought by him to levy certain disciplines and responsibilities so that he may be able to terminate contentions and chaos which are the out-come of his struggle for survival. The Geographical and Ideological bounds have divided the human society and these divided societies or communities follow their respective codes of life or religions ; but one thing is certain whether it is Christianity or Judaism or Hinduism or Islam, all aim at achieving a balance between spiritual and secular needs of the respective classes following them. We may say that religions or beliefs are the embodiment of those rules or regulations that guide the conduct of human beings for the purification of the soul, in some cases : and in others, the behaviour of man in his secular life. Man attaches sanctity to these rules of conduct according to his own scale. When we analyse the different systems, we conclude that some of them concern the issues of the material world as Communism, Socialism or Capitalism and other solely discuss the problems relating to soul and its purification, the long struggle of state and church in the West proves it. The best system, logically, would be that which inter-relates spiritual and secular life and provides the solution for the both and it is here that one has to admit that Islam is the only religion which gives equal importance to both, in fact, Islam does not profess any distinction

questions and ambiguous problems would have remained unsolved in the absence of this book . . . The fact that for both epochs, for the Jahiliyya as well as for the epoch of Islam, 'al-Ma'ārif' provides much raw material, is of no little importance. It is valuable instrument for comparing, checking and corroborating the material contained in the works of the authors of later period, including al-Tabari . . . the most important source for the history of Islam.³⁹

No doubt the book is a valuable mine of historical information, yet it is very brief, brief to the extent that in certain matters it gives only hints. It contains neither the details of administration nor that of Muslim conquests. It is rather a hand-book of the biographies of great Muslims of the early period as has been said by Ibn Qutaiba himself. That is why Margoliouth passes the following remarks about this book :

"Of Ibn Qutaibah's historical works, one which is called al-Ma'ārif is a compendium of historical information largely consisting of lists, facts connected with the Prophet, genealogical tables, names of sects and the like. The utility of the book is unquestionable, but it can scarcely be called history".⁴⁰



39. *Translation of Kitāb al-Ma'ārif, op. Cit.*, pp Liii, Liv.

40. *Lectures on Arabic Historians*, pp. 119-20.

ment companions of the Prophet including lists of al-Mu'allafat al-Qulūb (such new converts as were paid from the state exchequer, so that they might remain faithful to their religion), and of hypocrites, etc. The author, then tells us about the history of the Umayyad and the Abbasid Caliphs down to al-Mu'tamid. He devotes a separate chapter to the biographies of certain famous statesmen, officers, generals and governors of the Muslim Empire including that of some important rebels and Kharijites. He also discusses the biographies of the Tabi'un (those who had seen any of the companions of the Prophet), of the Chief doctors (Jurists), traditionists, Ashāb al-Qira'at, genealogists, historians, grammarians, and transmitters of verse, etc., the principal mosques like that of al-Haram, Jerusalem, Basra and Kūfa, etc; a very brief account of the Muslim conquests; occupations of the nobles; people exposed to suffering; those having certain physical defects such as the person as were deaf, the maimed the cross-eyed, the balds, the scanty-bearded, one eyed, the blinds, and those who were long-statured and short-statured. The book also throws light on the famous battles of the Pagan Days, i.e. 'Ayyam-al-Arab', religions prevailing in Arabia in the pre-Islamic times and the different sects. A complete chapter is devoted to the history of the kings, including those of Yaman, Syria, Hira and Persia. This account is brought down to the Islamic days and closes with the death of the last Persian King Yazda Jird :

To quote Dr. Zia al-Haq Sufi : 'al-Ma'ārif is an indispensable book of reference for a student of Arabic Literature. It is one of the most reliable and authoritative books in various branches of literature. It provides in a handy form exact and correct information about rare anecdotes connected with poetry, history, biography, geography, genealogy, scholars of the Qurān, Hadīth, Fiqh and Grammar. It throws sufficient light on the various aspects of different sciences and discusses the history of religions from the beginning of the world, the mission of the important prophets and their number and the books revealed to them. It is a storehouse of stray information that is not to be found in one place in any other book. Many of the disputed

He proceeds further :

”و قد يكون الرجل متبوعاً في الادب قد سبق فيه و اخذ بالحظ الاوفى منه الا انه اغفل شيئاً من الجليل كان اولئى به من بعض محافظ فيلحقه فيه النقيصه و يرجع اليه من الهجنة (العييب) كطالب غوامض الفقه و قد اغفل ابواب الصلوة و الفرائض و طالب طرق الحديث و قد اغفل متونها و معانيها“³⁷.

(Sometimes it so happens that a person who has acquired a great skill in literature and whom people follow in that respect, ignores certain most important factors relating to that branch. So it is regarded as his weakness and fault. For an instance a person engaged in solving the intricacies of Fiqh (Jurisprudence) who ignores the most important chapter concerning prayer and obligation; and a seeker of the chains of Hadith, who pays little heed to the text and its meaning . . .).

Keeping all above in view Ibn Qutaiba wrote this book and said :

“My this book contains general information about different sciences and branches of knowledge”³⁸

This book begins with the Creation of the world, and after giving a brief account of the various Prophets (Peace be upon them) and Patriarchs and after mentioning the number of the Prophets and of the revealed Books, conveys information about the names of the true believers before the advent of the holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). Then it gives the genealogies of the Arabs, including those of Yamanites, al-Aus and al-Khazraj; the genealogies of the Holy Prophet and his kinsfolk, including his wives, children, clients and his horses and mules, etc., his mission, his battles particularly Badr, Uhud and the Victory of Macca, and his death. Then it throws light on the history of the four rightly-guided Caliphs and of other promi-

37. *Idid.*, pp. 3

38. *Ibid.*, p. 3

Dr. Sūfi, has also arrived at the above conclusion.³³

About his book 'Tārikh Ibn Qutaiba', Zia al-Haq Sūfi says:

"A book of this name exists in al-Khizana al-Zahiriyya at Damascus. Hāji Khalifa states on the authority of al-Mas'ūdi that Ibn Qutaiba got material for this book from the book of history written by Abu Hanifa Ahmad, son of Da'ud al-Dinawari (d. 282 A.H.)"³⁴

The 'Kitāb al-Ma'ārif' is one of his most important works. The author of the book has written a very useful and informative introduction to it. In his introduction Ibn Qutaiba calls attention to the main purpose of writing the above book and gives an outline of the subjects discussed in it.

He says:

"This is a book in which I have collected information for the use of every person upon whom God has bestowed his highest favours and whom He has made remarkable due to his knowledge and power of speaking clearly. This type of knowledge is essential for him, whether he be in the company of kings, nobles or in the gathering of scholar"³⁵

He goes on to say:

"Among the nobles I have come across such persons as do not know their genealogy, and among the respectables (have seen) such persons as do not have information about their ancestors. There are descendants of the Quraysh, who do not know where the tree of their genealogy meets the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him), or any of his companions, I have also seen the sons of the persian kings who have little knowledge of their fathers and the period of their rule"³⁶

33. Cf. *Translation of Kitāb al-Ma'ārif*, op. Cit, f. pp. xxxvii-viii.

34. *Ibid.*

35. Ibn Qutaiba, *al-Ma'ārif*, (Egypt, 1934), p. 2.

36. *Ibid.*

Four of his works namely '*Adab al-Kātib*', '*Kitāb al-Shi'r wa'l-Shu'ra*', '*Uyūn al-Akhbār*' and '*Kitāb al-Ma'arif*' have gained immense importance and are really mines of information for the student of Arabic literature and History. These books have already seen the light of day.

Professor Nicholson says about the above four works :

"We have more than once cited his 'Book of General knowledge' (*Kitāb al-Ma'arif*) and his 'Book of Poetry and Poets' (*Kitāb al-Shi'r wa'l-Shu'ra*) and add here the *Adab al-Kātib*, or Accomplishments of Secretary, a manual of stylistic, dealing with orthography, orthoepy, lexicography, and the like; and the '*Uyūn al-Akhbār*, or choice Histories, a work in ten chapters, each of which is devoted to a special theme such as Government, War, Nobility, Friendship, Women"³⁰.

The books, which he composed on history are: *Tārikh Ibn Qutaiba*' and *Kitāb al-Ma'arif*. A third book namely '*Al-Imama wa'l-Siyasa*' is usually attributed to him, but it is not his composition. Brockelmann says in this connection:

"The pseudohistorical *Kitāb al-Imama wal-Siyasa*, Cairo 1322 and 1327, is ascribed to Ibn Kutaiba but, according to de Goeje . . . , was probably written in his lifetime by a Maghribi or an Egyptian"³¹.

Margoliouth observes :

"Another book which is ascribed to him is very different in character. This is called *The Book of Sovereignty and Government*, and is a history of the Islamic State from the death of the Prophet till that of Hārūn al-Rashid. Its falsification or ignorance of history is, however, so glaring that it cannot possibly be Ibn Qutaiba's work"³².

30. *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge, 1953), p. 346.

31. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ii, pp. 399-400.

32. *Lectures on Arabic Historians*, p. 120.

(And he was a well informed scholar of Philology, Grammar and poetry, etc, and was well versed and accurate in science).

Jurji Zaīdan gives his opinion in the following words :

”وكان عالماً في اللغة والنحو و الشرع متقناً بالعلوم صادق فيما يرويه مستقل الفكر جرئياً في قول الحق و هو اول من تجرأ على النقد الادبي فالتف في اكثر فنون الادب المعروف و الباقي من مؤلفاته الى اليوم حسن و شائع و بعضها من اسميات كتب التاريخ و الادب“²⁸.

(And he was a scholar of Philology, Grammar, Islamic law and was well-versed in many other branches of learning. He was reliable and truthful in whatsoever he recorded; he was a sound thinker and was bold in pleading the right cause. He was the first to look into the literature with a critical eye. He composed works on almost all the favourite branches of literature. And the works from his pen which have come down to us are the best and are widely read. Some of them are the most valuable sources of history and literature).

HIS WORKS

A very long list has been attached to his works in the sources quoted in the beginning. Ibn Taimiyya has recorded the statement of the author of the book : ‘Kitāb al-Taḥdīth Bi-Manāqib-i-Ahl-al-Hadīth’, which shows that the number of the works which Ibn Qutaiba composed was 300. This seems to be quite an exaggerated view in the light of the evidence recorded in the sources like Fihrist, Wafayāt, Tārīkh Baghdād and Nuzhat al-Alibba, etc. Doctor Sufi, after conducting thorough researches into the different sources has been able to collect the names of fifty of his works on different subjects related to the Qur’ān, Hadīth, Literature, Jurisprudence, Poetry, Genealogy and History, etc²⁹.

28. Tārīkh Adab.

29. Cf. Translation of Kitāb al-Ma’ārif, op, Cit, f.pp. xxvi-xL.

Al-Nawawī (d. 676 A.H./1277 A.D.), says :

”ابو محمد عبدالله بن مسلم بن قتيبة الدينوري الكاتب اللغوي الفاضل في علوم كثيره سكن بغداد وله مصنفات كثيراً جداً رايته فهرستها ونسيت عددها اظنّها تزيد على ستين مصنفًا في انواع العلوم“²⁵

(Abu Muhammad ‘Abd Allah b. Muslim b. Qutaiba al-Dinawari, al-Kātib, al-Lughawi (Lexicographer) and a well-informed scholar in the different branches of learning, lived at Baghdad. He has composed many valuable works. A list of which I saw but I could not remember the exact number of his works. I think that the list contained the names of more than sixty of his works composed on various branches of knowledge).

Ibn Khallikān observes :

”ابو محمد عبدالله بن مسلم بن قتيبة الدينوري وقيل المروزي النحوي اللغوي صاحب كتاب المعارف و ادب الكاتب كان فاضلاً ثقة سكن بغداد و حدّث بها . . . و تصاليفه كلها مفيدة“²⁶.

(Abu Muhammad ‘Abd Allah b. Muslim b. Qutaiba al-Dinawari, al-Marwazi, Grammarian and a Philologist, author of the books: Kitāb al-Ma‘ārif’ and ‘Adab al-Katib’, was an erudite scholar and the most reliable authority. He lived at Baghdād and gave lessons there. Almost all his works are very useful).

Ibn al-Anbārī passes the following remarks :

”و كان فاضلاً في اللغة و النحو و الشعر متقناً في العلوم“²⁷.

25. *Tahdhīb al Asma wa'l-Lughat*, op, Cit., ii, p. 281.

26. *Wafayāt*, i, p. 271.

27. *Nuzhat al-Alibba*, p. 272.

HIS EVALUATION

Ibn Qutaiba's literary activity was very extensive. He acquired a surpassing excellence in so many branches of learning, like the sciences related to the Qur'ān and Hadīth, Islamic law, Literature, philology, Grammar, History, Poetry and Genealogy, etc.

Brockelmann observes in this connection:

“As a matter of fact, however, his activities like those of his contemporaries, Abu Hanifa al-Dinawari and al-Djābiz, covered the whole learning of his period. He sought to make available the lexical and poetical material which had been collected especially by the Kūfi grammarians, as well as historical information. For the requirements of the man of the world particularly the Kuttāb, who were then beginning to gain influence in the administration. But he also took part in the theological disputes of his time, and defended the Qur'ān and Tradition against the attacks of philosophic scepticism”.²³

Most of the other learned biographers of Ibn Qutaiba hold a very high opinion about him and his works. Opinions of a few of them are quoted below:

Ibn al-Nadim says:

”وكان صادقاً فيما يرويه عالماً باللغة و النحو و غريب القرآن و معانيه و الشعر و الفقه كثير التصنيف و التأليف“²⁴

(And he was accurate and truthful in whatsoever he transmitted. He was a scholar of Philology, Grammar, of uncommon and rare words of the Qur'ān and their meaning, of Poetry and Jurisprudence and was a voluminous and prolific writer).

23. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ii, p. 399.

24. *Al-Fihrist*, p. 115.

”وقال الحاكم اجتمعت الامة على انه كذاب وقال الذهبي ما علمت
احداً اتهم القتيبي في نقله مع ان الخطيب قد وثقه وما اعلم الامة اجتمعت
الا على كذب الدجال و مسيلمة“ 18

(Says Hākim: The entire Muslim Community agrees that he was a great liar. While Dhahabi said: I do not know of any person who might have accused al-Qutaiba of relating (defective or false) traditions. Besides al-Khatib has termed him as ‘Thiqah’ (the most trustworthy and authoritative). I do not know whether the Muslim Community has ever agreed upon the falsehood of any person with the exception of Dajjal and Musailima).

Opinions differ about the date of his death. Some scholars hold the view that he died at Baghdad in the year 270 or 271 A.H., while others assert that the year 276 A.H. saw his death. Ibn al-Nadīm¹⁹ suggests 270 A.H., Khatib²⁰ gives 270 and 276, while Ibn al-Anbārī²¹ also gives the above two dates for his death.

Ibn Khallikān after recording the opinions of different biographers of Ibn Qutaiba gives his decision in favour of 276 .A.H and says :

”و كانت ولادته سنة ثلث عشر ومائتين و توفي في ذى القعدة سنة
سبعين وقيل احدى و سبعين وقيل منتصف رجب سنة ست سبعين ومائتين
و الاخير اصح الاقوال“ 22

(And he was born in the year 213 and he died in Dhil'l-Qa'dah of the year 270 or 271 (or) as it is said that he died on the fifteenth of Rajab of the year 276. And the last statment is the most correct).

19. *Al-Fihrist*, p. 115.

20. *Tarikh Baghdad*, x.p. 170.

21. *Nuzhat al-Alibba*, op, Cit, pp. 273-74.

22. *Wafayāt*, i.p. 272.

defend himself against the reproach of belonging to them.”¹⁴
 Imām Ibn Taimiyya says about his faith :

”و ابن قتيبة من المنتسبين الى احمد واسحق و المنتصرين لمذاهب
 السنة المشهورة و له في ذلك مصنفات متعددة .“¹⁵

(And Ibn Qutaiba belonged to the School of Ahmad and Ishāq and was amongst the defenders of the important schools related to al-Sunna and he has composed many work in this connection).

Abu Muhammad ‘Abd Allah was a straight-forward, reliable and truthful person.

Khatib Baghdādi observes:

”كان ثقة ديناً فاضلاً .“¹⁶

(And he was the most reliable and honest person and an erudite scholar).

Ibn Taimiyya says on the authority of the author of the book “Al-Tahdīḥ Bi-Manāqib-i-Ahl al-Hadīḥ”:

“He is one of the famous leaders, scholars and learned men. He is one of the best writers, having about 300 works to his credit... The people of al-Maghrib had great regard for him and they said: He who finds faults with Ibn Qutabia should be accused of heresy . . there is no good in a house which does not have some of the writings of Ibn Qutaiba”.¹⁷

Jalāl al-Din Suyūti has refuted the statement of Ḥākim about the unreliability of Ibn Qutaiba by saying :

14. *The Encyclopaedia of Islām*, ii, p. 399.

15. *Tafsir Surat al-Ikhlās*, p. 86.

16. *Tarikh Baghdād* x.p. 170.

17. *Tafsir Surat al-Ikhlās*, p. 86.

18. *Bughyat al-Wu‘ūt*, op. Cit, p. 291.