

INDIVIDUALS' PREFERENCES AND RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS THE SOCIETY: SAYYED ALI HUJWERI'S VIEW

AN IMPORTANT ISSUE OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

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What is man? What is society? What is relationship between man and society? Individual is important or society? These are questions of general philosophy, which provide foundation for the philosophy of education. Individuals should have sound knowledge of their responsibilities and principles of preference to live in a society. They should know better how relations could be developed among individuals of a society. They should be well aware of the priorities to be observed while treating different strata of the society. The society members should be well acquainted with the strategies for acquiring their balanced growth and development in a society.

Sayyed Ali Hujweri (1010-1072 A.D) occupies a prestigious place as a Sufi scholar and social philosopher among eminent Muslim scholars throughout the world. His magnum opus, "*Kashaf-ul-Mehjoob*" (the unveiling of that which is veiled) has attracted the attention of Muslim scholars as well as European orientalist who have done much to reawaken interest

in the study of Sufiism (Abdur Rashid, 1997: V).

The reformation of both individual and society was the sole mission of Ali Hujwari's life. He expressed a great deal upon the reformation of individual and society in "*Kashaf-ul-Mehjoob*". He practiced his conceptual knowledge essentially for the spiritual and moral training of masses. He aptly elaborated what relationship existed between an individual and society. His thought shattered societal fake religious experiences. Irrespective of race and region, sect or religion, he gave the lesson of humanity's regard for humanity's sake.

This article envisages important aspects of individuals' responsibilities and preferences toward the society as mentioned in Hujwari's major works. It further elaborates hereby-prominent features of Hujwari's viewpoint about the relationship among individuals and society.

1. **Shun not Society:** The lofty saying of Sayyed Ali Hujwari that: "The heart that shuns the society of God knows nothing of God" sets the mode of relation between an individual and the society in the paradigm of Hujwari's Social Philosophy.
2. **Solitariness and Alienation not Desirable:** Sayyed Ali Hujwari (as cited in Malik, 1997) quotes a Hadith of the Prophet (*Sallallah-o-Alaih-i-Wasallum*):

(P. 61,62,130) **فإن الشيطان مع الواحد**

"Satan is with the solitary". (*Sunnan-i-Trimzi*)

Sayyed Hujwari further relates: "Beware of retirement (alienation)! For it is in connection with Satan; and cleave to companionship, for therein is the satisfaction of the

Merciful God.” (Nicholson’s from English Translation, 1998: 190)

Sayyed Ali Hujwari focused upon individual growth but he was not in favour of alienation and seclusion from the community or comrade group. He asserted: “Companionship is obligatory for dervishes and that retirement (*uzlat*) is not praiseworthy, and that everyone is bound to prefer his companion to himself.”

(Nicholson’s from English Translation, 1998: 190)

3. **Principle of Preference:** Sayyed Ali Hujwari prescribed the “Principle of preferences” for the individuals to live in a society. He quoted from the Quran: “And they prefer them to themselves although they are indigent.”(59:9).

(Nicholson’s from English Translation, 1998: 190)

Sayyed Hujwari, in this regard, explained that the true nature of preference consisted in maintaining the rights of the person with whom one associated, and in subordinating one’s own interest to the interest of one’s friend, and in taking trouble upon one’s self for the sake of promoting his friend’s happiness because, preference was the rendering of help to others.

4. **Sacrifice as the Key to all Good:** Sayyed Ali Hujwari narrated that nothing was more difficult for a man than spiritual sacrifice and to refrain himself from the object of his love and God hath made that sacrifice the key to all good.

(Nicholson’s from English Translation., 1998: 194)

Allah Almighty declares:

لَنْ تَبَالُوْا بِالْبِرِّ حَتّٰى تَنْفُقُوْا مِمَّا تَحِبُّوْنَ ط

"You shall never attain righteousness until you give in alms of that which you love." (3:92)

Sayyed Ali Hujwari was of the view that eternal life could be gained through spiritual sacrifice; renunciation of self-interest in fulfilling God's commandment and obedience to His friends.

5. **Strive for Humanity's Welfare:** Shehab (2001) observes that Sayyed Ali Hujwari always exhorted the believers to work to earn their livelihood and spend their extra income on the welfare of their Islamic brethren. Discarding the luxuries of life, he advised believers not to indulge in any extravagance. Instead they should spend their extra wealth for the alleviation of poverty in the society. He advocated simple living, which he said, had been the symbol of true mystics.
6. **Adopt Simple and Economical Way of Life:** This advocacy of the simplicity of life, Sayyed Ali Hujwari inferred from two Hadiths. Once, Hazrat Ai'sha (Allah may be pleased with her) asked the Holy Prophet (Sallallah-o-Alaih-i-Wa-Alih-ee-Wasallum) to buy her a new shirt as her old shirt was torn at many places. The Holy Prophet (Sallallah-o-Alaih-i-Wa-Alih-ee-Wasallum) examined the torn shirt and came to the conclusion that it could still be used by mending it with patches. He advised Hazrat Ai'sha not to waste the old shirt and patch it for re-use. The Holy Prophet (Sallallah-o-Alaih-i-Wa-Alih-ee-Wasallum) himself never hesitated to wear patched clothes and his companions followed him in this respect. Sayyed Hujwari has quoted that Hazrat Umar's (Allah may be pleased with him)

garment had 30 patches, and the caliph used to say that the best clothes were the cheapest of all. Sayyed Ali Hujweri maintained that, thus, wearing patched clothes was the distinctive symbol of the Muslim Sufis.

7. Avoid Self-righteousness and Sectarianism:

Self-righteousness is actually a declaration of the infallibility of human intellect. If the Muslim scholars want to become men of scholarship and erudition, they must abandon self-assertiveness and self-righteousness. This leads towards sectarianism and dogmatism. It inculcates the habit of denouncing every other's thought and acclaiming only one's own viewpoint. Sayyed Ali Hujweri (as cited in Abd-ul-Latif, 1977:12) remarked that the height of perfection was that that a man should reach that pinnacle of knowledge where he had to confess that his knowledge was but a drop in the ocean. Abd-ul-Latif (1977) has quoted thereby Newton's words: "I am like a boy picking up pebbles at the shore while the great sea lies unexplored before me." Similarly, the famous Eastern astronomer-poet, Omar Khayyam, after his life-long study and research proclaimed: "I have come to know that I know nothing." (P.12)

If today's scholars, as advised by Sayyed Hujweri, adopt this habit, *Maulvis* and leaders then sectarianism/disunity in our society may come to an end and tolerance may develop much more.

Shehzad (2002) writes that no scholar can ever be, totally, sure that he has stumbled upon the final truth in matters that require interpretation of the scripture.

Humbleness is the key to scholarship and self-righteousness is, perhaps, the greatest impediment to it. In the study of religion, contemporary Muslim scholars have generally adopted the latter approach, which has contributed significantly in promoting sectarianism.

- 8. Shatter Fake Religio-social Experiences:**
Religion serves as the foundation stone in building a society. Rightful adoption and treatment of a religion can make a society very peaceful and progressive but following the fake religious experience can shatter the whole building of a society. Sayyed Ali Hujwari condemned the fake religious experiences prevalent in the society:

Our contemporaries give the name of 'law' to their lusts, pride and ambition they call 'honour and learning', hypocrisy towards men 'fear of God', concealment of anger 'clemency', disputation 'discussion', wrangling and foolishness 'dignity', insincerity 'renunciation', cupidity 'devotion to God', their own senseless fancies 'Divine knowledge', the motions of the heart and affections of the animal soul 'Divine love', heresy 'poverty', skepticism 'purity', disbelief in positive religion 'self-annihilation', neglect of the law of the Prophet 'the mystic path', evil communication with time-servers 'exercise of piety.

(Nicholson's from English Translation, 1998: 08)

Sayyed Ali Hujwari has given here a critique of the fake religious experiences. To build a sound and strong society, the individuals should shatter such fake religious experiences of the society. Neither any individual himself should be the spokesman of such fake pursuits nor the society at large should be allowed to involve in such

their culture. Conceptually, war rape should reflect these distinctions as well as other forms of sexual assault committed against women during conflicts and war.

The use of war rape by the Serbian government, military and militia groups as a strategy of ethnic cleansing and of genocide during its war in Bosnia brought the issue to the forefront of international condemnation.¹² As part of a strategy of ethnic cleansing, rape and the fear of rape facilitated the intentional and systematic, deliberate and brutal removal of one ethnic group (in this case Bosnian Muslims) from a land claimed by another (Bosnian Serbs).¹³ One Bosnian woman who was repeatedly raped by a Serb neighbour, even once in the presence of her son decided not to complain about it stating that, "He raped me, I told nobody because I did not want to cause panic. Not even to my husband. I am afraid of blood revenge that must not happen."¹⁴ Due to the societal attitudes towards rape victim, women tend to internalize sexual violence and suffer in silence.

In Bosnian war rape was used as a weapon to attack women's physical and emotional sense of security while simultaneously launching an assault, through women's bodies, upon the genealogy of security as constructed by the body politic.¹⁵ As a strategy of war, rape is one of the means by which the sanctioned and systematic pursuit of a political objective is undertaken. That political objective can range from terror and domination to genocide. The specific uses of rape in war are multifarious and involve combatant and non-combatant women alike. War rape, regardless of context, is both a form of torture and a tool of political terror. For example, rape and the threat of rape are used against women in order to gather information, to instill urgency into ransom-payers, as a means of punishment and as a tool of intimidation and humiliation to ensure civilian compliance. In October 1992, UN Secretary

10. High Concern for Universal 'Brotherhood'

Sayyed Ali Hujwari has expressed great concern for the establishment of global Muslim brotherhood in his teachings. In this context, Siddiqui (2003) has narrated following sayings of Sayyed Ali Hujwari:

- i. "It is imperative for everybody to establish an atmosphere of affection and benevolence between two Muslim brothers so that it may not injure each other's feelings." (p.57)
- ii. "Make much more brothers. Undoubtedly, your Sustainer (*Rubb*) is Self-Subsisting and most Merciful (*Hayye-o-Kareem*). Owing to His beneficence and benignity, He (God Almighty) will not give torment to anybody in front of his brothers, on the day of judgment." (p.58)

Siddiqui (2003) has noted thereby another incident quoted by Sayyed Ali Hujwari:

"Once a person, making rounds around the *Ka'ba* (performing *Twaf* of *Bai't Ullah*), was praying:

'O my Allah Almighty, kindly reform my brothers.' People asked him, 'Why don't you pray for yourself at this place? You are beseeching all prayers for your brothers.' He replied, 'At last, I shall return toward my brothers. If they are rectified I shall also be rectified'." (p.58)

This refection of Sayyed Ali Hujwari realizes us great importance of Muslim brotherhood and

establishment of amicable relationship among one another. The Quran has emphatically declared:

انما المؤمنون اخوة فاصلحوا بين اخويكم ○ (Al-Hojarat: 10)

"Surely, the believers are brethren: therefore reconcile your two brethren." (Nicholson's Eng. Tr. 1998: p.336)

Major Preferences and Responsibilities towards the Society:

Sayyed Ali Hujwari firmly believes in the whole society's welfare and progress. He advocated close affinity, trust, and brotherhood among all the individuals of society. He has presented the principles of:

- i) Shun not society;
- ii) Prefer others to themselves;
- iii) Avoid self-righteousness;
- iv) Strive for humanity's welfare;
- v) Adopt simple and economic way of life;
- vi) Reconcile your brethren if they face some clashes among themselves;
- vii) Make efforts for the establishment of global brotherhood.

The individuals of a society can develop a humanitarian society in line with the commandments of God the Gracious and His friends, following these principles. Sayyed Ali Hujwari has given proper code of conduct for different strata of a society. He has stressed upon mutual respect.

Fauq (n.d.) has quoted some sayings of Sayyed Ali Hujwari in this context. They can be taken as societal norms:

- i) "The young should respect the old because the latter are nobler and more experienced than the young ones are." (p.138)
- ii) "The old should have due regard for the young because the latter's sins are far less than those of the formers." (p.138)
- iii) "Behave your parents with high reverence and great veneration." (9.139)
- iv) "Do not put aside your teacher's right." (p.140)
- v) "Do not possess yourself which belongs to others' rights." (p.140)
- vi) "Do not attend the site which incurs you insult." (p.140)

Guiding Principles for the Individuals to Develop Relations among themselves in a Society

There are several sayings of Sayyed Ali Hujwari, which serve as guiding principles for the individuals for developing good relations among themselves. Some are given below:

- i) "Association demands sanity." (Nicholson's from English Translation, 1998: 189)
- ii) "Association with the wicked produces suspicion of the good." (Ibid., p.189)
- iii) "Companionship must be for God's sake, not for the purpose of gratifying any selfish interest." (Ibid., p.337)

- iv) "The seemliness and decorum of all religious and temporal affairs depend on rules of discipline (*Adab*)". (Ibid., p.334)
- v) "Treat everyone according to his degree:" (Ibid., p.339)
- vi) "In companionship it is not permissible to speak evil of the absent." (Ibid., p.339)
- vii) "When you leave off sitting with the poor in order to associate with the rich, your heart becomes dead to supplication and your body is caught in the toils of covetousness." (Ibid., p.159)
- viii) "Three things render thy brother's love toward thee sincere: that thou shouldst salute him when thou meetest him, and that thou shouldst make room for him when he sits beside thee, and that thou shouldst call him by the name he likes best". (Ibid., p.336)
- ix) "If you derive no religious benefit from a brother and friend, abandon his society." (Ibid., p.337) Sayyed Ali Hujweri has quoted thereby a Hadith in this context as cited in Malik (1997):

المرء على دين خليله فلينظر احدكم من يخاله (p.88)
(*Sunnan Abi Dawood*)

"A man follows the religion of his friend: take heed, therefore, with whom you form a friendship." (Nicholson's from English Translation, 1998: p.337)

If we keep in mind these guiding principles while developing our relations with other members of the society, it will lead us towards both individual and collective growth. Sayyed Ali Hujweri's exposition of Sufi doctrine and practice are distinguished not only by his wide learning and thorough knowledge but also by the strong personal character that is impressed on everything, he writes (Nicholson, 1967: XVII). His concept of individual and society is highly valuable for building sound Islamic society based upon strong, amiable and purified relations among different members of a society.

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