

Islam and Racism

Islam is a Message for all humanity. It addresses all people, irrespective of color. Islam did not come for one race, tribe, or nation, or a particular people living at any particular time or place. Consequently, as Islam spread from Arabia to the other parts of the world, from China to Spain, it managed to melt the differences between people that existed before Islam. It brought people from all different backgrounds together as one nation. It created the brotherhood between the people in such a way that in all aspects of life, from worship to marriage to political activities, Muslims managed to cross racist boundaries that the previous world order had established.

The means by which Islam lifted the oppressive hand of racism from the society is by addressing the issue through its doctrine as well as its legal texts. In regards to the Islamic Aqeedah (doctrine), the Creator is the Absolute Sovereign. Therefore, all human beings are bound by the standard revealed by the Creator, without any distinction made between them. This leads the one who adopts the Islamic Aqeedah to abandon his tendencies to establish himself, his race, or his nation as the sovereign over others.

Prophet Muhammad (saw) said «أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ وَاحِدٌ، وَإِنْ أَبَاكُمْ وَاحِدٌ، كُلُّكُمْ لِآدَمَ، وَآدَمُ مِنْ تَرَابٍ، إِنْ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اتَّقَاكُمْ، لَيْسَ لِعَرَبِيٍّ فَضْلٌ عَلَى أَعْجَمِيٍّ إِلَّا بِالتَّقْوَى» **“O people! You are all to Adam and Adam was made of dust. No Arab is to be preferred over a non-Arab except by virtue of his piety.”**

In addition to this, the Islamic legal texts never distinguished between human beings on the basis of race or nationality. Protection of one's life, property, honor, etc. are extended to all citizens of the Islamic State, Muslim or non-Muslim. Thus, the judicial system, since it never introduced the issue of race into its legal proceedings, prevents the emergence of institutionalized racism in the society.

Allah (swt) says: «وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ» **“When you judge between people to judge with justice.”** [Surah Al-Nisa 4:58].

This is a general address that applies to all people, Muslims and non-Muslims, Black and White, Arab and non-Arab alike.

Furthermore, the Messenger of Allah said: «وَلَكِنَّ النَّبِيَّةَ عَلَى الْمُدَّعِيِّ وَالْيَمِينِ عَلَى مَنْ أَنْكَرَ» **“But, the onus of proof is upon the claimant, and the taking of an oath is upon him who denies.”** [Al-Bayhaqi]

This is also general and it applies to Muslims and non-Muslims, Black and White, Arab and non-Arab alike.

«أَنَّهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَضَى أَنْ يَجْلِسَ الْخَصْمَانِ بَيْنَ يَدَيِ الْقَاضِي» **The Messenger of Allah has decreed that the two disputing parties should both sit before the judge** [Al-Hakim].

This is also general and it includes any two disputing parties, Muslims and non-Muslims, Black and White, Arab and non-Arab alike.

The Messenger of Allah said, «الْإِمَامُ رَاعٍ وَمَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ» **“The Imam is a guardian and he is responsible for his subjects.”** [Agreed upon by Muslim and Al-Bukhari].

The term “subjects” is general and it includes all the subjects, Muslims and non-Muslims, Black and White, Arab and non-Arab alike. Likewise, all the general evidences related to citizenship in the Islamic Sharia'h indicate that it is forbidden to discriminate between the Muslim and the non-Muslim, between the Arab and the non-Arab or **between the white and the black**. Rather, all the people who hold the Islamic citizenship should rather be treated equally, without any discrimination between them either by the ruler, in terms of looking after their affairs and in terms of protecting their lives, their honour and their wealth, or by the judge in terms of equality and justice.

Islam is the first ideology to bring people from all different races together as equals under one nation. In fact, to this day, Islam is the only ideology that has accomplished such a feat. It is only recently with the cultural colonization of the Muslim world by the West that Muslims have started to develop racist and nationalistic tendencies.

The Western culture, on the other hand, has carried the concept of racism from its earliest history, such as at the time of the Greeks and Romans. When the West adopted the Capitalist ideology, it did not manage to eliminate this idea from the minds of its adherents. **Rather, the Capitalist economic culture fueled the idea of racism by allowing it to be used as an excuse to exploit the labor of the foreigners, i.e. the plight of Africans in the Americas.** Thus, it is not surprising that Racism is still rampant in the West, especially in the most capitalistic societies such as America and Britain. Even Thurgood Marshall, who managed to be appointed as Supreme Court Justice in America, was discriminated against and not accepted by the elite. His own testimony that "Clubs here in this town [Washington D.C.], they invite everybody else but me" (New York Times, 1/27/93), is a clear example of the deep roots of racism in the West.

In addition to the racist tendencies in the thinking of the West, **Racism is also institutionalized in the West.** The American Constitution established the legal basis of racism by its three-fifths clause, which considered colored people as 3/5 of a human being. Though this text was later amended, it established racism as a precedent in the American institution. Even after years of struggle, bloodshed, Civil Rights demonstrations and marches, assassinations, and racism task forces, the American society is still plagued by racism. Even when a black candidate, like Jesse Jackson, runs for the presidential election, we find that it happened only because the elite, Richard Nixon and his party, funded his campaign in order to split the black vote in favor of the Republicans. The Rodney King and O.J. Simpson trials are rampant examples of how well established racism is in the society. The most important issue in both of these cases become race, and the mistrust that exists between whites and blacks clearly came to the forefront. **Most recent murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Yasin Muhammad and George Floyd shows the institutionalized police brutality against black American civilians.** The lives of Africans were constrained by organized groups of white men who subjected them to all manner of self-imposed humiliating practices and conditions... policing their public and personal lives as though they were untrustworthy and incapable of any moral integrity. The last hundred years has seen no change in attitudes or levels of police brutality, towards this section of the American community... nor has any lasting shift in societal values towards race and colour occurred, despite the US championing freedoms and minority rights, domestically and even through the barrel of a gun.

The epidemic of racism that the West is facing clearly stems from its ideology and its institutions. Racism is not inherent in the nature of the human being rather it is cultivated in the individual's personality by the culture one carries. Thus, to free ourselves from racism we have to re-evaluate the culture and the ideology that we carry. Islam is the only ideology that has addressed this issue in such a way that it builds personalities that melt the differences between people rather than construct barriers. It is the only alternative left for us.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾

"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted." [Surah Al-Hujurat: 13]

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
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