

Dialogue or clash of civilisations?

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alt & Civilization
Series
16-9-83

Huntington has propounded not only a vicious clash of civilizations idea but acted as a proselytizer of hate and ensured that Islam remains at logger head with Christianity and Judaism. His obsession is so overwhelming that he deemed it expedient to travel all the way to India to address the hard core *Hindutva* and tell the members to reinforce their commitment to Hindu fundamentalism, which in a way meant renunciation of Secularism as a political creed. His basic contention was that Islam could be effectively countered and harmed if Hinduism joined hands with Christianity and Judaism. A systematic propaganda for image tarnishing of Islam, is what Huntington so assiduously carries out, ironically as a great exponent of political science as a scientific discipline. If prejudice masquerades as science, Huntington has done enormous damage to his own intellectual image than to Islam whose followers constitute one-fifth of humanity, and its resurgence is no figment of imagination, but a reality that world has to live with.

One would be right in saying that the Muslim World suffers from enormous contradictions and a wide gap between what is professed and practiced. It is also true that they lack participatory political culture, without which Islamic polity is a misnomer. Not only do they lack unity among themselves but are out of step with the imperatives of knowledge of science, technology and informatics. But these are failings and follies of the adherents of Islam, which make them so vulnerable, weak and impoverished. Islam must not be maligned for the misdeeds of its so-called followers just as Christianity, and for that matter any religion cannot be judged on the aberrant behaviour, which very often the believers of a faith tend to manifest. Whether it is Oklahoma tragedy or nine-eleven act of terrorism, these are crimes against humanity, irrespective of who commits them — Christian or a Muslim. Such atrocities must be unequivocally condemned and a collective global response modality must be determined to arrest and eradicate the menace.

Launching "War against terror" unilaterally or through a contrived coalition is self-defeating as the very notion of war evokes counter-aggression, and the vicious game multiplies human sufferings. To attribute terror to Islam, when its very nomenclature implies peace is a colossal distortion of reality, and reflection of a bigoted mind. It could also be deliberate strategy of propaganda to justify military action to render a Muslim country weak and vulnerable so that its potential to become a formidable power is nipped in the bud. Moreover, when the country in question happens to be oil-rich, "war on terror" becomes a cover for greed and rapacity, making mockery of the moral overtones. What impels me to write this piece is to convey that often "intellectuals" in creating constructs and paradigms are guided more by utilitarian motives than the imperatives of scientific objectivity. Clash of civilizations idea propounded by Huntington is to serve the interest of the powerful lobby of the arms producers, whose massive business can only thrive when conflicts and clashes promote sale of weapons and equipment — a tragic irony which President Eisenhower, very much regretted, when he was making a retirement speech. He specifically implied that global peace was hostage to the military-industrial complex. No serving US President could ever pick up courage to frame a policy-global or otherwise — which could go against this mafia, except at the peril of his own ouster from power.

Huntington's tirade against Islam is also to help US President retain unipolarity, and destabilise the Muslim countries like Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Iran so that their reconstruction and democratisation would require US military presence for a long time to ensure the transition. Huntington has highlighted the complexity by concocting a bizarre thesis in his controversial book — *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. He makes a case that only Western countries are compatible with democracy. The separation of church and the state, is the key factor in western democracy. "In Islam", he says;

"God is Caesar", in [Confucianism], Caesar is God; in Orthodoxy, "God is Caesar's junior partner". According to him, the "kin cultures" (western countries) would be supporting each other in the civilisational fault-line conflicts in developing a scenario of a religiously driven World War III. Confucianism, implying China would collaborate with Islam as it also is primarily anti-democratic and authoritarian in nature. The post-communist Europe, is now the line separating the people of western Christianity on the one hand from Muslim and Orthodox peoples on the other. He answers his own question, "Where does Europe end?" by saying: "Where western Christianity ends and Islam and Orthodoxy begin". The most pernicious idea, he propounds is that the challenge for the west is not Islamic fundamentalism. "It is Islam".

Strangely, when the West was obsessed by the threat of Communism, Islam was no enemy. The most gifted historian of the modern times, Toynbee said: "In a world in which distance has been annihilated by the progress of western technology, or in which the western way of life is having to compete with the Russian way of life for the allegiance of all mankind, the Islamic tradition of the brotherhood of man would seem to be a better ideal for meeting the social needs of the times." Toynbee is not the only one, who has emphasised the liberal and democratic values of Islam. R.B. Smith in his book "*Mohammadanism in Africa*" admits that Islam has given to its Negro converts a status, dignity and self-reliance which are all too rarely found in their pagan and Christen fellow countrymen. R.C. Reddy also endorses it: "The age long problem of racial equality has not been solved by any system of religion or ethics except Mohammadanism. In every other polity or religion, reason, ethics and spiritual ideas have been broken on the rock of race and colour."

Secularism, which, separates religion with state is relevant only to Christian society, mainly because of historical reasons. This faith emphasised the life "hereafter" and not "here and now" and when the Roman Church combined the sacerdotal and secular, a reaction was inevitable. In the words of Iqbal:

"In Europe Christianity was understood to be a purely monastic order which gradually developed in to a vast church organisation. The protest of Luther was directed against this church organisation. If you bring with the conception of religion as complete other-worldliness, then what has happened to Christianity in Europe in perfectly natural. Islam does not bifurcate the unity of men into the irreconcilable duality of spirit and matter. In Islam God and the universe spirit and matter, church and state are organic to each other."

The great proponents of secularism Locke, Rousseau and Joseph Mazzini were not against religion. In fact Rousseau, the great apostle of democracy asserted: "No state has ever been founded without a religious basis." Similarly Mazzini like Rousseau, Voltaire was no doubt anti-clerical but regarded God as the law giver of humanity. He says: "God is the only law-giver to the human race... Human laws are only valid and good in so far as they conform to His Law, explaining and applying it... All sovereignty is in God, in the moral law, in providential design which governs the world..." The underlying idea is that the moral law cannot be denied nor change by the majority vote. Secularism without respect of God's laws regresses into anarchy. This is what is happening in the world today. If Caesar transgresses morality and ethics, he behaves like a typical Bush and acts on the doctrine of pre-emption. This is the curse of modern secularism.

Erich Kahler in his profound book "*The Tower and the Abyss*" rightly says: "When the individual is supposed to submit unconditionally to the will of the secular powers as instruments or substitutes of the supreme power, then the will of God is stripped of its actual influence on earth." Islam expects Caesar to behave in a manner that God's laws are not violated.

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