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Western Concept of Nationalism and Islamic Point of View

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Abstract:

Nationalism has become one of the determining forces in modern era. Deep attachments to one's native soil, to local traditions, language and to established territorial authority have been considered as the basic elements of nationalism. Since the very beginning of its revelation to the world, Islam as the last divine law and as the global religion of nations has expressed its universal message through the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). We can see in Islamic teachings that since the very beginning, Islam has discouraged tribalism, racism and prejudice in all of their forms. Despite Islam does not thoroughly reject the fundamentals of nationalism but it gives them right direction. Muslims are allowed to take pride in their nation loyalties so far they do not encourage or cause any prejudice in theory or in practice. Islam establishes the concept of Ummah Wāḥidah (A single Nation) which is in harmony with the nature of humankind. The base of this single nation is faith and Islam itself.

Key Words: Nationalism, Islam, Sociology

Introduction:

The study of political science depicts that the family comes into existence with the participation and collection of individuals. Families create societies which later convert into nations. Nations at the peak of political maturity establish states. Usually nationalism takes birth from its natural constituents like mutual language, race, civilization, culture, geo circumstances, country and religion. At a specific limit Islam doesn't object these elements of nationalism. Even prophets (A.S) of Allah Almighty have used these natural requisites in their preaching. Islam neither does wholly acknowledge all the factors, nor does it accept them as they are. Which of these factors corresponds to the wisdom and nature Islam accepts them and where deviation from wisdom and nature is found, Islam prevents them. The divine religions have always emphasized the moral and spiritual relations among the people to establish a platform for mutual cooperation at a large scale but nationalism cuts these relations

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with the scissor of racial and countrywide prejudices which leads hatred and hostility among people. This is the reason Islam totally rejects the modern concept of nationalism rather invites mass to peace and tranquility in the whole world.

Definition of Nationalism:

In Arabic the word “Qawmīyat” is derived from “qāma, yaqūmu” (قام يقوم) which means ‘to stand’. In common sense it is used for the group of people; however it is also specified for the group of men, as Khalīl Bin Aḥmad Farāhīdī describes that ‘Al-Qawm’ means men not women, as Allah Almighty says: “Let not people laugh at (another) people perchance they may be better than they, nor let women (laugh) at (other) women, perchance they may be better than they.” This verse shows that word *Qawm* is counted with men because they (women) are not included in *qawm*.⁽¹⁾

In ‘*Misbāḥu’l Munīr*’ it is narrated that the word ‘*Al-Qawm*’ means group of men excluded women, this is so because men perform significant and immense duties.⁽²⁾ Albeit, some experts of dictionaries have considered this word for both, group of men and women, as Fīrauz Ābādī, Ibn Manẓūr and Allāmah Jawharī has described in their works.⁽³⁾

So, we can conclude that the Arabic word ‘*Qawmīyat*’ is used for both genders in its common sense. Word ‘*Qawmīyat*’ with addition of ‘*yā nisbat*’ and ‘*tā tanīth*’, derives from *Qawm* which means the group of people having the common interests, values and culture. *Al-Mo’jamu’l Wasīt* defines it as under:

”القومية: صلة اجتماعية عاطفية تنشأ من الاشتراك في الوطن والجنس واللغة والمنافع وقد تنتهي بالتضامن والتعاون إلى الوحدة كالقومية العربية“⁽⁴⁾

(*Al Qawmīyat* (Nationalism) is a social relation formed from commonality of country, gender, language and interests and its ends at mutual cooperation, like Arabic nationalism.)

In Urdu, the word *Qawm* (Nation) has been derived from Arabic with its original meaning which means the group of people, sect, family, cast and race.⁽⁵⁾ In English the word ‘Nation’ is used for *Qawm*, which has been derived from Latin word ‘*Nasci*’ which means take birth.⁽⁶⁾ So a group which is associated by birth with a territory is called nation. These meanings are found in western books as :“(Nation is) a breed of people or a racial group”.⁽⁷⁾ In this regard it is wrong to use word ‘nation’ for country or state since it isn’t compulsory that people living in a same country may be associated with the same region by birth. On this base Andrew Heywood considers nation a cultural gathering rather than a political gathering. He says that a nation is a cultural entity, a body of people bound together by a shared cultural heritage. It is not therefore, a

political association, nor is it necessarily linked to a particular territorial area. ⁽⁸⁾ From nation the concept of “nationalism” produces, which carries a joint facet on any base. American nationalist Carlton Hayes says: “In simplest terms, nationalism may be defined as fusion of patriotism with a consciousness of nationality.”⁽⁹⁾ To make his point more clear and elaborated Hayes says: “(Nationalism) derives from the Latin *Natio*, implying a common racial descent but few, if any, modern nationalities consist of a distinctive ‘race’ in the biological sense.” ⁽¹⁰⁾

Consequently, the term nation is not confined with a definite race but the people from different races, languages and religions living in one country can be called a nation. When the members of a nation consciously produce harmony regarding their race, language, religion and culture the sense of nationalism establishes. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, a well renowned scholar says that nationalism comes into existent with few things like race, language, geographic unity, traditions and religion. If a group of people shares these factors while they are conscious about these things then naturally they favor and empathize each other. They understand the feelings and sentiments of each other. They share others’ griefs, sorrows and joys. They think about their issues in a same way. ⁽¹¹⁾

Islamic Concept of Nationalism:

Islam is a natural religion. That’s why it does not deny the natural passions and factors of nationalism instead it identifies the true direction of these factors. Islam has a unique point of view about these factors. Islam neither does wholly acknowledge all the factors, nor does it accept them as they are. But Islam specifies their limits by bringing them into the domain of wisdom and nature. Otherwise, these factors can be harmful for the peace of society and can affect lives of people in adversely. Let’s have a review of natural factors of nationalism in the light of Qur’ān and Hadith.

1. Lineage/ Race:

People from the same race and lineage establish nationalism. They love and express sympathy for their nation by nature. Islam considers race and lineage a strong national link. That’s the reason Islam has forbidden cutting off relations. Race and lineage are not the sheer merits of uprightness or unrighteous. All the people are from one father Adam, and the distinction of nations, families, tribes, color and race are just for identification and introduction. Islam emphasizes to adopt only those principles for collective and political life which are assigned by Allah Almighty not those made by people with national and tribal prejudices. These facts have been narrated by Qur’ān and Sunnah in various forms. Allah Almighty says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾ (12)

(O people! Be careful of (your duty to) your lord, who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind) and spread from these two, many men and women; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, by whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship; surely Allah ever watches over you.)

According to *Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlahī* this verse depicts the fundamental principles upon which Islamic society is originated. Two things have been considered the base of mutual cooperation and sympathy; one is Allah Almighty who is the creator and other is blood relation which languishes at a stage but in fact it is common among the human being.⁽¹³⁾ Thus, lineage or tribe is not symbol of superiority or prejudice but piety is the only merit of being honorable and worthy. Qur’ān says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾ (14)

(O you men! Surely we have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty); surely Allah is Knowing, Aware.)

Ḥaḍrat Abū Ḥurayrah (R.A) quotes from Holy Prophet (PBUH) that at the time of creation of humans the *reḥm* (blood relation) stood and asked if that was the place where someone seeks Your refuge from cutting of relation? Almighty replied, yes! Are you not contented if I make relation with one who makes relation with you and cut off the ties of kinship with one cuts off with you? He replied, yes I am. Almighty said you are bestowed with this honor. Then Rasūl (PBUH) quoted these verses: “But if you held command, you were sure to make mischief in the land and cut off the ties of kinship! Those it whom Allah has cursed so He has made them deaf and blinded their eyes.”⁽¹⁵⁾

This Ḥadīth of Holly Prophet clearly depicts how immense the sin of qat rehm (Cut off relations) is! Allah has cursed those commit this and has made their hearts deaf and blind.

2. Language and Literature:

In construction of society Islam acknowledges the social and political importance of language and literature. But in lieu of seeing merely its national aspect, Islam considers it on ethical and moral basis to differentiate between its innocuous and nocuous, absolute and impure characteristics. *Quraysh* were proud of their language and race, so holy prophet (PBUH) nullified that. Considering the all human progeny of

Haḍrat Adam (A.S) neglected the immoral and illogical division of Arabs and non Arabs. Therefore, about one the greatest poets of Arab *Imrau'l Qays*, the Rasūl (PBUH) said, “*Imrau'l Qays* is the flag bearer of the poets of hell.”⁽¹⁶⁾

If Rasūl (PBUH) had seen him in a national point of view he might have appreciated him but the prophet (PBUH) considered the Islamic and moral aspect of his poetry.

3. Civilization and Traditions

In construction of society, Islam also acknowledges the significance of civilization and traditions of a nation but considers its moral and ethical value. *Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlahī* narrates that Islam justifies civilization and traditions on true merits then accordingly accepts or rejects. This merit is ethical and rational not national.⁽¹⁷⁾

Islam has its own moral system of civilization. The traditions contradicted to Islamic principles have no place in Islam. Therefore, it demolished the traditions of the dark ages and refined them with ethical values. Thus, Allah has condemned the illogical and non Islamic nexus with traditions and ways of life. Holy Qurān says:

﴿وَكَذَلِكَ مَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِنْ نَذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم مُّقْتَدُونَ﴾⁽¹⁸⁾

(And thus we did not send before you any warner in a town, but those who led easy lives in it said: surely we found our fathers on a course and surely we are followers of their footsteps.)

Islam is against the irrational deeds and blind following, hence condemns those perform rubbish. Without logic, argument or reference Islam doesn't acknowledge any tradition.

4. Motherland/ State

This is another important factor of nationalism. Sacrifice for motherland is martyrdom in Islam. But this is also a fact that motherland is not the merit of uprightness or unrighteous. *Amīn Iṣlahī* narrates that according to Islam human value is because of his intellectual and moral being not of his region. Therefore, Islam privileges his noetic and moral demands above all other demands. In case of contradiction between the demands of intellect and morality and the requisites of motherland, Islam goes with the demands of intellect and morality and rejects those of motherland.⁽¹⁹⁾ We see that owing to unfeasibility of fulfilling prerequisites of faith and ethics, Holy Prophet (PBUH) and his companions had to migrate to *Habshah* and *Madīnah*, leaving their own motherland. Allah Almighty says in Qurān:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا فِيمَ كُنْتُمْ قَالُوا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوا فِيهَا فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا﴾⁽²⁰⁾

(Surely (as for those) whom the angels cause to die while they are unjust to their souls, they shall say: In what state were you? They shall say: We were weak in the earth. They shall say: Was not Allah's earth spacious, so that you should have migrated therein? So these it is whose abode is hell, and it is an evil resort.)

So if someone hasn't freedom to act upon his religious traditions or he cannot protect his faith, he is supposed to migrate to a peaceful land. Migration to *Habshah* and *Madīnah* are its obvious examples.

To fight for the sake of country, its dignity and preservation is obligatory as per Islamic teachings. However the purpose must be seeking the glory of divine religion and contentment of Allah Almighty. Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: "One who fights for the glory of Allah's cause, fights in the way of Allah Almighty."⁽²¹⁾ *Qidhmān Bin Hārith*, fought severely in the battle of *Uḥud* and killed seven to eight pagans. People gratulated him of heaven. But he said, "By God, I fought for the sake of family honor." On hearing his words Rasūl (PBUH) said: "Surely he will be in hell."⁽²²⁾

In lieu of conferring humans in the limits of family, nation or state Islam wants to bond them in the chain of faith. That's why it was the Sunnah of Holy Prophet (PBUH) that he not only welcomed the people came from remote areas but also included them in his dear companions. *Ḥaḍrat Salmān* (R.A) from Persia, *Ḥaḍrat Bilāl* (R.A) from *Habshah* and *Ḥaḍrat Ṣuhayb* (R.A) from Rom are its explicit examples. Remarkably he considered *Salmān Farsi* (R.A) from his family; *Ahl-e-Bayt*.⁽²³⁾ These non Arabs had a special honor and respect in Rasūl's (PBUH) eyes. As *Ḥaḍrat Anas* (R.A) narrated that Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: "There are four men who proceeded (in the way of Islam); I myself from Arabia, *Salmān* from Persia, *Bilāl* from *Habshah*, *Ṣuhayb* from Rom."⁽²⁴⁾ The above three personalities i.e. *Salmān*, *Bilāl* and *Suhayb* (R.A) being the slaves were considered mean and humiliated in the non Muslim society and they were impecunious and destitute people. So, Rasūl (PBUH) gratified and respected them and never allowed any one to make them feel their weaknesses.

5. Religion

Religion is considered the most effective factor in making of nationalism. However, affected by national prejudices if religion abandons the natural principles of righteousness and justice or it becomes the collection of public worldly wishes instead of representing its original

duties and teachings Islam doesn't accept such a based nationalism. As *Amīn Aḥsan Islāhī* says that mostly the pagan's religions are based on public desires and prejudices. Although Judaism is a divine religion but its followers by making many modifications altered it into a national religion. ⁽²⁵⁾

In short, Islam wants to bond all humanity into one relation beyond the color, language, race, geographic borders, traditions and religion and that relation is brotherhood. Secondly, the nationalism that brings up through above factors is full of defects and flaws. So, merely these factors cannot become the base of a true nationalism. In this regard we can say that Islam itself is the base of nationalism. A person who embraces Islam spontaneously becomes the part of Islamic nationalism. In other words, in Islam the base of nationalism is Islamic principles and creeds not the factors mentioned above. This was the reason the central point of preaching of prophets (A.S) was faith in God and His oneness. Although they lived with above mentioned factors of nationalism but they always preferred the logical, natural and moral principles over these factors.

Qur'ānic Concept of Nationalism:

Qur'ān has used three terms for nationalism i.e. *Qawm, Millah and Ummah*. Here we will examine which term conveys the true meaning of nationalism.

1. Qawm (Nation)

For human assemblage the word *Qawm* has been used in deferent ways:

- i. For a group having definite point of view. For example: لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ، القوم الكافرين، القوم الظالمين etc.
- ii. For the followers of a prophet or subject of a king, as من بعد قوم نوح، من قوم فرعون etc.
- iii. For a group of people living in definite region:
(قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِ لُوطٍ) ⁽²⁶⁾
(They said: Fear not, surely we are sent to Loot's nation.)
- iv. For a group having definite ethnic and theoretic background:
(إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ) ⁽²⁷⁾
(I have forsaken the religion of people who do not believe in Allah)
- v. For a group having a separate sect or faith:
(وَمِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَىٰ أُمَّةٌ يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَبِهِ يَعْتَلُونَ) ⁽²⁸⁾

(And of Musa's people was a party who guided (people) with the truth, and thereby did they do justice.)

So, we can say that in holy Qur'ān the word *qawm* is never used in Islamic sense of nationalism that establishes on the base of faith and Islam. Instead it is used for a horde of people having a definite point of

view, culture and civilization or used for people subjugated by a constitution or kingship or it is used for the people of a particular region.

2. Millah (Millat)

The word *millah* (millat) has been used seventeen times in Qurān. Describing the meaning of *millah*, *Rāghib Aṣfahānī* says that *millah* is like religion; this is the name of *sharī'ah* that was introduced by Allah's prophets (A.S) so that people may seek His contentment. The difference between *millah* and religion is that *millah* can only be related to a prophet having *sharī'ah*.⁽²⁹⁾ In holy Qur'ān the word *millah* has been used in the meaning of religion. Almighty Says:

﴿وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُوا قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ﴾⁽³⁰⁾

(And they say: Be Jews or Christians, you will be on the right course. Say: Nay! (We follow) the religion of Abraham, the Ḥanīf, and he was not one of the polytheists.)

This verse shows that the nation of Haḍrat Abraham is a holy and pure path and religion and this way is pure from polytheism and any type of flaw. The word nation is also used for non-divine religion. Qurān narrates:

﴿وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِرُسُلِهِمْ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكُمْ مِّنْ أَرْضِنَا أَوْ لَتَعُوذُنَّ فِي مِلَّتِنَا﴾⁽³¹⁾

(And those who disbelieved said to their apostles: We will most certainly drive you forth from our land, or else you shall come back into our religion.)

This verse uses the word nation for the constitution and religion of polytheists. But the Qurān has emphasized that people should recognize the divine religion. So they have been insisted to follow the religion of Abraham (A.S) which is pure one.

﴿فَاتَّبِعُوا مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ﴾⁽³²⁾

(Therefore, follow the religion of Abraham, the upright one; and he was not one of the polytheists.)

Thus, all Muslims honor the religion of Abraham following the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The religion of Abraham (A.S) is pure from ethnic, regional, linguistic, cultural or other contradictions. Although the discussion shows that the word nation is used in the sense of religion, religion or righteousness but it is commonly used in the Muslim world for Islamic nationality or religious community. So, *Allāma Muhammad Iqbāl* uses the words '*qawm*' and '*millah*' as synonyms. He writes that I have used the word *millah* in the meaning of nation. Undoubtedly, this word in Arabic, particularly in Qurān has been used for religion and *sharī'ah*; however the present literature of Arabic, Persian and Turkish shows that

millah is also used for the people of the nation. So, in my writings I have used the word *millah* synonym of nation. ⁽³³⁾ In the same way a Western Scholar Andrew C. Hess ⁽³⁴⁾ has expressed his views. He writes that the world *millah* though basically employed to mean religion; later in Islamic history is extended to include ‘religious community’, i.e. the community of Islam. ⁽³⁵⁾

Regardless of the meaning of the term *millah*, this word refers to Islamic nationality and community. Because the Islamic religion is the true follower of the nation of Abraham (A.S) and it is his actual heir, and the ultimate purpose of the Allah Almighty is the religion of Abraham (A.S) should be followed.

iii. Ummah

In Arabic generally this word is used for nation, like *Al-’umamu’l Muttahidah* (United Nations) and *Al-’umamu’l Arabiyyah* (Arab League) etc. While for the citizens of a country the word *Sh’ab* is used. In Qurān, this word has been used for the sixty two times with different forms. *Allāma Muhammad Hussayn Tabā Tabāī* in his exegesis of Qurān narrates the four meanings of the word *’ummah*:

- i. It means group of people. Qurān narrates:

﴿كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً﴾ ⁽³⁶⁾

(All people were a single nation.)

- ii. The word *’ummah* refers to a human being, as Abraham (A.S) is called *’ummah* in this verse:

﴿إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ حَنِيفًا وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ﴾ ⁽³⁷⁾

(Surely, Abraham was a nation (*’ummah*), obedient to Allah, upright and he was not of the polytheists.)

- iii. *’Ummah* has also been used for a long period. Allah says:

﴿وَقَالَ الَّذِي نَجَا مِنْهُمَا وَادَّكَرَ بَعْدَ أُمَّةٍ أَنَا أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِتَأْوِيلِهِ فَأَرْسِلُونِ﴾ ⁽³⁸⁾

(And of the two (prisoners) he who had found deliverance and remembered after a long time said: I will inform you of its interpretation, so let me go.)

- iv. Another meaning of *’Ummah* is religion. Allah Almighty says:

﴿وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ﴾ ⁽³⁹⁾

(And surely this your religion is one religion and I am your Lord, therefore be careful (of your duty) to me.)

At another place it is narrated as:

﴿إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ﴾ ⁽⁴⁰⁾

(Surely this Islam is your religion, one religion (only), and I am your Lord, therefore serve me.)

Ṭabā Ṭabā further explains that the real meaning of *Ummah* is the first one and the rest of the meanings return towards it. Therefore, the last meaning is a *Muslim Ummah* who believes in Allah, worships and obeys Him. ⁽⁴¹⁾

Although this term is used parallel to Muslim *Ummah* but in Qur'ān, it is also given towards other nations like the word *Millah*. Qur'ān narrates:

﴿وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ فَمِنْهُمْ مَن هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَن حَقَّبْنَا عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةَ﴾ ⁽⁴²⁾

(And certainly We raised in every nation an apostle saying: Serve Allah and shun the *Shayṭān*. So there were some of them whom Allah guided and there were others against whom error was due.)

In this verse for every nation the word *Ummah* has been used which means general people. A famous orientalist Rudi Paret ⁽⁴³⁾ writes the definition of *Ummah*: “*Ummah* refers to ethical, linguistic or religious bodies of people who are the objects of the divine plan of salvation.” ⁽⁴⁴⁾

This definition also includes other religious and moral groups apart from Islam. Therefore the '*Ummah*' can not be literally specified with Islamic nationality. If the above definition is considered, we come to know that its application is not correct on the concept of Islamic nationality, because there is no status of any moral or ethnic group in the formation of Islamic nationality. But on the other hand, it seems that this word defines the Muslim nationalism as well. In Qur'ān, at one place this word is used purely to the Muslim '*Ummah*'. Almighty says:

﴿كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ﴾ ⁽⁴⁵⁾

(You are the best of the nations raised up for (the benefit of) men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and believe in Allah.)

The usage of this term for *Muslim 'Ummah* became apparent even when the Prophet (PBUH) laid the foundation of the first Islamic state in Madīnah. He established a new nation and formed a treaty between the '*Anṣār*', the refugees and the Jewish tribes of Madīnah, which is recognized as the first Islamic constitution of the State Medīnah. The initial words of this treaty were:

﴿بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ، هَذَا كِتَابٌ مِنْ مُحَمَّدٍ النَّبِيِّ بَيْنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ وَيَثْرِبَ وَمَنْ تَبِعَهُمْ فَلَاحِقٌ بِهِمْ وَجَاهِدٌ مَعَهُمْ، إِنَّهُمْ أُمَّةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ مِنْ دُونِ النَّاسِ﴾ ⁽⁴⁶⁾

(In the name of Allah, the merciful, and the beneficent. This agreement is between believers and Muslims of *Quraysh* and *Yathrib* (Madīnah), and those who followed and helped them; and tried together and surely they are one '*Ummah*.)

In the shape of this civil state of Madīnah, an outline of Islamic state was formed, in which *Rasūlullah* (PBUH) presented an ideal concept of Islamic nationality separated from all over the world. In its constitution, the citizens of the Islamic State, including the Jews and other non-Muslims were protected minority. About this Muslim 'Ummah an Iraqi scholar Majid Khaddūrī⁽⁴⁷⁾ writes that the conception of the 'umma or brotherhood constituted the basis of Islamic community in whose membership alone the believer obtains prosperity in this world and salvation in the next.⁽⁴⁸⁾ Allah Almighty also appreciated his Rasūl's (PBUH) by saying:

﴿مَلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا﴾
(49)

(The faith of your father Abraham; He named you Muslims before and in this.)

This is a very important aspect of Holy Prophet's life that he discouraged the tribal and contemporary concept of nationalism. Hence, he considered faith a fundamental point for the unity of Muslims. For the same purpose, Muhammad (SAW) set a relationship of brotherhood among the people of different nations and tribes. Therefore, it would not be untrue to say that the fights between a prophet of Quraysh and the polytheists' tribes of Quraysh were just to discourage the concept of tribalism and nationality. Because of faith and acceptance Islam, Quraysh had wronged the Muslims, therefore, they were ordered to fight against Quraysh. So in this regard the Muslim people neglected the national and tribal interests and prepared themselves on the basis of faith and monotheism against polytheists and pagan Arabs. This explicitly declares that at that time the faith of Muslims dominated all the factors of nationalism and tribalism and Islam achieved it course to triumph.

The Western Concept of Nationalism:

The basis of modern state is laid on four elements; area, population, sovereignty and government. Today, the society comprising these four boundaries is called a nation in political language. The Western concept of nationality is a kind of political affair that connects people with a particular state. For a long time the nationality in the west was based on ethnic, racial, and especially religious beliefs but renaissance of west and scientific revolution have changed the dimensions of nationalism. Instead of these factors, now all the importance has been given to the homeland in other words geographical boundaries. Therefore nationalism has become a political term now in the West. Therefore, modern scholars of west define nationalism in this way: "Nation is an imagined political community that is inherently limited and sovereign."⁽⁵⁰⁾

The nation is limited to its boundaries, outside of which other nations are populated. And being sovereign means no non-empire or non-government can claim the rule over them. British socialist Anthony Giddens defines nationalism as: “(Nation is) a set of institutional forms of governance maintaining an administrative monopoly over a territory with demarcated boundaries, its rule being sanctioned by law and direct control of the means of internal and external violence.”⁽⁵¹⁾

In fact science evolution has overwhelmed the feelings of protection and immunity among the nations on all other sentiments. Due to this, the nations now give more importance to geographical boundaries. Now generations, languages and traditions are not given as much importance as it is given to the rivers, seas, mountains and other natural defense citadel.

The Origin and Evolution of the Western Concept of Nationality:

Apparently the French Revolution (1789) is considered the origin of modern nationalism but the fact is that its seeds were sown by sociopolitical crisis over the years in Europe. Then it was grown up by *Reformation movement, Renaissance* and *Democracy*. The fight for power between the pope and the king ended on this public point of view that power was not of the two but the nation. So the nation must be motivated and organized to achieve their right of political power. For the basis of this movement, unity and integrity needed a spiritual passion, which came into force in the form of madness of nationality.

From this the concept of self-government originated. People themselves have right of sovereignty. This thought made them stand against dictatorships and tyrannies. American freedom (1776), French Revolution (1789) and battles of Napoleon (1792-1815) brought further swiftness in making the 19th century the century of evolution of nationalism. According to Andrew Heywood the nineteenth century was a period of nation building.⁽⁵²⁾ Hans Kohn, a European scholar of 20th century writes about the origin of nationalism that nationalism has been one of the determining forces in modern history. It organized in eighteenth-century Western Europe; during the nineteenth century it spread all over the Europe; in twentieth century it has become a world-wide movement.⁽⁵³⁾

So it is seen that at the end of the nineteenth century, national flags, national anthems, songs of patriotism, national holidays and national languages as the source of education were caught up in the world. This further strengthened the western concept of nationality. In this regard Heywood writes, ‘Such nationalism became increasingly chauvinistic and xenophobic.’⁽⁵⁴⁾ So every nation started crossing its limits by raising the

slogans of their superior attributes, and Europe started the advent of neo-colonial expansion. Weak nations were subjugated. At the beginning of the 20th century half of the world was under European dominance and by the middle, millions of humans became victims of two world wars. Heywood says that nationalism was therefore a powerful factor leading to war in both 1914 and 1939. ⁽⁵⁵⁾

The Reasons of National Movement in the West:

During the 18th century the concept of nationalism in the West produced due to the following factors:

- i. People were disturbed by the feudal system, because of which the rights of farmers and laborers were being exploited heavily.
- ii. People wanted to get rid of the monopoly of the churches that had been imposed on them in the name of religion.
- iii. People wanted a free and equitable part of the rights. Therefore, the basic human rights movements began and the slogan of the public sovereignty was lifted by snatching the right from Sultan.

If examined minutely the above reasons and motives for movement of nationalism are not present in Islam because the power and leadership in Islam is of *Sharī'ah* and law. People have equal rights and obligations. The owner of the supreme power is Allah Almighty whose law is equal for everyone.

Features of Western Nationality and Islamic perspective:

The modern concept of nationality has been found in itself under such basic features that have imposed bad effects on the ideas of religion. Following are some of its features and Islamic perspective about them.

1. The concept of nationalism is a matter of secular thinking. It demands the separation between religion and state. As Egyptians also had a rule that religion belonged to God, but the country or state belonged to the people.⁽⁵⁶⁾ Alī Abdu'l Razzāq (1888-1966), a well-known author of Egypt, writes that today the governments are based on national and national interests, not on the religious interests. Islam is a global and universal religion on the other hand, and invites people to its original beliefs so that they believe in him. However, if politics is also a component of its fundamental belief, then it will be contradictory to its global and universal status, since it has not come to Islam that it is necessary that all the people of the world come under a political union. ⁽⁵⁷⁾

It clearly means that religion is a private matter, which has nothing to do with collective affairs nor does it have the right to intervene in that matter. The Western concept of nationality denies religion's claim that it

can be a fundamental element of mutual unity and political unity rather, it weakens national solidarity. On the other hand, Western nationality teaches us that the only source of mutual unity is that people keep their respective regional, ethnic and linguistic identity. Owing to these reasons, nationalism encourages secularism and it legitimate to sacrifice the religion and everything that is more dangerous for national unity and solidarity. ⁽⁵⁸⁾

But Islam is a religion which has no concept of separation of religion and world or religion and state. As Islam has given instructions related to our personal life, it has also given instructions related to our collective and political life. Therefore, it is not possible for such type of multi dimensional religion to allow anything to be the base of nationalism other than itself.

2. Nationality is a merit to examine the loyalty and sincerity of the nation. To see the goodness and loyalty of a nation, it is seen that he is dedicated to the sincere and nationalist spirit with his homeland. Therefore, in order to maintain this feature, the nation should maintain its relationship with its history and culture. As Hans Kohn says that nationalism is a state of mind, in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due to the nation-state. A deep attachment to one's native soil, to local traditions and to established territorial authorities has existed in varying strength throughout history. ⁽⁵⁹⁾

Love of motherland is a natural passion that is found in every human being but every living spirit. Love of country seems to be a natural and divine demand in some hadiths as one narrated by *Hadrat Anas* (R.A) that whenever the Rasūl (PBUH) came from a journey, he felt happy to see the high places of Madīnah and moved camels fast towards it, and if there was another animal. ⁽⁶⁰⁾

Allāmah Badru'Dīn 'Ayni says that this tradition is a clear indication of the grandeur of Madīnah and patriotism and its legacy. ⁽⁶¹⁾ Ibn Abī Ḥaṭīm in his exegesis of Qur'ān writes that when the Holy Prophet (PBUH) came out of Mecca and reached the house of Jaḥfah, he got a break on Mecca, so Allah revealed this verse to him, "Surely He who has made the Qurān binding on you will bring you back to the destination to Mecca". ⁽⁶²⁾

Such traditions show that love of motherland is a natural requisite. However, this is a very important point to know that people often do not understand that the love of motherland and nationalism are two different things. Nationalism is that one's country is the merit of righteous and unrighteous, not the Allah's guidance. This is a form of polytheism and Islam also undermines and opposes it, as the rest of the forms of

polytheism. It does not mean that we can't love our country but giving homeland importance equally or even greater than religion is not appropriate for any Muslim.

3. One of the characteristics of nationality is that it has tribal, ethnic, regional prejudice as well as greediness; it also has feelings of superiority over other nations. Or in other words nationality is a modern form of ancient tribal prejudice. As *Ibn Khaldūn* also has the same theory that the prejudice is the primary element of nationality. ⁽⁶³⁾ Before Islam, Arabs used to live in the tribes. Their sense of prejudice was severe in relation to their own nations. But Islam challenged this contemporary spirit and announced that division of humans in tribes and races was intentionally done by Allah Almighty so that they could recognize each other not to show superiority over other people. Superior is only one who fears Allah.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾ ⁽⁶⁴⁾

(O you men! Surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty); surely Allah is Knowing, Aware.)

In his last sermon Holy Prophet (PBUH) said, “O people! Your Lord is one and you are all children of Adam. Behold! None of the Arab is superior to non Arab or non Arab to Arab. Neither the white is superior to black nor the black to white; except one who fears Allah.”⁽⁶⁵⁾ In a tradition that during the Battle of 'Uḥud, a young Iranian Muslim soldier proudly attacked the infidel, saying, “This is my sword and I am an Iranian.” By listening to this, Rasūl (PBUH) thought that such words would raise the national sentiment in the Muslims. So he stressed that young man should be proud of religion rather than his nationality.⁽⁶⁶⁾ Once Holy Prophet (PBUH) condemned national prejudice by saying that he is not one of us who invites to prejudices or fights and dies for prejudice. ⁽⁶⁷⁾

So the blood relations, tribes, nations or languages are not the means of pride and honor. But rather in the sight of Rasūlullah (PBUH) man's faith, his behavior with others and piety can make him superior in society.

These points show that nationalism is not only related to human emotions, but it is also a philosophy and ideology. But Islam does not legitimate such feelings and passions for Muslims. On the other hand Islam also supports the positive aspects of nationalism, which can

influence the good effects of human society. For example, a positive aspect of nationalism is that it establishes an atmosphere of harmony and love between people of the same nation. Similarly, people of the same nation have good relationships due to the mutual understanding. If these national sentiments are well-represented, there arise love, emotions and mutual support in people for their homeland. People participate in various departments of education, skills, science and technology and thus contribute to the development of the country. These are the positive aspects of nationalism that Islam also encourages.

Conclusion:

We can say that nationalism is a modern form of tribalism. In fact, nationalism is love with nation, loyalty to one's country, awareness about one's connection with his history, and sense of commitment with one's shared heritage. This feeling plays an important role in maintaining its identity, introduction and integrity. But when this passion of nationalism crosses its limits and instead of protecting itself, transforms into madness of superiority; instead of fulfilling its interests and goals when it holds lust and arrogance it transforms into a source of fire for community. Everywhere the rule of hatred and chaos prevails, as we saw in worlds wars.

The factors like language, race, civilization, traditions, geographical conditions, homeland and religion shape nationalism. Till they are in a particular circle Islam does not object on them. Which of these factors corresponds to the wisdom and nature Islam accepts them and where deviation from wisdom and nature is found, Islam prevents them. However, there is no doubt that the nationalism based only on these grounds, is always very narrow, as it is explicit in history. It does not have any scientific approach to seeing and testing matters. Apart from their people, there are emotions of hatred and jealousy for other humans. The passion of national prejudice becomes the merit of righteous and falsehood. Decisions are made on the basis of nationalism instead of justice and truth. The peak of this passion is that they know very clearly the Prophet of Allah and he becomes known to them as they recognize their own offspring but they refuse to accept him just because Allah did not send from their nation. Therefore, at any level in any form there is a flaw in the factors of nationalism. That is why Islam does not acknowledge them deliberately.

Then what is the basis of nationalism near Islam? The answer is that the basis of nationalism in Islam is Islam itself. Whoever accepts Islam is a part of Islamic nationalism. And whoever does not accept Islam can not be a part of Islamic nationalism. This fact is so clear that there is no way of doubt.

So, all the problems of humanity, individual or collective, can be found in the light of the Qurān and *Sunnah*. Muslims should have to destroy the idol of western nationalism and strengthen the rope of God in the light of Qurān and *Sunnah*. Hence, they need to adopt brotherhood, sympathy and mutual love and cooperation among themselves so that the Muslim 'Ummah takes the course to progress and honor, as this right path is the surety of its security and survival.

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