

Research Paper

Analyzing the Influence of the Rulers on People's Religiosity with an Emphasis on the Story of Prophet Moses and Pharaoh

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Abstract

The fact that in many societies, the rulers determined the cultural direction of the societies is undeniable; however, the historical facts show that despite having righteous leaders, some societies have continued their deviant path, and in some other societies, despite the extensive and long-term efforts of corrupt leaders for deviating the society, people were less influenced by their indoctrination and kept their original beliefs. The current research was carried out through a descriptive-analytical method, followed a problem-oriented approach, and used library sources to collect data. Although many narrations indicate the positive and negative role of the rulers in the religiosity of the people, according to the narrations that mention several factors for reforming or corrupting peoples' culture, this conclusion comes from the sum of these two categories of narrations that the ruler is not the only factor of leading or corrupting people, and other factors sometimes neutralize the influence of rulers. In the Holy Qur'an, Pharaoh is referred to as a cruel ruler, and Pharaoh's invitation to the religion before peoples' invitation, Moses' request from Pharaoh for the liberation of the Israelites, and the role of the ruler's facilities in guiding or misleading people are some of the characteristics and behaviors of Prophet Moses with Pharaoh, which are mentioned in the Qur'an, and prevented peoples' interest in the religion or made it difficult.

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1. Introduction

The fact that in many societies, the rulers determined the cultural direction of the societies is undeniable; however, the historical facts show that despite having righteous leaders, some societies have continued their deviant path, and in some other societies, despite the extensive and long-term efforts of corrupt leaders for deviating the society, people were less influenced by their indoctrination and efforts and kept their original beliefs. The current research was carried out through a descriptive-analytical method and followed a problem-oriented approach. To collect and analyze data, the researchers used library sources and examined Islamic texts and resources, and most importantly, the Qur'an, which, according to Muslims, is sent by God and there is no deficiency in it.

According to Muslims, one of the corrupt rulers whose story is told in the Qur'an for Muslims to learn a lesson and not follow him is Pharaoh. This study considered the story of Pharaoh as a model of a corrupt government's behavior and examined the verses related to it. The whole story of Moses and Pharaoh, which is the main theme of this research, has not been discussed in this study; rather it has focused on the scenes in which the Holy Qur'an describes Pharaoh's confrontation with the people or his role in leading people astray. It is also worth noting that besides these verses, other verses which were cited in the Qur'an about the ruling of the Taghut (Taghut is someone who not only rebels against God but transgresses his will) and not following the Taghut have also been examined. However, the story of Pharaoh as a symbol of a corrupt government has been focused more in this study.

2. Method

Document research and library methods, in which note-taking techniques are used, are very helpful for conducting such research. Therefore, the document research method has been used to collect data about the study's topics. The research method was descriptive analysis.

3. Findings

In several parts of the story of Prophet Moses and Pharaoh, the Holy Quran describes the effects of government on people:

1. The influence of the living and social environment:

"When they are told, 'Follow what Allah has sent down,' they say, 'No, We will follow what we have found our fathers following.' What, even if their fathers neither exercised their reason nor were guided?!" (Al-Baqarah, verse 170), "When they are told, 'Come to what Allah has sent down and [come] to the Apostle,' they say, 'Sufficient for us is what we have found our fathers following.' What, even if their fathers did not know anything and were not guided?!" (Surah Al-Ma'idah, verse 104), "When they commit an indecency, they say, 'We found our fathers practicing it, and Allah has enjoined it upon us.' Say, 'Indeed Allah does not enjoin indecencies. Do you attribute to Allah what you do not know?'" (Al-A'raf, verse 28).

2. Compulsion and reluctance:

"There is no compulsion in religion: rectitude has become distinct from error. So one who disavows fake deities and has faith in Allah has held fast to the firmest handle for which there is no breaking; and Allah is all-hearing, all-knowing." (Al-Baqarah, verse 256), "It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them; had you been

harsh and hardhearted, they would have surely scattered from around you. So excuse them and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs, and once you are resolved, put your trust in Allah. Indeed Allah loves those who trust in Him.” (Al Imran, verse 159), “Allah does not task any soul beyond its capacity. Whatever [good] it earns is to its own benefit, and whatever [evil] it incurs is to its own harm. ‘Our Lord! Take us not to task if we forget or make mistakes! Our Lord! Do not place upon us a burden as You placed on those who were before us! Our Lord! Do not lay upon us what we have no strength to bear! Excuse us, forgive us, and be merciful to us! You are our Master, so help us against the faithless lot!’” (Al-Baqarah, verse 286).

3. The behavior of religious missionaries and politicians:

“O you who have faith! Indeed many of the scribes and monks wrongfully eat up the people’s wealth, and bar [them] from the way of Allah. Those who treasure up gold and silver, and do not spend it in the way of Allah, inform them of a painful punishment” (At-Tawbah, verse 34), “So woe to them who write the Book with their hands and then say, ‘This is from Allah,’ that they may sell it for a paltry gain. So woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn!” (Al-Baqarah, verse 79), “O People of the Book! Do not exceed the bounds in your religion, and do not attribute anything to Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only an apostle of Allah, and His Word that He cast toward Mary and a spirit from Him. So have faith in Allah and His apostles, and do not say, ‘[God is] a trinity.’ Relinquish [such a creed]! That is better for you. Allah is but

the One God. He is far too immaculate to have any son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth, and Allah suffices as trustee.” (An-Nisa, verse 171).

4. Livelihood situation and religious apostasy:

“Satan frightens you of poverty and prompts you to [commit] indecent acts.” (Al-Baqarah, verse 268), “that nothing belongs to man except what he strives for,” (An-Najm, verse 39).

5. Providing religious and social health:

“Those who, if we granted them power in the land, will maintain the prayer, give the zakat, bid what is right and forbid what is wrong. And with Allah rests the outcome of all matters.” (Al-Hajj, verse 41).

6. The influence of media on people’s tendencies:

“But the elite of the faithless from among his people said, ‘This is just a human being like you, who seeks to dominate you. Had Allah wished, He would have sent down angels. We never heard of such a thing among our forefathers.’” (Al-Mu’minun, verse 24), “and [they would] say, ‘Shall we abandon our gods for a crazy poet?’” (As-Saffat, verse 36), “They consider it odd that there should come to them a warner from among themselves, and the faithless say, ‘This is a magician, a mendacious liar.’” (Sad, verse 4), “Do they say, ‘He has fabricated it?’ Say, ‘Then bring ten surahs like it, fabricated, and invoke whomever you can, besides Allah, should you be truthful.’” (Hud, verse 13).

7. Rulers and leaders of society:

“She said, ‘Indeed when kings enter a town, they devastate it, and make the

mightiest of its people the weakest. That is how they act.” (An-Naml, verse 34)

Then, the story of Pharaoh has been analyzed carefully and the things that the Quran says about Pharaoh and his rule have been fully investigated.

4. Conclusion

Although many narrations indicate the positive and negative role of the rulers in the religiosity of the people, according to the narrations that mention several factors for reforming or corrupting peoples' culture, this conclusion comes from the sum of these two categories of narrations that the ruler is not the only factor of leading or corrupting people, and other factors sometimes neutralize the influence of rulers. In the Holy Qur'an, Pharaoh is referred to as a cruel ruler, and Pharaoh's invitation to the religion before peoples' invitation, Moses' request from Pharaoh for the liberation of the Israelites, and the role of the ruler's facilities in guiding or misleading people are some of the characteristics and behaviors of Prophet Moses with Pharaoh, which are mentioned in the Qur'an and prevented peoples' interest in the religion or made it difficult.

The effect of the government on the religiosity or religious apostasy of the people is completely accepted and has been mentioned in various jurisprudence and interpretation topics; however it is clear from the narrations that the ruler is not the only factor in leading or corrupting people, but other factors can sometimes neutralize the ruler's influence. Despite accepting the fact that in many societies, it was the rulers who determined the cultural direction of societies, historical

facts show that in some societies, regardless of having righteous leaders, the society continued its deviant path and in some other societies, despite the extensive and prolonged efforts of corrupt leaders for deviating people, they were less influenced by the leaders' indoctrination and retained their original beliefs.

Therefore, in the past, when all the military, economic, and cultural facilities and information were at the disposal of the governments, the role of the rulers in determining the cultural direction of the society was prominent, but today with the presence of commercial companies with wider financial circulation than some governments and the expansion of information tools that crossed the borders, the possibility of the positive and negative influence of the rulers on peoples' cultural movement has decreased.

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