

## THE SPIRIT OF HIJRAH AND ITS REVIVAL IN MODERN TIMES

Hijrah has two different aspects which should distinctively be dealt with. As a philosophical concept and religious institution, it is as old as the process of Divine Revelation and Prophethood itself. As an event which took place in Arabia in 622 A.D., it has a historical and cultural significance. The present article is designed mainly to throw light on the first aspect of 'Hijrah'.

Hijrah was the most important event in the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him !) so much so that the *Sahabah* (companions) were unanimous in adopting this event to mark the beginning of the new Islamic era. When during the days of Caliph Umar, the matter of adopting an independent Calendar for the Islamic State came up for consideration, such other important events as the Holy Prophet's birth and his receiving the first 'Revelation' were dismissed in favour of the 'Hijrah'. This clearly shows that neither the birth of the Holy Prophet nor the beginning of the Revelation can surpass the Hijrah event in its historical importance or in its ideological, social, political and cultural impact on the history of mankind.

The real meaning and significance of Hijrah has not been fully understood. The Western scholars have generally used the term 'Migration' for 'Hijrah'. Sometimes they interpret it as 'Flight' to save one's life and honour. Some Muslim writers tend to use the term 'March' or 'Long March' for this historic event. But even a cursory glance over the details of Hijrah preserved by the most authentic sources and the usage of the word in Arabic literature and poetry as well as in the Quran and the Hadith would contradict the assertion that it was either 'Flight' or 'March' to save life, property or any thing of the like. There is enough evidence in the record of the Hijrah to reject such an interpretation.

The historical evidence at our disposal proves beyond doubt that



Hijrah was never made out of fear or for any worldly gain. It was a Long March towards the achievement for the first time in human history, of true freedom, justice and human equality. It was to denounce all the false and unnatural bases of human society and civilization, to deny the race and blood-relationship as the foundation of human society and to reject common territory and land as the binding force of State. It is to be noted that the root *hajara* from which the word *Hijrah* has been derived, literally means to abjure, to renounce, to part with something with contempt.

As a socio-political concept, the Hijrah has a manifold significance. As a historical event, the Hijrah has a greater importance. It has rightly been regarded by some writers as the greatest *mu'jizah* (miracle) of the Holy Prophet. Its results changed the direction of human history within a few decades. It heralded a new world order in the establishment of an 'Ideal State' and an ideal society, in the realization of a just and equitable system of life.

The Sahabah were not unmindful of this significance of the Hijrah. In the 17th year of Hijrah, there arose the need for adopting an Islamic calendar. Under of the leadership of Caliph Umar, the Sahabah unanimously decided to begin the calendar from the year of the Hijrah. In his address on this occasion, Caliph 'Umar declared that it was the Hijrah which had created a distinction between Truth and Falsehood; it had ushered in an era of honour, prestige and ascendancy of Islam; and it had marked the beginning of free practising of the tenets (*sha'a'ir*) of Islam.

It is to be recognized that Hijrah is a must for the cultural expression of Islam. If an Islamic community is unable to find a venue for its cultural expression in a given society, the Muslims have to be in search of some other place where they would freely express and practice their ideology into the norms of culture and civilization. This is the meaning of freely practising the *Sha'a'ir* (signs) and symbols of Islam. Islam is an ideology which requires for its perfect and practical manifestation a society which is sustained by an ideological State. Like any other state, the Islamic State has its own *Sha'a'ir*, the symbol which should be honoured and venerated. The Holy Quran says:

“وَمَنْ يَعْظَمْ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ”

“Whosoever honours and respects the *Sha'a'ir* of Allah, it is due to fear of God in their hearts”.

Explaining the term *Sha'a'ir*, Qurtubi says: “Among the *sha'a'ir* of Allah, are the distinguished signs of God and the places of His



worship; it is the plural of *sha'irah*. *Sha'ā'ir*, also means those places of worship which have made the *shi'ār* or signs and symbols of God for the humanity. *Shi'ār* literally means sign and symbol". Another commentator of the Holy Quran, Ata ibn Abi Rabah, says that all the commandments and prohibitions are the *sha'ā'ir* of Allah. According to Hasan al-Basri, the entire *Din* (system of life) of God is His '*shi'ār*. It is significant to note that the term *Sha'ā'ir*, has occurred four times in Holy Quran, and the relevant verses and 'surahs' are those which were revealed in Madinah, *i.e.*, after Hijrah. This clearly shows that the establishment and respect of God's *Sha'ā'ir*, can only be possible after Hijrah.

The institution of Hijrah is to be seen in the context of the entire Islamic philosophy of 'Da'wah' and 'Jihad'. Islam enjoins upon every believer to persistently struggle for the establishment of the Quranic social order and to live according to the life-pattern propounded by the Quran and its great transmitter. This life long struggle is termed in the Quran as the Jihad. In case the evil forces stand in the way of the establishment of this just order, the believers should offer the fullest possible resistance and if no other alternative is left, they should declare war against it. The evil which comes in the way of Truth is termed in the Quran as TAGHUT, and the Muslims are commanded to reject it and to condemn it. The abjuration of the *taghut* is one of the important aspects of both the Hijrah and the Jihad.

The dimensions of the institution of Jihad may be briefly dealt with here, so that its relation with Hijrah becomes clear. According to Shah Wali Allah, the best and the most perfect system of life is the one which provides for the institution of Jihad, and which connotes an all-out struggle in the way of God. Also every act done to ensure safety and integrity of Islamic State and society and to propagate the teachings of Islam, is an act of Jihad and of worship. According to Hazrat Ali: "The most ideal kind of Jihad is to enjoin the good in the society, and the extermination of evil constitutes the best kind of Jihad". The Prophet once said to Hassān b. Thabit: "O Hassān! Satire the infidels; Gabriel is with you. While my companions fight with weapons, you fight with your tongue". It means that poetic and literary pursuits in the defence of Islam, are acts of Jihad, just as the fighting is in the battlefield.

Ja'far Sadiq has cited a number of reports which establish that to safeguard the integrity of the family institution is also an act of Jihad, because 'family' is the basic unit of Islamic society. Bukhari has also



quoted a Hadith in this context. Ja'far Sadiq also reports: "The one who strives to earn for the living of his family from lawful sources is like one who makes Jihad in the way of Allah". He further reports: "The Jihad of the women is their good and excellent married life". A Hadith cited by Bukhari supports this meaning: "A man came to the Messenger of Allah (P. B. O. H.) and sought his permission for (participating) in Jihad, The Holy Prophet said: "Are your parents alive?" He replied, "yes!" The Prophet said: "Then make Jihad in serving them". Abu Bakar declared in his first speech after assuming office of the caliph: "No one among you should give up Jihad: because whichever nation gives up Jihad, God imposes upon it humiliation, contempt and disgrace".

Jihad also meets human tendency for renunciation of material world. Some People would often develop an urge, in the ecstasy of their religious zeal, to lead a monastic life. Islam satisfies this urge within a natural limit. Fasting, *I'tikāf* and Jihad, *inter alia*, meet the same urge. If one develops an urge to live some time in perfect devotion to God, he should go out for Jihad. In this case his monasticism contributes to the well being of his society and the mankind at large; otherwise its effect would be limited to the monk himself. Anas reports that the Holy Prophet said: "Every people has some (kind of) monasticism: of our people (the Muslims), it is Jihad in the way of Allah". According to another report, a man came to the Holy Prophet and asked for his permission to leave his home and kith and kin for his spiritual purification, and for the suppression of his self by forcing it to part with pleasures etc. To this the Prophet replied:

ان سياحة امتي الجهاد في سبيل الله

(The way-faring of my people is the Jihad in the way of Allah!)

Hijrah constitutes an important phase in the process of Jihad. They are complementary of each other. Hijrah is not an escape from difficulties and hardships; it is going in search of a place and atmosphere more suitable for the advancement of the Islamic cause, more receptive of the Islamic call, and more conducive to the success of the prophetic mission.

After the conquest of Mecca some people thought that Hijrah was no more required and that the institution of Hijrah had become a bygone phenomenon. When this assertion reached the Holy Prophet, he corrected it. Ahmad b. Hanbal reports on the authority of a number of the companions of the Holy Prophet that they disputed among themselves the point whether the institution of Hijrah existed after the conquest of Mecca or not. Someone from amongst them went to the Messenger of



Allah and said: "O Messenger of Allah: some people say that the Hijrah has discontinued." The Prophet replied: "The Hijrah cannot be discontinued as long as there is the Jihad".

Abu Da'ud also reported a Hadith from Hazrat Mu'awiyah who heard the Holy Prophet saying: "The Hijrah cannot discontinue as long as *tawbah* (repentance) is not discontinued: and *tawbah* will not discontinue as long as the sun does not rise from the west". It is significant to note that Abu Da'ud has cited this Hadith under *Abwab al-Jihad*; it implies that the Muhaddith considers the Hijrah as an important chapter and phase of Jihad: the one will continue as long as the other continues.

Apart from Jihad, the institution of Hijrah has also a close relation with Hajj. There are a number of similarities between the two. Both are manifestations of the Islamic spirit of universalism; both are institutional expressions of the spirit of sacrifice inculcated in the Islamic ideology. On a number of occasions the Holy Prophet referred to similarities between Hajj and Jihad. Said he:

—'What a good *Jihad* is the Hajj!'

—'Hajj is a (kind of) *Jihad* for the weak one.'

—'The Jihad of the old, the weak and the women, is Hajj and Umrah.'

### The Spirit of Hijrah

The following are the main points inculcated in the philosophy and message of Hijrah:

- (i) Sacrifice.
- (ii) Sincerity.
- (iii) Spiritual purification.
- (iv) Humanitarianism.

(i) SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE. The spirit of sacrifice permeates the whole concept of Hijrah. The Hadith literature has preserved a number of examples of sacrifice of life, wealth, property and prestige made by the companions of the Holy Prophet. One of the companions expressed his sentiments and those of others in these words:

تركت اهلى و مالى مهاجراً الى الله

"I have left my kith and kin and my property making the Hijrah towards God".

This clearly shows that Hijrah is never made towards a particular place or a country; it is always *towards God*. Its basis is spiritual not corporal. The Sahabah renounced all material affiliations and parted with their wealth, property, homes and lands in their way to God. It is common knowledge that Mus'ab b. Umair was one of the wealthiest



traders of Mecca. When he made Hijrah to Madinah, he left all his wealth in Mecca and passed his whole life in great difficulties.

In a Hadith, Khabbab reports: 'We made Hijrah with the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) seeking the pleasure of Allah, the Most Blessed and the Most High. Our reward had thus become incumbent upon God. Among us were people who passed away and had no opportunity to taste their reward (in this world). Mus'ab b. Umair was one of them. He was killed on the day of Uhud, without having any thing in which we could shroud him. We had only a small piece of cloth; if we tried to cover his head, his legs and feet remained uncovered. Seeing this, the Holy Prophet ordered to cover his head and to put some grass on his legs.'

Such were the examples of sacrifice set by the first Muhajirs in the history of Islam. They left their wealth, property, homes and houses for the sake of God's pleasure and in the way of truth, justice, freedom and equality. A historian reports the destitute condition of the houses and property of Muslim emigrants in Mecca in these words:

Once Utbah, Abbas and Abu Jahl passed by the house of Ibn Rabi'ah after its closure; because its owner, his wife and his brother, Ahmad, a blind man, had migrated to Madinah. Utbah saw the house deserted with waving doors and without any resident. When he saw that the wind was the only thing whistling in the house he exclaimed: 'Every house, though it remains peaceful for long, is bound one day to face disasters and catastrophes'.

(ii) SINCERITY OF PURPOSE. Hijrah is the manifestation of a Muslim's sincerity for his mission, his cause and his *Din*. Sincerity to a cause is the natural corollary of faith and belief in the righteousness of the cause. If one has firm conviction in the truthfulness of one's mission, one will naturally be sincere to it. The degree of conviction determines the degree of sincerity and *vice versa*. In a well-known Hadith, Umar reports that he heard the Messenger of Allah saying: "Verily! All acts are based on intentions. Every one would get what he had intended. Therefore, whose Hijrah was (intended) towards Allah and His Prophet, his Hijrah will be towards Allah and His Prophet; and whose Hijrah was meant for achieving worldly gain or marrying a woman, his Hijrah will be considered to have been made towards what he had intended to be".

If the Hijrah is made with a full conviction of God's presence, He sends His *sakinah* upon the Muhajir. When Abu Bakr was accompanying the Holy Prophet during the Hijrah, he was tempted



to feel grief and fear; thereupon the Holy Prophet told him: "Don't be sad! Allah is with us!" and God sent His *sakinah* on him. According to Hirawi, *sakinah* is a spiritual experience comprising three states: *Nur*, *Quwwah* and *Ruh*. 'Nur' is a state which illuminates the heart and enables it to grasp the 'Proofs of Faith', the realities of true conviction: *i.e.*, the difference between the Truth and the Falsehood, between true guidance and the delusion, and between scepticism and conviction becomes clear on him. 'Quwwah' (power, force) is an energy which generates determination and resolution to face the difficulties that rise in the way of a mission. 'Ruh' (spirit) engenders life and freshness in the heart.

(iii) SPIRITUAL PURIFICATIONS. Hijrah is a great contributing factor to the spiritual purification of muhajir, as it keeps him away from evil. A true 'muhajir' is never supposed to indulge in any act forbidden by God. When a Muslim leaves his home, kith and kin for the sake of God's pleasure only, he acquires spiritual and psychological force which enables him to overcome all his difficulties. If a man does not part with evils, his Hijrah is useless as far as its results are concerned. The Holy Prophet made this point clear on many occasions. We quote a few 'Sayings' (*Ahadith*) in this regard:

Abdullah b. 'Amr b. al-'As reports that a well-wrapped and outspoken beduin came to the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and said to him: "O Messenger of Allah! Tell us about the Hijrah; is it made towards you wherever you be? Or is to a particular nation? Or to a particular land? Or will it discontinue after you pass away?". The reporter says that the Messenger of God kept silent for a while and then said:

"Where is the one who was asking?" He replied: "That was myself, O Messenger of God." The Prophet, then, said: "Hijrah is that you denounce all shameful deeds, whether they are obvious and visible or they are hidden and invisible; that you establish the prayers and pay the Zakat. (If you had done this) then you are a muhajir though your death takes place in your own city.

A man asked (the Holy Prophet): "O Messenger of Allah, which Hijrah is the most excellent?" The Prophet replied: "(The most excellent Hijrah is) that you denounce and part with what your Lord is not pleased with. And Hijrah is of two kinds: the Hijrah of one who actually migrates to the city of Islam, and the Hijrah of the inhabitant of the desert (who does not prefer to settle down in the city). The Hijrah of the latter is that he should



respond to the call whenever made and follow the commandments. But the former is better in reward”.

Another brief *Hadith* epitomises what has been discussed:

“The (true) muhajir is he who denounces the evil, and then keeps aloof from it”.

However, the denunciation of material and worldly affiliations does not mean an escape from worldly responsibilities. Hijrah is not the name of fleeing from duties and responsibilities. The following *Hadith* throws more light on this important aspect of the Hijrah:

A man came to the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: “Oh Messenger of Allah! I possess some camels and I intend to make the Hijrah; what do you order me to do? The Prophet asked him, “Do you give away (to people) from it”? He said”, “Yes”. The Prophet then asked, “Do you pay its Zakat also?” He said, “Yes.” The Prophet then replied: “Go and work even overseas; God will never put you in loss for any of your (good) deeds. And remember that the position of the Hijrah is rigorous.

In view of these *Ahadith* (Sayings) Muslim scholars have underlined the two main aspects of the Hijrah, viz. the outwardly (*Zahirah*) and the inwardly (*batinah*).

Discussing these aspects, Hafiz Ibn Hajar Asqalani says:

“The inwardly Hijrah means the renunciation of all the evil temptations of the self and the Satan. The outwardly Hijrah is to save the religion from calamities, by moving from one place to another. The ‘muhajirs’ addressed by such foregoing *Ahadith* so that they may not contend with merely moving out of their homes, but may also comply with the commandments and prohibitions of the *Shari‘ah*”.

(iv) HUMANITARIANISM. Universalism, humanitarianism and Hijrah are closely related to each other. Islam as a *Din* is meant to be professed and practised by the whole mankind. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) was sent as a Mercy unto the Worlds: his task was to warn mankind of their duty towards their Creator and towards their fellow beings. The relationship between humanitarianism and Hijrah becomes clearer in the institution of *Muwākhāt* (Brotherhood). Hijrah strengthens the bonds of brotherhood which potentially cover the whole mankind. It was because of the excellence of Hijrah that the Holy Prophet said: “If there had been no Hijrah, I would have been a man from amongst the Ansar.” Explaining this *Hadith*, the well-known



commentator Qastalani says that the Holy Prophet meant that: 'but for the Hijrah, I would have affiliated myself to your city, Medinah; or I would have adopted your name and associated myself to you according to the system of tribal alliance. But the distinction of Hijrah took the priority and prevented me from doing so, because it is supreme, most exalted, and most sublime, and cannot be replaced by any other (distinction).'

### HIJRAH IN THE MODERN AGE

Hijrah is an obligatory duty of every individual Muslim with all its meanings and implications. Qadi Abu Bakr ibn al-Arabi says that the 'Hijrah is still an obligatory duty upon the Muslims as it was during the days of the Holy Prophet; it will remain obligatory till the day of Resurrection.' But the question is how this obligatory duty is to be carried out today?

Today, Hijrah in its spirit and message must take precedence over its physical aspects. Muslims must overcome territorialism and nationalism by reviving the spirit of Hijrah. Intellectually and culturally, the faithful must move from the condition of Jahiliyyah to the spirit of Dar-al-Islam. We are living in a state of Jahiliyyah, a state of ignorance and darkness of alien domination, both cultural and intellectual. We have to move at first through a conscious realization of our collective self. A vigorous and strenuous campaign of *Jihad* and *Tabligh* (which is but a primary form of *Jihad* has to be carried out to counter all anti-Islamic movements working in the world of Islam today. The different alien forces can be successfully resisted by a counter-movement from the Islamic Camp. It is because of the "movement vacuum" in the Islamic world that the anti-Islamic moves have gained momentum. The beginning of a vigorous Islamic movement should coincide with the advent of the Fifteenth Century of Hijrah. In the true spirit of Hijrah, every faithful must become a 'muhajir' in the ideological, cultural and psychological sense, wherever he lives. After the treaty of Hudaibiyyah the Embassy of the tribe of Muzanah waited upon the Holy Prophet. It was a big Embassy and consisted of one hundred members. They said to the Holy Prophet that they were ready to make Hijrah to Madinah if the Prophet so desired and commanded. The Messenger of Allah said, "No you are Muhajirs wherever you are". The Hijrah movement should work for the renaissance of Islam in the Muslim countries, and for freedom of religious belief in other countries. To be the target of and persecution and oppression of the evil forces without trying to face them is un-Islamic. Those who leave



themselves at the mercy of evil and continue to be an object of persecution are termed by the Quran as 'sinners'. The following Quranic verse lays down clear injunctions in this regard:

"When the angels take the souls of those who die in sin against their souls, they say: In what (plight) were ye? They reply: Weak and oppressed we were on earth. They (angels) say (to them): Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to move yourselves away (from evils)? Such men will find their abode in Hell—what an evil refuge! Except those who are (really weak and oppressed—men, women and children who have no means in) their power, nor (a guide post) to direct their way. For these, there is hope that Allah will forgive; for, Allah doth blot (sins) and forgive again and again. He who forsakes his home (to make Hijrah) in the way of Allah, finds on the earth many a refuge, wide and spacious. And who parts with his home as a muhajir to Allah and his Messenger (and) then death overtakes him, his reward becomes due and sure with Allah. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful".

The coming century is a century of universalism and humanitarianism, because the world is rapidly growing smaller and smaller every moment. The currents and under-currents that emerge in any one country soon affect the entire world. In such a situation, the world stands in dire need of a universal human ideology and civilization which can unite mankind on the common basis of humanity. The historical bases of Western Civilization are deeply rooted in its colonial past and it is also permeated with conviction of the supremacy of white races. Therefore it cannot meet the future requirements of mankind. Such a civilization cannot gain the confidence of coloured races which are destined to play a pioneering role in the formation of the future destiny of mankind. Communism is also destined to lose the ground because of its totalitarianism which can never prove workable in a big global society covering all the nations of the world.

Islam aims at creating a universal human unity which includes theoretically and potentially the entire mankind within its folds. It gives the natural differences their proper and rightful place in the organism of human society. It does not stand for the suppression or the eradication of these natural and innate differences. It transforms them into a bouquet containing innumerable flowers of different colours and odours which, in spite of their differences, form a unity for the decoration of the bouquet. Islam stands for the freedom and solidarity of mankind. The Creator of all is One. All the children of Adam have sprung from one



and single soul; their life is one in nature, and immortal in destiny; and their legitimate way of life (*al-Din al-Haqq*) is one.

The division of humanity into religious and secular, spiritual and profane, divine and mundane is the root-cause of all evils. History of Europe during the past five hundred years bears testimony to the fact that such a division of life does not provide spiritual and intellectual satisfaction to mankind. If the West failed in achieving spiritual and mental satisfaction in spite of its unprecedented scientific advancement and technological progress, how can the scientifically backward nations of the East attain that satisfaction by adopting the same division. Our social, political and religious ideals emanate from one and the same spring. The unity of mankind is to be achieved through the unity of their Creator, unity of the guidance and unity of life. Explaining the humanitarian ideal of Islam, Iqbal says:

“The humanitarian ideal is always universal in poetry and philosophy; but if you make it an effective ideal and work it out in actual life, you must start, not with poets and philosophers, but with a society exclusive in the sense of having a creed and well-defined outline, but ever enlarging its limits by example and persuasion. Such a society, according to my belief is Islam. This society has so far proved itself a more successful opponent of race idea which is probably the hardest barrier in way of the humanitarian ideal”.

“Since I find that the idea of nationality based on race or territory is making headway in the world of Islam and since I fear that the Muslims losing sight of their own ideal of a universal humanity are being lured by the idea of a territorial nationality, I feel it is my duty as a Muslim and as a lover of all mankind, to remind them of their true function in the evolution of mankind”.

“Renan was wrong when he said that science was the greatest enemy of Islam. No, it is not; it is the race-idea which is the greatest enemy of Islam, in fact, of all humanity, and it is the duty of all lovers of mankind to stand in revolt against this dreadful invention of the Devil”.

To conclude, Hijrah is the cultural necessity for the Islamic community. The cultural expression of Islam can be possible only in a society visualised by Islam itself; and it is the duty of the Muslims to strive for the establishment of such a society. Such a strife is Jihad. But, in case the soil is so barren that all possible ways and means of Islamic Da'wah and Jihad fail in the improving situation, one has to leave that soil. Then he has to strive in a place where cultural expression of Islam becomes possible.