



## Syed Qutb's contribution towards Political Islam in the Muslim world

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### **Abstract:**

Syed Qutb (1906, 1966) was renowned for his revolutionary ideas in the Muslim world. He wanted the applicability of the true Islamic precepts in the Muslim countries. In addition, he strongly objected to the expanding political and economic dominion of the Western States in the internal affairs of the Islamic States. Moreover, he hailed from an Egyptian village and completed his primary education from that specific area. In 1920, he migrated to Cairo in order to acquire secondary education. After completing it, he got enrolled in Dar al-alum for accomplishing his higher studies. From 1933 to 1952, he rendered his services to his Government as a teacher and an administrator in the department of education. Alongside this, he also became an eminent literary secular writer of his time and wrote numerous poems and articles on various social and cultural issues. But, in

1948, he had undergone a process of instant transformation and started to write on numerous Islamic topics. To add further, it is argued that the factors such as the instability of the Egyptian politics, the political and economic expansion of the colonial powers in the Islamic world and the formation of the Zionist state played a monumental role in making him an ardent exponent of political Islam. Moreover, he hated the Western way of life and advised his followers not to adhere to its norms, tradition and values. It has been seen that he considered Islamic political system as the panacea for all the political, social and economic ills plaguing the followers of the divine faith. Furthermore, he was also a trenchant member of the Muslim Brotherhood and tried his level best to overthrow Nasser's regime in his country. Never the less, he could not be successful in his objective and was executed by his own Government for plotting against it (**Bouzarinejad, 2017**)

**Keywords:** Muslim Brotherhood, Anti-Semitism, Capitalism, Communism, Ottoman Empire, Orientalists, Jahiliyya

### **Introduction of His basic Ideas and Contributions**

He was widely considered as the prolific revolutionary writer of the 20th century. As per his understanding; Islam was a complete code of life and needed to be implemented in the political, economic and social aspects of life. In simple terms, he contended that law of the Quran and the Sunnah was the only law which could govern human behavior in an appropriate manner. Although he wrote number of books, but it was his book (the milestone) which is regarded as the best mouth piece of Political Islam. To put it simply, he conceived that that the manmade laws were the source of all the evils that impeded the followers of the true faith from endorsing God's will and commandments. It must be mentioned that it was his idea of Jahiliyya, which was used as a justification for imposing Political Islam on the rest of the people by the various organizations. In other words, it was this doctrine, which was used as a legitimizing tool in toppling various un-Islamic governments by a number of militant movements. Alongside this, a substantial stress should be laid on the fact that many terrorist organizations, such as, Al-

Qaida, have adopted his revolutionary blueprint for bringing change in the world through violent means. It is an unvarnished truth that he did not like himself to be called a philosopher and detested the various philosophical precepts. In addition, he considered the western and the classical philosophy as a biggest threat to the Islamic teachings, as those disciplines tried to understand through human reasoning, the divine work of God. **(Mura, 2004)**

### **A Pessimistic view of the history of the Christianity**

Syed Qutb was of the opinion that the history of Christianity was based on fabricated lies and had no resonance with reality. In other words, he explicated that it was filled with dogmas and superstitions and was totally unscientific in its approach. Further, according to him, it was fallacious to assume that the religion of Christianity was founded by Jesus Christ. To put it simply, he postulated that Paulo was the person who laid the foundation of this religion and fostered his own made ideas, values and doctrines to the masses in the name of the Christ. Moreover, he stated that those people, who used to call themselves as followers of Jesus Christ, had radically diverged from his teachings and had replaced his ideas with their own ones. Likewise, he explicitly made it clear that this religion was not in conformity with the teachings of the GOD, as its followers allowed the Roman law to prevail over them. In addition, he elucidated that the Christian Church tarnished its image by involving in perverse and wicked practices. In simple terms, according to him, the morally degenerated Women played an imperative role in the selection of the Pope and used to influence him while giving judgments on important affairs. Similarly, he castigated The Church for persecuting the scientists, who were accused of having heretical views. **(Mura, The Inclusive Ideas of Islamic Universalism, 2014)**

### **Propagation of Anti-Semitism**

He laid immense stress on the fact that the Jews were responsible for all the social, political and economic ills plaguing the world. Further, he stated that Jews

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orchestrated the French revolution in order to eliminate the concept of religion and morality from the minds of the people. In other words, according to his understanding, the slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity was deliberately raised by the free-masons in order to instill in the masses feelings of disenchantment towards the prevailing religious and moral values. Similarly, he was of the opinion that they also used the Darwin's theory of evolution for the purpose of indoctrinating in the masses the belief that existence of a God was nothing but a fallacy. At the same time, he illustrated that the Jews quite cleverly made it an inter-disciplinary theory by making it a part of the subjects, such as, Politics, History, Psychology, Philosophy and Sociology so that the people studying those subjects would become atheists. In addition, he asserted that their main aim, behind the propagation of a Godless world, was to inculcate in them a love for the materialism and to disavow them from the spirituality. Hence, as per his understanding, the Jews fostered capitalist values in order to make the followers of other religions their dinkies. To put it simply, the industrial revolution and the scientific advancement made the people of other religion subservient, in relation to the Jews.

### **An Orthodox Viewpoint Regarding Women**

Syed Qutb radically castigated the mingling of the opposite genders in co-educational institutions. In addition, he explicated that the co-educational system was promoting sexual perversity and immorality in the Muslim world. So, according to him, women needed to be secluded from the mainstream educational activities in order to obviate the young generation from indulging in illicit activity, such as, fornication. Further, he was of the opinion that women should not be allowed to work outside their homes and should do house chores within the confines of their family life. Moreover, he explicitly stated that the industrial revolution, brought about by the process of Capitalism, has enslaved Women by compelling them to work outside their homes in factories. In other words, the low wages given to the male workers in factories impelled them to fend for themselves only, as they were not given ample amount to satisfy the needs of their family.

Hence, as a result, the Females had no choice but to work in industries in order to make a living. Further, to make things worse, they were only given the half amount of their services, in comparison to the Men. This kind of inequality precipitated the rise of prostitution among them, as they had to ensure their economic survival by hook or crook. Moreover, he also repudiated the Feminists and Women liberation movements going on in the Muslim countries. In addition, he argued that such movements were specially designed by the Christian Crusaders and Zionists in order to make the Muslim Women Anti-Islamic. (Shehadeh, 2000)

### **Repudiation of Contemporary Western Ideologies**

He was of the opinion that the modern western ideologies, such as Communism and Nationalism, were dragging the human race in a totally wrong direction. In other words, he stated in an unvarnished manner that such Satanist ideologies were indoctrinating in the masses feelings of immense disenchantment towards the concept of God. Furthermore, he despised Communism because it viewed with suspicion the concept of Religion and Morality. In addition, he assumed that its attack on family life was detrimental for the human race, as it would have led them towards moral degeneration. Moreover, he detested the followers of Karl Marx for being economic determinists, who had reduced the concept of Religion to mere fantasy and illusion. To put it simply, Contrary to their focus on economics as the main determining force of history, he contended that the Religious and Spiritual forces were the primary driving forces in every stage of historical development. Similarly, he refuted them in their claim that the Religion is the Opium of the working class, which has made them docile and submissive, in relation to the industrialists. Further, he vociferously criticized them in their effort to destroy religion because he regarded it as a part of man's natural propensity, that cannot be wiped out. At the same time, he painted a bleak picture of Nationalism by expressing that it was carefully crafted from the West in order to polarize the Muslims into various hostile states, with diverging national interests. Alongside this, he was steadfast in his belief that artificially created affinities, based on Language and Territory, were diligently exported to the Islamic Countries to make sure that their Spirit of Jihad gets weakened. Likewise, he was of the opinion that contrary to Nationalism, Religion was the only potent force which could rally

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people together. According to his conception, it was the Nationalistic Fervor which led to the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. In simple words, it was the love for one's nation, which impelled the Arabs to rebel against the Turks. Hence, according to him, this divisive force created rifts among the Muslim Ummah and crippled their capacity to counter the political and economic expansion of the infidels in their domestic affairs. (Nishino, 2015)

### **Elucidation of the entire History of Islam**

He laid enormous emphasis on the fact that the Muslims had met their downfall, as they did not implement the Islamic teachings in its true letter and spirit. Furthermore, the various Islamic dynasties, throughout history, did not rule in accordance with the injunctions of the Quran and Sunnah. For instance, as per his understanding, The Umayyad's, along with the Abbasids and The Ottomans, while passing laws and enactments, diverged from the true principles of The Faith. To put it simply, the last Apostle of Islam and the rightly guided Khalifs acted in line with the teachings of the Shariah. But, soon after their rule came to an end, the Umayyad dynasty got hold over the reins of power and diverted from the true injunctions of the God's religion. However, they did not bring about major deviations. But, in the tenure of the Abbasids, major innovations were brought about, as they permitted Sufism and Philosophy to flourish in their rule. Never the less, still the Shariah law prevailed in general. However, things became from bad to worse when the Turks founded their own empire and started to curtail the growth of Islamic jurisprudence in the society. Such a move was a last straw on the camel's back, as it obviated the intellectual growth among the Muslims. At the same time, intrusion of the European Powers in the lands of the Muslims further added insult to the injury by militarily capturing their areas. Moreover, it was the introduction of the French law, which posed a direct threat to the Islamic principles prevailing at that particular juncture.

### **An Attack on Orientalist's Intellectual Activities**

He postulated that the Orientalists were also the part of the western conspiracy to malign Islam. Further, he stated that like the colonial powers, the Orientalists were also hostile to Islam and did their level best in indoctrinating a narrative that

its political system was ill-equipped to resolve the political, social and economic problems faced by the Muslims. Moreover, he went on to say that their malicious activities against Islam were analogous to the crusader's attempts to crush Islam in the medieval century. In addition, he elucidated that they deliberately through their writings, challenged the credibility of the Islamic intellectual precepts and tried their level best to defame its image in front of the masses. In other words, according to his perception, it was not appropriate for the Muslims to condone their writings in which they have insisted upon refuting the intellectual credibility of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH's progeny. Further, he made it explicitly clear that the Muslims should not become a prey of their vicious plot and should have a firm belief in the infallibility of God and His Prophets. Hence, he laid substantial stress on the fact that it was not permissible for the true Believers to be influenced from their writings, as they inculcated such ideas which were antithetical to the teachings of the Divine Faith (**Bergesen, 2009**)

### **His Concept of Jahiliyya**

By this term, he meant ignorance. Moreover, he used it to characterize the Islamic governments of the modern world. In addition, this word was used to refer to the pre-Islamic era in the Arab world. To add further, he made it crystal clear that this concept was not confined to a certain time or history, but was applicable across time and space. It must be taken into account that he conceived Jahiliyya as a frame of mind in which the specific person or nation is reluctant to act in line with the God's commands. Likewise, he also referred to those nations as ignorant, who were not willing to implement the true teachings of the God's divine book. In short, it can be construed that his term had a political outlook to it. In addition, he labeled even the Islamic Governments as wicked and unholy, which did not apply the true spirit of the Islamic laws in their rule. Conversely, he postulated that only that regime was suitable to rule, which made laws compatible with the principles of the Holy Book and the Hadiths. To add further, he strongly opposed the leaders of all the existing countries because they followed man made laws, which were not in accordance with the commandments given by the Lord. Hence, he fostered a narrative that all the Muslims had a religious obligation to oust their vicious rulers

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by using brute force. In simple words, he authorized the people of the true Faith to rebel against their Government so that the Law of Allah could be implemented in its true sense (Khatab, 2002)

### **Condemnation of the Existing Governments in the Arab World**

He was of the opinion that all the present countries were ruled by wicked and ignorant persons, who followed the fallacious man made laws. In other words, he tacitly stated that Islamic political system was not being implemented in any of the existing states during his life time. Furthermore, he divided the ignorant states into four types. First of them was the communist states, such as, the Soviet Union. The second were the idolatrous states, which included States like India and Japan. The third type included the Christian and the Jewish States, like USA and Israel the fourth type included those states which paradoxically called themselves as Islamic Countries, but were not. It must be emphasized that he did not explicitly mention the states, which he labeled as Un-Islamic. However, it is assumed that he was referring to the existing states in the Middle East when he explicated the fourth type. It must be stressed that although the people residing in those countries were Muslims, but their rulers did not adhere to the Sharia law while making decisions. Hence, he made it as clear as day light that it was the religious responsibility of the followers of Right faith to militarily overthrow their rulers in order to pave the way for the implementation for the Islamic jurisprudence in their respective countries.

### **Conclusion**

It can be said with hundred percent mathematical precision that his radical ideas have left an indelible mark on number of extremist organizations worldwide. Moreover, along with his strong emphasis on belief in monotheism, his ideas regarding the implementation of the Shariah law, has given new impetus to Islamism. In addition, his martyrdom has reenergized his revolutionary followers and has persuaded them to adopt the path of militancy in achieving their stringent objectives. Moreover, he has had enormous followers among an offshoot of



Muslim Brotherhood, (the Qutbians) who are willing to go to any extent to impose his puritanical Islam on the rest of the Muslim world. To add further, his doctrine of Jahiliyya has been widely construed as a green license to overthrow various Governments by the Islamists. For instance, the members of the Tazim al-Jihad, who were influenced from his conception, butchered Egyptian president in 1991. Never the less, their hopes were dashed to ground when their act did not precipitate the eruption of a violent revolution in Egypt. However, it is assumed that many of the extremist organizations, which are inspired from him, have diverged from his principles by targeting non-combatants in their operations. It must be taken into account that the prominent scholars of Islam have strongly repudiated his ideas and have urged their followers not to adhere to his radical precepts. Moreover, they have come up to the conclusion that had he not been incarcerated and tortured, his thoughts would have been more moderate. In addition, contrary to Qutb, they hold the opinion that a Government cannot be toppled as long as its rulers call themselves as Muslims. Thus, they rejected his extremist ideology and disapproved of using Religious values for violent means.

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