



Culture and Society in the Taliban's Deobandi Theological School

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Abstract

The Deobandi school represents one of the prominent intellectual and religious traditions in Southeast Asia, exerting considerable influence on the ideologies and practices of religious fundamentalists, particularly in Afghanistan. The Taliban, having received their education from this institution, were significantly shaped by its teachings, which informed many of the principles and regulations governing their rule. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan prompted a substantial influx of Afghan refugees into Pakistan, many of whom, particularly the Pashtuns, shared ethnic and linguistic connections with the scholars of the Deobandi school. This situation fostered a strong interest in religious education, leading many to enroll in Deobandi seminaries. With the backing of the Pakistani government at the time and the movement of individuals across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, the doctrines and ideologies of the Deobandi school rapidly disseminated among Taliban members. This study employs library research methods to examine the theological underpinnings of the Taliban, concluding that its leaders, educated in the Deobandi tradition, aimed to implement the intellectual tenets of this school as a significant Islamic sect in Afghanistan. Their focus extended to various social issues, including women's veiling, employment, and education, as well as the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice, customs, elections, and the tribal system. Furthermore, in line with Deobandi teachings, the Taliban advocates for

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restrictions on Afghan women due to the perceived dangers of gender mixing. They regard the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice as a divine mandate, asserting that the establishment of the Islamic Emirate is intended to fulfill this obligation. They also reject the concept of elections as un-Islamic and an imitation of foreign practices, while opposing the instruction of modern sciences in educational settings. Regarding customs, they maintain that practices aligning with Islamic law are permissible.

Keywords: Maturidism, Deobandism, Taliban, Political Theology

Introduction

The emergence of the Taliban traces back to the Afghan Civil War in the 1990s, following the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan. Amid the power vacuum, the Taliban, with its roots in religious seminaries (madrasas) in Pakistan, rapidly gained ground, enforcing a strict interpretation of Sharia law across territories under their control.

The year 2021 witnessed a swift and dramatic resurgence of the Taliban, culminating in their capture of Kabul and subsequent assumption of control over Afghanistan. Despite years of international intervention and efforts to build Afghan security forces, the Taliban capitalized on widespread discontent, military vulnerabilities, and the withdrawal of foreign troops to rapidly seize territory across the country.

The Taliban's resurgence is deeply intertwined with societal factors, including grievances against corruption, inefficiency, and insecurity under the previous Afghan governments. Additionally, their promise of restoring law and order resonated with segments of Afghan society disillusioned by years of conflict and instability.

The resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the significance of understanding their ideological beliefs have become pivotal amid the recent events unfolding in the country. Rooted in complex historical, social, and political factors, the return to power of the Taliban reflects a multifaceted narrative that necessitates a deeper examination of their ideological underpinnings.

The Taliban's resurgence was fueled by a combination of factors, including:

Military Vulnerabilities: The withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces left a significant security vacuum, exposing vulnerabilities within the Afghan military and government forces. The Taliban capitalized on this vacuum, exploiting weaknesses and swiftly seizing control of key provinces and cities.

Popular Discontent: Widespread discontent among the Afghan population, fueled by corruption, inefficiency, and lack of governance under the previous Afghan governments, provided fertile ground for the Taliban's resurgence. Many Afghans, disillusioned by years of conflict and insecurity, viewed the Taliban as a viable alternative capable of restoring law and order.

Regional Dynamics: Regional actors, including Pakistan, Iran, and Russia, either supported or tolerated the Taliban for various strategic interests. These actors provided diplomatic, financial, and logistical support to the Taliban, further bolstering their resurgence.

Importance of Understanding Taliban's Theology

The resurgence of the Taliban in 2021 has not only brought significant political changes but also has profound implications for their cultural policies, particularly in areas concerning family, education, and the role of women.

Family: The Taliban's ideological perspective heavily influences its cultural policies, especially regarding family dynamics. Drawing from their interpretation of Islamic law, the Taliban promotes a conservative social structure that emphasizes traditional family values. This includes advocating for patriarchal authority within households, where men hold primary decision-making power and women are expected to adhere to traditional gender roles as wives and mothers.

Education: In the realm of education, the Taliban's cultural policies reflect their fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. Historically, the Taliban has restricted educational opportunities, particularly for girls and women, enforcing a narrow curriculum focused on religious studies and ideological indoctrination. Despite claims of allowing education for all, the Taliban's track record suggests

a preference for segregated and highly regulated educational systems that align with their conservative worldview.

Women's Status: The Taliban's cultural policies concerning women's rights are perhaps the most contentious aspect of their governance. Under Taliban rule, women faced severe restrictions on their freedom and autonomy, including limitations on mobility, dress codes, and access to education and employment. The Taliban's interpretation of Islamic law often reinforces traditional gender roles, relegating women to subordinate positions within society.

Therefore, to comprehend the Taliban's actions and aspirations, it is imperative to delve into their ideological framework. Their interpretation of Islam, rooted in Deobandi Sunni fundamentalism, shapes their governance, social norms, and worldview. Understanding these ideological tenets is essential for anticipating their policies, actions, and potential impact on Afghan society.

However, the emergence and rise of the Taliban movement in Afghanistan stem from complex events in the contemporary political history of the world, particularly the contemporary Islamic world. Around the years 1987 to 1993 and during the internal wars in Afghanistan, which initially involved the destruction of Kabul and the displacement of its people, and later, with the spread of corruption, lawlessness, and the extortion of factions, the people of Afghanistan were brought to their knees. Insecurity, banditry, corruption, and other factors had destroyed the social fabric of life in the country. The exhausted people of Afghanistan, who were suffering from war, insecurity, and ultimately poverty and destitution, were willing to accept any solution to escape from the terrifying and distressing situation. Naturally, in a war-torn society where there is no solution to end these conditions, people are even willing to accept the restoration of security and social order at the expense of individual freedoms. When the efforts of internal groups and mediators to resolve these problems faced deadlock and agreements and treaties were immediately violated after signing, the people witnessed such bitter and painful situations. In these circumstances, the murmurs of the emergence and advancement of the Taliban group, affiliated with the Deobandi school of thought, gradually arose. Therefore, the main question of

the present research is “What impact did social theology have on the conditions and situation of society under the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan?”.

The Formation of the Deobandi Religious Movement

The city of Deoband in India gained Islamic and global fame due to the establishment of the Darul Uloom school. This educational center became renowned in South Asia when the Deobandis celebrated the centenary of the founding of Darul Uloom in 1997. By the late twentieth century, there were about nine thousand religious schools throughout South Asia, which increased to approximately ten thousand madrasas by the end of the century (Rashid, 1998: 144).

The Deobandis exclusively adhere to the Hanafi school of jurisprudence (fiqh) and primarily follow the theological doctrines of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi. However, among them are individuals like Abu al-Hasan al-Nadwi, who follow Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari in theology. Qari Muhammad Tayyib, the director of Darul Uloom Deoband, writes about this: “It is commonly known among the scholars of Deoband that they are Maturidis, but there is a group among them who, for their reasons, consider themselves Ash'aris. However, the best approach is to consider the scholars of Deoband as Maturidis inclined towards Ash'ari, and the differences between Ash'aris and Maturidis are merely formal. The Deobandis adopted this method of reconciliation between the Ash'ari and Maturidi schools from Sheikh Nanautavi” (Tayyib, 2009: 211-206).

The Deobandis, who were administrators of numerous religious schools in Pakistan, were responsible for the education and organization of Taliban fighters. These religious schools played a fundamental role in the formation of the Taliban group due to their financial support, round-the-clock free education, and boarding facilities. One of these schools was the Haqqani Madrasa. After completing a ten-year course, students of Haqqani Madrasa were proud recipients of a degree. With the Taliban's entry into the political arena of Afghanistan, this madrasa became the most popular school in Pakistan. At least eight ministers of the Taliban government were graduates of this school, and dozens of other diploma holders from this madrasa assumed positions such as provincial governors, commanders, judges, etc. (Rashid, 1998: 149-147). The scholars of Deoband

spared no effort in supporting the Taliban, as Mufti Jamil says: “We take pride in having taught the Taliban and always pray for their success because they strive to implement clear Islamic laws” (Rashid, 1998: 149-147).

As mentioned, the theological foundation of these schools is based on the doctrinal principles of Abu Mansur al-Maturidi. All Maturidi scholars, directly or indirectly, were disciples of Abu Hanifa. Perhaps this is why Maturidis consider their thoughts and ideas to be closely linked to Abu Hanifa’s and insist on his theological views. Therefore, the basis of Maturidi thought is inspired by Abu Hanifa (Jalali, 2019: 45). Mohammad Abu Zahra, in comparing the views of Abu Hanifa and Abu Mansur, states: “From a scholarly comparison between the theories of Abu Hanifa and the works left by Abu Mansur al-Maturidi as recorded in his books, it becomes evident that they largely concurred on most foundations. Therefore, scholars have concluded that the theological ideas of Abu Hanifa are the foundation from which Maturidi’s thoughts have branched off” (Abu Zahra, 2005: 291). This is how Maturidi’s theological beliefs emerged among the Taliba.

Women and Society from the Taliban’s perspective

One of the important issues in Islamic societies is whether Muslim women can participate in society and play a social role. Here are some aspects of women’s roles in society from the Taliban’s perspective:

A) Education of Women

One of the benefits that both women and men share is the pursuit of knowledge, and there is no doubt or hesitation in the permission or even the obligation for women to seek knowledge. The phrases “O mankind” and “O you who have believed” mentioned in the Quranic verses and traditions regarding the pursuit of knowledge indicate generality and include all women and men. The Quran considers knowledge as light and ignorance as darkness. It is stated in the Quran: “The blind and the seeing are not equal, nor are the darkness and the light” (Quran, Fatir: 19-20). In another verse, it is said: “Say, ‘Are those who know

equal to those who do not know?’” (Quran, Zumar: 9). The Prophet Muhammad also said: “Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim.”

According to the teachings of Islam and the Sunnah, when learning knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim, it follows that both men and women must strive to overcome ignorance.

The education of women has been prevalent since the time of the Prophet Muhammad, to the extent that the Prophet himself dedicated some of his time to teaching women about religious matters. Bukhari narrates that women said to the Prophet: “Men have excelled us in attending your assembly, so set aside a day for us.” The Prophet accepted their request and allocated a day to them, during which he preached and advised them, regularly encouraging them to learn and uplifting their spirits (Bukhari, 2006: Hadith 30).

Therefore, Islam permits women to acquire knowledge beneficial for both their worldly and spiritual well-being. However, the quality of education and upbringing of women has been a subject of discussion and debate in Islam. From the Islamic perspective, the education of women must not involve mixing with men so that girls can study in an environment of tranquility and security, preserving their honor and dignity, and being known for their good conduct, dignity, and maturity (Behdarvand, 2009).

Perhaps the first writer to address the issue of educational matters and the separation of genders in education was Imam Qabusiyeh. In an article concerning education and upbringing, he states: “Girls and boys shouldn’t be mixed during education” (Nasih al-Wan, 2015: 276). When Ibn Sahnun was asked about the quality of education for women, he said: “I do not like for girls and boys to study together because it leads to corruption” (Nasih al-Wan, 2015: 276).

From the perspective of the Taliban, what Qabusiyeh and Ibn Sahnun say is not their personal opinion but a ruling derived from Sharia, and the command of God supersedes any other ruling. In this regard, it is stated in Surah Al-Ahzab: “It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter, that they should [thereafter] have any choice about their

affair. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly strayed into clear error” (Quran, Al-Ahzab: 36).

The Taliban’s rationale for preventing mixed-gender schools could be based on the following reasons:

1- Quranic Verses:

The Quran addresses Muslims regarding the wives of the Prophet Muhammad, stating: “And when you ask [his wives] for something, ask them from behind a partition.” (Quran, Al-Ahzab: 53) Although this verse specifically addresses the Prophet’s wives, according to scholars of the principles of jurisprudence (*usul*), the inference drawn from the verse is based on the generality of the wording. Thus, the concept of requesting behind a partition applies to all Muslim women.

2- Modesty and Chastity:

Allah commands both believing men and women to lower their gaze and guard their chastity. Women are instructed not to display their adornment except to certain relatives, including their husbands. (Quran, An-Nur: 31) Therefore, the inclusiveness of the verse suggests that it applies to all Muslim women.

These Quranic teachings emphasize modesty, separation of genders, and protection of women’s dignity, which could form the basis of the Taliban’s stance against mixed-gender education.

Therefore, according to the Quran, Muslim women are required to cover themselves, preserve their respect and chastity, and avoid mingling with unrelated men. Allah says: “O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful.” (Quran, Al-Ahzab: 59)

When a Muslim woman is commanded to wear the jilbab (outer garment) in this verse, how can her mingling with unrelated men be imagined? In a narration, it is reported that the Messenger of Allah said: “Whenever a man is alone with a

woman, Satan makes a third.” (Ibn Hanbal, 1995, 1:26) This indicates that whenever a man and a woman are alone together, Satan will inevitably be the third present with them.

Another narration from Bukhari and Muslim states that the Prophet said: “Avoid visiting strange women.” A man from the Ansar asked: “What about the in-laws of the husband?” The Prophet replied: “The in-laws are death; they are a greater trial.” The Quranic verses and Prophetic traditions mentioned unequivocally and without doubt prohibit mingling of men and women.

After identifying the textual evidence prohibiting the mingling of men and women, it must be said that the most significant reason for the Taliban’s opposition to women’s education is their ideology. Abdul Hakim Haqqani, the Chief Justice of the Taliban, has opposed women’s education in his book, which analysts refer to as the “Law of the Taliban” (Haqqani, 2020,248). Based on this law, the Taliban stand against women’s education. According to the Taliban’s interpretation of Sharia, women should be obedient and subservient, accepting male dominance over themselves.

Taliban have divided the world into two parts: the female and male domains. In the Taliban’s world, the female domain is confined to the kitchen, while roads, offices, markets, sports fields, economy, and politics are all considered male domains. According to this interpretation, even women’s departure from the designated female sphere is seen as opposition to divine orders. Abdul Hakim Haqqani, in the Taliban Manifesto, labeled any form of education for women as sedition. Even mosques have been transformed into entirely male spaces by the Taliban. Women are not even allowed to enter mosques, indicating their gender-biased narrow-mindedness.

It is interesting that the Taliban’s code of conduct considers women’s education obligatory but stipulates that it should take place at home and be conducted by a male guardian rather than at universities or schools. What the Taliban deem as obligatory education for women is the worship of God and respect for male family members. According to the Taliban, the education mandated for women is to learn how to obey their husbands and always be in their service.

According to their perspective, education by a male guardian is only for worshipping God and serving male family members, but in reality, this is a prohibition on education. No home can become a school or university, especially since many households do not even have a literate member. These laws have also banned religious education for women outside the home, effectively shutting down girls' religious schools. The Taliban aim to create a completely male-dominated society through these actions and have no qualms about admitting it (Mohebbi, 11/12/2022).

b) Women's Employment

According to the dominant Sunni view, the only duty of women is to serve as wives and raise children. Therefore, they do not consider women's employment outside the home as appropriate and insist that a woman's place is in the household.

Rashid Reza and Maududi, each according to their own reasoning, do not consider women working outside the home permissible or correct. Rashid Reza says, "human nature demands that a woman should engage in pregnancy, breastfeeding, caregiving, child-rearing, and household chores" (Rashid Reza, n.d: 37). Mawdudi also does not consider it permissible for women to work outside the home due to the mingling of women with men (Mawdudi, 2006: 152). Additionally, some Hanafi jurists state that one of the rights of a man over a woman is that after marriage, the woman should stay at home and take care of household chores, and it is the man's responsibility to provide for the woman's needs (Kasani, 1989, Vol. 5: 836). Here are some sources from the Sunni tradition cited for preventing women from employment:

The first reason is derived from Quranic verses. Allah says: "Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth." (Quran, Nisa:34) Men are caretakers and administrators of women because Allah has granted men superiority over women in terms of physical strength, endurance, and mental and emotional power.

The word "لَاضِف" (translated as "given one over the other") in this verse is absolute, indicating the superiority of men. Employment is one aspect of this superiority, creating the grounds for men to take charge of women's affairs. Therefore, employment is specifically for men. According to rational necessity, individuals with virtues and superiority are entrusted with various duties and occupations to preserve their superiority (Rahbar, 2009).

Rashid Rida regarding this superiority says: Superiority means the superiority of the male gender over the female gender, not all men over all women. Therefore, if a woman is stronger than her husband in terms of the ability to perform work and employment, still the man has superiority over the woman. Also, Alusi and Zamakhshari believe that the superiority mentioned in the verse refers to the inherent superiority of men over women, and that superiority is the same as the power of thinking and reasoning. According to this interpretation of the verse, men have authority over women. Therefore, no woman can have a job or business. (Rashid Reza, n.d., Vol. 2, p. 189; Alusi, 1985, Vol. 1, p. 23; Zamakhshari, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 266).

The second reason is narrations reported by Sunni hadith scholars from the Prophet, such as this narration: "A people who appoint a woman as their leader will not succeed." (An-Nasai, 1930, Vol. 8, p. 227). Based on this basis, women are considered weak in managing societal affairs due to their predominance of emotions, and their governance and leadership over society lead to disarray in affairs and the failure of society. Employment is also one of the factors that leads to the transfer of leadership of men's affairs to women and the dominance of women over men. Therefore, according to this narration, delegating authority to women is not permissible.

The third reason is a fortiori argument based on a narration attributed to the Prophet Muhammad regarding someone who arrives late for congregational prayer: "Whoever misses something from his congregational prayer should recite tasbeeh (glorification of Allah), because tasbeeh is for men and clapping is for women." (Ibn Hanbal, 1995, 2: 479) When the Prophet restrained women

from speaking in the gatherings of men to prevent any deviation, this restriction extended to employment, as it encompasses both speaking and other activities.

Therefore, upon regaining power in recent years, the Taliban declared that they would recognize women's rights within the framework of Islamic Sharia. However, the exact meaning of this policy for today's Afghan society, where women have the right to education and work, was unclear. But as time passed and the Taliban's track record during their rule from 1996 to 2001 became evident, it became clear that based on their interpretation of Islamic Sharia, women have almost no social rights outside the walls of their homes.

Wahidullah Hashimi, a senior Taliban official, has stated that despite international community pressure regarding women's right to education and work, the Taliban government will soon begin implementing Sharia law. In an interview with Reuters, he said: "We have been fighting for the establishment of Sharia law in Afghanistan for about 40 years. According to Sharia law, men and women who are not mahram (closely related), cannot be in the same environment or under the same roof. Women and men cannot work together, this is evident. Women do not have the right to come to offices or work in ministries and government institutions."

Wahidullah Hashimi further added that the employment of women in banks and media institutions, which had increased significantly in the two decades since the fall of the former Taliban regime, is prohibited. He says contact between men and women outside the home will only be allowed in exceptional cases, such as a woman visiting a male doctor. He added: "It is obvious that we need women in some specific jobs such as education and healthcare. We will establish separate institutions for women, separate hospitals, schools and perhaps separate universities (Radio Farda, 2/27/2021)".

C) Women's Hijab

Sunni scholars consider the hijab ruling to be one of the religious rulings and ethical recommendations of the Islamic religion, and they believe that this ruling was revealed at a time when the Islamic society had taken shape, which

indicates that this ruling has both individual and social aspects, because this ruling was revealed when its social conditions were ready. The necessity of hijab was felt among Muslims even before its revelation, and in the year 5 AH, with the revelation of the hijab ruling, the Companions' wish was fulfilled.

They believe that the commandment of hijab has had significant effects on purifying the social environment and preventing deviations, and this is still the case today. It is considered one of the privileges of Islamic society and it is natural that, like other Islamic rulings, this commandment has its opponents. They further state that the commandment of hijab in Islam has been revealed to prevent and protect against the harmful effects of immodesty and moral corruption. Hijab is not only about body covering and is not only related to women; rather, hijab means living with integrity and chastity, it means avoiding moral vices such as adultery, homosexuality, promiscuity, and many other diseases.

Therefore, Maulana Zafiruddin in his book "The System of Chastity and Innocence" enumerates some of the harms of immorality and sexual freedom based on rational and religious reasons. He considers the harms of adultery to include damage to oneself, harm to the family, harm to one's reputation and their family's, disruption of generational continuity, the spread of diseases, and droughts and calamities (Zafir-ud-Din, 2010: 36).

The deputy of the Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice of the Taliban government stated that the necessity of "hijab" for women is not their order but rather the "command of God" that must be implemented. Mohammad Faqir Mohammadi, the deputy of this ministry, in an interview with Toloo News Network regarding the detention of women due to "improper hijab" by the religious police and Taliban police, said: "Hijab, praise be to God, is not the order of the Islamic Emirate (Taliban government) nor the order of the Ministry of Promotion of Virtue; hijab is a command from the Lord of the Worlds. The people of Afghanistan one hundred percent want to observe hijab. No one has complained about hijab, saying that we do not accept hijab." Recently, a large number of women in Kabul were detained for improper hijab, and it has been said that after a few hours of detention and "providing necessary recommendations"

and obtaining “guarantees from the family” to prevent its recurrence, they were released again (Mohammad Faqir Mohammadi, Afaq News Agency, 1/24/2022).

D) Women's exclusion from Managerial Affairs

According to the Taliban, women's participation in managerial affairs, which is prevalent today, is not permissible. This is because the nature of women requires them to focus on pregnancy, breastfeeding, caregiving, and raising children, as well as household chores. These are specific characteristics of women, and no man can acquire them, as men have to provide for the financial needs of their wives and children. Therefore, Mustafa Saba'i says, “as long as it is religiously obligatory for the husband to provide for the expenses, the wife has no right to work” (Al-Siba'i, 1962: 153). These are divine laws and should not be overlooked due to the ignorance and disbelief that most people live by today.

In the Taliban's view, turmoil has erupted where the system of disbelief and ignorance is overturning the divine system, and this ignorance and disbelief are proliferating through education, upbringing, and advocacy for women's rights in Afghan society and even in Islamic countries.

One of the reasons for the lack of women's participation in managerial affairs can be attributed to the prohibition of women from going to mosques. A narration attributed to Aisha states: “If the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, had seen what we see of women in his time, he would have definitely prohibited their presence in mosques, just as the women of the Children of Israel were prevented from attending the mosque.” (Bukhari, 1990 : Hadith 869). As a result, they have interpreted that if women's access to mosques, which are the most honorable places, is prohibited, then women's participation in markets, government, and politics is prohibited a fortiori (Haqani, 2020: 149).

The extremist Islamic Taliban have restricted many of the rights and freedoms that women have gained over the past two decades. Upon gaining power, they abolished laws regarding women's rights that had been passed in the country's constitution and the previous parliament. Taliban authorities emphasize women's rights following Islamic Sharia law.

According to the news network NTV, during the years 1996 to 2001, when the extremist Islamic Taliban had control over Afghanistan, women did not even have the most basic citizenship rights. Based on this, any flexibility in this regard in the current era seems not to stem from belief but rather from the desire to attract international attention and receive financial aid (Deutsche Welle, The Taliban leader's controversial order, 12/3/2021).

Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil

Muslims believe that enjoining good and forbidding evil is obligatory upon all accountable individuals who can discern right and wrong, provided that certain conditions are met, such as effectiveness. Enjoining good and forbidding evil is one of the most important social and religious responsibilities, as Allah has placed it alongside faith in the Quran, saying: "You are the best nation created [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah." (Quran, Al-Imran: 110) This verse indicates that Muslims are praised for enjoining good and forbidding evil, demonstrating its significance in Islam as a means of upholding righteousness and combating wrongdoing. Here are some references from the Sunni tradition to prove the obligation of enjoining good and forbidding evil:

1- Allah says: "And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be saved." (Quran, Al-Imran: 104)

2- Also, "Those who, if We give them power in the land, establish prayer and give zakah and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. And to Allah belongs the outcome of [all] matters." (Quran, Al-Hajj: 41)

In addition to the above verses, there are also narrations from the Prophet Muhammad, for example:

1- The Prophet said: "Surely, enjoin good and forbid evil, otherwise Allah will send upon you a punishment, and then your supplications will not be accepted." (Suyuti, n.d, vol.3 , p.220)

2- The Prophet also said: “Any people who commit sins, and among them are those who can prevent them and do not prevent them, Allah will likely afflict all of them with punishment and distress.” (Ghazali, 1989, Vol. 11: 53)

Therefore, Qalamuddin, the former Minister of Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, says: “Enjoining good is a simple matter. Firstly, enjoining good is a command of God and the Quran, not of clerics or Taliban. Secondly, in enjoining good, there are penalties at the discretion of the judge (tazir) and not fixed defined punishments (hadd). Enjoining good has its principles. If enjoining good is implemented according to these principles, no problem will arise. For example, if someone does not have a beard, I will punish him with a whip and enforce penalties, describing this as forbidding evil, but it is not my right. First, enjoining the good must be established, and they must be informed about the beard’s importance, quality, and quantity. If they still do not comply, the enforcer of enjoining good has the right to warn them, and as a result, they will be detained for one or two days. Or a scientific commission compiles a book from jurisprudential books to be acted upon accordingly. If there is repeated opposition in an action, then penalties will be enforced.” (Barzgar, 6/28/2020).

Education in the Taliban’s Thought

Knowledge and education are influential cultural factors, which play a significant role in social transformations. The Taliban, who were intellectually trained in Deobandi schools, focused on combating modernization and new education. They closed down new schools and institutions. When they seized control of Kandahar and Helmand provinces in late 1994, they closed the secondary schools to male students. In the early years of Taliban rule in Kandahar city, the second-largest city in Afghanistan, there were no high schools for boys. Later, they closed high schools for boys in other provinces such as Helmand, Ghazni, Logar, Maidan, and other cities (Andishmand, 2005: 220).

The closure of new schools was not limited to these cities; rather, wherever the Taliban went, they exerted pressure on the schools and educational system, leading to the closure of these new schools. In Herat, they also forcibly closed down all schools and suppressed women’s protests. However, before the Taliban,

45,000 students were enrolled under the rule of Ismail Khan in Herat, half of whom were girls. Across the three provinces, there were a total of 75,000 students. In 1993, Ismail Khan took me to see the Atoon Hero School, where 1,500 girls were studying in two shifts (Andishmand, 2005: 220).

The closure of schools by the Taliban also reached Kabul and Mazar. Within three months of taking over Kabul, the Taliban shut down 63 schools in the city, where 103,000 girls, 148,000 boys, and 11,200 teachers were studying and teaching. Among these, 7,800 were women. Until December 1998, UNICEF reported that the education system in the country was at risk of collapse due to the non-registration of nine out of every ten girls and two out of every three boys (Forouzan, 2010: 166).

The closure of many new educational schools is considered one of the initial consequences of the Taliban's ideological and political dominance in the cultural and educational sphere during the first rule of the Taliban. This policy deprived hundreds of thousands of students (both boys and girls) of education and knowledge. In this regard, the Taliban even demanded that teachers prioritize religious teachings: "To emphasize the importance of religious education and Sharia laws for students, teachers are required to prioritize questions and grades related to religious sciences over new sciences in exams" (Forouzan, 2010: 239).

During the emirate years, the Taliban emphasized learning religious subjects and reduced the inclusion of new subjects in the curriculum. This shift led to a decline in educational quality. The Ministry of Education in the Taliban's emirate adjusted the curriculum in a way that allocated the majority of weekly teaching hours to religious subjects. Essentially, this curriculum transformed modern schools into religious institutions, leaving little room for anything else in boys' education (Forouzan, 2010: 230).

Etiquette and Customs in the Islamic Emirate of the Taliban

In every Islamic country, some customs and traditions are not contrary to Islamic law. Afghanistan, as an Islamic country located on the Silk Road, possesses ancient and diverse cultures. It embraces various cultures, including Nowruz,

which is considered a native and authentic tradition. Culture reflects the identity of a society and should be preserved. Afghan culture also reflects the identity of Afghanistan and should be safeguarded. Therefore, in the Islamic Emirate of the Taliban, Afghan customs and traditions related to aspects of life such as clothing, customs, language, etc., which are not contrary to Sharia, have been given attention.

According to Taliban scholars, the customs that emerged during American dominance are not inherently Afghan. Therefore, they are not given attention and should be uprooted. For this reason, the Taliban's hostility towards America's military and cultural occupation policies has intensified in recent years. The cultural characteristics of Afghanistan have helped bolster the Taliban's anti-American positions. The reason for eliminating these imported customs is the opposition and contradiction with the Sharia, nature, and customs of the Afghan people against American culture, which has existed in this country since ancient times (Saffari, 2016: 32; Haqqani, 2020: 39-40).

In the book "History of Iran and Afghanistan", Sayyed Jamal al-Din Asadabadi stated about the customs and traditions of Afghanistan that most of the people settled in Afghanistan are of Afghan descent, and they possess the qualities of bravery, courage, warrior spirit, and resistance against others. Their attire consists of a shirt, trousers, turban, and cloak. Women wear long and modest clothing. Their tradition involves honoring scholars, saints, and elders. Most of them follow the beliefs of Abu Hanifa and are fond of acquiring religious knowledge. It is a common practice among the Afghan people to build a mosque in every village and to construct a house for students in it, covering their livelihood with willingness and desire, as scholars hold great importance among them, and they accept the words of scholars in religious matters. They are a warrior nation and do not accept the rule of foreigners (Asadabadi, 2000, Vol. 7: 157).

Ancient customs and festivals that the Taliban opposed upon their arrival in Afghanistan include the celebration of Nowruz, night programs for Buddha, and the Gul-e-Kachaloo festival in Bamiyan, as well as the Gul-e-Badam festival in Daikundi (Khabar Online, Do not interfere in Afghan affairs, 2/18/2002). Nowruz, as the most important national celebration in Afghanistan, has been

prepared by the Afghan government every year for the past twenty years, starting two months before the New Year. People across the country used to participate in the festivities with fireworks and local music joyfully, but since 1403 SH, the official Nowruz celebration has not been held in Afghanistan. In 1400 SH, the Taliban banned the celebration of Nowruz in the country and did not allow citizens to celebrate the New Year. The group argued that celebrating Nowruz was forbidden from an Islamic perspective. The Taliban seem to oppose Nowruz for two main reasons: firstly, they view Nowruz as a foreign and anti-religious phenomenon that needs to be devalued so that people no longer celebrate it. The Taliban claim that Nowruz is rooted in Zoroastrian culture, has no basis in Islam, and celebrating it is considered forbidden. Secondly, Nowruz is predominantly celebrated in the northern, northeastern, western, and central regions of Afghanistan, while the Taliban group, which originates from the southern part of the country, does not show any appreciation for Nowruz due to environmental considerations (Shirzad,3/12/2024).

The National and Tribal System of the Taliban

The land and society of Afghanistan is one of the most complex societies in terms of tribal structure. This complexity is a result of centuries of monarchy policies, wars, bloodshed, and political and social conflicts. A logical and scientific study of a society with these characteristics naturally requires a thorough examination of its structures and the identification of a coherent and consistent social map. One of these paths is the study of the national and tribal system and its impact on the formation of the Taliban. In this regard, it is necessary to mention the Pashtun tribe, which is one of the largest ethnic groups in Afghanistan and is considered the largest tribal society in the world (Esmatollahi, 1999: 10). This tribe has a unique and distinct cultural, religious, and social characteristics, the most important of which include:

1-Strong loyalty

One of the unique characteristics of tribes is having a sense of strong loyalty. loyalty in its literal sense means support (Dehkhoda, 1931), which is a main factor in forming communities and governments and preserving values in tribal

society. The main framework of loyalty is formed by kinship ties (Fakhouri, 2004: 744-743). Loyalty is the strongest pillar in preserving and continuing the life of the Pashtun tribe, to the extent that according to some researchers, “Pashtunism believes that either Afghanistan exists and in that case must accept Pashtun leadership, or the people of Afghanistan reject this leadership, in which case Afghanistan will not exist” (Pahlavan, 1999: 25).

2- The superiority and supremacy of the Pashtuns

Afghanistan is a country with various ethnicities and religions, and this factor has created a unique complexity in the administration of this country. The diversity of ethnic and religious groups has influenced all levels of Afghan society, from political elites to the general population, and penetrated deeply into the social fabric of this country. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the issue of racism in Europe began with the theories of Aryan-European racial superiority. These theories, which were politically, socially, and religiously accepted, had negative and detrimental effects. These destructive effects were not limited to Europe but became a global phenomenon, affecting other countries worldwide, including Afghanistan. Some German and English intellectuals, who were the originators of racial theories in European societies, considered the Germanic families in other Asian countries, including Afghanistan, as Aryans. The debate on Aryan racial superiority in Afghanistan from the 1930s to the late 1960s became one of the political, cultural, and religious issues of the time, to the extent that some Afghan political elites tried to emulate the German methods for this country. They admired Adolf Hitler, the leader of the Nazi regime, and Goebbels, the German politician (Salim Naji, 11/13/2019).

This ambition for superiority among the Pashtuns, the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, has manifested more than other ethnicities in the country. Based on this ambition for superiority, “Pashtunism gives itself the right to always seek help from foreign forces, but if members of other ethnic groups want to do the same, they are considered traitors” (Pahlavan, 1999: 30-31). This ambition was also extended to religious beliefs, to the extent that the Taliban claimed non-Pashtuns could not be good Muslims. On this basis, even some Sunni ethnic

groups like the Baloch were suppressed with the claim that only a little light of Islam had shone upon them (Crews & Tarzi, 2008: 30). In this way, the Taliban, who are mainly Pashtuns, revived their national and tribal traditions, and in return, came under the protection of the Pashtuns. Furthermore, some high-ranking officers of the Pakistani intelligence organization were also Pashtuns, and the Pakistani government infiltrated the Pashtun areas of Afghanistan through these individuals (Hamid & Farral, 2015: 39-40).

3-The Pashtunwali Principle

According to a dominant definition, identity is a mental and additional concept that in sociology means “becoming one with others.” This definition refers to both individual and social personality (Jenkins, 2015: 215). Identity is like a shaping agent that creates a set of values and anti-values in the individual and society and dictates the way individuals behave in social roles. Today, the characteristics of modern society, such as the growth of communication and information technology, have led to changes in identities (Dorrān, 2009: 53). For this reason, elites of ethnic, religious, and social groups seek to strengthen ethnic and tribal characteristics to preserve their existence in a larger social system (Giddens, 2015: 128).

In Afghanistan, national identity holds a very high position due to the importance of ethnicity in this country, and this national identity has various religious, ethnic, and political aspects (Hettne, 2010: 34). Pashtunwali is one of the factors that has contributed to the preservation and unity of this ethnic group. Pashtunwali, in essence, means the Pashtun lineage, and encompasses a set of laws such as the constitution, and has given rise to specific beliefs and customs. The laws of Pashtunwali emphasize courage, bravery, defense of honor, and blood feuds (Rezvani Bamiyani, 2011: 35). From the perspective of sociologists, the formation of the Taliban, in addition to being based on national and tribal foundations, is also a superficial interpretation of Islamic Sharia law and the customs of Pashtunwali (Saffari, 2016: 210). As a result, the Taliban group, with slogans based on Pashtunwali traditions, garnered support from the Pashtuns themselves (Marsden, 2000: 74). In what follows, we refer to some Pashtunwali principles:

3-1- Principle of honor

One of the fundamental concepts of Pashtunwali is the principle of honor. Other principles of Pashtunwali are related to this principle. Yuri Tikhonov, the author of “The Afghan Stalin’s Battle,” writes about the importance of this principle: “The great importance in the life of Eastern Pashtuns is the traditions of Pashtunwali, whose fundamental concepts are honor and revenge. Honor and its defense are sublime values in the life of every Pashtun. The leader’s honor and the honor of an ordinary warrior are equally valuable to the tribe, as a dishonor to one member of the tribe is considered an insult to all tribesmen. Any encroachment on freedom, land, and property, aggression against the united tribe, even if it leads to the killing of a relative, is evaluated as a violation of dishonor. Then the law of retaliation becomes effective, the law of blood revenge, which can last for centuries.” (Tikhonov, n.d.: 27)

Pashtuns believe that every Pashtun man has a duty, especially regarding unmarried women, to tightly prevent their sexual relations with others. Fear of gossip and “people’s word” also leads many men to prefer keeping their wives and daughters indoors for the sake of household security. This concept is referred to by Pashtuns as “parda” meaning “curtain”.

3-2- The principle of retribution

The principle of retribution, also known as the principle of retaliation, is the same as the law of retaliation. The enforcement guarantee of the principle of honor is retaliation. The principle of retribution states: “Retaliation for blood is blood, and bloodshed only ends when one of the two conflicting parties submits and seeks forgiveness from the victorious party. Sometimes, conflict can be resolved with the help of an influential mediator in which case bloodshed can be avoided, and the dispute can be settled with the payment of a large sum of money. The principle of retaliation is even applicable in the dealings between any Pashtun tribe and governmental organizations” (Tikhonov, n.d.: 27).

In other words, it is a belief that every individual must administer justice and take revenge for the injustices done to them. This law dictates, for example,

that a son must kill his father's murderer. In many cases, the mother insists that her son must avenge his father. Otherwise, she will disown her son, and he will be considered dishonored. If the murderer dies a natural death, then his son, brother, or uncle should be killed in his place (Banting, 2003).

In 1997, the Taliban clashed with Hazara Shiites in Mazar-i-Sharif, but due to the resistance of Shiite forces, they faced heavy casualties and damages, forcing them to leave the city. This defeat deeply fueled their sense of revenge, prompting them to commit a full-scale massacre when they attacked the city again a year later. "One Taliban commander later admitted that Mullah Mohammad Omar had permitted them to slaughter for two hours, but they were engaged in this for two days. The Taliban massacred like madmen. They roamed the streets of Mazar in their Toyota trucks, firing indiscriminately left and right, killing anything in their path. They shot at women, men, shopkeepers, cart drivers, children, and even donkeys and goats." (Rashid, 2000: 124)

3-3- The principle of Hospitality

The principle of hospitality is one of the patterns and behavioral principles of Pashtunwali. Pashtuns consider hospitality as one of their national honors, and therefore, anyone who is not hospitable is deemed to lack Afghanism (Pashtunwali). Elphinstone writes: "Anyone can exercise this right without distinction. If a traveler travels across the country empty-handed, he will not remain hungry, although this may not be the case in cities. For an Afghan, nothing could be more humiliating than driving a guest out of his home" (Elphinstone, 1997: 220).

One of the most important indications of the Pashtun hospitality tradition is that the host ensures the safety of the guest (ibid, 221). The Taliban's political leaders' refusal to hand over Osama bin Laden to the United States government should also be understood within the framework of their tradition of hospitality.

3-4- Seeking intercession

Seeking intercession is another principle of Pashtunwali. Elphinstone describes this custom as follows: "If someone has a request, he goes to his house or

tent and refrains from sitting on the carpet or eating his food until he responds to his request. Rejecting the request for intercession harms the reputation and status of the host. This custom is so strong that a person who is afraid of being caught by an enemy quickly seeks refuge in another person's house and he accepts it. The host only refrains from accepting the request of a guest when he is unable to intervene in any way or when certain conditions make his intervention unjustified" (Elphinstone, 1997: 222).

With this custom, whenever individuals feel threatened, they seek refuge with a person or tribe who can defend and protect them, to be safe from potential dangers. After their defeat against the coalition forces led by the United States, the Taliban forces sought refuge in secure tribes on both sides of the Afghanistan border.

3-5- The Rejection of Election in the Taliban's View

The Taliban have always explicitly stated that elections will not be held in Afghanistan because elections are a non-Islamic imitation. In an interview with Taliban leaders published in the Jeddah-based newspaper *Al-Hayat* on December 5, 1995, it was stated: "Elections will not be held in Afghanistan because elections are a non-Islamic imitation" (Hashemi, 2001: 107).

Furthermore, in Afghanistan, there is no constitution because the desired system of the Taliban is a system of coercion and domination or a council of compromise, which is derived from the theories of legitimacy of government in Matrīdiyya's theology. This group believes that there is no legitimate reason for democratic elections and the Islamic nation does not consider it lawful; otherwise, the companions of the Messenger of Islam, would not have abandoned it. Additionally, elections are part of the democratic system of ignorance that has been imported from the system of disbelievers (Haqani, 2020: 74-76). As a result, elections are not suitable for Muslims, and there are many corruptions in elections, including the following:

1. Elections create undesirable conflicts and discord among different tribes and parties, which the Messenger of God referred to as the disputes of ig-

norance (Bukhari, 1990: 495). As a result, these conflicts weaken the unity among Muslims and disrupt cohesion in facing the enemies of God.

2. Democratic elections lead to equality among rational and ignorant individuals, men and women, believers and non-believers. As a result, all people are considered equal regardless of their status, which contradicts the teachings of the Quran. “Are those who know equal to those who do not know?” (Quran, Al-Zumar: 9).
3. Wasting personal and public funds in elections is considered an unjustifiable waste of money according to Islamic law, as we observe in republican countries. The Quran strongly prohibits wasting money, stating “Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils” (Quran, Al-Isra: 27).
4. Every candidate calls people to vote for themselves with fake promises and lies, which is the same as seeking leadership and rulership that religion has forbidden.
5. Elections are always accompanied by cheating and deceiving people to gain votes, which has a significant impact on the elections (Haqani, 2020: 76-74).

Due to these reasons, the Taliban dissolved the Independent Election Commission, which was responsible for organizing the presidential, parliamentary, and provincial council elections. According to this group, this important democratic institution in Afghanistan was a burden on the Taliban government’s budget.

The Taliban government spokesperson has stated that this group will form a council of elders that will fill the void left by an institution like parliament. This calculated political move will enable the inclusion of some well-known political figures and moderates in the Taliban regime. Therefore, so far, none of the prominent Afghan politicians have condemned the dissolution of the election commission. This is while the dissolution of this institution means that for now, the Taliban does not intend to share power through legitimate and democratic

processes such as elections (Khaled Khosrow, Afghanistan International, dissolution of the election commission, 10/8/2021).

Conclusion

Considering the Taliban's ideological school of thought and its impact on the social conditions of Afghan society, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1- Women's status:

- a) The Taliban considers educating and upbringing women in religious matters permissible, but they believe that such education should not lead to the mixing of men and women, which they deem it unlawful. They oppose women attending schools and universities, arguing that women should receive education under the supervision of a mahram (a close male relative).
 - b) The Taliban does not consider women's employment outside the home appropriate and insists that women's place is in the home. They argue that a woman must be a homemaker and provide for the needs of her husband, and that employment is primarily for men.
 - c) The Taliban believes that the hijab has a significant impact on maintaining the moral integrity of society and preventing deviations. They consider hijab to be a divine commandment that must be enforced.
 - d) The Taliban believes that women's participation in managerial affairs is not permissible, and that women's duty is pregnancy, breastfeeding, and raising children. Among the reasons they cite for the exclusion of women from managerial affairs is the prohibition on women going to mosques. They argue that if women are prohibited from going to mosques, their participation in socio-political affairs is also prohibited in the first place.
1. The Taliban believes that enjoining good and forbidding evil is obligatory for all responsible individuals. They believe that enjoining good and forbidding evil is a commandment of God and the Quran. Enjoining good includes punishments, not fixed religious penalties. If an individual commits an evil act repeatedly, he must be punished.

2. The Taliban opposed the new education system and closed down schools and educational institutions. In the early days of their rise to power in Afghanistan, whenever they entered a city, they would shut down high schools. These closures were considered their first intellectual control over the cultural and educational sphere.
3. The Taliban believes that during the American time, customs and traditions were formed in Afghanistan that were contrary to the authentic Afghan nature and must be eradicated.
4. Afghanistan is one of the most complex tribal societies in terms of its structure. One of the ethnic groups in Afghanistan is the Pashtuns. Some of the characteristics of this ethnic group include loyalty, honor, retaliation, and hospitality.
5. The Taliban opposes election and considers it illegitimate. They believe that election malpractices, such as undermining Muslim unity, disregarding the equality of rational and ignorant individuals, misusing personal and public funds in elections, and making false promises, lead to fraud and deceiving the people.

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