

Religion Can't Just Be Inherited

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لطفاً متن فارسی را در فایل ضمیمه مطالعه کنید.

In the land of meaning, to be poor isn't about not to have, but to remain content with what you have.

An old friend of mine, the late Ahmad Darvish, was a literary figure who belonged to the Sect of the Dervishes of Gonābād, Iran. He was a great man, a quite warm and sincere fellow, and someone devoid of any religious or sectarian hatred. He showed me best his kindness and friendship when he introduced me to the guru of the dervishes, who in turn kindly gifted me the guru's prayer rug as a souvenir.

Once I asked Mr. Darvish if his grown-up children would be natural members of the Sect of the Dervishes. "No," he said. As I recall, he explained, "to be a dervish isn't something that you inherit automatically. Even though my children ought to appreciate the hereditary aspect of a religion or a sect, they should also study about it for themselves the same way that they would get into a university. They ought to walk the road knowingly, because wisdom and prudence grow out of seeing the truth, and seeing the truth grows out of education. This very education is what sustains and maintains the rational commands that they are to receive."

"**Otherwise,**" Mr. Darvish continued, and I paraphrase, "my children would turn into some mindless parrots who merely speak the words, unable to understand their meaning. **They would become like the vast majority of the followers of all religions,** who reiterate the words without any clue as to what they mean; who might even lack a knowledge of the language. **Yes, they'll utter the words, but that'll only be a parrot's voice. Such people** bend to the softest breeze, the most shallow of advertisements, like the weak and fragile branches of a plant. They are easily manipulated by others, and as such, they may set on fire themselves and the world. Just look at the history of the world! That is the outcome of accepting, of believing, without studying about the material at hand."

Indeed, blind acceptance without studying the subject for themselves rips away the followers' ability to think. Such people believe and teach, join and continue, the long chain of imitation, and of religious and sectarian hatred, one generation after another. They imagine themselves to be "preserving a legacy", while their motto alone shows how much they truly understand. We've seen at times how they judge a person irrationally upon merely learning of their religion or sect, or even rise to kill one another over such matters. They try to guard that **cursed legacy, like a flawed family gene,** for future generations, in the guise of preserving their own identity. Thence, now and then, they handicap our children, and altogether the world, so

badly that as the result, and to recall the eminent poet **Fereydoun Moshiri**, our humanity shall die.

**It's foolish to speak of freedom, purity, or compassion.
They're speaking of the death of kindness, of love.
They're talking about the death of humanity.**

Many people mistake their religious, racial, national, or traditional heritage for their true identities. That is, the followers of the thousands of religions, sects, races, etc. have adopted as many special group identities. This lingering misconception has for long nurtured the germs of differences and divisions among members of the human species. But the true identity of any human being is their shared identity, what they have in common with all other human beings, and which has the potential to bring about peace and comfort for the global population.

Today, our **civilized but wandering world**, fearing Hell, has sought refuge with the Infernal Dragon! One group must fall, even as we fear that an even worse group might emerge; whilst millions of people have become desperate, homeless refugees, wounded, or dead, all sacrificed as the heavy price of our follies. Every government, naturally concerned about its own future, is also trying to somehow rip a reward from the muddy waters. Meanwhile, those who seek destruction, who intend **to train the villains, who wish to promote religious and sectarian hatred**, they continue freely to pass on their divisive and seditious instructions. They do this everyday, everywhere, before the oblivious eyes of the world, **cloaked as religious promulgation, under the safe shade of the flag of free democracy**. The governments better try and prevent such inciting and seditious teachings, instead of getting distracted by petty crimes, so to speak. Otherwise, we'll continue to see the spread of evil, bigotry and prejudice, and the waning of conscience and humanity. As an Iranian poet wrote,

**We left the Creator, only to become enslaved by religions.
Why such religious prejudice? Aren't we all humans?
If we have the spirit of God inside of us, and if God is one and alone,
Then what's the fighting for? Ah, it's all about worshipping ourselves.**

And may I add, "Is it about earning a living? If so, alas, people's lives have become some worthless commodities..."

My friends, Truth is above Faith. Let's be realistic. Think of the tiniest point that could somehow motivate us and future generations towards wisdom, intellectual independence, and security, alongside believing in such reasonable codes as the Ten Commandments. That point would be worthier than the most important nonsensical command that could lead us to hatred and enslavement. Let's avoid superstition, bigotry and prejudice, and let's abstain from repeating blindly the mistakes of the past. **Let me emphasize: No follower is obligated to repeat the mistakes of his or her predecessors.** If we do the same mistakes over, we may only expect to suffer the recurring frustrations of the past. To repeat past errors is to introduce our upcoming mistakes. Take a look around the world: those especially predisposed for evil are committing horrid crimes based on some accepted writings passed down to them, which may read, for example, "You Shall Kill!" We can't imagine an end to this dreadful trend, unless by the rule of time, and by the hands of each and every enlightened heir to the religions, such seditious writings are removed from all religious books. Let's learn from the past, so that we could make a better

future. May that day never come when the current religious disasters become so commonplace that they'll be deemed as a norm of life.

The world today, in step with the giant leap taken by science, and similar to the huge leap that we made long ago out of the era of ignorance, needs to take yet another leap into a new stage—the stage of humanity. And we better start doing this by removing the causes behind the global religious and sectarian hatred. **The sooner we act, the less misery we'll have to endure.** To preserve their worthwhile heritage, every generation is duty-bound to understand and improve upon that heritage, instead of blindly imitating its directives.

**If I try to tell it all,
Hundred worlds shall come and pass,
Yet this story won't have come to an end.**

As a wise man said, **Let's not be so tempted by a drop that we may forget the ocean.** That rational heritage that rings true in all epochs, such as the famous Torah commandment, "Love for your neighbor as you would love for yourself", is like a wise friend—it's desired, and it's here to stay. Let's borrow from a Persian poet, who beautifully portrayed this concept about friends:

**The friendship of the wise is like a golden crater:
It won't break, but if it does, it can be shaped anew.
The friendship of the ignorant is like a clay vase:
It easily breaks, but if it doesn't, throw it away.**

Reasonable inherited notions are similar to golden cups; they won't easily break, but when they do, when they don't agree with the time, they could be adapted, adjusted, and preserved. In contrast, inflammatory writings should be thrown away. The times of blind imitation are over, and humanity, having been harmed by this ill for far too long, is destined to turn toward sound sources and rational arguments. For some evident and worthy examples of this positive trend, we may think of the unprecedented private and public conversations among people, which suggest the awakening of many adherents of religions; as well as the free-thinking words of Pope Francis; and the gradual shedding of many superstitions attributed to religion.

We may study the bloody history of the Church, filled with numerous disasters, to realize that Pope Francis is the leader of the same Church that in a far past sold shares of Heaven to people—until as they say, one day a man officially bought all the shares of Hell from them. Then he asked people to stop buying Heaven's shares, because as its sole owner, he would no longer let anyone into Hell! And since everyone had to go to Heaven, the sales of Heavenly shares came to a halt—and hence, he managed to end the scam. **Today, it isn't the colossal mass of world population that has turned to logic; neither it's the Pope who is indeed speaking;** rather, it's about the necessity of time and the progressive movement forward.

In Conclusion: My friends, an inheritance that ceases to grow is akin to a tree that stops growing—it's bound to dry out and wither. **No legacy, no written text, is too holy** to refuse being made fit to its time of practice, and to be improved. Perhaps the best proof and most salient example of this statement is the Hebrew language, a millennia-old undoubted heritage of the Jewish people. You may not know that out of about 100,000 words in Modern Hebrew, only 12,000 belonged to the original Hebrew that had reached us. The other 88,000 words have been

the outcome of the efforts made by the late **Eliezer “Perlman” Ben-Yehuda (1858-1922)** and the Academy of Hebrew Language which he founded. As a result, the people and the government of Israel have been able to have their own official language.

Everyone who receives an inheritance is duty-bound to improve upon that legacy, and to make it usable for modern times. Let’s accept the reasonable commands of our beloved heritage, in order to better understand and practice this legacy. Thus, we will have helped their survival; and we’ll have better and more successful followers for our religion. In this regard, those who are prepared and merit the rewards, they shall receive their due prizes. Such a preparation is not hereditary but it’s acquired; since religious edicts are not capable of change in essence, but human understanding is. By the demand of Nature, and as the poet Omar Khayyam said, every generation is obligated to walk further than the one before, if only for as much as one breath; and to act better than they did, if only for a trifle; because at the end of the day, the outcome of our lives is but that single breath.

**It’s only one breath from the house of blasphemy to the religion.
It’s only one breath from the world of doubt to the realm of certainty.
Cherish this single breath, for our life’s fruit is but this adored breath.**

It’s said that **Abu-Said Abul Khayr**, the 10th Century A.D. Persian Sufi (mystic) born in the city of Mihne, was invited to speak at a mosque. As he stood at the pulpit before a packed house, a man shouted at the crowd, “People! Let everyone in! Move one step forward from where you’re standing!” Upon hearing those words, Abu-Said stepped down from the pulpit and explained, “I have nothing more to say, for that man said in so few words all that I had meant to say.” Indeed, that single breath is the same as that one reasonable step forward.

**If you wish to become the master of your era, then learn
And earn experience in the school of reason, and nothing else.
The day when the habit of imitation is erased from people’s minds,
That single day deserves to be called Life, and nothing more.**

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