

INTRODUCTION

A State¹ is a self-governing political entity. A state is more than a government, governments change, but states endure. A state is the means of rule over a defined territory. It is comprised of an executive, a bureaucracy, courts and other institutions. But, above all, a state levies taxes and operates a military and police force. A government² is the body within an organization that has the authority to make and enforce rules, laws and regulations. Typically, the government refers to a civil government which can be local, national, or international.

The concept of government has been around since humanity itself where hunter-gatherers would commonly establish tribes' high authority and have unique ideals. However, government is not limited to the human species itself as many animals establish groups such as ants, lions, and bees. Although, a common trait of animals, specifically mammals and colony insects are a social caste that may work in a governmental way.

The extent to which a government can be classified varies by degree. For example, Iran can be seen as democratic, authoritarian and theocratic while constitutional monarchies such as the Netherlands combine elements of monarchy and democracy.

Theocracy - Rule by a religious elite. In this form of government the God is considered as the supreme civil ruler of the state, and it is the belief that, religious elite were the representative of the God and he is ruling according to the guidelines of the supreme. And

¹ State has its own characteristics which distinguishes it from all other institutions or organizations. The basic characteristics of a state are *Territory, Population, Sovereignty, and Government*.

² There are different forms of government which are existing in this world like; *Constitutional monarchy* - A government that has a monarch, but his/her power is strictly limited by the government. Example: United Kingdom, *Constitutional republic* - Rule by a government composed of representatives who are voted into power by the people. *Democracy* - Rule by a government where all [citizens] are represented but power is held by the majority. *Dictatorship* - Rule by an individual who has full power over the country. *Monarchy* - Rule by an individual who has inherited the role and expects to bequeath it to their heir. *Oligarchy* - Rule by a small group of people who share similar interests or family relations. *Plutocracy* - A government composed of the wealthy class. Any of the forms of government listed here can be plutocracy. For instance, if all of the voted representatives in a republic are wealthy, then it is a republic and a plutocracy. *Anarchism* - Absence of government. Anarchism is not a form of government—it is the belief that governments are harmful and unnecessary. *Totalitarianism* - Characterized by a state that regulates nearly every aspect of public and private life. *Authoritarianism* - Characterized by an emphasis on the authority of the state in a republic or union. It is a political system controlled by no elected rulers who usually permit some degree of individual freedom.

“Theocratic states are incompatible with pluralism”

in such states one religion will be recognised as the religion of the state and all the laws which exist there in that state will be according to that particular religious belief.

Whatever may be the form of government which is in existence in a state the basic and the most important purpose of government is the maintenance of basic security and public order. According Thomas Hobbes’s *Social Contract Theory* the people, as rational animals, saw submission to a government dominated by a sovereign as preferable to anarchy. And according to him people in a community *create* and *submit to* government for the purpose of establishing for themselves, safety and public order.

THEOCRACY

Theocracy is a form of government in which a god or deity is recognized as the state's supreme civil ruler, or in a broader sense, a form of government in which a state is governed by immediate divine guidance or by officials who are regarded as divinely guided.³ The word *theocracy* originates from the Greek words *Theos* meaning “god,” and *Kratein*, meaning “to rule.” Thus the meaning of the word in Greek was “rule by god” or theocracy is a form of government in which divine power governs an earthly human state, either in a personal incarnation or, more often, via religious institutional representatives (i.e., a church), replacing or dominating civil government. Iran and Vatican City are two best examples for Theocratic states.

In a theocratic state, the state is ruled by religious head. In this form of government the God is considered as the supreme civil ruler of the state, and it is the belief that, religious head were the representative of the God and he is ruling according to the directions of the supreme. And in such states one religion will be recognised as the religion of the state and all the laws which exist there in that state will be according to that particular religious belief.

Fallen humanity is tined by original sin and that without sin there would be no need of government. Government can curb sinful conduct by the threat of punishment. But it cannot cure the original sin.⁴ St. Augustine insisted that, the church should obey the laws of the state, his emphasis upon the moral superiority of Christian principles over political society, and his belief that church should imbue society with these principles, has been interpreted as a justification for theocracy.

³ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/theocracy>

⁴ St. Augustine of Hippo, *City of God at Political theory-An introduction*, p 91

Since 1970, influence of Marxism has steadily declined. Its position has been taken by religious fundamentalism, most significantly Islamic fundamentalism. The fundamentalist impulse in religion is sometime based upon the belief in the literal truth of the sacred texts, but is expressed politically in the assertion that religion provides the basis for social order and political conduct, as well as private morality. Islamic fundamentalist for instance, call for founding of an Islamic state, a theocracy ruled by the spiritual rather than the temporal authority.⁵

PLURALISM

What is pluralism? There are different conceptions of pluralism. Pluralism is a social organization in which diversity of racial or religious⁶ or ethnic⁷ or cultural⁸ groups is tolerated or the doctrine that reality consists of several basic substances or elements or it can be said as the practice of one person holding more than one benefice at a time. A pluralism definition has the basis in operating under the principles of acceptance and diversity. It is promoted as a system for the “common good” of all. It is a coming together with common recognition and credence to all beliefs and developments of modern social, scientific, and economic societies. Pluralist is someone who believes that distinct ethnic or cultural or religious groups can exist together in society.

Many things influence worldviews: to name a few, geography, culture, religion, and politics. Some of us look at the world from the perspective of religion; some have secular values as their organizing centre. Some differences are bred by our peculiar culture so that the Asians among us probably find wives serving their husbands normal, while others might find the idea unacceptable.

Literally pluralism means “Rule by many.” It refers to a political system in which numerous competing groups exert strong influence over a responsive government. However each of these groups concentrate on its own area, so no single elite dominates all sectors. New groups can emerge easily, bringing further competition to the political market place. At the minimum, pluralism describes the reality of people having different worldviews that govern the way they live and regard the world.

⁵ Andrew Heywood, *Political theory-An introduction*, p 102

⁶ *Religious pluralism* is a loosely defined expression concerning acceptance of different religions, to which one's religion is not the sole and exclusive source of truth, and thus that at least some truths and true values exist in other religions.

⁷ *Ethnic pluralism* means co-existence of a variety of distant racial groups

⁸ *Cultural pluralism* is a term used when small groups within a larger society maintain their unique cultural identities. One of the most notable cultural pluralisms is the caste system, which is related to Hinduism.

THEOCRATIC STATES ARE INCOMPATIBLE WITH PLURALISM

Now let's come to the main discussion that, *“Theocratic states are incompatible with pluralism”*. Is it so? Whether theocratic states are inconsistent with pluralism? It's not fair to discuss about this without going through the functioning of the states which are theocratic in nature.

Iran's government is described as a "theocratic republic" (Officially Theocratic Republic of Iran). Iran's head of state, or Supreme Leader, is an Islamic cleric appointed for life by an elected body called Assembly of Experts. The Council of Guardians, considered part of the executive branch of government, is responsible for determining if legislation is in line with Islamic law and customs (the Sharia), and can bar candidates from elections, and green light or ban investigations into the election process.

Ayatolla Ruholla Khomeini called for the establishment of an “Islamic Republic” as a system of institutionalised clerical rule, recognising that this was based upon a novel interpretation of Islamic doctrine. Under his influence Islam became a Theo-political project aimed at regenerating the Islamic world by ridding it of occupation and corruption from outside.⁹

Iran has a unique culture and history that separates it from other Middle Eastern countries, but to suggest that Iran is a good example of democracy is like saying that the Soviet Union was a republic. Iran is a theocratic oligarchy, ruled by an elite handful of religious leaders. The people are "free" to elect officials who have to be pre-approved by the Guardian Council¹⁰. This assures that viewpoints that the government disapproves of are not heard. Iran also lacks other institutions of a free country, such as a free press, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion.

The Holy See (commonly known as the Vatican or Vatican City) became the last surviving territory of the former Papal States. In 1929, the Holy See was formally recognized as an independent state through treaties with the Italian government. The head of state of the Vatican is the pope, elected by the College of Cardinals, an assembly of senior Catholic clerics. A pope is elected for life, and voting is limited to cardinals under 80 years of age. A

⁹ Supra 4, p 103

¹⁰ <http://media.www.thebatt.com/media/storage/paper657/news/2007/04/26/MailCall/Iran.A.Theocracy.Not.A.Democracy-2880842.shtml>

secretary of state, directly responsible for international relations, is appointed by the pope. The Vatican legal system is rooted in Canon Law, and subject to the dictates of the pope and changes to Canon Law made by conferences of senior clergy.

A theocracy is undoubtedly a Christian state, indeed one par excellence. According to T. S. Eliot theocracy is a "type 1" Christian state. By theocracy T. S. Eliot mean the situation where there is ecclesiastical supremacy and the state machinery is used to further particular religious interest.¹¹ The early Jewish nation, Geneva under Calvin and various Islamic states around to the world today are examples of type 1 states.¹²¹³

Liberal democracy does not entertain the idea of a religious state; indeed, it is opposed to it. A fundamental tenet of liberalism, perhaps even its "defining feature", is its advocacy of neutrality: "a liberal state is a state which imposes no conception of the good upon its citizens but which allows individuals to pursue their own good in their own way."¹⁴

Afghanistan

The Afghan population is divided into numerous ethnic groups. More than 99% of the people are Muslim- between 75-90% Sunni and 10-15% Shia. The country has been governed by nearly every system of government over the past century, including a monarchy, republic, theocracy and communist state. The constitution ratified by the 2003 Loya jirga restructured the government as an Islamic republic consisting of three branches.

Afghanistan is currently led by President Hamid Karzai, who was elected in October 2004. The current parliament was elected in 2005. Among the elected officials were former mujahadeen, Taliban members, communists, reformists, and Islamic fundamentalists. 28% of the delegates elected were women, three points more than the 25% minimum guaranteed under the constitution. This made Afghanistan, long known under the Taliban for its oppression of women, one of the leading countries in terms of female representation.¹⁵

Most existing Afghan civil law has not been updated or modified since the socialist period of the 1970s. As in many Muslim countries, Afghan civil law co-exists with Islamic Sharia law, as well as tribal and customary law which is often used to resolve many conflicts

¹¹ Leo Pfeffer, *Church, State and Freedom*, 26 (rev Ed), 1967).

¹² *Journal of Law and Religion*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (1998 - 1999), pp. 453-482

¹³ <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1051480>

¹⁴ Peter Jones, *The Idea of the Neutral State* in Robert E. Goodin & Andrew Reeve, eds, *Liberal Neutrality* 11 (1989)

¹⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghanistan#Government_and_politics

in Afghan society. Understanding the proper balance between these varied bodies of law is highly complex.

Whether Afghanistan is a theocratic state? If so is it incompatible with pluralism? Let's take an example; Afghanistan has quietly passed a law permitting Shia men to deny their wives food and sustenance if they refuse to obey their husbands' sexual demands, despite international outrage over an earlier version of the legislation which President Hamid Karzai had promised to review.

The new final draft of the legislation also grants guardianship of children exclusively to their fathers and grandfathers, and requires women to get permission from their husbands to work.

Although the government is changed, and new laws have been passed by the legislature, it's only the language of the law has been changed. Many of the provisions that alarmed women's rights groups remain, including this one: "Tamkeen is the readiness of the wife to submit to her husband's reasonable sexual enjoyment, and her prohibition from going out of the house, except in extreme circumstances, without her husband's permission. If any of the above provisions are not followed by the wife she is considered disobedient."

The law has been backed by the hard-line Shia cleric Ayatollah Mohseni, who is thought to have influence over the voting intentions of some of the country's Shias, which make up around 20% of the population.

From all these we can understand one thing that, though Afghanistan is a Republic, it is not so in its real sense. Shias are the major power in Afghanistan, even though they are only 20% of the population. In the real sense and by looking its practical approach to the society it is very clear that Afghanistan is a theocratic state and it is incompatible with pluralism.

Srilanka

The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the State to protect and foster the Buddha Sasana.¹⁶ Srilanka is not a Democracy; it is a religious theocracy that has ruthlessly crushed the voices for equal rights

¹⁶ Articles 10 and 14(1)(e), The Srilankan Constitution

by the minorities. It has done nothing to safeguard the religious rights of the minorities. In fact it is been doing just the opposite from 1948 onwards.

Thousands of Hindu or Christian places of worship have been destroyed or damaged and or taken over by the Military. This has been happening from long before there were Tamil rebel groups. The holiest of Hindu temples have not only been destroyed but also have been taken apart to be used as Raw material by the srilankan military. This has happened in the Thirukoneshwarar and Ketheshwaram temples.

The Ramakrishna Mutt was taken over in 1960 by the Sirimavo Bandaranaike government, given to be used as bhikkus` quarters. More recently it has become a Buddhist Archaeological Museum, with a statue of Buddha at its entrance. Srilanka has now become a Buddhist theocracy with the religions of the minorities threatened by the state to the point of extinction.

This form of Buddhism practiced by the state is in stark contrast to the peaceful and tolerant Buddhism of the east. And it is indeed an irony that a religion that was brought to Srilanka by missionaries is now persecuting the native religion. Srilanka is the only place in the world where Buddhist monks run for elections. Endorse candidates and dictate state policy. The time tested democratic cornerstone of the separation of church (religion) and state` is not to be found in this country. We see religious figures advocating racist and warlike policies and the government listening to them. This has been happening from 1948 onwards.

So to conclude, we can say that Government of Srilanka is a democracy only in name but not so in reality.

Nepal

Nepal was a “Hindu state for centuries. The picturesque Himalayan state of 28 million people has had a very chequered experience of parliamentary rule over the last 50 years. After years of power wrangling between the king and the government, the partial democratic experiment was dissolved in 1959, and a "party-less" absolute monarchy governed Nepal until 1989, when a popular movement forced the monarchy to accept constitutional reforms. King Gyanendra's predecessor, King Birendra, agreed to create a parliamentary monarchy with the king as head of state and a prime minister as head of government.

This system was rudely disrupted by a growing Maoist rebellion which started in 1996 and has continued since. The failure to suppress it prompted King Gyanendra to seize absolute power in February 2005, insisting he could succeed. He has completely failed to do

so and was outflanked in November, 2005 by an agreement between the Maoists and other parties to demand democratic change.

Nepal was formerly the world's only constitutionally declared Hindu state, but following the movement for democracy in early 2006 and the breaking of King Gyanendra's power, the Nepali Parliament amended the constitution to make Nepal a secular¹⁷ state. Maoists' entry in the parliament marks the end of the confessional state. Here many religions and cultures have lived together. Nepal's Maoists have made it into the country's parliament after ten years of bloody guerrilla warfare moved by the idea that “power comes from the barrel of a gun”.

Saudi Arabia

The central institution of the Saudi Arabian government is the Saudi monarchy. Saudi Arabia is closer to a true theocracy, running their government according to Sharia, the laws set forth for daily living in Islam. Further, Saudi uses the Quran as its constitution. There are no recognized political parties or national elections, except the local elections which were held in the year 2005 when participation was reserved for male citizens only.¹⁸ Justice is administered according to the Sharia by a system of religious courts whose judges are appointed by the king on the recommendation of the Supreme Judicial Council, composed of twelve senior jurists.¹⁹

In Saudi Arabia, the legal system doesn't any provide legal protection for freedom of religion; the public practice of non-Muslim religions is prohibited. Indeed, the Government enforces a strict and conservative version of Sunni Islam. Muslims, who do not follow the official interpretation, can face severe repercussions at the hands of Mutawwa'in (religious police). Hence we can say that Saudi culture lacks the diversity of religious expression, buildings, annual festivals and public events which we can see in other countries where religious freedom is permitted.²⁰

CONCLUSION

In a pluralistic society, the diversity of racial or religious or ethnic or cultural groups is tolerated. In such society one person will be holding more than one benefice at a time, such as freedom press, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion. But such freedom lacks in

¹⁷ Article 4(1) Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007 at http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Nepal_Interim_Constitution2007.pdf

¹⁸ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3734420.stm

¹⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudi_Arabia#cite_note-8

²⁰ <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108492.htm>

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theocratic states. While we examined the position in Afghanistan, it is found that even after the government changed the nature of the laws and rules were remained the same. It was very clear that the afghan society is prejudice to one particular section. From the above study it is clear that the theocratic states have ruthlessly crushed the voices for equal rights by the minorities.

So to conclude, we can say that the *theocratic states are incompatible with pluralism*. It is also to be noted that as a result of such inconsistency, there is always some kind of disturbances to the administration in such states.