

Islam and Ignorance

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1.The Inter-relation of Opinion and Conduct

Man faces many things in life and with none of them can be deal properly unless he forms an opinion about the nature or condition of that thing and his own relationship with it. Right or wrong, an opinion has to be formed about everything and until such an opinion is formed no man can decide what behaviour and what attitude he should adopt towards a particular thing. This is an experience, which is a part of your daily life. Whenever you meet a person you need to know: Who is he? What is his position and status in life?

What are his personal qualities? What sort of relation subsists between both of you? You cannot determine how to deal with the man to the aforesaid questions. In the absence of all such information, you nevertheless have to form a conjectural opinion on the basis of appearances and whatever conduct you adopt towards him is controlled by the opinion so formed. You eat the sort of things, which according to your knowledge or conjecture contain food value. The things you cast away, or make use of; the things you preserve adore or loathe; the things you fear or love-your varying attitude towards all these things is regulated by the opinion which you have formed about their nature and propensities and your relations with them.

The correctness or impropriety of your behaviour towards these things is dependent upon your right or wrong opinions you have formed about them. The validity or fallacy depends on whether you have formed the opinion about them on the of knowledge, conjecture, whim or observation through senses. A child, for instance, sees fire and on bare observation through senses forms the opinion that it is an attractive, glaring plaything. This opinion leads him to the act of stretching his hands to hold the fire. Another man sees the same fire and through conjecture or whim comes to the conclusion that it embodies in itself some attribute of Divinity or, at least, it is an emblem of Divinity. On the basis of this conclusion he determines to bow his head in supplication before the fire, thus signifying his relationship with it. A third man looks at the fire. He begins to investigate into its nature and properties and through knowledge and research arrives at the conclusion that fire can bake, burn or heat things. He

further forms the opinion that his relationship with fire is like that of master with his servant. Fire, in his opinion, is neither a plaything nor a deity. On the other hand it is a thing which can be pressed into service for cooking, burning or heating purposes, whenever the need arises. Among the foregoing different attitudes, those of the child and the fire worshipper are definitely based on ignorance. Experience negates the child's opinion that fire is a plaything. The opinion of the worshipper of fire that fire is God or an emblem of godhood is based upon whims and caprices rather than on any proof furnished by true knowledge. In contrast to both these opinions, the attitude of the man who regards fire as a useful agent in the service of man is a scientific attitude as it is based upon knowledge.

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Chapter 2

THE BASIC PROBLEMS OF LIFE

The Opinion and Attitude of Man towards Life

Keeping this premise in mind let us divert our view from the details to the fundamentals. Man finds himself living on this planet. He possesses a body which is endowed with divergent potentialities. A magnificent expanse of earth and sky lies before him. This universe contains an endless variety of things and man has the power to press all those things into his service. Man is surrounded by countless millions of other human beings, animals, plants and minerals and his life is inextricably linked with all these things. It is possible for you to imagine then that man can adopt a mode of dealing with these things without first forming an opinion about his own self, the nature of things which surround him and the position in which he stands in relation to those things? Is it possible for a person to adopt a way of life without determining: Who am I? What am I? Am I responsible or irresponsible? Am I independent or subordinate to someone? If I stand in a subordinate position who is my superior and if I am responsible to whom am I accountable? Has my worldly existence any end, and if it has, what is it? Similarly, can a person propose to expend his powers without first deciding the questions: Do these powers belong to him or are a gift endowed by someone else? Is there some one to call him to account for expending his powers? Is the use of his powers to be regulated himself or by someone else? In the like manner is it possible for a man to adopt a certain behaviour towards things which form part of his surrounding without ascertaining: Is he himself their master or someone else? Does he command unlimited power over them or are his powers restricted? If his powers are confined within bounds who does set limits to his powers? Likewise can a man devise a mode of behaviour towards his fellow men without first forming a definite opinion as to what are the ideals of humanity? What is the basis of distinction and disparity between man and man? What are the motive forces underlying friendship and animosity, coalescence and discord, co-operation and non-co-operation? Similarly is it likely that a man can on the whole adopt an attitude towards this universe until he arrives at certain definite conclusions about the nature of the system of this universe and his own position a part of this system?

On the basis of the premise I have already discussed, it can be stated without hesitation that it is impossible to adopt an attitude without forming an opinion about all these matters. As a matter of fact, every living man, consciously or sub-consciously holds certain opinions-nay is constrained to hold certain opinions- about these questions of life; for without this opinion he cannot move even a step in this universe. It is not essential that every man might have deliberated in a philosophical manner upon all these questions and might have arrived at certain conclusions about each and every matter after detailed investigation. Nay, most men have no definite idea of these questions, nor do they consciously exercise their minds over them. Despite all this, all men do form some sort of a negative or positive opinion about everything and the attitude of every man towards life is inevitably controlled by the opinion he has formed.

The Bases Of Individual or Collective Behaviour are the same

At this rule holds good in the case of individuals, so it is true in respect of groups as well. These questions lie at the root of human life and unless matters relating to these questions have been clearly determined, it is impossible to frame a programme for the body politic and raise on edifice of culture and civilization. The moral code of a society will reflect whatever conclusions would be drawn about

these vital questions of life, the concept of morality will be shaped in consonance with them. The various institutions of life will be modelled on the same conclusions, indeed the whole fabric of society will be moulded by these conclusions. In point of fact, there can be no two opinions on this matter. The attitude of an individual or a society will be determined by the nature of conclusions arrived at in answer to these questions. If you wish, you may analyse the attitude of an individual or a society and very easily ascertain what conclusions about life's basic questions are the motive force of the existence of this individual or society. It is definitely impossible that the nature of an individual or collective behaviour should be at variance with the nature of conclusions drawn in answer to these questions. Words and actions may disagree but nature of the answer of these questions that dwells in the inner self of a man cannot conflict in any case with the nature of his practical behaviour.

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Chapter 3

DIFFERENT SOLUTIONS OF THE PROBLEMS OF LIFE

Let us take a step further. All those fundamental problems of life the solution of which is imperative for the active existence of man are metaphysical in essence. The answer to these questions is not written on the horizon for every man to read on his advent into this world, nor is the answer self-evident so that everyone could comprehend it. It is due to this reason that there is no single solution upon which all men may agree. Men have always held divergent opinions on these questions and various men have found various solutions to them. The question now presents itself as to what are the possible solutions to these problems, what means have been adopted to solve them and what possible solutions emerge out of all these means.

1. One way of solving these problems is to rely upon one's senses and opinions about all matters should be formed on the basis of sensorial perception and observation.
2. The second way is to derive a conclusion by means of sensorial perception aided by speculation.
3. The third alternative is to put one's faith in the solutions to these problems offered by the Prophets of God who claimed to possess direct Knowledge of the Truth.

So far, only the above three means of arriving at a solution to these problems have been made use of and probably only these three ways are possible. In each of the above cases different solutions have been found by different means. Each solution gives rise to a particular attitude of mind and a particular pattern of morality and culture, which in its basic characteristics is completely different from the attitude produced by other categories of solutions. Let me show you now the different solutions to these problems arrived at through different means and the attitude of mind produced by each solution

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Chapter 4

FIRST SOLUTION---SHEER IGNORANCE

Relying exclusively upon his own senses when a person arrives at some opinion in relation to these problems, he, in a manner quite natural to this mode of thought, concludes that this entire system of universe is a result of mere chance. There is no cause or purpose behind this universe. It has come into being by itself; it is operating automatically; it will meet its end without producing any consequences. There is no visible master who controls the universe. Hence there is no master of the universe and if at all there is one, His connection with man's life is nonexistent. Man is specie of animals, whose birth is only accidental. It is not whether somebody has created him or he was selfborn. In any case, this question is not germane to our discussion. We know only that man exists on this planet called earth. He entertains certain desires and there are some inner urges which compel him to fulfil these desires. Man is equipped with limbs and organs by means of which he satisfies these wants. Around him, on the face of earth, there are countless provisions and by using his limbs and organs man can satiate with these things. Hence there is no other use for the powers of man than that he should satisfy his desires and fulfil his needs to the optimum degree. World is no more than a tray upon which booty is arrayed for man to lay hands on. There is no sovereign being over man to whom he is accountable; there is no spring of Knowledge, no source of Guidance

from which man may derive the law for regulating his life. Hence man is an autonomous being who is responsible to none. It is his own function to make laws and regulations, to devise means for expending his powers and to determine his behaviour towards things existing around him. If man is in need of any guidance, he should, resort to the laws of life of animals, the story of stones and the experience of his own history. Man is either accountable to himself or to the human authority which the society of men has imposed upon itself. The present worldly life is the only life and the consequences of all actions are confined to this world alone. Hence judgement as to what is right or wrong, useful or harmful and good or pernicious and what is to be adopted or rejected is based on the effects of actions produced in this world.

This is complete ideology of life which deals with the fundamental problems of life on the basis of sensorial observations. There is a logical link and an intrinsic compatibility between each strain of thought contained in this ideology. A person, therefore, who believes in this dogma can adopt fairly smooth and consistent attitude in life disregarding the fact that this dogma and the attitude produced by it are right or wrong. Now let us look at the conduct which a person adopts on the basis of this answer.

Conduct based on Sheer Sensorial Experience

An inevitable consequence of this viewpoint in individual life is that the entire range of human conduct should be unfettered and devoid of any sense of responsibility. Man will deem himself the sole master of his body and his physical powers. He will, therefore, use his physical powers and qualities of his head and heart according to his whims and caprices. He will treat all things and all man whom chance places under his power as his chattel and himself will feel as their master. Only the bounds of natural law and inevitable restrictions imposed by collective life will set a limit to his authority. His own soul will be devoid of any moral sense—a sense of responsibility and a fear of accountability—and no moral force will check his refractory action. Where there are no external restrains upon his action or where he is able to bypass these checks, the natural tendency of his faith will impel him to be tyrannical, dishonest, wicked and mischievous. He will temperamentally be selfish, materialist and a time-server. The satisfaction of his carnal desires and animal needs will be the end—all and be—all of his life. Only those things will hold value in his eyes which prove serviceable to him in this attainment of his life's purpose. It is natural and quite logical that the believers in this dogma should bear such characters and personalities. There is no doubt, however, that for the sake of expediency and impelled by far-sightedness such a person may show traits of sympathy and selflessness. He may spare no pains in the task of national welfare and progress. He may on the whole display some sense of responsibility and respect for moral principles. But on a careful observation of his conduct you will find that all his seeming virtues are mere extensions of his selfish motives and carnal desires. He looks at the welfare of his nation or country from purely personal motives: he seeks his own welfare through the betterment of his nation and country. For these reasons, such a man can at best be called a nationalist only.

Characteristics of the Society built upon this Conduct

The distinctive feature of the society fashioned by individuals bearing aforementioned characters and personalities will be as follows:

The basic principle of politics will be that sovereignty is vested in human beings, and individual, family, a class, or the common people. The loftiest collective ideal considered feasible will be that of the setting up of a Commonwealth. This state will be governed by man-made laws. All laws shall be made or amended according to human desires and experience of circumstances. Policies, too, shall be formulated and altered in deference to profit motive or personal expediency. In this state people who are stronger and excel others in cleverness, craftiness, lies, perfidy, callousness and wickedness will gain ascendancy by force. The leadership of the society and reigns of authority will be in the hands of these people. Their book of constitution will enshrine the principle.

“Might is right and the weak are always wrong”.

The whole edifice of society and culture will be raised on the foundation of self-interest. Increasing

permissiveness in the satisfaction of one's lusts shall become the rule and standards of morality shall be so established that maximum freedom for attainment of sensuous pleasures is guaranteed to every one. Arts and literature will be affected by this philosophy of life and will progressively reflect nudity and pornographic trends.

In the economic domain of life sometimes feudalism will hold sway; at other times capitalism will gain ascendancy and sometimes the working classes will establish the proletariat dictatorship through violent means. Equity, however, will not form part of any of these economic systems. The conduct of every individual in this society shall be dictated by the fundamental conviction that the world and all the wealth contained in it is a booty and all men are free to lay their hands on it at will and whenever the chance presents itself.

The education system set up for the training of the members of this society will be based on this philosophy of life and shall reflect the same attitudes of mind. This system of education will impart to each successive generation the same notion of the world and man's place in the world which I have explained earlier. In all fields of knowledge information shall be so arranged and presented as to inculcate in the minds of the rising generation the same theories of life. The entire programme of training will be designed to prepare individual who will adopt this same attitude in life and will completely assimilate in this type of society. I need say no more to you about the characteristics of this type of educational system as you have had personal experience of such a system. You are studying in institutions, which have been set up under the same system, though they bear such names as 'Islamic College' or 'Muslim University' etc.

The attitude of mind which I have just analyzed springs out of sheer ignorance. This attitude is similar to that childlike state of mind which relying upon sensory observation considers fire as an attractive plaything. There is one difference, however. The fallacy of the child's observation soon becomes apparent through experience. The fire which the child takes as a plaything and wants to hold in his hands is a hot substance. So as soon as it touches the hand, it reveals that is no more a plaything. Contrary to it, in the other cases, the fallacy of observation becomes manifest after a long time. Indeed most people remain blissfully ignorant of the fallacy of their observations. The fire which these people hold in their hands has low heat; it does not burn instantly; it simmers on for centuries. However, if a person wishes to learn from common experience, he should ponder that due to this attitude of mind, individuals are constantly committing frauds, the rulers are oppressive and tyrannical, the judges are unfair, the rich are covetous and the commonality is deprived. This, indeed, is a better experience for a man and, over and above this, the burning flames of nationalism, imperialism, war and confrontation, invasions and monstrous acts of the extirpation of the same attitude of mind may force him to conclude that this attitude of mind is based on sheer ignorance rather than on true Knowledge of the Reality. Man's opinion about the system of this universe and his own position in the universe which lies at the root of this attitude of mind is not consistent with Reality, or else it could never have entailed such horrible consequences.

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Chapter 5

THE SECOND SOLUTION – Fundamental Problems

Let us examine now the second method. The second method of solving the fundamental problems of life is to coalesce observation with conjecture and speculation to arrive at opinions about life's problems through these means. Three different strains of thought arise out of this method and each strain of thought produces a particular type of behaviour.

(1) Polytheism

One school of thought believes that this universe is certainly subject to Divine control, but that there is not one God, but many. Different forces in the universe are being operated by the hands of different deities. Man's prosperity or misfortune, success or failure, profit or loss depends on the kindness or

displeasure of a plurality of gods. The protagonists of this viewpoint have also made an attempt on the basis of their conjectures and speculations to identify these divine powers and those in whom these powers are vested. They have set up those things as gods which have caught their fancy.

Characteristics of the Polytheistic Behaviour

The distinctive features of human behaviour which flows out of this viewpoint are as follows:

Life full of Superstitions

In the first place, man's whole life becomes a target of superstitions. He believes that there are many things which exert a good or bad influence on his fortune through supernatural means. He arrives at this conclusion on the basis of bare, subjective thinking; his belief is not supported by any proof of knowledge. The devotee of this faith, therefore dissipates most of his energy in entertaining false hopes of good fortune or in imaginary fears of ill-luck. Sometimes, he pins his hopes upon some grave for the accomplishment of his desires; sometimes he trusts that an idol will turn the wheel of his fortunes to a better end; sometimes he exerts himself to the utmost to propitiate some imaginary god; he feels crest-fallen on seeing a bad omen; sometimes he starts building castles in the air on the appearance or what he consider a good omen. All these things deflect his ideas and endeavours from the natural course and set him on an utterly unnatural course of action.

Endless Cycles Of Rituals

Secondly, this viewpoint establishes a lengthy hotch-potch of worship, devotion, offerings supplication and other rituals and caught in this complex web a large part of man's efforts and activities goes in vain.

Frauds Committed by Impostors

Thirdly, the protagonists of this philosophy of polytheism and superstition fall an easy prey to the wily tricks or fraudulent men. A man sets himself up as a king claims descent from the sun, the moon and other gods. He thus makes the people believe that he is a god too and that the people are his bondmen. Someone becomes an attendant at a shrine or a temple and sets himself up as an intermediary between the people and some supernatural power who rules over the destinies of mankind. Someone becomes a 'Pundit' or a 'Peer'(a saint) and by the stratagem of amulets, charms, sorcery and practice of magic, hoodwinks the people into believing that through these supernatural means all their desires can be obtained. The progeny of these tricksters from themselves into hereditary family groups and classes whose rights, privileges and influences continue to grow and become entrenched with the progress of time. This belief, therefore, thrusts upon the necks of the people the yoke of slavery of royal families, religious functionaries and spiritual guides. These self-styled gods enthrall the state of milch animals and beasts of burden.

A Life of Errors

Fourthly, this doctrine provides no enduring base for knowledge and art, philosophy and literature and culture and politics, nor do men receive from these imaginary deities any guidelines which may be followed in daily life. Man's connection with these gods is limited to the performance of a few rituals of devotion with the main end to solicit the favour and support of these deities. As regards the affairs of life, man is left to himself to frame laws and regulations and devise codes of conduct. Hence a society which believes in the plurality of gods virtually follows the same paths which I have described earlier in connection with the society which is guided by a faith based on sheer ignorance. The rules of morality, the code of conduct, the culture, the politics, the system of economy, knowledge and literature are almost the same in both societies. There is, therefore, no difference in principle between doctrine based on sheer ignorance's and faith in polytheism.

(2) Monasticism

The second doctrine produced by coalescing observation with conjecture and speculation lays down that

world is a Place of Torment Physical existence is constantly subjected to pain and torture. Soul is incarcerated in the body of man as a condemned prisoner. All sensations of pleasure, desires and physical needs which are the natural consequences of worldly existence are, in fact, yokes, and fetters in which man is enchained. The more man craves for the world and its things, the tighter grows the grip of these chains and severer torment shall lie in store for him. Salvation lies in renouncing all connection with the affairs of the world; to strangle all desires; one must abstain from all pleasures; deny all physical needs and demands of passion; purge the heart of all affections born out of kinship of flesh and blood, and put this enemy (i.e. one's body and passions) through a severe trial of torture and hardship so that the soul is freed from the dominance of the body. In this way, soul shall become light and refined and will gain sufficient strength to soar in a state of 'Nirvana' to the vantage point of salvation.

The Effects of Monasticism

The characteristic features of the human behaviour produced by this doctrine are these:

Individualism instead of Collectivism

In the first place, this doctrine changes all human tendencies from collectivism to individualism and from culture to bewilderment. Man turns his face from the world, flees from all responsibilities and non-cooperation and renunciation of all personal relations becomes the hallmark of his life. In short, he adopts negative moral values.

Good Men become Hermits

Secondly, this doctrine impels good men to renounce the world and go into seclusion in order to attain salvation. This paves the way for wicked man to take the reins of authority in all worldly matters into their own hands.

Smooth Fodder for every Tyrant

Thirdly, with the penetration of this doctrine into the society the people begin to adopt negative kind of moral values. They exhibit unsocial and individualistic tendencies and become psycho paths. Their creative powers are sapped. They become tender morsel for the tyrants and it is easy for every despotic government to coerce them into obedience. In point of fact, this doctrine works like magic in taming the common people to become the willing slaves of tyrants.

Conflict with Human Nature

Fourthly, a constant conflict rages between human nature and this doctrine of monasticism and the latter has always to capitulate. When it receives a setback the monastic doctrine seeks refuge in pretences. As an aftermath the ritual of Penance is invented; the stratagem of Allegorical Love is employed; and finally, under the cloak of renunciation the protagonists of this belief display such love for the world as to put the most covetous lovers of the world to shame.

(3) Everything is God

The third view point which emerges out of a coalescence of observation and conjecture holds that man and universe are unreal. They have no real existence of their own. In fact, there is one Being who has created all these things as a manifest of His Ownself and the same Being is working inside them. If we go into its details we shall find many ramifications and myriad aspects of this doctrine, yet there is one strand of thought that runs through all of them: all things are mere shadows of one single Being; only

this Being exists, all else is illusory.

This doctrine inculcates the attitude in man that he doubts the reality of his existence; he loses all initiative; he considers himself a mere puppet that is made to dance by someone-else or perhaps some external spirit is dancing within it; he forgets himself in the stupor of his illusions; his life is rudderless and has no set course or purpose. The train of his thought runs like this: I am only a shadow; no work has been assigned to me; nor can I accomplish anything by myself. That All-Pervading Being which casts into shadow through me the entire universe and which will hold sway from the beginning to the end of the world is the Mover. Everything is accomplished by that Being alone. If that Being is perfect, I am also perfect. Why shall I act then? If that Being is endeavouring towards perfection and is heading towards its climax taking the whole universe in its stride, then as a shadow I shall automatically move along with this Being. I am only a part; it is not for me to know whether the whole is moving or where it intends to go.

The practical consequences of this doctrine are nearly similar to those which I have already described in the course of the discussion on the Doctrine of Monasticism. In certain respects the attitude of the devotees of this belief is akin to that of the protagonists of the doctrine of Ignorance. The man who believes himself to be a mere shadow succumbs to passions; he gives free reign to his passions and does not care what direction they take, for according to his line of thinking, it is the substance which is the prime mover of his passions and he himself is only a puppet.

These three concepts, like the first one, are based on Ignorance and the kind of human behaviour which flows out of these concepts is also characterized by sheer Ignorance. None of the above concepts is substantiated by proofs based on knowledge. As a matter of fact, a variety of concepts has been formulated on illusory and conjectural grounds. Experience denies the validity of these concepts. If any one of these doctrines were valid, its practice would not have entailed bad consequences. If you observe that whenever and wherever it is taken a thing causes pain in the stomach, you rightly infer from this experiment that this particular thing does not agree with the anatomy and temper of the digestive system of man. In the same manner when it is an established fact that the doctrines of polytheism, monasticism and existentialism have by and large caused mischief to humanity, it is a positive proof that none of these doctrines is compatible with Reality and, on this basis, all are invalid.

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Chapter 6

THE THIRD SOLUTION-ISLAM

Let us now turn to the third course of action which is the last resort in formulating a view point about the basic problems of life. This course of action is to put our faith in the solution to these problems offered by the Prophets of God. The matter may be explained by taking the example of man who found himself in a strange land. He has absolutely no acquaintance with the land. He seeks information from a man and goes around the land under his guidance. Whenever you are confronted with a problem of this nature your first endeavour is to search a man who claims to know the way. Your second concern is to satisfy yourself about the reliability of such a guide on the basis of circumstantial evidence. Finally, taking him as your guide, you set out on your journey. When it is established by experience that the information provided by him has not misled you, you are convinced that your guide possessed the requisite knowledge and that the information supplied by him about that place was true. This is a scientific method. In the absence of any other scientific method, this one is surely the only correct method of formulating one's viewpoint.

Now look! The world is a strange place for you. You have no knowledge about its reality. You do not know how the world is regulated? You are not aware under what system of laws this great 'workshop' is operating. What is your own position in this world? And what is the proper attitude you should adopt towards the world? These are questions the answers of which you seek. In the first place, you conceived the opinion that what is visible is real. You acted according to this viewpoint, but the result was a fiasco. Subsequently, you formed various opinions on the basis of conjecture and supposition and acted

upon each of them, but in every case the experience was negative. After all this, the final course left for obtaining true guidance is to turn to Prophets of God. The Prophets claim to possess correct knowledge. On a deep inquiry into the ways of their lives, it is revealed that they are very truthful, trustworthy, pious, selfless and sound-minded beyond any shadow of doubt. Evidently there is sufficient ground for believing in the truth of their claims. It remains to be determined, however, that how far their information in regard to this world and man's position in it is valid and whether or not any practical evidence is forthcoming which gives a lie to their claims? Further, how far the information supplied by them succeeded in experience? If upon scrutiny the outcome of all these inquiries is in favour of the Prophets, we should put our trust in their guidance and adopt only that course in life which is in accordance with their instructions.

As I have said earlier, in contrast to other methods based on Ignorance, the basis of this method is scientific. If a man bows his head in compliance to this knowledge; when he gives up obstinacy and conceit and acts according to this knowledge and if he limits his actions within the bounds fixed by this knowledge, it is this method which is termed as "Islamic Method".

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Chapter 7

THE VIEW POINT OF THE PROPHETS ABOUT MAN AND THE UNIVERSE

The Prophets hold the following concepts regarding man and the universe:-

Sovereignty Lies with God

This whole universe stretching out before man, or which man is a part, is not an accidental phenomenon. It is a well-organised and well-regulated dominion. God has created this state; He alone is the Master and Sole Ruler of this state. It is, in fact, a totalitarian system in which all powers are vested in the Central Authority. No one else shares the Rule of this Totalitarian Sovereign. All forces which operate in the system of this universe are under His direct control. Nothing in the universe dare to disobey His Commands or act on its own accord without His permission. No part of this All Embracing system can attain and naturally should not have autonomy or be irresponsible.

Subservience of Man

Man is a born subject of this Divine State. Man does not become a subject of this State in his physical being by adoption; he is born as a subject and it does not lie in his power to hold any other status than that of a subject. Man, therefore, has no right to devise a way of life or to define his own obligations. Man does not own anything in this universe and he has no right to make laws for the use of property which does not belong to him. Man's body and all human powers are the possession of God and His Gift. Hence the right to use his body or physical powers according to his own will does not vest in man. On the other hand, man shall use these Divine gifts according to the Will of the Almighty.

Similarly, all things---earth, animals, water, plants, minerals, which from the environment of man are the property of God. They do not belong to man. Hence he has no right to appropriate even these things according to his will. Man should deal with these things according to the rules set by the Master to Whom they really belong.

Similarly, all men who inhabit this earth and whose lives are interlinked with each other are the subjects of God. Therefore, they have no right to formulate rules and regulations for ordering their mutual relations. The whole range of their mutual relationships should be governed by laws made by God.

As regards the question—what the law of God is, the Prophets inform us to same source from which we have received knowledge about the reality of this world and about your own selves has conveyed to us the knowledge of the Divine Law. God Himself has revealed this knowledge to us and has appointed us to deliver this knowledge to you. Trust in us; recognize us as the envoy of your King and receive from

us the authentic law of the King.

Boundaries of Action

The Prophets further explain to us, "you observe that the entire business of this universe is running according to a system; yet the Emperor is not visible, nor do we see His functionaries at work. You have a sense of freedom and feel free to act according to your wishes; you may behave as if you are the owner of things; you may even bow your heads in subservience and obedience to others who impose as Masters; you receive sustenance under all circumstances; you are provided with means of work; disobedience of Divine rule does not entail immediate punishment. All this is meant to put you a test. The Master has endowed you with wisdom, the faculty of deduction and the power of choice between right or wrong. The Master has, therefore, thrown a veil between His Being, His System of Dominion and your eyes. He wants to put you through a trial and see how you use the powers He has bestowed on you. He has blessed you with commonsense, freedom of choice, and measure of autonomy and has left you to act as you desire. If you realize your position as a subject and adopt this position with heart and soul without coercion, you will come out successful in the test of your Master. On the other hand, if you fail to recognise your status as the subject of God or having recognized your position as a subject, you set upon a rebellious course you fail in the test. You have been vested with some powers in the world in order to put you through a trial. You have been given control and authority over many things in the world and have been granted a whole life-span to prove your worth".

The World is a Place of Trial

The Prophets then inform us that worldly life is a period of trial; accordingly no accounts shall be called for not any reward or punishment be dispensed in this world.

Whatever is given here is not necessarily a reward for virtue; it does not signify that God is pleased with you or He approves of your present deeds. All this is, in fact, given to you as a means of putting you through a test. Goods, wealth, children, positions in the Government, means of livelihood-all these are bestowed on you in order to test your performance and to enable you to make use of your good or bad qualities. Similarly, all hardships, losses, calamities which overtake you do not necessarily signify the visitation of God's punishment on you for some evil deed. Some of these afflictions are results of certain natural phenomena. Some of these hardships fall under the category of trials. Some misfortunes occur when one behaves in accordance with a view point which is opposed to reality. In such a case one inevitably suffers a rude shock.

In any case, this world is not a "House of Reward or Punishment; it is a 'House of Trial'. The consequence of actions which appear in this world cannot be taken as basis for judging a method or an action righteous or wicked, good or bad and unlawful or permissible. The consequences or worldly actions which will be established in the next world will form the real basis of judgement. When the period of grace (the present life) is over, a second life will start in which your deeds shall be assessed and judgement will be delivered as to whether you acquitted yourself with credit or ignominiously in the worldly life. The only basis on which you shall be judged guilty or non-guilty in the next world will be whether firstly, you employed your faculties or observation and reason in the right way and acknowledged the sovereignty of God and the Divine sanctity of His Commandments; secondly, whether you, having recognized the above reality and possessing also the freedom of choice, submitted to the Sovereign Lord and acted upon His Commandments without coercion and of your own accord.

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Chapter 8

SCRUTINY OF THE ISLAMIC VIEWPOINT

A Scientific Concept

The conception of the world and man propounded by the Prophets is perfect. All parts of the whole viewpoint are logically woven together, there is no inner contradiction in it. It contains the most perfect

interpretation of the events of the whole world and fully explain the entire universal phenomenon. There is nothing relating to the observation or experience of man the interpretation of which cannot be made in the light of this conception. Hence it is a scientific doctrine and is valid by the definitions of the world 'scientific'. Again no other observation or experience has exploded the validity of this doctrine. Hence it still holds good. It cannot be included among the exploded myths. Our observation of the system of the universe also makes this view point appear the most probable. The phenomenon of the marvellous organization of the universe forces on us the conclusion that it is more rational to believe in the existence of a Supreme Administrator rather than to deny His existence. Similarly, on the evidence of this vast organization of the universe, it is a much more reasonable to conclude that it is a centralized system and that a Single All-Powerful Authority controls this system rather than to infer that the universe is a decentralized system which is ruled over by several authorities. In the same manner upon observing the grant wisdom working behind the glorious management of this universe, it is more rational to infer that the system of the universe is constructed according to a wise design and purpose, and, on the same evidence, it appears far from reason to believe that there is mere child-play.

Again when we carefully consider the fact that the system of this universe constitutes a State and man forms a part of this State, it appears quite reasonable to believe that there should be no provision for the independence or unaccountability of man in this system of State. Man's true status should be that of a subject. On these grounds this viewpoint appears to us the most reasonable.

A Practicable Creed

Looked at from the practical angle this view point appears feasible too. A whole scheme of life complete in every detail emerges out of this creed. Philosophy and Ethics, Science and Crafts, Literature and Art, Politics and System of Government, Peace and War, International relations- in fact this creed furnishes eternal grounds for all aspects and every need of life. There is not a single field of life in which a person need look outside of this creed for guidelines.

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Chapter 9

IMPACT OF THE ISLAMIC IDEOLOGY

We have now to observe as to what sort of attitude in life is formed by the Islamic Ideology and what consequence emerge out of it.

Impact on Individual Life

In contrast to other doctrines based on Ignorance, the Islamic creed builds up a responsible and disciplined attitude of life among individuals. Faith in the doctrine of Islam implies that man should not deem himself the master of his body, physical powers or anything in the world and should not consider him self free to use them at will. Instead man should look upon these things as the property of God and make use of them in conformity with the Divine Law. He should take his possessions as a trust from God and while using them, should never forget that he has to render full accounts for their use to a Supreme Authority from whose sight no individual deed is hidden nor is He unaware of even the innermost of man. Evidently a man who renders allegiance to Islam will abide by a code of rules under all circumstances. He can never let his passions go berserk like an untamed beast. He can never become a tyrant or a corrupt person. His integrity is above board and he is truth worthy. There is no need of external pressure to coerce him into obeying the laws. His inner self becomes subservient to a Supreme Moral Discipline which keeps him steady on the path of righteousness and equity even under those circumstances when there is no risk of punishment at the hands of a worldly power. It is impossible to imagine any other means of producing individual of such impeccable and dependable character in society than the fear of Divine Retribution and a realization that all things in man's possession are a trust from God.

Moreover, this viewpoint of life not only transforms an individual into a man of action but also diverts his efforts from the attainment of selfish, sensual or nationalistic ends with a view to achieving lofty

aims of justice and morality. It is impossible to find a more dynamic, more productive and a man of more righteous action than the one who entertains the following opinions about himself that:

I have not been sent unto the world without any aim; instead God has created me to discharge a duty; the aim of my life is to perform deeds that please God rather than live to please myself or my relations;

I shall not be spared until I have rendered full accounts as to how and to what extent did I expend my energy and time.

This viewpoint of life produces individuals of such excellence that it is difficult to imagine that any other view point can inculcate a better sense of values among its individual devotees.

Impact on Collective Life

Let us now analyse the impact of the Islamic viewpoint of life on the collective life of mankind. In the first place, the Islamic faith changes the foundations of the human society. According to this doctrine all persons are the subjects of God. Hence all enjoy equal rights, equal status and equal opportunities. No individual, family, class, nation or race has any superior or preferential rights or rights of dominance over other people. In this way the concept of man's dominance or superiority over other men is rooted out, and all evils arising out of Monarchy, Feudalism, Aristocracy, Brahmanism, Papal rule and Dictatorship are instantly knocked down. The doctrine of Islam also removed all prejudices of tribe, nation, race, country or colour which have been the major cause of bloodshed in the world. According to the Islamic faith, the whole earth is the property of God. All men are the progeny of Adam and Creatures of God. Merit is attained by virtue of purity of morals and fear of God and not on account of race, genealogy, goods, wealth, or the white or pink colour of the skin. Distinction is conferred on those who fear God most and practice piety and carry out ennoblement of their souls.

Similarly, the Islamic viewpoint completely alters the basis of social links, inter-relation, difference or distinction between man and man. Those man-made principles which form the basis of collective social life or social conflict have groups and have raised insurmountable barriers between these groups. Race, country, nationality or colour cannot be changed by man nor do they permit of social mobility from one section of mankind to another. In contrast to this, the Islamic viewpoint establishes the basis of social life or conflict upon the secure foundations of firm conviction in God and obedience to His Commands. Those who renounce supplication to creatures and bow their heads before the Creator and acknowledge the Divine Law as the governing principle of their lives, all these constitute one community. Those who act otherwise form a separate community. In this way, all differences are levelled, save one. And even this difference is not insurmountable. It is possible at all times for a person to change his convictions and his way of life and thus move out of one group to embrace the fold of another. If it is possible to form a united community of the peoples of the world, it can be founded only on the principles of Islam. All other doctrines split up the mankind: Islam welds peoples together into one united brotherhood.

The Sovereignty of God

Subsequent to the introduction of these reforms the society which emerged on the principles enunciated by Islam is a society, the attitude, spirit and social structure of which undergoes a complete transformation. In this society, the basic principle on which the State is formed is that Sovereignty lies with God, not with man. God is Sovereign Ruler; He is the Law-giver. Man functions only as a vicegerent of God. To start with, this political system wipes out all those evils which arise out of a system in which laws are framed by men and man rules over man. The striking distinction of this kind of State System is that a spirit of piety and service to God pervades over the system. The rulers and the ruled both understand that they are directly accountable to God Almighty Who is Omnipresent, the Knower of the seen and the unseen. The citizen pays taxes as donations in the service of God; the tax-collectors and the men responsible for spending the tax money consider it the wealth of God and themselves only as its trustees. From an ordinary policeman to the Judge and the Governor, every State official performs his functions in the same frame of mind in which he performs service to God, for both are equally acts of devotion to the Almighty and in both cases the same spirit of piety and dread of Divine Authority is required. The virtues sought out among the candidates whom the citizen elect from

among themselves to act as the representatives of God on earth are the fear of God, trustworthiness and integrity of character. In this process only those persons are elevated to the position of power and authority in society who surpass other citizens in moral excellence. Islam permeates society and culture with the same spirit of piety and purity of morals. The keynote of this civilization is Service to God rather than slavery to passions. Almighty God is the Arbitrator between man and man; relations among men are regulated by the law of God. Since the Law-Giver is free from all sensuality and self-interest and is All-Knowing and Wise, His Law, therefore, suppresses every possibility of the rise of mischief or tyranny in this society for all times to come. The Divine Law, however, makes due allowance for every aspect of human nature and makes provision for every human need.

Time does not allow me to present before you a complete picture of the structure of society which can be raised on the principles of Islam. You can, however, form an idea of the kind of attitude, its consequences and possibilities which emerged from the viewpoint regarding man and the universe presented by the Prophets of God. It is not a utopian State the blue-print of which is drawn on paper only. The existence of a society and a state raised on this viewpoint is a historical fact. No better citizens and no Humanitarian State better than the one created by the Islamic Concept of the universe have ever existed on the surface of this earth in the whole history of mankind. The sense of moral responsibility among the citizens of this State had developed to such an extent that a desert woman, who had got pregnant as a result of illicit intercourse, despite the knowledge that she would be mercilessly stoned to death for this crime, came of her own accord, pleaded guilty and requested that the punishment be enforced on her. She was released without taking surety or bond and was told to come back after the delivery of the child. She turned up from the desert after the birth of the child and repeated her request to be punished. This time she was told to suckle the infant and return when the weaning period was over. The woman went back to the desert and was not subjected any surveillance by the police. At the end of the suckling period, the woman presented herself once again and implored the judge to cleanse her of the sin of a adultery by enforcing the law on her. She was stoned to death and the people prayed for God's blessings on her. When a man caskally remarked: "What a lewd woman she was!" he was severely reprimanded and it was observed:

"By God! This woman has made such penitence that even a corrupt tax-collector would have pardoned by God if he had made a similar recompense".

Such was the moral calibre of the citizens of that State. And what of the State itself? It was a State the total receipts of which amounted several millions of rupees. The treasuries of that Government were overflowing with capital revenues from Iran, Syria and Egypt. And yet the Head of this State received paltry sum of Rs. 150.00 per mensem as salary. Among the citizens of this State, it was difficult to find a single person deserving alms.

Even after this historically successful experiment an individual is not prepared to believe in the validity of The Prophets' view point about the nature of the universe and position of man in the cosmic system, there is no other way in which such an individual may be persuaded. God, angels and the life in the Hereafter are not open to the direct view of any man. In the absence of direct observation, experience is the best guide to determine the validity and existence of a phenomenon. Take an example. A physician on examination of his patient is unable to determine the real defect in his internal system. In this case, the physician administers various medicines and waits to see which medicine reaches the target in the dark recesses of the human body and eliminates the defect. The fact that a certain medicine proved efficacious in curing a disease is a proof positive that this particular medicine was the only suitable means for removing the defect in the system of human body. Similarly, if the defaults of the mechanism of human life cannot be removed by any other ideological system and can be set right only by the solution offered by the Prophets it is a proof positive of the fact that the Prophet's viewpoint is compatible with the reality of the case. This universe is a Divine State and there is surely a life beyond this life in which man shall be obliged to render full account of his deeds in the worldly life.

Some may think it pretentious of me to write a foreword to a book by an Islamic thinker as outstanding in our time as Mawlana Mawdudi, especially when any need to introduce the eminent author or his remarkable book *Towards Understanding Islam* has been magisterially fulfilled by Brother Khurshid Ahmad. *Towards Understanding Islam* has already made its mark and this edition is only an improved

English version. However. I can hardly neglect this opportunity to express our gratitude to Allah, *subhanahu wala'aia* for having enabled us to bring out a new revised version of a book which has so deeply influenced such a large number of men and women. Only recently I received a letter from a friend in Brazil, saying how a leading journalist had embraced Islam purely because of the simple and persuasive exposition of the Islamic way of life in *Towards Understanding Islam*. There must be innumerable other examples of a similar kind and I hope that the book will be even more effective in its present form.

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